



Willows Animal Sanctuary

25th Anniversary Information & Rescue Stories



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Front cover: *Wilma*—see story on page 14.



Back cover: A rescued mallard duckling—read more on page 16.

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Willows 25th Anniversary

As a way of marking 25 years of rescuing animals at Willows Animal Sanctuary, this little booklet celebrates the stories of some of our rescues and describes the animals and facilities at Willows. This description covers the present time as well as animals who lived out their lives here. Hopefully, the booklet will also serve as an introduction to potential visitors and anyone interested in supporting the Willows cause financially or morally. Willows is an animal charity run by those who founded it with the indispensable help of wonderful and committed staff. Without its amazing supporters, Willows would not have been able to achieve even a small fraction of what it has in its 25th year.

The first of Willows charitable purposes, as recorded by OSCR (Office of the **Scottish Charity Regulator**) is:

*To relieve the suffering and distress of **horses, ponies, or any other animals** which have been abused or abandoned by providing a **secure life time home**.*

This booklet illustrates how Willows has fulfilled this charitable purpose in its first 25 years.

Willows started rescuing animals from distressing situations in the late 1980s and became a registered charity in the late 1990s in NE Scotland. The sanctuary has been situated at Lambhill, New Pitsligo since 2002. We named the sanctuary after the first horse we rescued, Willow, an Arab mare who was found tethered to a tree without food or water. The tether had become wrapped around her neck and was slowly choking her. Subsequently the owner was reported to the RSPCA and was successfully prosecuted.

Some of the first animals to be rescued were seven Welsh ponies, one of which, Nellie is still alive at time of writing (July 2023). You can read Nellie's story in this booklet, on page 30. We were obliged to rescue all seven badly abused animals, rather more than we were comfortable taking, because the owner threatened all or nothing—she would have them all slaughtered. Sadly, we slowly came to expect this sort of callous indifference to animal pain and consequently made it part of our mission to educate, inform and raise awareness of animal suffering. This brings us to the second of Willows charitable purposes:

Education of the public as to the need for and means of achieving humane and considerate treatment of animals through practical guidance and presentations at the premises of the Trust and elsewhere.

Willows specialises in the rescue of equines, cats as well as farm and domesticated animals. Although we have done so in the past, we do not currently rescue wild animals and refer them to **New Arc** at Ellon. We very occasionally rescue dogs, but these are always taken on as pets by Willows staff or approved foster homes. Normally we refer inquiries concerning dogs to **Barrk** or **Mrs Murrays** in Aberdeen. You can

read about some of the dogs we have rescued on page 21.

Willows rescues take many forms, but very often what we do is just as much a service to the people involved as it is to the animals. Families may find themselves in distress for many reasons: relationship breakup, death

or a thousand other compelling reasons. Typically, the family has to face a stark choice: re-home a much loved animal or have it destroyed. Rehoming is easier said than done. If the animal has behavioural quirks or is old, it is probably impossible. A well known national cat charity, for example, will not accept a cat unless it is young. Feral cats, of course, are out of the question. The same applies to horses, they must be young, ridable and saleable—otherwise, rather like worn out cars they are scrapped. Willows has always tried to help in these situations.

Willows has often rescued baby animals, including hedgehogs, lambs, foals, kittens, piglets and others. Sometimes the rescued animals are pregnant and subsequently give birth at Willows. Several litters of kittens, donkey foals, horse foals and lambs have been born here.

In the beginning, Willows had about ten acres of grazing and few outbuildings. Now it has 54 acres, more outbuildings, a coffee shop, a gift shop, charity shop, a sheep tunnel, machinery for grass management and people to



***Gem**—not actually born at Willows, but arrived when very young with her seriously ill mother.*



***Primrose** and her four kittens. All born safely and living at Willows today.*



*A baby hedgehog—we named him **Fuzzipeg**.*



A baby rabbit being bottle fed.



*Two rescued piglets: **Zooter** and **Babe**. Babe was found on the road and Zooter in a field..*

help do the work. Getting to where Willows is now has been a constant struggle, and still is, but with the quality of support we have been privileged to receive, Willows has survived some difficult times and we look very positively to the future. However, there is much to be done. Our outbuildings are old and in some cases require replacement or rebuilding. The expense, time and disruption of doing this is daunting, to say the least. Just to maintain the *status quo* at Willows needs to raise perhaps £20,000 now. Raising such a sum is not easy. Sometimes we are fortunate enough that a supporter will donate a large sum—this happened when we needed a new field sweeper—a very generous person donated £10,000 which meant we could buy the machine outright, but this is extremely rare!



Skye, one of the two mules that Willows looks after.

Willows has definitely come a long way in twenty five years regarding physical resources and infrastructure, but it certainly could be argued that the really important gains have been in intangibles: it has raised awareness of animal suffering, educated and informed children, provided life-long sanctuary for rescued animals and helped a good many people through some hard times. Surely, this is Willows most vital achievement for the community it serves.



The comfortable and roomy sheep tunnel. Two of the Biscuit Boys (above right) in the tunnel.



Coffee shop entrance and inside

The animals at Willows fall into several large groups: equines, sheep, cats, goats, pigs and cows. There are other, smaller groups too, including rabbits and guinea pigs. The equines consist of about eighty horses in many shapes and sizes and a group of donkeys—eighteen at time of writing. The horses occupy stables and a very large shed (rented from a local land owner). They also graze the majority of the fields during the summer months. The donkeys have their own barn and share the fields with some of the horses during the summer.



Inside the Gift and Coffee shops



The Willows sheep have recently acquired a sheep tunnel, which they absolutely love! They are free to go in and out as they please. We rescued a flock 25 sheep when their owner was tragically killed in a farming accident. This brings the number of sheep at Willows to about seventy. The sheep share grazing with some of the steadier horses.

The goats have their own field with shelters and a platform that they can climb on. Willows cares for various breeds of goat, including [Page 5](#)

pygmies, and a herd of Boer goats.

Cats at Willows are very well served—they have a **Cat Hotel** and 54 acres to roam over. We think the Cat Hotel is one of Willows best features and we are very proud of it and consider it one of our best achievements in 25 years—read more on page 9.

Willows provides lifelong homes—when we take an animal on, it is for the remainder of the animal's lifespan and we do not re-home. We do this because of the nature of the animals we rescue. There are many individuals who will not hesitate to 're-home' if they see the potential for profit. Horses that should not be ridden will be sold as rideable—which is both cruel and extremely dangerous. Horses that cannot be sold will be slaughtered. Dead or alive there is a profit to be had. Regrettably, to the vast majority of people animal life is both cheap and disposable. Willows is a *last-chance* sanctuary and we specialise in taking in animals that other, much larger, charities will not take.

The equines at Willows (horses, ponies, donkeys and mules) use the majority of the available grazing and are the most expensive and time consuming of our animals to look after. None of them are rideable and most have physical and/or psychological issues. A couple of them were

*You can support Willows in many different ways. **Animal Adoption** is a great way to support an animal and costs from only £2.00 per month, but there are several other ways, including **JustGiving** and **PayPal**. Willows needs your help to pay for essential bills such as veterinary care, feed, hay, straw and other crucial running costs.*

Bank of Scotland (29 Low St, Banff AB45 1AU)

Account Name: Willows Animal Sanctuary

Sort Code: 80-08-92

Account No: 00649002

BIC: BOFSGB21085

IBAN: GB34 BOFS 8008 9200 6490 02

willowsanimals.com/adoption.html



More details at: willowsanimals.com/supportUs.html



born at Willows because the rescued mares were pregnant at time of rescue. You can read more about the horses on page 28 and the donkeys in on page 19.

Another significant feature we are happy to provide for our visitors is the **Wildlife Walk**. This winds around the fields containing most of the animals, making them much more accessible for viewing by visitors than previously. It offers a fairly easy walk of a little more than 2Km, if one walks the whole way around. There are butterflies, birds, dragonflies and wild plants to be seen in the summer months, as well as the Willows animals in their fields. Read more on page 33.

This booklet includes some of our rescue stories, but they merely represent a tiny fraction of the thousands of animals, large and small that have passed through Willows and enriched the lives of visitors, donors, staff and many others. Sometimes an animal comes to Willows as the result of appalling neglect or outright cruelty, but often simple human tragedy is the cause and there's no one to blame. Put simply, people are the biggest asset that Willows has accrued over 25 years. People who help fix up the old buildings, work on a project, make a donation, buy cat food, donate a bale of hay, bring surplus food or useful items, give to our charity shop, visit us, support us on social media, send us a Christmas card and so, so many others who care about our cause—this is Willows greatest asset and biggest achievement in 25 years.

Freya: a cat born with (almost) no hair covering her body. She was lucky enough to have two outfits tailored specially for her.

*The patchwork one, together with a little blanket, was made by **school children in Orkney** and sent down to Willows (before it moved to Lambhill).*

*The other was knitted by the **Willows vet** at the time and featured in local newspaper (right).*



Today, Willows Animal Sanctuary is the largest, ethically managed, equine, farm and domestic animal sanctuary in Scotland and will try to help any animal in distress. Willows operates a strict **no kill** policy and only euthanize an animal on veterinary advice. We look after over 500 animals including over 100 horses, ponies and donkeys, approximately 65 cats and dogs and many reptiles as well as over 200 farm animals and birds. Willows is dependent on donations from individuals and legacies to keep the sanctuary running. Unfortunately, we are at a disadvantage with respect to many benevolent organisations, because we do not re-home animals—most such organisations make re-homing a condition of providing grants.

Unlike the large, national charities we have no reserves of money and are always short of funds. Willows specialises in helping elderly or more vulnerable animals that have already been refused help, but we can only continue to help needy animals with your support. It would be great if we could do our work without asking you for money, but we cannot. We are dependent on your input. Please, if you can, donate a few pounds every month—it will make all the difference in the world.



*Above left: the horse that started Willows Animal Sanctuary, **Willow** with her long time companion **Chester**.*



Above: some of the many horses at Willows today coming in to their winter housing. In the background is some of the huge number of bales of hay and haylage needed to feed them in the winter months.

Willows Cats & The Cat Hotel



*The **Cat Hotel**—a central hub for 65 cats at Willows. They come and go as they please, have comfortable beds and excellent service from the Willows staff!*

All the cats at Willows are free to come and go as they please and have constant access to food, water and medical care. Currently we care for about 65 cats, some of which are seldom seen, but there are plenty of sociable cats ready to greet visitors and accept a stroke or two!

Willows specialises in taking in cats who are not house trained or have psychological problems or are feral. Many of our cats have suffered hardships or were simply unwanted. Some had loving families that experienced a change in circumstances and were forced to give up their pets. Every cat is neutered, vaccinated, wormed and is checked regularly by our staff and vets. They receive lots of fuss from our staff, volunteers and some even wait in the car park to greet visitors.

The Cat Hotel began 24 years ago with a cat named **Edward**. Edward had the most appalling start to life as his owners for some peculiar reason, had kept him locked in a cat carrier from a young kitten until he was 18 months old before the crime was discovered by an animal welfare official. The people were prosecuted and Edward was put up for rehoming. Sadly, he was so traumatised and agoraphobic, he was in no

fit state to go into an ordinary home. A lady who was dropping off feed at Willows and knew of Edward's plight asked us if we could help as she thought our set up would be more appropriate for such a frightened cat. We agreed to take him in and Edward arrived soon after. To say he was terrified was an under-statement. He was a big cat, but very under-weight and had very little muscle in his legs as he had barely used them. It was heart-breaking to see. We moved him into a large cage covered with blankets so he could feel safe and waited for him, to come to us.

Gradually, over many weeks, he started to gain more confidence so we gradually increased this agoraphobic cat's space and he slowly gained enough confidence to be able to place a paw into the outside world. Edward didn't really know how to jump or climb or play so he had to learn all this much later than normal. It was absolutely amazing to watch this cat blossom from such a frightened skinny wreck to a large, well covered glorious looking boy! He took a real shine to one staff member and with his love and care, Edward became really affectionate to people and managed to re-gain his lost trust in humans. Edward lived very happily at Willows for 13 years and he was so loved by everyone. Sadly, the day came when Edward was diagnosed with cancer and when he was no longer able to have a good quality of life, we had him put quietly to sleep in the arms of the first staff member he had bonded so strongly with.

The Cats Hotel is Edward's legacy to all forgotten and traumatised cats and Willows has gone on to help hundreds of cats in the whole time it has been running.



Above: **Edward** enjoying his freedom after 18months in a cage.

Spirit



*Above left: **Spirit** when he first arrived at Willows
Above right: **Spirit** after his recovery*



In 2018, we received an urgent phone call about a very poorly cat in a local town. Apparently, the cat had been adopted by some people 3 years previously, but he had disappeared and they hadn't seen him for a couple of years. He had just reappeared on their door step, but they were no longer in a position to care for him.

He was incredibly ill, and in desperate need of a vet. We organised a volunteer to collect him and bring him to us. When he arrived at Willows, we were shocked to by his condition and it was clear he was at death's door. We rushed him straight to our vet. The poor cat was very dehydrated, completely emaciated and only weighed 1.9k. He also had a bad upper respiratory infection. He was placed on a drip and scanned for a microchip.

He had been rehomed by a large national charity a few years previously and although he was still their responsibility and very unwell, they would not take him back into their care. We were shocked by this reaction and said we would take him in. After the vets discharged him, we got him settled in our hospital area and his return to health began.

We named him **Spirit**, because even though he was so poorly, he hadn't given up and it was clear all he wanted to do was live! All he did was eat and sleep initially and over the course of time he regained some of his condition, but he was still suffering with the respiratory infection. After further tests were done, it was clear that the nasty virus he had contracted had a strong hold on him. Our vets recommended some expensive anti-viral treatment, which we would give him daily. We appealed for donations to cover the initial outlay of his treatment and our amazing supporters came to the rescue.

The treatment was a huge success and allowed Spirit to Make a full recovery and have a good quality life.

Two years after his rescue, his body began to give up and it was clear there was no more we could do to keep him comfortable so our vets advised it was time for him to be put to sleep. He died quietly and with dignity in the arms of someone who loved him very much. We wish he could have had more time, but we would do it all again for him. He touched the lives of many and we are so glad he had some real quality time at Willows.

Tia & Arthur



In 2008, we had an urgent phone call from a lady who had found two young cats dumped in a wood. It was clear that the pair had been secured in a plastic bag by a very nasty person and left for dead. The two had evidently clawed their way out and then gone to ground in an old paint can.

She phoned around all big well known charities and no one would help. When she phoned us and explained the severity of the situation we immediately said we would take them in. The pair were deeply traumatised and we will always remember how Tia's eyes flicked from side to side with fear. It took them a long time to recover from their awful trauma but when they did, they settled in so well and became a real favourite with the visitors and were always keen to greet new comers!

Marmalade



Willows received a call from a vet surgery asking if we could help an old cat that had been handed in. It seemed that he had been dumped in town and despite various efforts to trace his home or owners, no one had come forward to claim him. This poor old boy only had one eye which only had a small amount of sight in it, so it was thought that someone must have been looking after him.

We said we would help and made arrangements for him to be collected. With him not being neutered, not house trained, rather cross and very feral, it seemed unlikely that he would find an understanding home anytime soon!

We made more attempts to find his owners through social media and the newspapers but no one came forward for him. We started making arrangements to accommodate his special needs. We held a fundraiser and managed to raise enough money for him to have a lovely Catio (*Cat Patio*) constructed and attached to a cabin. We are pleased to report that he has adapted extremely well and seems very happy.

He has the company of the other older cats at Willows and mews in delight when he sees a new cat friend! He's mellowed quite a bit since he's been at Willows and no longer attacks people on sight! He lives with another, older cat and 4 kittens and apparently loves them all—see below.



Wilma



In April 2001 Willows received an urgent phone call from the school secretary at Banff Academy. She had retrieved a newly born kitten from the middle of the road outside the school. The kitten had narrowly missed being run over by a bus and urgently needed to be helped.

Willows agreed to take her and she arrived cold, hungry and smelling of diesel and petrol. One of the sanctuary volunteers quickly prepared warm milk and then helped her to urinate. This is achieved by gently stoking the underside of a baby animal – something the mother does instinctively. The kitten was named 'Wilma' after her kind rescuer. Wilma stayed at the sanctuary - far away from busy streets and blissfully unaware that she had had such a narrow escape.

Wilma grew quickly and showed herself to be a cat of determined personality. She felt herself to be the most important member of the sanctuary with a very regal bearing and a very large and bushy tail, rather like a squirrel's!



Wilma when rescued



Malone



Malone came to Willows because he was viciously attacking his owner—who needed hospital treatment! She loved him dearly and had him checked by a vet who assured them it was purely behavioural, not medical.

The situation went bad to worse and she became absolutely terrified of him. No charity would help them and they were considering the heart-breaking decision of euthanasia.

Fortunately, a friend told Malone's owner about Willows and she immediately got in touch with us. We said we'd help and she was so relieved that she immediately drove him the five hour long trip to bring him to safety!

Malone was very aggressive and cross for quite a while but we gave him time and space and we've managed to win him around and he now absolutely loves his life at Willows!

He's still a bit unpredictable but that's ok as we always take our lead from him.

*Sponsor
Malone
from only
£2/month*

willowsanimals.com/adoptionCats.html



Birds at Willows



Quackers, a Mallard duckling (above left) was brought into Willows one day, apparently separated from her family and lost. At that time Willows took in a few wild animals and birds. The little duckling thrived at Willows and grew into an adult duck. She was completely free to join the wild duck population, but stayed with us for her whole life of twelve years or so.

Today, Willows cares for many kinds of domestic birds, including chickens and turkeys. Sometimes, we have taken in ex-battery hens that have reached their end-of-life date (usually at about 2 years old). These are usually in an appalling condition, (below left). The other image (below right) shows a couple of the surviving birds fully recovered.



Before



After

Willows has had some specially designed bird housing built (top right) to comply with regulations regarding Bird Flu. Up until Bird Flu, our chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys had lived largely free-range, but we are not permitted to do that now. Without any barn space available, we made the decision to commission a reputable joiner to construct some sturdy new homes. Naturally, this was quite expensive, but to allow the birds to lead a good quality of life and withstand the incredibly high winds and gales we get here, the expense was justifiable.

Sheep at Willows



Above, just a few of the many Willows sheep. The sheep no longer have to go out in cold weather as they can go in and out of their tunnel as they please. We used to keep them in a barn during the winter and let the hardy ones out every so often.

The Willows sheep are a very mixed bunch—common domestic breeds, Soay, Jacob and Zwartbles to name a few. They have come from all kinds of situations including: bottle fed lambs, cruelty cases, family tragedies and beloved pets that could no longer be kept. Sheep are nowhere near as daft as commonly portrayed, they are intelligent animals that deserve more respect from people.



Angel

Angel was rescued from a poorly looked after flock when she was a lamb. Had Willows not intervened she would surely have died in the field. She had a badly infected eye which received no treatment at all until she came to the sanctuary. The Willows vet was obliged to remove the eye because it had degenerated so much and was a risk to her life. She has learnt to manage quite well without it. Angel has a lovely temperament and always comes to say hello when we are in the fields. Recently, she has learnt to walk nicely on a lead.

Willows rescued three Zwartbles sheep along with **Violet**, a horse. Both Violet and the three sheep came from a loving home, but their owner was being forced to downsize. Violet wasn't suitable for



Violet

riding and is, in fact, very dangerous under saddle so it was important that she went somewhere safe where no one would ever try to ride her again. The sheep were older, castrated males with no real value and had been beloved pets their whole lives.

The owner of these animals was advised to send them all to a slaughterhouse and get some money for the corpses. She had no intention of doing this as they were her pets, they had only known love from her and the sheep had been given biscuits every day as a treat. After prolonged discussions, we agreed that we would make room for these vulnerable animals. When we told the owner we could help, she cried with relief.

All the animals settled in well and they are truly the most unique and beautiful characters—we can tell have been loved deeply. Obviously, we named the sheep the **Biscuit Boys**!



Angel walking on a lead.



One of the Biscuit Boys

Donkeys at Willows



Above: **Molly & Lady**



Right: **Humphrey**



Lady came from an awful place where her foal died in the terrible conditions. She arrived at Willows with untreated mastitis. **Humphrey** lived out in a field with no proper care or shelter and had terrible foot problems. Boris was placed in a market and was destined to be sold for meat. He was terrified of everyone but was fortunately saved and brought to Willows.

An interesting fact about donkeys is that they all have a mark like a cross on their backs. We wondered why and found several explanations for this phenomenon. Here are two very different explanations:

On the day we call Palm Sunday, Jesus led his followers into the city of Jerusalem riding on the back of a donkey. The donkey so loved his gentle master that he later followed him to Calvary. The little donkey was grief-stricken by the sight of Jesus on the cross and when the crowd dispersed, the donkey went up to Jesus, and he stood behind the cross and as the sun went down, the shadow of the cross fell across the donkey, and ever since then every donkey carries the mark of the cross.

A more scientific explanation of why donkeys all have a cross on their backs is that it's an ancient form of camouflage. Like zebras, from which donkeys share a common ancestor, it's a heritable marking that could have helped them hide themselves from predators.

Mr. Jingles A Christmas Rescue



Meet Mr Jingles! Life hasn't always been kind to this boy. He has lived alone for a lot of it and he was very depressed.

He didn't receive regular foot care and his feet were terribly long and he was in danger of being left with irreversible damage to his joints. He would often wander off looking for friends and company as he was so terribly sad and alone.

Just before Christmas though, his luck changed for the better and arrangements were made for him to come to Willows. We immediately had his feet trimmed and you can see the difference already! He has been neutered and is now successfully integrated with our own donkey herd. He's now a very happy donkey and has many friends to play and spend his days with!

Mr Jingles was an expensive rescue for Willows, not least because of the work that had to be done on his feet. When an equine's feet become as bad as these, through neglect, the animal will become lame and be in constant pain. Because people often keep equines in unnatural conditions, their feet do not wear down properly or retain their proper shape.

Dogs at Willows

Poppy arrived one Sunday afternoon with some people who claimed that she had been abandoned in their garden. They were flying down to England and they had been trying to find someone to take her in. Poppy was about three months old and very unsure about what was happening. We checked locally and discovered that she had been passed around by several people and had already had five homes.

We decided that Poppy should be adopted by Willows and be given a permanent home with the two other rescued dogs that were here at the time. She quickly made herself at home and was particularly keen on spending her winter evenings lying in front of the fire. She had a lovely nature and lived a full life at Willows—we still miss her.

Merlin was one of four border collies that Willows was asked to take in because their owner was emigrating to Australia the very next day. The collies had lived together as a pack and had never been allowed to run off the lead. We agreed to take them in and managed to find accommodation for them all.

All the Willows staff fell in love with Merlin and he has consequently become a permanent sanctuary dog. He arrived at roughly the same time as Poppy, but he has lived much longer and is still alive at time of writing. He is very old now, of course, and his sight and hearing have deteriorated somewhat. Also, he had to have one of his back legs amputated a few years ago, but even now he still gets around pretty well. He has been an extraordinarily obedient and faithful dog.

Willows has rescued a number of other dogs over the years, but there is no space to write about them all here. We are very occasionally able to take a dog, but only if a staff member (or an approved foster home) can take one. Normally, we refer dogs to Barrk or Mrs Murrays in Aberdeen.



***Poppy and Merlin** - on a walk*



***Poppy** - looking at a new born foal in a stable*



***Merlin** - lying down in long grass*



Toto - above: in good health.

Toto was found running for his life on a main road. An older couple stopped to pick him up and he was so filthy and matted, at first they weren't quite sure what he was! They drove him straight to Willows, informed the dog warden and then rushed him to the vets. He was very thin, all of his teeth were rotten and he was matted and caked with his own faeces. Whilst the warden searched for his owner, our vets operated on him to remove all of his teeth. He was soon feeling much better although he was still extremely frightened. His owner was never found and he was fostered with a Willows staff member who was experienced with abused dogs. Toto gained enormous confidence with another rescued dog called **Munchie**. To say he adored her is an understatement and the two lived very happily together—totally in love! Although we only managed to give Toto two years, we know they were with love, safety and lots of food!



Munchie and Toto - best of friends.

Perdie had the most appalling start to life. She was purchased on a whim and when her owners couldn't cope with her they locked in a cage in a small cupboard under the stairs, only letting her out for a few minutes every other day (if that). A neighbour who was aware of the situation became very concerned and after some months had gone by she asked them if they would consider letting her take Perdie. They immediately handed her over.

This good Samaritan realized that Perdie was too much for her to cope with (as she was disabled and Perdie was a very high energy dog) so she set about finding her somewhere safe to go. None of the local kennels could help because they were full up. She finally discovered Willows—we immediately said we would take her. Poor Perdie was absolutely matted with her own filth and was completely traumatized by her terrible start to life. She was estimated to be around 18 months old and had never developed any sort of bladder control.

It was decided that Perdie would remain a sanctuary dog and she lived a full and happy life at Willows. She was a very sweet natured dog who loved chasing leaves and was always keen to go for a walk! She loved trips to the beach and coming back home to her warm bed. We think it's safe to say that her life at Willows made up for her terrible and cruel beginning.



Perdie - at 18 months old.

Willows Cows: Ruby, Ralphie, Ermintrude & Bella



Ruby (top) has a condition called dwarfism which means her growth is stunted. Her owner, a farmer had intended to use her for breeding but as she didn't grow properly and she became more of a pet. The farmer asked Willows if we would take her in as he was unable to keep a pet cow and we were fortunate enough to have a space for her.

Ruby has grown some over the years, but has a slightly deformed front leg which doesn't seem to cause her any issues and our vet is happy with her. She lives here very happily with our other three cows, **Ralphie** (she is great friends with Ralphie) **Ermintrude** and **Bella**. Ruby absolutely loves a scratch on her head!



Ralphie (bottom) was born at a dairy farm and removed from his mother at only an hour old. A truly devastating, but sadly routine experience for dairy cows. He was bottle fed by machine along with many other calves. The dairy farm was giving a tour to a school and one of the accompanying teachers started petting Ralphie and felt the most incredible connection with him. She asked the farmer what was going to happen to him and she was told that in two months time he would be transported to an abattoir and slaughtered. Ralphie was now suckling on her fingers and there and then she pledged to save his life and purchased him from the farm.

She had no land and no where to take him! She immediately started searching for somewhere safe for him and she eventually came across Willows. We immediately said we would help him and she made arrangements to collect him and bring him to Willows. At only 3 weeks old, he arrived with us and we made sure that this poor orphan had all he needed to make him comfortable. Lots of company, bottles and most importantly, cuddles were given in abundance and he soon settled in.

A while later, we were approached by a farmer who had bred a little cow with dwarfism. She was only 9 months old, and she had been made into a pet as he couldn't use her for



breeding, he was at a loss what to do with her and really didn't want to slaughter her. We said we would take her and he brought her down the same day. When Ralphie saw her he was so pleased— it was love at first sight! Ruby was absolutely caked in muck and it took a lot to get her cleaned up. Ralphie helped by grooming her himself. The two bonded strongly and absolutely adore one another—five years on, nothing has changed

Willows heard of the 2 year old **Ermintrude** 5 days before she was to be sent to slaughter. Distraught and desperate to rescue her bovine friend from this awful fate, her saviour - a very distressed lady - contacted us at Willows. We had recently lost **Arwen** and this meant we had a space available.

What better way to honour Arwen's life by saving another cow! We agreed that if ownership could be secured, we would take Ermintrude at the sanctuary. The lady was subsequently able to get ownership of Ermintrude - no mean feat in itself. She then organised transportation and signed her over to Willows. Willows was delighted to give this lovely, sentient being a lifelong home.



Bella (at left) came from a petting farm that was closing down. She is a Jersey cow and she is a whopping 18 years old! Her owners really didn't want to send her to slaughter but the options for such an old cow are rather limited. Luckily, we had one space left and we are so pleased we were able to help.

Bella is a very sweet old lady and we are glad she will have a lovely retirement with us at the sanctuary.

Our first ever rescued cow was a Jersey (many years ago) and it's been wonderful to be able to help another.



Above: **Ralphie** when he was a calf.

Goats at Willows



Ronnie (top left) came to Willows after his owner very sadly had to give him and his friends up because they were going through a divorce and they no longer had anywhere to keep them. Ronnie and his friends had clearly been dearly loved pets and Willows was happy to help. They are a lovely friendly group and have settled in really well. Their owner unfortunately was having a change of circumstances and they would no longer have anywhere safe to keep these little guys. They had been a very important component of their owner's life and it was a very hard decision for her to make. When they arrived at Willows, we could see how loved they are and they all have the most amazing characters. He's a very cute cheeky chap and is always keen to say hello.

In February 2014 Willows was asked to help two Pygmy goats—one was **Charlie** (see above). The animals all came to Willows because of a marriage breakup which had left their owner with nowhere else to keep them and she was highly relieved that we were able to accept them. Charlie is a lovely, friendly goat who loves being with his friends and greeting visitors!

We were contacted in August 2015 by a lady who had been left to take care of 12 sheep and 5 **Boer goats** (top: 2nd from left) that had been abandoned by their owner. Animal Health advised that they be fattened up and sent to market. Many of the sheep were found with fly strike (when a bluebottle fly lays eggs on a live animal and they hatch into maggots and starting eating the flesh) and the goats had rotting feet. They were immediately seen by our vet and received medical attention. The sheep began producing lambs in February 2016 and are all doing well. They are all happily settled in the sanctuary and will stay here in safety for the rest of their lives.

Pigs at Willows

The Willows pigs live in an established group with two acres to roam over and dig up as they please. They also have a home of choice and a supply of straw which they use to make their home comfortable and warm. Scientific research in the 1990s showed that pigs are the 4th most intelligent animal—after chimpanzees, dolphins and elephants. If you were wondering, dogs are 5th. Pigs are highly emotional animals, according to research done at Wageningen University and are capable of communicating their emotions with other pigs.



We have rescued many pigs at Willows. All with different stories, some have suffered trauma and neglect, some were an unwise choice of pet and caused mayhem and damage to property.

Three Little Pigs (at right) went *Wee, Wee, Wee* all the way home to Willows! These pigs were at a petting farm in Norfolk that was closed down. The owners sold off the 'exotic' animals (Llamas etc.) on Gumtree and then shot the farm animals himself. However, apparently no-one wanted the pigs.

The Little Pigs owner was overheard to say he was going to shoot them too. The person who heard this alerted an animal rescue network who say they tried every sanctuary in England, but none was able to help them.

The animal rescue network raised enough money for the piggies transport to Willows and they arrived here at the end of March 2013.



Above: One of the Willows sows gathering straw to put into her house, in order to make it clean and comfortable.



Babe and Zooter



*Above: **Babe** shortly after arriving at Willows.*



Early one morning, many years ago, a passing motorist alerted the Willows staff to the plight of an injured piglet which was on the road just outside the sanctuary. It appeared that the little piglet had fallen from a lorry and been hit by a passing car. We managed to catch her and establish that she needed urgent veterinary attention. **Babe** (at left) needed many stitches in the wounds on her back but quickly recovered and soon began to adapt to her new lifelong home at Willows.

Everyone was amazed that Babe had somehow managed to arrive just outside an animal sanctuary – all by herself. She attracted much attention from newspapers, radio and TV. She loved all the fuss she received from visitors. Babe was very lucky to have lived out a long and happy life at Willows and to have avoided the fate of other less fortunate pigs.

Zooter escaped from a pig farm and was discovered cold and hungry amongst a field of sheep when she was only a few days old. She had a large bruise on her head and we suspect someone had bashed her head deliberately. She was saved by a lovely family who looked after her and then obtained permission for her to come to Willows!

*Left, below & right: **Zooter** shortly after arriving at Willows.*



Horses at Willows



McGill

There are a lot of horses at Willows. An Arab horse called Willow was our first rescue and the name of our sanctuary commemorates her. The horses range in size from miniature Shetland Ponies (about 3' at the shoulder) up the 18.3hh (about 6' 3" at the shoulder) **McGill**.

McGill came to Willows as his owner felt he was better suited to a quiet life. He's a very spooky worried horse and suffers badly from anxiety and he just wasn't suited to being ridden. McGill was a well cared for horse, but because he is so big and nervous, very dangerous for riding.

Rocket's mother **Carley** (whilst pregnant with him) and his father **Faramere** were part of a big welfare case that went to court. The owners were prosecuted but there was no one able to take in the two ponies and they were actually facing being put down. We were contacted by a frantic good Samaritan who had been watching the whole situation and was desperate to find them a good home. Once we heard of the severity of the situation, we immediately agreed to help. They arrived safely at Willows where they were both checked and treated by our vets.

After a few weeks, Rocket was born safely and in good health at the sanctuary! The three are very bonded and they are always together grazing the fields.



Faramere, Rocket & Carley



Rocket



Old Sammy



We rescued **Heather** in May 2018. Her elderly and infirm owner had loaned her to someone she thought trustworthy and it had gone very wrong. Heather and her friend had been totally neglected and were malnourished, and crawling with parasites. Heather also had a bad respiratory infection. At 28 years old, it seemed impossible for her owner to find a charity to take them on. She contacted Willows and we immediately said we'd help.



Heather shortly after rescue

After a lot of TLC, Heather has made a full recovery. We manage her dental issues by feeding her soaked forage based feeds and medicate her daily for COPD (the equine equivalent to asthma).

Heather is just one example of how the story doesn't end after the rescue. Once restored to good health, a lot of hard work that goes into keeping an animal healthy. Heather has worked most of her life and she deserves a retirement with a safe home and medical care and with your support we have been able to provide this for her.

Old Sammy, a miniature Shetland, was one of Willows oldest ponies. We never knew his exact age, but it was around 40 years—he was at Willows for more than 20 years. When he arrived he was in very poor condition and his feet were badly over-grown and generally in a very poor state. It took the Willows farrier many months to correct them. He didn't have many teeth which is quite common for ponies of his age and he needed to eat lots of soaked forage-based feeds. He also hated the horse dentist.

Old Sammy was very happy in his lifelong home at Willows with his girlfriend **Cheyenne** (see left) , who is still with us and even older, we think.



Cheyenne currently Willows oldest resident

Nellie



*Sponsor a
horse
from only
£2/month*

Nelly had a terrible start to life. When she was a very young pony, she was beaten up by a gang of teenagers and poor Nellie was left so traumatised, she couldn't even bear the sight of people. Her owners, who felt unable to deal with her trauma decided to send Nelly and her friends to the slaughter house.

The day before their terrible fate took place, a contact of the owners asked if they could instead go to Willows and fortunately, they agreed. Nellie and her friends arrived safely at the sanctuary and it was painfully obvious to us that she was deeply traumatised and it was going to take a lot of time for her to recover.

Many years have gone past and we are now very pleased to report that Nellie is a much happier pony. She is still worried, but she now enjoys being groomed and is always keen to come over for a bucket of feed! She was once such a frightened pony but now she grazes the fields with her friends without a care in the world!



willowsanimals.com/adoptionHorses.html

Fluke

Fluke on arrival



In 2016, we were asked if we could provide a home for a 40 year old Fell pony, named **Fluke**, whose 80 year old owner could no longer care for him. His owner had been so determined to take care of him (he lived alone) that he had pushed himself too far and had a bad fall alone outside whilst feeding Fluke. He ended up spending the entire night unable to move until help came. His friends contacted very well known (large) charities who all refused flatly to help this heartbroken old man.



At Willows, we don't discriminate because of an animal's age. If we can help an animal lead a good quality of life, regardless of age, then we will do our best to make it happen. We didn't see Fluke as being over some arbitrary age and therefore worthless, unrehomeable and unsaleable. To us he was a sentient being whose retirement meant the world to a very dedicated owner and that's what we focused on.

When Fluke arrived, our vets examined him and found he was malnourished, but ultimately pretty healthy for such an old horse. With proper feeding, Fluke regained his weight within a few months. It soon became clear that he was an escape artist and neither did he suffer fools gladly! He knocked people over when he wanted his own way and often bossed the other horses around.

We are very pleased that he had almost two years of happy retirement with us. At the end, Fluke was put to sleep under veterinary advice when he suddenly became very ill. We were there by his side, he had been loved his whole life and right up to the end, he knew that. We couldn't have helped Fluke if we didn't have amazing support from people like you. You made his happy retirement a reality.

Ginger



I started out life as a racehorse. Although I was well cared for, I was subjected to great cruelty by my trainer. He decided to teach me a hard lesson when I didn't understand what I was being asked to do one day. Instead of showing me in a gentle way what he was wanting of me, he got immensely angry and beat me until I was black and blue and I felt as if my spirit was broken. The day came for my first big race and I galloped as hard as I could whilst being lashed with a whip. I gave it my all but I didn't win. The racing world is a hard and cruel industry and horses that don't win (or even the ones who do) either go straight to the knackers yard, a sale or the lucky ones go to a rehab charity. Many horses are bought up and sent abroad for slaughter. I was very frightened that this cruel fate would be mine but I was incredibly lucky and I was saved by a very kind lady. She took me home and loved me and I actually started to like people again! But, sadly it wasn't to last. She became unwell and she said she had found me a kind loaner to care for me and I would be better off. So I was loaded up again and sent away to a new livery yard. When I arrived, I didn't like it there. I wasn't allowed in with the other horses and they all looked ill. There was rubbish all over the fields and no stables or shelters.

To start with, my new human came up every day to care for me but as the weather got colder her visits started to drop off. My feet became painful as I hadn't seen a farrier in months and there was no food to speak of. She just seemed to have lost interest in me. I was very lonely and hungry. My rugs were torn and wet and I felt myself becoming weaker. I heard that I was being put up for sale, but I felt so low I no longer cared. A woman came up to view me and I heard her telling my loaner "You will never sell a horse in this kind of state! I'm going to talk to his owner!"

A few days later when the wind was howling and the rain was beating down hard and I was standing alone in the field shivering, I saw a horse box pull up. I was taken over to it and the driver insisted that I should have an appropriate rug put on (My loaner thought my torn and soaked rain sheet was okay for me to travel in). When I was ready I was loaded up and we set off! Six hours later, we came to a stop and the doors were opened and I stepped out into this wonderful new world! I was led into a nice warm stable with lots of hay and I looked around at all my new friends and I saw lots of contented horses, ponies and donkeys happily munching at their hay with shiny coats and peaceful expressions. A sense of calm came over me as I thought to myself "I'm home now". After I'd had something to eat, I was groomed, given new rugs and the vet came out to examine me. She said that I needed to gain a lot of weight and left a gentle wormer for me and treated me for lice. The Farrier then came out and made my feet much more comfortable. People were constantly popping in and giving me pats and reassurance and telling me that the worst was now over and the best of it is, I believe them!

A few weeks later, I felt strong enough to have a good gallop across the field! As I tore across the field with the wind in my mane and my new friends by side I felt something mend that had long been broken - my spirit!

Willows Wildlife (Conservation) Walk

We began our Wildlife walk by planting native species of trees, hedges and plants and have created new habitats to help encourage new/endangered species of insects, mammals, birds, butterflies and plants. We hope to raise awareness of all the wildlife that inhabit this area and emphasise the importance of biodiversity and conservation particularly in response to the recent research that has drawn attention to the shocking decline in numbers of wildlife. Our Wildlife Walk is a little over 2km long, if you go all the way around. It is a fairly easy walk, on a mown grass path, for the majority of people. You will do the walk in 30 or 40 minutes—the super-speedy will take less time.

- There is one short moderate incline.
- Some parts of the walk may be closed during very wet weather.
- Benches are available at various places on the walk.

The walk is still being developed—as time and money permit. A number of trees have been planted and more will be planted in due course. We have grown some of the trees at Willows and some have been donated. The land that the walk passes through supports: butterflies, badgers, deer, lizards, moles, weasels, frogs, toads, newts and many plant, insect and bird species. You should not expect to see many of these animals because most will hide from people, but they are there! The walk passes by two ponds—one long established and a newer one, still being developed, where we are cultivating wild plants.



Above: parts of the walk showing an educational sign, the grass path and the bird feeding station (also feeds badgers, and other wild animals!)

The Mindfulness Area



Chill out, relax, give thanks for the gifts that life brings. This little garden is a place to slow down and appreciate what you have. Cats may come to help you!

Curiosity Cave



Above: Our on-site charity shop contains a multitude of new and used bargains and unusual items.

The Beastie House



The Beastie House (left) is home to a number of rescued reptiles and Amphibians. We do our best to give each one the most full and enriched environment we can.

Some of them were unwanted pets and some have been placed here by animal welfare agencies and vets because they were found wandering the streets in Aberdeen!

Please Remember Willows in your Will



***We are here for the forgotten.
We are here for the unloved.
We are here for the abandoned.***

Willows is the last chance sanctuary for many elderly animals, some of which have suffered abuse and exploitation. By choosing to make Willows a gift in your will, you will be helping to ensure the continued safety of these animals and help us to keep helping the forgotten ones.



Butterflies in the Memorial Garden

With your help, we will continue to provide forgotten, unloved and abandoned animals with sanctuary. Willows is a growing charity and as such your gift would make a big difference. We will remember your generosity with a memorial plaque, bench or other means of your choice.



A dedicated bench in the Memorial Garden

***Your last act of kindness will go a
long, long way at Willows***



'The love for all living creatures is the most noble attribute of man.'

Charles Darwin