

Socalex

Newsletter Christmas 2018



Happy Christmas and Happy New Year!

A Brief History of Socelex

As a child, Maria Hennessy's dream was to run away and join the circus. When she grew up, she got a job in London before landing her dream job; however, the dream became a nightmare when she found how badly the circus elephants were being treated. Angered by this, she began to collect evidence of their mistreatment.



Her quest led her to hitchhike to Nepal, India and then on to Japan to tend sick circus elephants where she hired a Jumbo jet to fly them to a safari park in Argentina.

In 1975, Maria went to Afghanistan and persuaded army guards to let her into a compound to help an injured elephant. It was then that she founded Socelex (the Society against Elephant Exploitation). Maria soon found that other animals needed her help and Socelex expanded to include any animal that needed care.

Maria learnt a lot about animal medicine and was able to nurse them herself but in August 1996, Maria died of cancer. Her brother John and son Shane, with a small team of volunteers, carried on her work but running a sanctuary is a full-time job so they had little time for fund-raising.

In 1996, Diane Allen visited Socelex through her work with the Cat Protection League and fell in love with the place. She had a lot of experience fund-raising for the cats and turned her skills to help Socelex. Diane helped out with the daily duties involved in running the sanctuary as well as organising the fundraising. Later on, her mobility was impaired with osteoarthritis but she still carried on her work.

In 2006, Diane was diagnosed with cancer, she still tried to help where she could but her hospital treatments made that difficult. Diane died in May 2007, she is greatly missed by everyone at Socelex.



Socelex has had a very successful year but the start was very hard weather-wise at the sanctuary; we had a record amount of snow over three different periods. We just got over one load and back to normal then another snow storm came back. Temperatures were low and the winds were strong causing lots of drifting which made access to the sanctuary difficult. Luckily, we had plenty of warning from the television and radio so we'd spent weeks before getting in supplies of food and stuff for the animals. With help from our friends, we had plenty of nice warm bedding for everybody. Thank you all on behalf of our animal residents, we all appreciate a nice warm bed on a winters' night.



There was one occasion I had to go out with the snow still on the ground as I needed to go to the local supermarket for cat food and bits and pieces. When I left the sanctuary, it didn't seem too bad with maybe six or seven inches of soft snow. With the shopping done, I loaded up the car and noticed the wind had got up quite a bit. I thought I should get back to the sanctuary as soon as possible as I know how bad the lane gets with the snow drifting off the fields. Off I went with a car full, I went a few hundred yards and the car went side-ways straight into a snow drift; three feet of snow right up to the bonnet of the car! It was obvious I was not going anywhere. I sat in the car wondering what to do next, feeling down-hearted.

Half a mile away was my aunties' house so was able to make it there on foot but with the wind and snow, I was covered by the time I arrived. After a cup of hot tea and cake, I felt a lot better, it was so nice to be warm. The phone rang and to my surprise it was my next-door neighbour (next door to the sanctuary). The farmer was ringing to check that I was ok as they'd seen me go out in the car earlier.

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He asked was I stuck anywhere I told them, both father & son were on the phone, that the car was in a snow drift near the supermarket. They told me to go back to the car and they would pick me up in their 4-wheel drive truck. Twenty minutes later we'd transferred the food from the car to the truck and were on our way back home. The drive back to the sanctuary was pretty hairy with three foot of snow in places but the 4x4 truck just got through, our lane being the worst.

When I was dropped off they had a job to get going again, the truck was going sideways but they got back ok and safe. For me going in the house, I could not have felt better if it were Buckingham Palace I was entering. Thanks to my lovely neighbours the animals were fed and I was safe. I didn't leave the sanctuary for six days to retrieve the car. I'm very grateful to our have such good neighbours in Francis, Bob, Kath and Owen, a really, really big thank you to them all.

After the snow went it seemed we went straight into a great summer, the best we've had for years. At one time we hadn't had rain for six weeks; it really was exceptional the best for years. At the sanctuary we had the weather for overhauling the fences; working in the fields was a pleasure. We are now looking forward to the coming winter and hoping it's not as bad as the last. Knowing whatever the weather, work at Socelex goes on.



As spring came, Socelex welcomed a new volunteer at the sanctuary, Jen was not all new, she last worked at the sanctuary when she was twelve years old helping Diane. After a chance meeting in Asda, she said she would like to help with the animals again. At the sanctuary, she's like a breath of fresh air. Her love of all animals is overwhelming, they all respond to her. Thanks to her hard work, we've accomplished so much at Socelex over the last six months.

Crystal

Hi, my name is Crystal, I didn't have the best start in life. I was taken from my mam about 3 weeks too early and left to fend for myself in a strange place with lots of new sounds and smells.

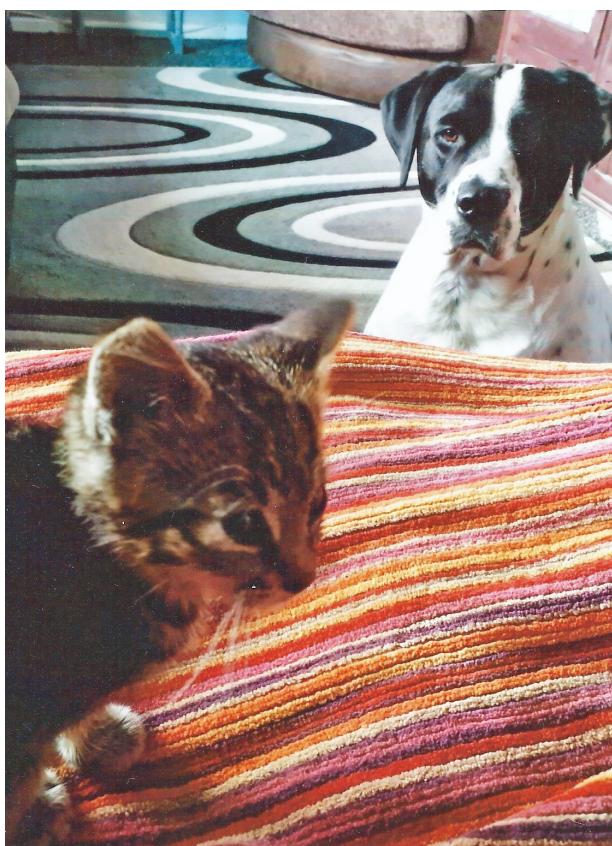
On the first day I was left all alone, I remember seeing people sweeping the paths and I called out loudly grabbing the attention of a little boy (Alfie), who came towards me calling me. I was too scared to approach him so I ran as fast as I could into the trees until I found a huge barn to hide in. The two people looked for me for hours but I was too clever and they couldn't find me. It soon got dark and my new playground was suddenly very scary and cold and I was very hungry.

Morning came and all I could hear was birds singing and other cats meowing but I was still too scared to leave my hideout. All of a sudden, I could hear a cat calling so I followed the sound, it was getting louder so I kept following and hoping there would be food and warmth. Then

suddenly the meowing stopped and there was that person I had seen the day before reaching down to get me. I hissed and growled but it was too late, she had me holding me against her petting my head telling me everything would be ok. Suddenly everything did not seem so scary and I felt that there was hope at last.

I was put into a big box with a fluffy warm blanket and given water and food and I was so happy and realised that these people were trying to help me, I finally felt safe.

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The next day, I was taken to see a vet, she was very nice to me and gave me lots of cuddles, this was where I became known as Crystal. I was given a tablet to get rid of any nasty parasites and told I had a clean bill of health and we left to go back home.

I am now currently being fostered at the little boy Alfie's house where I have made a new friend, a dog named Taff. He is a lot bigger than me but very gentle with me. I have a warm bed and lots of food and cuddles. I am a very happy kitten and can't wait to find my forever home with a lovely new family.

Alfie, Taff the dog & Crystal are living happily together caring for each other. The kitten had some help writing this story from Alfie and Lunar.

Woody

On a very stormy day a woodpigeon was brought to the sanctuary. The bird was in a very bad way, feathers all dishevelled and much the worse for wear. But he was eating and drinking and seemed quite bright. We made him comfortable, he had no other things wrong, no injuries at all. He is now making a good recovery at the sanctuary. Time will see Woody back to normal soon we hope, every day he's looking better. His plumage has a nice shine on it so much of his day is spent washing and tidying himself up. The time will come for his release, probably in the springtime. We will build him up over the winter. In the meantime, he wishes all a Happy Christmas and New Year.



Silver

On a cold October morning, John was called out to a factory in Cwmbran. The worker had opened up in the morning to find a little kitten in the premises, they could not catch him as he was wild. A nice lady asked that if they could catch it would Socelex come to pick it up? We agreed they would phone back when they could trap it in a confined space. Within a few hours, we had the call that the kitten was contained in the office. We went straight over but transferring the kitten was a bit hair-raising. He was in a plastic box storage tray hissing and jumping around, of course he did not know what his fate would be. We only want to help you we said; if only we could talk to the animals everything would be so much easier. Anyhow, it came to the point where he wanted a rest so he let his guard down and within seconds, the kitten was safely in a cat basket. After saying goodbye to the workers, he was soon on his way back to Socelex sanctuary. He settled down well on the trip back and was very quiet, even slept a little.



At the Sanctuary, he was put in isolation till he was vet examined. Over the weekend, we all tried to make friends with him. On the third day Jen came to me excitedly to tell me that she had picked the kitten up and able to have a cwtch up. I was amazed so I went with Jen to see for myself. She picked the kitten up, he was purring like a little engine, really enjoying it. Monday morning off to the vet he went where he was examined by Elizabeth the Vet. Good behaviour was the order of the day, purring. Hetty fell in love with him. Silver was passed as ok and in good health and was then wormed and flea treated. Hetty said he was suitable for homing as soon as one became available.

Back at the sanctuary, he soon settled down again looking for food. Silver as we now called him as always had a good appetite 'Give me more please, I'm a growing boy', 'Yes, we know, Silver'.

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Silver still hisses a bit at strangers but he's mainly just going through the motions. Once past that he then starts purring. He loves the attention which he gets in bucketful's at Socelex.



Bonnie

We received this story from Sally who had rehomed one of our kittens 19 years ago, we wanted to share the story with you.

We had Bonnie from Socelex on 1st September 1999, though she had been named Selina by Socelex and we renamed her Bonnie. No-one knew for certain how old she was but she looked about one years' old to us so from that day forth, we celebrated her birthday every 1st September. I believe it was Diane we saw when we came to collect her. Diane told us that the cat had been dumped outside their gate in a cardboard box and she was heavily pregnant however, on examination they discovered that none of the kittens had survived. Socelex had no doubt saved her life as she would have died without their intervention.

She was a lovely, long-haired black cat and the only cat I have known not to knead, this proved to be good for my legs as she absolutely loved a lap!

One morning in October 2005, I heard a commotion at the cat flap and Bonnie came running in leaving a trail of blood in her wake. On examining her, we found that all the fur from her rear left leg had been stripped away and she was dragging it behind her, exposing the bone. It appears that a neighbour's cat had gripped her leg as she entered the cat flap and as she pulled away, had ripped her skin off.

We immediately rushed her to our local vet's surgery in Pontllanfraith where an emergency operation was performed to sew her skin back together.

We were given a neck collar to put on her to stop her pulling out her stitches and were told to keep her calm, quiet and indoors for ten days, after which time we should return to have her stitches taken out. So, as soon as we got home, we locked her cat flap, dug out a litter tray from the attic and filled it with fresh litter. She usually did her business in the garden but the vet had said to keep her indoors to give the wound a chance to heal and who were we to argue with the vet?

Well, we tried, we really did. That evening we did get the neck collar on after a fashion but within ten minutes she had wriggled out of it! She absolutely refused to use the indoor litter tray and raced around the house, upstairs and down, like something demented, pausing only briefly to headbutt the now locked cat flap. Fearful she would pull out all her stitches on the first night while we slept, we put an elastic bandage on her leg but by morning there was no sign of the bandage! The following day, with the litter tray still unused (just how long can a cat hold itself?), we had to admit defeat and unlock her cat flap. During those ten days she lived life to the full as always. She scaled six foot fences, went hunting and caught a mouse which she brought in to play with before eating it and leaving the remains for me to find and at every opportunity she would pull, lick and tug at her stitches if she thought we were not looking, and when we challenged her she would stop and look at us like butter wouldn't melt ('you talking to me?!').

When we returned to the vet's surgery ten days later and the vet asked how she had been, we said tongue in cheek 'no problem'. We held our breath and had our fingers crossed behind our backs as he took the stitches out, fully expecting it all to fall apart, however to our utter disbelief it had healed! We thanked the vet and left but said nothing of Bonnie's antics.

Then after losing Bonnie in February 2016, we received a lovely sympathy card from our vet so I sent a letter back and confessed all. I hope it made them smile.



**Happy Christmas and new year to you all
from John & staff at Socelex.**

Socelex

Date: _____ Membership No.: _____

Checklist / Membership / Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____ Tel. No.: _____

Please tick in box or underline as appropriate:

- I want to collect 1 tin / or more of pet food a week and have it collected / can deliver approximately every 3 months (please include your phone number)
- Please send me information about legacies
- Membership @ £5 per year
- Donation

If sending a cheque, please make it payable to 'Socelex' and quote your membership number on the back. Thank you.

Please return to: Socelex Animal Sanctuary
Temple Cloud Farm
Crumlin
Gwent NP11 3BD
Tel. No.: 01495 211 401

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