



Alonnisos Society for Animal Protection

A registered charity promoting respect, increasing awareness and encouraging positive and responsible behaviour towards animals.

You can help the animals of Alonnisos by becoming a member of ASAP for €12 a year. Contact Mike Holmes on **6976874657** for more information.

WANTED URGENTLY !

Energetic and lovable puppy needs a good home, can be micro-chipped for export.

We also need clean newspapers and old towels for the comfort and hygiene of animals having surgical treatment, and non-plastic pots and containers for water at our feeding stations.

If you can help with any of the above, please contact Julia Browne on **6978-957142**

Ten Beaches Marathon Walk

On the morning of the 22nd March, eleven intrepid walkers set off on a marathon beach walk to raise money for the animals of Alonnisos.

Most started near the graveyard in the Old Village and set off to visit five beaches on the north-west side of the island, before stopping for lunch at Megali Ammos. Rodney and Belinda Walton (not pictured) walked from home to Tourkonari and joined there.

The walk was led by Guy Routh and Clive Ponting, who usually lead much gentler island walks on Saturday mornings during the winter. Jane Routh, who drove the backup car with Julia Browne, delivered a picnic lunch. The walkers then crossed the island and visited a further five beaches on the east coast before heading up the goat track from Patitiri to the Old Town to be greeted by supporters for a well-earned drink at Maria's bar.



Boots on, we're off!

The entire walk covered more than 20 kilometres (13 miles) of often-difficult terrain, and took nearly 8 hours.

Special mention goes to Pete Donnelly, who paddled in freezing water on all ten beaches, but all walkers and their sponsors should be congratulated on their efforts, which raised over €420 for ASAP.

Guy Routh

VETERINARY VISIT REPORT

George Michail, a veterinary surgeon based in Volos, visited Alonnisos for the weekend of the 29/30th March. After collecting him from (appropriately) the flying cat at 11 am we made 4 whirlwind house calls and then on to our 'surgery'. Two bitch spays were first on the list and, before bad light was called at 7pm, George had managed to neuter 19 cats. Having remembered to put our clocks back, we made an early start on Sunday as there was a lot to do before getting George to the port for the 14:45 boat back to Volos.

Sunday saw another 11 female and 2 male cats neutered and another slew of consultations. We got George to his boat with very little time to spare, but the incredibly satisfying result was that

over the weekend he was able to spay 30 female cats, 16 of which had been pregnant. Follow-up visits have been made to the bitches which were neutered for further antibiotic treatment and to the locations at which the feral cats were returned after being kept under observation for 24 hours.

I'm very pleased to report that all are doing well and there have been no signs of post-operative infection or of stitches being lost.

My thanks to those who caught feral animals, ferried animals (and owners) around the island, assisted with surgery and provided accommodation. It was a very busy weekend but an incredibly successful one.

Julia Browne

BEAST OF BURDEN

A serious case of neglect of a working animal has recently come to light in the Old Village.

After an anonymous tip-off, representatives from ASAP visited a ruin near the Alonis, where they found an elderly pony being kept in disgusting conditions.

An ASAP Committee member describes what they found there; the report does not make for comfortable reading.

When we first visited the pony, it looked under-nourished and had rusty baling wire tangled around its hind leg, which had made a 4-inch (10cm) wound in the skin. Its belly and flanks were covered in lumps of manure; its hooves were overgrown and filled with compacted dirt. It is easily over 30 years old, its teeth so long that it cannot close its lips over them.

The pony's living area consisted of a concrete yard about 5m square, and a small covered stable area. While not cramped, it was immediately obvious that the quarters had never been cleaned, neither prior to its arrival nor throughout the winter months

confined there. The yard was in bad enough condition, with rusty metal, fragments of broken glass and frayed plastic refuse poking through an inches-thick layer of compacted manure; but in the covered stable area we found a scene of heartbreaking squalor.

The sleeping space was covered to a depth of 50 cm (20 in) with a foul compost of wet hay, faeces and urine. The smell of decay was bad enough at the surface, but as I began to shovel away layer after layer of oozing filth it became literally un-breathable, like having a mixture of pure ammonia and sewage sprayed into my nose. To avoid vomiting, I had to keep running outside to take a breath, then running in again while holding it, to clear as much as I could.

It took half an hour, with frequent breaks, to get down to a base of damp soil and rocks. There was no manger to put feed in; the hay it was being fed had simply been dumped in the corner, with nothing to keep it separate from the underlying muck.

The pony had no water; hardly surprising, as there was no connection to the water supply on the premises. We later found that a young worker brought a plastic bucket of water some distance twice a week. If it was knocked it over, the pony went thirsty until he came again.

The animal was understandably nervous and hard to approach, but gradually it calmed down and I was able to cautiously remove the wire from its leg and apply some antiseptic salve to the wound, still sensitive to touch three weeks later, but not inflamed and presumably slowly healing. The next day we led the pony to a nearby garden where it could

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The predictable results of six months without mucking out



graze, and gave it a thorough cleaning and brushing. It ate voraciously, and particularly relished the carrot and apple we gave it.



A thorough wash and brush up, and the first fresh food for months

I took on the responsibility of mucking it out, grooming it and bringing fresh water each morning: not a demanding job, but unlike the worker who had been left in charge of it, we only live 50 metres away, rather than 5 km. The only time the job became harder was when it rained, and a stream of slurry flowed downhill from the yard into the stable, which has no drainage.

Over the course of the next two weeks we established trust with the pony and found it to be a friendly and responsive creature, albeit visibly keen to get away to the mares kept in a paddock some distance down the hill!

So how does a working animal get into such a disgusting state? Last autumn it was acquired to carry supplies up to a café in the Kastro. It seems the owner had the pony moved to the ruin, had food delivered, and left it in the care of a young labourer while she left the island for the winter. It had been kept in these steadily worsening conditions for over six months, without having any opportunity of exercise, or fresh green food.

On 18th April, the pony worked for several hours ferrying supplies up to the Kastro in preparation for Easter, and was left soaked in sweat, without a blanket, after sunset. He was left with a full bucket of oats and whole flour, with only a little water remaining from what we had brought that morning. We let him eat half, and gave him a blanket and some fresh water until he cooled down.

So far, we had done no more than the minimum required to protect the pony from further distress, with daily cleaning, fresh water and a broader diet, buying hay when the supply ran out and was not replaced for days. Initial attempts to contact the owner about our concerns, both directly and via local intermediaries, had not been successful. We were encouraged by the supportive reaction of local people to the pony's conditions, and it seems that some notice was finally taken, as the pony was moved to the edge of the village, where it now has good grazing and a clean water supply from a rain-collection sterna.

Finally we were able to make contact and there has been some progress in addressing the longer-term issues of whether so old an animal should not be retired, having its over-grown hooves trimmed by a competent farrier, and removal of the public health hazard of accumulated manure remaining in the former quarters.

ASAP is researching the legal position to see what further steps can be taken in this and similar cases in future: the laws against neglect and overwork are in place, but enforcement is at the discretion of people who do not necessarily share our priorities. We have had valuable advice from the Equine Task Force of the Greek Animal Welfare Fund, and a sympathetic local councillor.



The pony's former bed - on the left, rotting manure, on the right, rocks

ASAP will continue to pursue dialogue with the owner, negotiate better feeding and exercise, and monitor the the condition, living space and workload of this and other working animals.

In the meantime, a pony of this height (13 hands) has a maximum safe rider load of 68 kilos. The pannier frame that carries the load weighs 25 kilos when empty. If members should see a white pony working in the village with a load that appears to be greater than 43 kg, ASAP would be grateful for photographic or video evidence.

Alex Watson



At last - fresh air and a healthy environment