

# Amanda's Diary

**We continue our monthly update with RGT co-ordinator Amanda Ainsworth on some of the issues that she and the headquarters staff have been tackling in recent weeks.**

The announcement of the recent GBRF grant of an additional £200,000 to the RGT was accompanied by relieved sighs from Worcester Park.

In an already tight year, the closure of four major kennels put funding plans into a tailspin.

Amanda said: "As hard as we were trying to cut back on our

kennel bills, an enormous black hole suddenly opened up in front of us.

"Although we will still probably finish the year between



£100,000 and £150,000 over budget, you can imagine how bleak things would have been but for the grant."

Even allowing for the exodus of the Wimbledon home finding scheme, which went independent, RGT head office was paying

the weekly kennel bills of around 900 greyhounds in January of this year.

Amanda said: "By cutting numbers we had that down to around 750 and then the kennel closures sent it up to well over 800 again.

"We are now down to around 700 and trying to make our budgets, but it is a struggle."

The majority of the RGT's 70 branches have some dogs paid for by head office, alongside others funded by themselves, and in some cases, by track managements.

Amanda said: "In addition to those we pay for, there are probably about 160 who are being financed by the branches themselves."

**THE £75,000 grant by BAGS earlier in the year has bought out some high level ingenuity in the RGT staff.**

An interesting set of strings attached to the grant - it could only be used for fund raising, not for direct homing - has led to a string of innovative fund raising initiatives.

The biggest to date is a raffle which was launched, tickets included, in the RGT's regular Homer magazine.

Amanda said: "We have wanted to do something like this for some time but it is more difficult and expensive than most people would probably appreciate.

"The biggest single expenditure is in the additional postage and the printing of the tickets. Then there is the £3,000 prize money - it is £1,000 to the winner, £750 to the runner-up plus more than 20 consolation prizes.

"Then you have to pay for a licence for the Gambling Commission, and donate to a gambling charity.

"In total the project cost around £13,000. Thankfully, in the first month to date, we have raised over £24,000, and entries don't close until December 2. Its not too late to enter!"

Another £3,000 of former BAGS cash was spent on a com-

pany specialising in raising money through legacies.

Amanda said: "We sent out some questionnaires last year and were sent around 500 replies from people promising to contribute.

"However we have learned from other charities that you need specialists to fully capitalise on legacy donations.

"They know how to locate potential benefactors and how to follow up those enquiries. The benefits can be enormous if it is handled professionally.

"Some of the leading charities raise between 40-60% of their annual income from legacies.

"We realise that this particular expenditure is for medium and long term returns, but we were only reminded how significant this type of fund raising is when we received an anonymous cheque earlier this month for £30,000.

"That sort of generosity is really quite touching, you have to shake an awful lot of tins to raise £30K."

The third biggest 'BAGS cash' project - the £3,500 letter campaign mentioned earlier in the year - is on target to bring in around £18,000 in additional income... which leaves just enough to update computer software.

Amanda said: "I am the first to question any charity that doesn't spend its income directly helping those for whom it is raising money, but we urgently need to update our computer software.

"By using money that could not be used to home dogs directly, we will become much more efficient at fund raising.

"We have tens of thousands of contact details on our database that could be used far more efficiently.

"For example, we could do so much more merchandising if we were able to streamline the operation, rather than rely on people manually taking down information and processing it.

"The greatest single strength of the RGT, over all other charities that I have studied, is the work carried out by our volunteers - but even they can benefit from a bit of technological help."

RGT head office starts to resemble an Amazon warehouse at this time of the year with boxes of merchandise filling every inch of office space.

Although selling the RGT branded products is some way down the charity's priority list, last year's profit of around £16,000 made by the trading arm, paid for a lot of kennel spaces once handed over to the main organisation.

Nobody is specifically employed to sell the assorted goods, everyone just mucks in.

Amanda said: "At this time of year it takes over Trish's working day, but everyone plays their part, Ivor (Stocker) was packing boxes this morning. I dragged my son in for a day's voluntary work last week.

"I've just spent the last two hours offloading 6,000 toy dogs from a delivery van. That's 84 boxes in case you are interested, and I'm shattered!"

There are a wide range of goods for sale on the RGT website and advertised in Homer magazine. Its twice yearly publication, invariably sees a huge upswing in orders.

So what are the most popular products? Toys, coats, leads and muzzle, clothes, tea towels, shopping bags?

"No it will always be Christmas cards" says Amanda.

"We use some brilliant printers who design and print them in May and we haven't had a price increase in eight years which is fantastic.

"Every year we have new designs and demand continues to grow.

"This year we ordered 13,000 packs. We have already sold 9,000 packs and have re-ordered another 3,000. Once they've gone, that's it."

So has business been hit by the financial climate?

"No not at all" says Amanda.

"It is significantly up this year. Although the figures might be hit by having to spend on large quantities to stock - we have to buy in bulk to get the best price - I would hope profits this year could be around £22-23,000 mark."

AMANDA estimates that around half the RGT branches now have agreements to supply blood donors.



## Retirement Plans

She said: "A couple use commercial companies, the majority use Pet Blood Bank UK, who are an animal charity.

"We don't get paid for allowing the use of the greyhounds but they benefit from the veterinary checks which can show up early signs of various health problems.

"Greyhounds are particularly popular because their blood, along with that of a handful of other breeds, can be universally used.

"Other breeds can have four transfusions of greyhound blood before it requires type-specific blood.

"The other reason that the vets like to use greyhounds is that they are very calm and make good donors.

"It is quite likely that when the Blood Bank unit visits a kennel, as many as half the dogs will donate.

"In most cases though, they will be joined by dogs who have already been adopted and their owners like to bring them in to play their part."

EVER wondered what happened with the last of the Stow retired hounds?

The last four dogs still in the rehoming scheme remain in the tender care of Joy Batley and the staff at Barley Kennels.

The 'celeb' of the quartet is former open star Siesta Frisby, though ex-racegoers may also recall Clonbrin Joe, Chivalrous and Borna Jinx.

So are they destined to spend the rest of their days in Waltham Abbey?

Joy said: "You never know, we had a little bitch Show Vision go out only last week.

"The reality is this bunch (all blacks) are a little difficult to home.

"They certainly couldn't go anywhere with small dogs.

"Borna Jinx also has an eye problem so he will stay here, hopefully with a sponsor.

"But if they don't go, they will always have a place here, where they are happy and very much at home."

## We are the champions - of the pet world



I-r Robbie Marslan (UK Director of IFAW), Tony Nevelt, Queen guitarist Brian May & Danny, and Baroness Gale

AMANDA'S recent visit to the House of Lords had an additional unexpected bonus.

She was there to attend the awards ceremony run by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

Among those collecting an Amazing Animal award was Danny, accompanied by owner Tony Nevelt from Wellingborough.

The pair were featured in the Star earlier in the year for their long term commitment (Danny inherited the job from a greyhound of similar name) to the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (READ) programme - which

involves visiting schools and encouraging pupils, including autistic and special needs youngsters, to read to them.

Amanda said: "It was an amazing day with so many interesting tales about animals.

"In addition to Danny, for example, was a police dog who was honoured for bravery.

"He had continued on duty after having his skull cracked by a brick in the Tottenham riots.

But the biggest bonuses of the day: "It had to be meeting Brian May" confessed the lapsed teenager.

### RGT Calendar 2012

Exquisite pictures of retired greyhounds taken by their loving owners  
Dimensions: 30 cm x 21.5 cm

£7.50 each - Price includes P&P within the UK



### Christmas Cards 2011 Traditional



£5.00 per pack  
Price includes P&P within the UK

Animated pack of 12 cards, 4 each of 3 designs  
Size: 210mm x 148mm



### Christmas Cards 2011 Animated

Animated pack of 12 cards, 4 each of 3 designs.

Size: 210mm x 148mm

£5.00 per pack  
Price includes P&P within the UK



Contact the RGT at  
0844 8268424 or visit the website:  
[www.retiredgreyhounds.co.uk/](http://www.retiredgreyhounds.co.uk/)  
Merchandise

NOVEMBER EVENTS		
Event	Date	Branch
Pets At Home - Oldbury Green Ret. Pk	Saturday 5	Birmingham - Hall Green
Phoenix Stroke Appeal - St Agnes	Saturday 5	Cornwall
East Sussex Walks Eastbourne	Saturday 5	Brighton & Hove
Table Top Sale Hornsea	Saturday 5	Hull
Greyhound Walk - Ripon	Sunday 6	North Yorkshire
Fun Dog Show - Little Port	Sunday 6	Mildenhall, Suff. & East Cambs
Meet n' Greet - Hornsea	Sunday 6	East Riding
Just 4 Pets - Kidderminster	Saturday 12	Birmingham - Hall Green
Pets@home - Bridlington	Saturday 12	Bridlington
Walk of Hope - Beverley	Saturday 12	Hull
Pets at Home Scarborough	Sunday 13	Hull
Store Collection - Morrisons, Tiverton	Saturday 19	Cornwall
Meet and Greet, Oswestry	Saturday 19	Shropshire and Borders
Sponsored Walk - Edinburgh	Sunday 20	Edinburgh
Market Stall - Beverley Market	Saturday 26	East Riding
Hummanby in Bloom	Saturday 26	Hull
Christmas Fayre - Brandesburton	Sunday 27	Hull