

Making a difference at Polden Hills Veterinary Centre

By Patsy Atkins (pictures by Patsy & Robert Atkins)

According to Robert Alleyne (dog behaviourist, author and presenter of BBC TV's Dog Borstal), "The importance of a good vet is quite literally a life saver; he or she makes a difference between life and death." At the Polden Hills Veterinary Centre's Open Day at Brent Road, Cossington pet owners said the same thing. Cards, gifts and the message board at Reception added to the litany. But what *does* it take to 'make the difference'? Dedication of course, and these are the main players:

Robert Alleyne has known owners John Smith and Margaret Walker since the early 1990s when they had a veterinary practice in London (in the Borough where he worked as an animal welfare officer). He recognised their commitment and dedication, recalling them carrying animals around at two o'clock in the morning to soothe them - just like babies and Margaret, feeding an injured street pigeon in Catford at five o'clock every morning just to keep it alive. "If that's what they do for a street pigeon, then what will they not do for *your* animal," said Robert.

As a witness to patient care Stripey the cat was in her element. Lord

▼ A Boxer dog and his owner share the moment with Bridgwater Army Cadets. Under Sergeant Sara Jones they managed the car parking with aplomb. A good job too ... they got busier and busier as the day progressed.



Above: Deputy Mayor Pat Parker and Lord Mayor Bill Monteith turned up to cut the ribbon with TV dog behaviourist Robert Alleyne and vets Margaret Walker and John Smith

Mayor Bill Monteith presented her with an endurance award (a cat basket and duvet) whilst Margaret received a plaque for saving Stripey's life. A tour of the Centre provided an insight into how such care, with the latest technology, veterinary techniques and a modern facility can make a difference to an animal's well-being.

Dental Suite: Featured here with Lisa Milella. She is a vet who teaches dentistry and oral surgery at Bristol University's School of Veterinary Science. Lisa kindly demonstrated the latest in diagnostic imaging; a digital x-ray with a plate the size of a large postage stamp to fit into the smallest mouth. "Dental surgery is a dirty business insofar as infection is concerned," explained Lisa. "Which is why a dedicated dental suite, including an x-ray and dental surgery room, is a real advantage." Lisa was with her dog, Emily, saved and adopted following a road traffic accident. Lisa says Emily is 'good' when having her teeth brushed!

Client Care Room: It is so quiet here. It exudes calm, privacy and peace if you have to say



goodbye to your pet. It has all the comfort needed for all the time you need; sofa, cuddle blanket and lots of tissues. A place to start gathering memories.

Isolation Ward: Bright and airy.

Preparation Area: Space efficient. Everything is within easy reach.



Operating Theatre: Featured here, where Nellie (a fluffy dummy dog) was being prepared for surgery by trainee veterinary nurse Hannah Porter. Teresa House will be joining her in July.

Rabbit & Pocket Pet Ward: For our smaller furry friends. Birds too, maybe even a street pigeon!

Cat Ward: Currently housing Flame and her four kittens, especially 'rented' for the day for cuddles.

Builders: John and Margaret's "wonderful builders" were there.

Mark Collins and Russell Appleyard who project managed the entire facility. "They were so proactive in their support and in sourcing supplies and suppliers. We cannot thank them enough for their kindness," enthused Margaret.



Their patients, like your pets, are family. John and Margaret go the extra mile.

About 300 turned out for a sunny, fun-filled Sunday. With balloons, bouncy castle, pig roast, cold drinks stall, competitions and a dog agility demo it was a village fête atmosphere with a difference. It celebrated that special human/animal bond. You can't write that. It has to be lived. That is why pet owners across a wide area swapped stories and counted themselves fortunate for this small animal practice which is already making that all important difference. (Special thanks to helpers: Angela, Anne, Blake, Bob, Helen, Jan, Lisa, Maggie, Natasha, Nigel, Sue, Teresa plus Babs for website.)

Polden Hills Veterinary Centre



▲ Robert Alleyne with another potential client. There were lots. They formed an orderly queue, with the odd exception!

Missed the Open Day? No worries. Go to www.goldenhillsvets.com or book a Practice Tour with John and Margaret on 01278 722 088



▲ Sue Mosedale and Diesel, her Border Collie (both of Pawsability Dog Training), showed other dogs and their owners what good training can achieve.

▼ And how's this for care and dedication? Caught sharing their pig roast with their Terrier cross breeds, Olive and Sasha, were John and Linda Vieth from Stawell. Clients of Sue Mosedale, they put their own dogs through their paces. They performed admirably, even after a bite of roast pig.



The winning draw (for holiday use of a villa in Majorca) will be sold with proceeds going to: Secret World, Labrador Rescue and the Dog Welfare Group, Canine Crusaders.

