

The birth of a dream.

By now, I was fully committed to the concept and to give up now was not an option. If I had, I would always wonder if it would be successful. Fortunately, I was surrounded by people, some professional in their field who offered help and advice. The first step was to establish a charity. To use the word 'veterinary' at that time had to be approved by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Permission was duly given. Now to draft the constitution. A friend who later became the chairwoman had previously dealt with this aspect with other charities. The final document was submitted to the Charity Commissioners for their approval. Our status as a charity was granted and we were allocated a registered charity number 1050827. What a celebration we had! As you can imagine it was a long document similar to the one for The Diggles. I shall highlight only three areas in the Object:-

- The provision of free or subsidised medical and surgical treatment for animals whose owners are unable to afford, or are otherwise in need, the fees of veterinary surgeons.
- The advancement of education for public benefit by the provision of support for secondary degree students undertaking veterinary studies in such a manner as the trustees may from time to time determine.
- Arrange and provide for, either alone, or with others, holding exhibitions, meetings, lectures, classes and training courses to help further the education of the public in animal welfare.

Providing help for the students with their tuition fees was a very successful part of the charity and this has now been incorporated into The Diggles also offering talks on animal welfare, conservation and responsible pet ownership. I had had training as a voluntary speaker for the RSPCA and the authority that I was employed at the time as a mainstream primary teacher encouraged Wednesday afternoon visits to other schools to talk to the children. On one particular occasion, I had to entertain all the children in the hall as the staff had to deal with an overspill of oil in the playground!

But, there was still a long way to go. To trade vouchers and stamps was not allowed by a charity, therefore with the aid of our accountant we initiated Veterinary Vouchers Ltd registered at Company's House.

There were still questions to be asked and in September 1993 I managed to get a copy of a directory of veterinary practices in the UK and a questionnaire was circulated to all! Imagine the cost of postage! A local vet offered the photocopying and others pitched in with folding, sticking and licking!

The response was as follows. 395- only 16% of all vet practices replied. Of those replied, 90% were in favour. 1% unsure and 9% not interested. 257 were small animal practices, 117 mixed, 14 large animal and 1 exotic. 39% of the practices were rural, 42% urban, 7% inner city and 12% mixed