

Today marks the 13th anniversary of the establishment of A Poultry Place. At the time — despite me having spent almost two years living at Atchin Tan sanctuary living hands-on with rescued animals serving what I refer to as ‘my apprenticeship’ — a number of people thought I was doomed to fail and gave me a year or two at best before I gave in and returned to life in the big city. Yet here I am today.

When I established A Poultry Place, Atchin Tan, was the only other place I was aware of which took in what people refer to as ‘farm animals’. I prefer the term ‘food animals’, after all that is what most humans use them for. It is gratifying that not only has A Poultry Place grown during the past 13 years but a number of other sanctuaries have come into existence since such as Edgar’s Mission, Hogwatch, Animal Angel Farm and Noah’s Ark in Victoria; Brightside, Free Hearts and Big Ears in Tasmania; Freedom Hills over in South Australia; Farm Animal Rescue up in Queensland and closer to home Peanuts Funny Farm, Signal Hill and Little Oak. This is by no means an exhaustive list but it means there are more permanent homes being created for animals otherwise destined to end up on someone’s plate. It also takes away that sense of isolation I had when I began transforming five clear acres of land into a sanctuary back in 2001.

In recent weeks a number of colleagues from the animal rights movement, who have become close and dear friends, have come and spent time here helping out with chores and also taking advantage of spending some quality time with the residents. To hear their kind words about what this place means to them makes all the hard work of the past 13 years worth it. Apart from providing a safe haven to animals rescued in the course of investigations and the obvious educational benefit, sanctuaries like A Poultry Place play, in my opinion, an important role in the animal rights movement as they provide a place where activists can go and spend some time reconnecting with those beings they are campaigning on behalf of.

I can’t remember how I used to pass my days beforehand but I have never regretted or resented my decision to start A Poultry Place. A recent conversation with a former workmate reminded me of the fact that up until 2010 I was working two jobs to fund the sanctuary. Another recent conversation with a young activist, visiting for the first time, acted as a bit of a ‘pat on the back’ as he realised just what it takes to do this and recognised the sacrifices I have willingly made to make the sanctuary what it is.

When I referred to A Poultry Place as ‘my baby’ recently one guy got quite upset and a little abusive. “You can’t compare what you do to being a parent,” he said. But my opinion differs. After all, I have nurtured what was a barren five acre block of land into a thriving environment, which not only provides sanctuary to those I take in but also provides much needed natural habitat to native mammals, birdlife and reptiles who have moved in. Furthermore, just like a human parent, I work to earn an income to pay for the wellbeing of those who live with me — their food, medical expenses and housing needs. Like a parent, I have to make decisions which affect those in my care and take responsibility for them. Apparently such an analogy upsets some — oh well you can’t please everyone.

If you are on Facebook make sure you have a look at some of the before and after photos I will post of the sanctuary at www.facebook.com/apoultryplace sometime today.

Of course anniversary or not life goes on as normal here.

2013 ended off with sanctuary being given to Ryan the rooster (below left), from a kitchen garden project at a child care centre. A few days later saw the arrival of a woman from Newcastle who had asked if I could take in seven bantam roosters, but she actually turned up with 10! At least she has agreed to collect eggs rather than let broody hens sit on them and hatch chicks. These 10 are now living happily with another little fellow who arrived around the same time who was called Priscilla, before she became a he and started crowing, which meant he had to leave the loving suburban home he had been part of. And then there were the three chicks who arrived from yet another school hatching project (below right).



Christmas Eve saw the arrival of some special newcomers — a family of peafowl consisting of Peter peacock and his three peahens Pippie, Penny and Peanut. These four were reluctantly surrendered by their human as they had outgrown their space. It was nice to be asked to take them in, especially given that Peabody peacock, who has been living here since November 2009, had been without any friends of his own kind for a little while after his brother Archie died in early 2013. The five are now one happy family.

Fast forward a week later and we are into a new year.

The first newcomers of 2014 were two other young roosters from, yeap you guessed it, another hatching project! These were quickly followed by another three youngsters (pictured right) who had been found dumped at Bankstown Airport but were luckily spotted by a true animal lover, who rounded up the guys and contacted our friends at NSW Hen Rescue for help in finding them a home. Following an early morning phone call between Hen Rescue's Catherine and me and these were A Poultry Place bound the following day with some friends who were coming to visit from Sydney.



The year thus far has been like the last one — hot! 2013 was apparently the second-warmest year on record for the region and 2014 has continued this trend with almost a week of 37-plus days already making its presence felt. It is the most prolonged warmth period in the region since the Bureau of Meteorology began in 1934

In amongst everything else work has continued around the sanctuary. During the festive season break I installed a pond, which was donated back in October and the drakes love it. And with the help of some of my recent visitors, I have almost completed, what should be, the last major building task — the conversion of a donated trailer (which arrived here back in 2003) into a rooster house, which will mean the completion of the section of the sanctuary know as Roosterville. That chapter of the A Poultry Place story will hopefully be part of the next update. ●

***PS:** A Poultry Place is charity of the month at The Cruelty Free Shop, so if you are shopping online with the lovely Jessica, please consider including a donation as part of your order, it will be appreciated.*

TO VISIT A POULTRY PLACE EMAIL freechook@bigpond.com

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