



Wishing you
a very Happy &
Healthy Christmas &
we hope that 2025
brings you a very
special year

**“ Gifts of time and love are surely the basic
ingredients of a truly merry Christmas.”**

— Peg Bracken

"Christmas is doing a little something extra for someone."

— Charles M. Schultz

2024 WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN

So much to be truly grateful for...

A year that has also challenged many and a year that has truly flown by!

We as a family have so much to be grateful for... our wonderful family & friends, the kindness & generosity shown to us this year by so many, our wonderful Orbit & Canine Partners, the friends & services that help us throughout the year, our own health & the health of those around us. We are truly thankful.



THE PINK CHAIR ARRIVES!

FINOLA'S NEW CHAIR ARRIVES 26.11.24 – FINOLA CHOOSES PINK!

Thank you so much to Tom Dobson,
Wheelchair & Seating Specialist from
Motus Medical, for fitting Finola so very
well & being so supportive.



<https://www.motusmedical.co.uk>



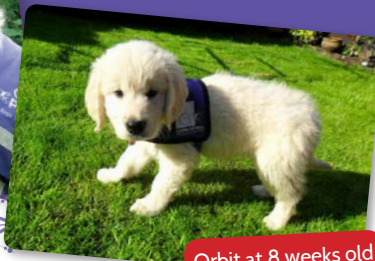
ORBIT REACHES 12 YEARS & RETIRES ON 7TH SEPTEMBER 2024



Orbit & Finola day 1



10 YEARS AND 5 MONTHS of service to Finola from a truly amazing Canine Partner (14.04.2014 – 07.09.2024)



Orbit at 8 weeks old



BACKGROUND:

Orbit and his sister Olga first started their training to be a Canine Partner at 8 weeks old.

His puppy parent, Graham Elliot looked after Orbit and gave him basic training from 31.10.2012 – 09.12.2013. Orbit visited hospitals, schools & colleges, train stations, shops to name but a few to get him adjusted to noise and possible future duties.

Both Olga and Orbit also attended Canine Partner puppy training days.

We would personally like to thank Graham profusely for giving Orbit such a wonderful start and for helping make Orbit into such a very special dog.

Orbit then moved to a foster family with children until he was matched with Finola in early 2014. After meeting Finola he received intense specific training for a few months with his trainer, Chrissie. Orbit then started his journey north & both Finola and mummy on 14 April 2014 were extremely excited as Orbit arrived at his new home. We then had 2 weeks of training with Chrissie. What a truly wonderful organization Canine Partners is.

Thank you thank you thank you.



Puppies in training



Orbit taking the washing



Orbit meets Finola

FINOLA & CANINE PARTNERS - THE FUTURE



What a beautiful, handsome, loyal friend he has been. Thank you so very much Canine Partners.

Orbit had his last Canine Partner Gathering attending as an official Canine Partner at The Kelpies Visitor Centre, Falkirk – Monday 3rd June 2024

It was lovely being there, but it was noticeable that perhaps his retirement was on the horizon.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Finola, Orbit, Henri & Bruce travelled to Canine Partners National Training Centre in Osgathorpe, Loughborough, Leicestershire 13 – 15.5.24. Finola was put through her paces with a variety of dogs on 14 May to see how they responded but also to see how Orbit would react. Needless to say he sat up, watched, sat heavily on Henri's foot then lay down unperturbed and said "over to you!"

We are absolutely thrilled as Finola has been placed on the priority list to be matched with another Canine Partner (14.6.24). The wait is dependant on the puppies that are coming through as they are matched on duty and temperament. Finola could be waiting for 1 to 2 years however we are adjusting Orbit as his new official home is Gullane – not bad!



ORBIT'S RETIRAL BBQ



SATURDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER ORBIT'S RETIRAL BBQ, GULLANE

We just had to mark his retirement & give him a BBQ party noting all his hard work & loyalty over the years. Friends, Orbits friends, people involved with Orbit, the vet physio, groomer, vet, Canine Partners Rob MacKinnon, Aftercare Instructor – Scotland & Northern Ireland were all invited.

Sadly Rob was unable to attend owing to car troubles on the day but sent a lovely message. Finola in her weekly music sessions had compiled Orbit's retiral song which was played for one and all. This was circulated to Canine Partners post the event as the lyrics said it all.

Final chorus:

**"Orbit you are my faithful friend
and partner Orbit always with me
You make me feel free"**

A few tears shed – very well done Finola & Keith, a really lovely song. Some wonderful photos of the day. Huge thank you to Scott & Meriel for helping us out – you are both stars & wonderful friends!



HAPPY RETIREMENT ORBIT & THANK YOU

Wishing you Orbit a long,
happy & healthy retirement
& thank you so much for
all your wonderful 10 years
5 months with Finola x



OUR THANKS AS ALWAYS GOES TO OUR WONDERFUL PHYSIOTHERAPIST...

FILIP VERVAEKE - 25+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Optimising movement, confidence, creativity and health. Some words from Filip -

"I have always been interested in how the body works and moves. Even before I turned an adult myself, I knew I wanted my future work to be with children. In effect, my best and most important time 'growing up' myself was spent as part of the local youth group, as a child and from the age 18 years old, as a leader, working voluntarily with children every Sunday afternoon and more.

As a physiotherapist I have worked with very young children, including babies. However, even babies eventually turn into 'grown-ups'! And so, this too occurred with Finola, whom I have known and worked together with since she was about 10 years old: and then she became a grown-up!

That was around the time I expanded my work to include adults as well as children. And to my surprise I enjoyed it, possibly as much as working with children, especially working with elders. They have so much wisdom to share. Working with adults as well as children allows me to use the knowledge, I have gained from treating people later in life, and applying it with the children. This has given me a better idea of what is "in store" for them in future years.

In the last few years, since mid-2021, my working life has evolved somewhat, particularly in the light of my calling to protect children, as well as ensure that children are equipped to look after and fend for themselves.

So, besides my work as a physiotherapist, I am also offering yoga for children again. In addition, I am assisting outdoor leaders at We are Wonder, an outdoor learning community in Glasgow that is close to my heart.

The early days



And now



My newest venture is completing my training at the International Center for Molested and Abducted Children (ICMA2C) and the Victim and Criminal Profiling Academy (VCPA) to establish myself as a therapist for victims of sexual abuse as well as sex offenders, who very often themselves have suffered severe child abuse.

<https://timetotalkaboutit.org/vcpa-course-introduction/>

As always, my aim is to deeply listen and respond to all individuals with curiosity and compassion, in whatever role I am in, be it a father, an 'assistant', a 'leader', a friend, a 'facilitator' or a therapist.

I offer consultations and therapy tailored to individual needs, regardless of whether they are a baby, a child, an adolescent or an adult.

I facilitate rather than direct and build on each individual's interests and/or strengths using a creative and fun approach.

I encourage rather than demand."

With grateful thanks to this very special person who is not only a unique physiotherapist but a great friend.



Libby & Finola in the early days.



This year the executors of the Trust made the decision to close it. Finola was very kindly gifted 11 years' worth (approx.) of physiotherapy of which we are extremely grateful for. As highlighted in last years' newsletter, without therapy there is a real risk of contractures and pain. Studies show that 70% of adults with Cerebral Palsy live with acute pain. We are deeply indebted to both Libby for her past generosity and to the family for this years' donation and to those that continue to support her. Thank you so very much, we are truly grateful for all your kindness.

Kindness that will never be forgotten.

WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN 2024?

WE HAVE HAD A VERY CREATIVE YEAR...

Finola has been painting with mummy and is continuing to develop her sound story with Keith McDougall from Able Creative Arts (more of that later).

Here she is painting at Gullane, with a little help from mummy.

SOME OF THE FINISHED WORKS

Friends Forever



Winnie the Pooh & Friends



Peter's Woodland Gathering



It has been a wonderful experience to share this creativity together.

WHAT ELSE HAS FINOLA BEEN DOING?

Finola continues to listen to her audio story books daily (Lord of the Rings; Harry Potter; Peter Rabbit; The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe) and is also continuing to progress with her Italian Duolingo app on her own and at her own pace.

Molto ben fatto Finola! Un giorno dovremo tornare in Toscana per poterla usare!

(Translation: Very well done Finola! One day we will have to go back to Tuscany so you can use it!)

THANK YOU TO ABLE CREATIVE ARTS

Pegasus painted by Finola & mummy



A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO ABLE CREATIVE ARTS, KEITH MCDUGALL

www.ablecreativearts.com

Finola and Keith continue to meet weekly. They have not only been compiling music and songs but progressing Finola's sound story too. Songs have included Orbit's retiral song 'Orbit, you are my faithful friend and partner'; an extension on 'Henri's Hell' (to include the skydive this year!) and 'Come Join Us'.

Finola's sound story has developed into:

The Adventures of Morag Empress

It involves a character from ancient Scotland, Morag Empress, who lives in Glen Boromir in the Highlands and is visited by Zeus who asks her to save his flying horse Pegasus from the evil witch, Annabel Chucky. Pegasus is a jet black stallion with bright blue eyes.

Morag Empress lives with her working dog Orbit, the giant golden retriever. Zeus unlocks Morag's magical powers and tells them they must go to Greece to save his flying horse. How are they to do this? How indeed! Not only do they meet and get help from Poseidon but also meet many dangers on the way....

Finola is currently recording the narrative of the story along with all the different character voices. Sound affects have been made and the music has been created and played by Finola & Keith.

Working alongside this and in conjunction with it the sound story will be created into a book so illustrations are now being created by Finola and mummy which will show and describe the characters and locations.



THE YEAR AHEAD, 2025

- Progression of the Morag Empress Story both developing the storyline, recording & illustrating it
- A music video will accompany Orbits' retiral song which will be filmed in and around Leith. Watchout 'Sunshine on Leith' this could be the next best seller!
- Finola will also be involved in other groups providing character voices & music for films

Our grateful thanks to Keith for providing the mechanism to make this all happen within Finola's own home. You are a star & also another great friend

WHO & WHAT DO WE NEED TO BE THANKFUL FOR DURING 2024

WHERE DO YOU START?

There have been so many kind gestures made so in no particular order I will start by thanking

Scott Kirkness, K & I Ltd, Coach Builders, Eskbank

Not only do they look after the Finola Trust van so well but when I asked if they did van wraps for promoting the dreaded skydive, I was greeted with "yes but we would like to do it for you as way of our sponsorship". So very kind thank you.

At this point, we also must thank Will Patterson from Wink Creative who designed the advertising of the skydive campaign & who also maintains The Finola Trust website, plus compiles this newsletter! Huge huge thank you Will. You are a star!

Scott as I said to you the vans message was so powerful we did not have to ask people.. the message was loud and clear!

Frightening experience coming up for mummy! I truly thank you for your great kindness.



Kat Healy from Shorelark Arts

<https://shorelark.org>

A Scottish multi-disciplined artist, Kat Healy, founded Shorelark Arts CIC in 2023 after building a thriving creative network in East Lothian and Edinburgh, hosting monthly art workshops in local community spaces since 2020.



It was Kat who introduced Finola's mother to watercolour in Feb 2023.

This year not only did Finola and Alex receive a Lottery funded day of painting at Kat's studio at Cockenzie Hub

But also, Kat very kindly painted a Robin in flight and called it "Safe Landing"

She then auctioned the painting raising funds for Henri's Tandem Skydive and raised **a whopping total of £ 365.00**

Huge thank you to Kat for all her support and to everyone who kindly donated. We have so many stars to thank.



Henri's artwork

I would also like to personally thank Kat for all the wonderful sessions I have had this year in her workshops.

Polar bear 10.2.24

Buzzing bees – 24.5

Snow Leopard 9.11.24

I look forward to 2025 & more art days!



THE AMAZING SKYDIVE & WHY I DID IT

This event was originally crowdfunding to make up the shortfall of the last 2 years of fundraising, to replace Finola's current electric wheelchair. Estimated funds required

£5,500 approx as an amazing £11,372 had already been raised during 2022/23.

However, having taken Alex to her NHS wheelchair clinic review 15.2.24 only to see her being asked to self-propel across a room, of which she could do as it was morning. Then to be told in the next breath she would not qualify for an NHS electric chair because she could do this! I was adamant that we would raise sufficient funds in order that Finola's current chair would be refurbished totally with all new parts and fitted for Alex so that we could then gift the chair to Alex.

Motus Medical whom we have to thank profusely for their great kindness and support, on hearing this plan very kindly reduced the price of Finola's replacement chair from £17,051 (actual quote) to £15,500 & estimated £7,000 parts with £1,000 labour for Alex's new chair.



Grandad even makes Henri laugh!

THE 10,000 FT JUMP!



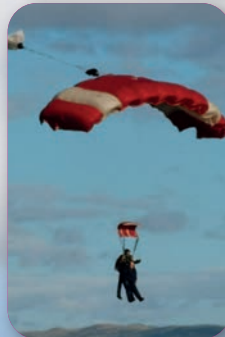
All that needed to be done was Henri to have the courage to jump out of a plane at 10,000 ft attached to an expert from Strathallan Skydive. The date was set Sunday 15 September 2024 Strathallan, Nr Auchterarder <https://bit.ly//henriskydiver>

Family, friends, East Lothian Courier were all told, and fundraising began in earnest. As the kindness of so many were shown by the very generous donations that came in as it got nearer to the day Henri had no turning back – she was going to have to do this!

With the support of family who had travelled all the way from Aix en Provence, Honoré you are an absolute star, to brother Andrew and his wife Karen who were so supportive, to wonderful cousins Nicky & her husband Wayne, Jacqui, Sammy..... to incredible grandad who was 98 yrs old this year, and to Callum & Mary for all their support on the day & with bringing grandad. Henri you have to do it!

Not only did I jump in a manner not to be ashamed of, but both Finola and Alex were there as well to witness it! Bruce very kindly drove the Finola Trust van and brought everyone (including Orbit) with Alex's PA, Stan. What a very special day it was.

Surrounded with so much support how could I NOT do it! Thank you so very much to each and every one of you... your cheering as I sped off into the air was very much appreciated!



The eagle has landed!

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO YOU ALL

WE RAISED AN INCREDIBLE

£5,985.51 online after all JustGiving
costs plus **£7,315.47 cash** donations

Cumulative Total
Henri's SkyDive =
(as at 24.9.24)

£13,300.98

However recently we received
a few more donations
making a final total of

£13,431.00



OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO EACH & EVERY PERSON WHO SUPPORTED US

**WE HAVE TO SAY A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU
TO THE ANONYMOUS DONOR WHO GIFTED**

**POST THE JUMP SO SECURING BOTH CHAIRS.
HUGE HUGE THANK YOU TO YOU -
YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE!**

£3,000

Also we would like to sincerely thank The Cameron Optometry Team & to Abbeyhill Footcare for their very generous donations; to Edinburgh Arts for their very kind support and grateful thanks to each and every person who gifted. We had 99 supporters online and that is before all the very kind cash donations. There are so many people to thank so please accept our sincere apologies that we are unable to list you all!

Shore Sheltered Housing at Jameson Place (Finola's nextdoor neighbour) very kindly organised a coffee morning in aid of the Skydive and we would like to sincerely thank Martin & all of you so very much for raising £145 & being such wonderful neighbours.

And although we have mentioned Shorelark previously we would like to thank Kat once again for raising £365 with her wonderful Robin painting named "Safe Landing" & thankfully it was!

On behalf of Finola, Alex and myself we truly thank every single person who donated & supported us for your great kindness.

NB – Amounts mentioned above are all included within the totals.

SKYDIVE STRATHALLAN - BLUE SKIES!



Fellow student giving last words of encouragement



Callum & Henri returning victorious!

SKYDIVE STRATHALLAN, AUCHTERARDER



For anyone wanting to skydive as someone who was truly terrified I would like to highly recommend **Skydive Strathallan** <https://skydivestrathallan.co.uk> both for their professionalism, safety, care, camaraderie and support. The centre is run by volunteers only and is a truly amazing place.

A special thank you to Graeme, Eddie and to Callum (my tandem expert on the day) for making the skydive possible. To all the fellow students & families who were so supportive, to the pilot & absolutely everyone who was involved. Thank you so much.

It was a truly amazing experience.... I was speechless at the time of being asked "what was that freefall of 5,000 ft in 35 seconds like?". Having waited from 9.0am to 4.30pm approx. the skies having been cloudy, raining & windy during the day, suddenly it opened up and I truly did have Blue Skies!

Huge thank you to both instructors and fellow students alike who were so supportive on the day in helping me achieve my goal. The official Skydive Strathallan video may be viewed at www.finolatrust.co.uk

Blue Skies to you all!

OUR DEEPEST & HEARTFELT THANKS AS ALWAYS...

...MUST GO TO BRUCE FORBES

Bruce came to us on the 10.12.2018 and we are extremely grateful he did! The relationship he has with Finola is brother/sister bringing with it a lot of mischief & happiness..... cheekiness as well! I am extremely grateful to him for all that he does for both Finola and I. Without him our world would be a very different place.

**Thank you Bruce for
everything you do.**

You are our biggest star!



GOODBYE & THANK YOU

This year has been another challenging year in trying to fill Life Enabling / PA positions for Finola. We did manage to secure a part time position for Siying Li who came to us end May and left as she graduated end October. Thank you Siying for your time with us.



THE FUTURE

As we are all aware recruiting seems to have its trials and tribulations at the moment and this is not just in social care. Trying to encourage the young into the caring field of work seems to be almost impossible. We are therefore trialling a few hours a week with a different 'style' of local agency. This will enable named carers to be part of the 'getting up' process – we hope! However, agencies too are finding recruitment not easy. It is vital that the 'right person' is found as the wrong person can reverse the great work that has been done to make Finola happy and healthy in her own environment.

We hope that by building a relationship with the local care agency that it will eventually lead to be a back up system for Finola.

We have also just finished yet another recruiting cycle and am hoping to employ during the month of December. However, this was not to be as having offered the post it was deemed not viable for the student who then took a job offer with double the salary! Need I say more...

Who knows what 2025 will bring but I am sure being positive that the right people WILL be found!

SOME FUN FAMILY SCENES



We are ending on some fun images of Finola and Alex enjoying North Berwick Beach Wheelchairs 25.8.24 Thank you so much Filip for helping us. You are a star!



AND MORE

some lovely visits in and around Scotland this year. Apologies for not including everyone!



Andrew, Honorée, Mummy & Karen



Sammy, Andrew, Nicky & Honorée



Richard, Finola, Mummy

Bruce, Honorée & Finola



Trina & Finola



Alex, Finola with Orbit photo bombing!



OUR SINCERE THANKS...



Goodbye to Chris & good luck!

OUR THANKS AS ALWAYS GOES TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS:

The City of Edinburgh Council

We would like to thank Margaret Patterson, Direct Payment and ILF assessor for all of her support. Since September 2024 we have been trying to introduce Harmony Agency as a support and backup to the team owing to the ongoing recruiting difficulties.

Without the support from Edinburgh City Council and ILF Scotland Finola would not be able to live independently so huge thank you as always for enabling us to realise Finola's dreams.

ABBNEYHILL FOOTCARE HCPC REG. PODIATRISTS



Jennifer Donegan is Finola's podiatrist and visiting regularly as a home visit. Thank you so much for your expertise and for making each appointment such fun! We would like to thank Abbeyhill Footcare Clinic once again for all their support and professionalism. Huge thank you for the very kind donation towards Henri's Tandem Skydive once again & for all of your kind support.

HARBOUR HOMES

Harbour Homes, a Registered Social Landlord providing homes in Leith and north Edinburgh. Formerly Port of Leith Housing Association. Finola has lived at her current address for the last 25 years – wow Finola quarter of a century already!

Thank you Harbour Homes for a wonderful flat that we are truly grateful for.

K & I LTD COACH BUILDERS.

Hardengreen, Eskbank

We would like to thank Scott and the team for looking after the Finola Trust van and us so well. You have been such a support this year with sponsoring the van wrap (advertising Henri's skydive) and for continuing to support us. You are all stars and we are truly grateful. Thank you so very much.

LOTHIAN CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED LIVING

www.lothiancil.org.uk



Finola and I would like to say a very big thank you as always to this organisation that processes wages and also supports with advertising for new life enabling companions/friends. We will endeavour to find exceptional people next year to enhance Finola's circle of support. Surely 2025 will bring us a special person.

OUR THANKS TO SO MANY

CAMERON OPTOMETRY

AWARD-WINNING EYE CARE

cameronoptom.com

We would like to thank Ian Cameron & the Cameron Optometry team for not only looking after us so well but for very kindly supporting Henri's tandem skydive with the very kind donation. We are truly grateful.. thank you so much for your wonderful expertise and support.



www.aberncornvets.co.uk

We would like to thank James Thorntonsmith & the team for looking after Orbit so well & for helping promote the Skydive. Happy Christmas to you all!

ABLE CREATIVE ARTS

www.ablecreativearts.com

Finola has been having 1:1 sessions with Keith in her own home since May 2022. In fact she was Keith McDougall's first student in his newly formed business!

A fabulous service and you just need to visit his website to see what he does! Keep up the good work!



vetphysioandmanipulation.co.uk

An absolutely huge thank you to Lisa Cleeton for all your kindness & support this year with Orbit. He absolutely loves his visits!

Poochy Pamper

www.facebook.com/qualifiedgroomer

Orbit, Finola and I would like to thank Sarah for her wonderful grooming skills. We would not hesitate in recommending Sarah to others. Thank you so much for your kindness to both humans and dogs!



www.motusmedical.co.uk

We would like to thank Tom Dobson and the team for their wonderful service. We are extremely grateful for all your help and kindness. Finola received her new PINK chair on 26 November 2024 and she really, really loves it! I must say we won't be losing Finola in a hurry & it does put a smile on peoples faces. Thank you so much.... Now to help Alex. Watch this space....

wink creative

www.winkcreative.co.uk

Last but certainly by no means least Will we have to thank you profusely for compiling the marketing for Henri's skydive. You did a fabulous job as certainly it could not be missed! You have once again excelled with setting this years' newsletter up & for the Christmas card. We are extremely grateful for your kindness & support & all your skills, including the Finola Trust website. You are a superstar!

A HUGE
THANK YOU
TO EVERYONE WHO
HAS SUPPORTED OUR
EFFORTS THIS YEAR.
This comes from us all,
Finola, Alex, Henri &
Bruce & of course
Orbit

Photo taken Dec 2023

WISHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS
& MAY THE NEW YEAR BRING HAPPINESS & HEALTH TO YOU ALL

 @FinolaTrust  Finola Trust

henri@finolatrust.co.uk

www.finolatrust.co.uk

the **finola**
trust

Maximising the Ability
Minimising the Disability