

RDA East Region Newsletter

No. 14

Summer 2017





Welcome to the 14th edition of the RDA East Region newsletter. A big thank you to Sue Diggins, and to Andrew for producing it.

We have all had a busy year and many volunteers have been recognized for their contribution to RDA. Christine Stone and Moya Luddington were awarded the President's Award. The Magpie Centre was started by Moya having donated the land and raised the funds., and she is still helping with the Hollesley Group.



The RDA UK AGM now takes place in a different part of the country each year, and it was held at Cheltenham racecourse. They had good speakers and it was well attended.

Thirteen people have retired or changed jobs most notably Sally Campbell Gray, who has been the backbone for many years and produced "How we work in the East Region" for coaches, so we must try and keep up her high standard. I would like to thank them on behalf of the region for their invaluable time and effort devoted to RDA, we would not be where we are today without them. and so many of our riders have benefitted from them. Some riders can now sit up and smile others have achieved great heights, and have qualified for Hartpury, winning in dressage, countryside challenge, showjumping and vaulting.

We were the first Region to take part in the Big Ride organised by Sam Orde our Chairman to raise money for the new National Training Centre. The thirteen

riders joined Woodhurst RDA Group Pleasure Ride which took place at Abbott's Ripton by kind permission of Lord and Lady de Ramsey. It was the first really hot day of the year in April and they all thoroughly enjoyed it. It was wonderful for them to enjoy the countryside and a change from the confines of an arena.

In May, the Regionals took place for the first time at Milton. It was a lovely day and everyone enjoyed it and they all went home with rosettes and many with trophies.

It takes an effort for groups to get there but it is worth it when you see the happiness it brings.

I hope you all have a very happy summer.

Gay.

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East Region Big Ride, RDA UK

at Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Sunday 9 April



The first RDA Big Ride kicked off in glorious spring sunshine on Lord and Lady de Ramsay's estate near Huntingdon, more famous for hosting the Secret Garden Music Festival. Five disabled riders along with five supporting riders and RDA Chairman Sam Orde mounted up, most of them on trusty RDA ponies and set off into the countryside.

For some this was their first ride of this kind. Young rider Louis who is waiting for a liver transplant had spent a frustrating two hours that morning failing to catch his pony. Luckily he was able to borrow a brilliant grey pony Mifty. As he had only ridden this pony once before in an RDA session, Louis planned to do 2 miles and was delighted to complete 6! When asked 'What do you like to do when you are not riding?' Louis answered 'riding'.

Para dressage rider Olivia was also on a borrowed horse as she continues to crowd fund for a new advance medium dressage horse (www.gofundme.com/oliviacornickdressage to see how much riding means to Olivia after major brain surgery and subsequent challenges). Two riders rode using one hand: Para dressage rider Eleanor and para vaulter Lizzie. Lizzie put 100% effort into completing the 6 miles and had to wait a while for energy to come back into her legs at the end. Claire Cooper a rider with Downes Syndrome took up the challenge to complete 2 miles and got a good cheer on doing so.

There was a great support team and one volunteer walked and ran the whole way to help riders achieve their challenge safely. The ride was organised by Woodhurst RDA Group who raised funds for their group with 100s of able bodied riders setting off before the Big Ride. Many of the Big Ride team came from Cambridgeshire College RDA Group along with others from across the East Region. RDA volunteers put in a lot of work to organise it beautifully.

Sam Orde said "It is brilliant to have the first Big Ride successfully completed. All who took part had wonderful rides in glorious sunshine. The RDA riders achieved something new while helping fundraise for

the RDA National Training Centre. I am really excited about the next 17 rides happening across the UK".

It was party, party, party all the way for the summer of 2016 for the Peterborough and District Group as we celebrated our Golden Jubilee!

PICNICING IN THE PARK

The first party of the summer was our picnic in Burghley Park for almost eighty children who ride with our group. Needless to say it rained throughout but the kind workers from Burghley Estate had erected a marquee, and along with gazebos, which had been begged, borrowed or stolen, everyone managed to more or less stay dry as they ate their lunch. Then all the children and their helpers piled in to the tent where they were wonderfully entertained by Dave the Clown with magic, singing and dancing. Dave is a veteran of many a children's party in Peterborough, and he even had the group helpers dancing gangnam style for the show finale!

Inevitably, the sun was just starting to break through by 'going home' time. As happy children wended their way back to their buses, sticky from cake and brandishing their special jubilee rosettes, they were hotly pursued by their carers and teachers briskly gathering discarded coats, balloon animals and jubilee certificates along the way. Amazingly all the children ended up on the right bus, and thence back to their rightful school, which, bearing in mind the army of buses hired for the day to choose from, was a minor miracle! And as for the group helpers? Exhausted by the exertions, we sought solace in a glass of fizzy pop before beginning the massive clear-up, and the dismantling of soggy tents, bunting and decorations.

A CELEBRATORY CUP OF TEA

If the first party had concentrated on the riders, a month later it was time to say a heartfelt "Thank You" to all our ex-volunteers, fund-raisers and benefactors. Thus nearly a hundred people, all with various associations to the group from the last fifty years converged on the refectory at the Peterborough School for afternoon tea. And what a reunion it proved to be! The group's founder and first chairman, Jill Speechley was able to attend and was thrilled to meet many of the volunteers from her era as well as expressing her pleasure to see the group thriving. Then there was Maggie Cochrane, the owner of Merrylegs, the first pony used, and who was much amused to be returning to her alma mater after all these years! In the early 70s the group had a spell in Crowland under the auspices of Mrs Whaley, now sadly departed this life, but her daughter Pat was able to attend. There was Andrew, who as a child, had ridden with the group during this time, and Ian, whose grandparents had welcomed the group to use their indoor arena in the winter months also in the 70s. There were past committee members, secretaries and treasurers, and people who had lent ponies, all mingling in a jolly cacophony of laughter and reminiscences. It became a full time job for the group helpers to keep all the teacups topped up, and plates replenished with sandwiches and cakes, as well as making sure everyone met up with the people from their particular 'era'.

The party was also an opportunity to entertain many of the current school helpers and teachers, and there was a fair degree of surprise and merriment from both group and school helpers alike that, having only ever seen each other muffled against the habitually inclement weather of an RDA session in an outdoor arena, how well everyone had scrubbed up to become almost unrecognisable to each other! There was a cake to be cut, and presentations and accolades by Sam Orde. But before the group helpers had time to rest on their laurels and

admire their long service awards, as the party drew to a close with the distribution of more jubilee rosettes, there was the washing up to be attended to!

OUR FINEST HOUR

And so on the climax of the summer ... the final party ... and a visit from our President! Having looked at how other groups had planned their royal visits, we decided to be different, in that there would be no sitting down and watching displays for the Princess on this occasion. As our riders are on the therapy part of the RDA pathway our success lies with each rider, pony, leader and helper working an individual team during our regular sessions. We decided that the Princess should be in the arena along with the riders, as we wanted her to observe close up how we use ponies and riding to promote our riders' learning, as well as their physical and social development. The latter is something that is not measured or tested in national assessments, but includes life skills that may well help them integrate into society, and as we see it, a vital part of our work.

She was able to watch the riders doing a range of activities and skills. These covered numeracy, literacy and fine motor skills to a standard appropriate to each rider's ability, as well as promoting their balance and core stability, and also giving them choices. And as it was Brexit Day, we even had a sorting exercise using Union Jacks and EU flags.

We ride outdoors, and inevitably it started to rain and as the Princess was presenting long service awards to the ponies, and rosettes to the riders, she teased one pony for objecting to her umbrella when only minutes earlier beanbags had been winging past his ears!

Riding finished, and it was soon time for more people to be introduced, more awards made, a posy of flowers to be presented, a cake (now rather soggy and sticky from the rain) to be cut, and a plaque unveiled – some traditions never change! She was also given a copy of a recently written book covering the history of our group. Then our hour was up, and off she went to her next engagement.

We are a tremendously happy group, and lucky to have so many faithful and hardworking volunteer helpers all of whom worked unbelievably hard to make the three occasions so successful and memorable for everybody who has ever been associated with our group over the last fifty years. Even the expenses for all these celebrations were covered by a kind ex-helper who raised enough money to cover the buses to transport the children to the picnic, the entertainer and all the jubilee rosettes, with the cakes and flowers being generously donated by other loyal supporters.

It was an exhausting few months, so here's to our next major milestone celebration that will be our Diamond Jubilee, but hopefully we'll bag a day with better weather!



OAKLANDS COLLEGE 2016







Chris's Swimathon Effort Pays For Five Disabled Riders For A Year

When Chris Barlow took place in a Rotary Club Swimathon he said his first £1,000 should go to the West Suffolk Group of Riding for the Disabled.

Chris, who is Vice President of the Rotary Club of Bury St Edmunds, swam 40 lengths of the Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre pool - that is 1Km - in spite of being a 70 year old who had a leg amputated four years ago, after an aneurysm.

He raised £7,000 of the £12,500 the Swimathon made in March and on Tuesday he was able to see £1,000 presented by the Rotary Club's President Jenny Benfield to the RDA Group at Barrow Farm Stables.

Chris, who is also treasurer of the RDA Group, said: "They're all volunteers and they deserve recognition. They need £8,000 a year which is a constant struggle."

West Suffolk RDA chairman Sue Price said: "The sum of £1000, as raised by Chris Barlow's swim, would pay for one pony hire for a year - that is, enable five disabled riders to participate for a year. Our riders come from all walks of life and ages range from three-and-a-half to 40-plus."

Riding has real benefits for the riders beyond the exercise it provides. Sue said: "The physical benefits of riding are well known, giving disabled people the opportunity for therapy, achievement and fun, enabling riders to develop core strength, stability and co-ordination to support walking and reduce tension and stiffness and promote relaxation."

The activity also enables riders to feel connected with their peers, the horses and the people who support them, building confidence.



Taken from John Henderson's article in the Bury Free Press

Barrow Farm News

40th anniversary Gala

Barrow Farm's 40th Dinner and Dance was held on Friday 7th October. Stockbrook Country Club, provided the opulent setting for an evening to remember. The Food was delicious and the party atmosphere continued until late.

The Music was provided by Bradley Hyde of "Black Cat Discos" and he managed to play an array of hits that pleased everyone. Magicians provided entertainment during the meal and Stephen Reid of Rawlight Studios was on hand to photograph guests in their finery. The evening was arranged to celebrate the fact that Barrow Farm has been running for 40 years and continues to go from strength to strength providing first class facilities for 1,000s of disabled riders during this period of time. The Staff, Trustees and over 100 volunteers were thanked for their commitment to making Barrow Farm an outstanding RDA. The evening was also about raising much needed funds to help sustain the success, staff training and on going needs of our riders and ponies. Guests dug deep and their generous contributions on the evening, including raffle and auctions raised an amazing £7000. Thank you to everyone for helping to make the evening such a success.

A rider and a rider's parent both spoke very movingly about their experiences at Barrow Farm and what a difference we had made to their wellbeing, confidence and physical health. A real reminder from the heart of what we are all about. Thank you, Alex and Andrea, for speaking for us.



Park Drive Health Club Funday raises a fab £740 for Barrow Farm.

Thank you so very much to everyone who came to the successful Fun Day on Sunday 9th October at Park Drive Health Club, Maldon There was lots going on including Go Karts, a bouncy castle, face painting, BBQ and a silent auction. Special thanks go to Linda, Natalie, Andrea, Viv and Sue for making it all happen. It looks like everybody had a good time!



2016 Riding Holiday

In July five riders and six helpers had a splendid week's holiday in Wales at the Clwyd Special Riding Centre.



Hacking along the sensory ride: Lucy and Mouse in the lead followed by Peggy, Sue L and Apollo...

There have been many changes at the centre since our last visit in 2015. They have built a splendid new stable block and tack room on the top of the hill opposite the outdoor arena.



Ben and Jasmine tacking up Bryn.

The old tack room has been turned into super new offices for the office staff. A new shop has been built under the trees by the car park, next to a new physiotherapy centre complete with a state of the art mechanical horse.



Peggy and Apollo riding solo.

Plus the old shop and toilets in the common room/kitchen area have been revamped. But best of all, they have lots of new horses and ponies.

Our riders were fortunate enough to each be riding a horse they had never ridden before; Peter rode the gorgeous Percheron, Erik.



Peter, Martin and Erik out hacking in the beautiful Welsh hills.



Peggy, Sue L and Apollo dropping a ball into the basket.

Lucy was allocated Mouse, a lovely bay Fell pony.



Lucy and Mouse doing leg yield where the horse moves forwards and sideways at the same time crossing his legs. You can see Mouse crossing his hind legs in this picture.

Ben rode another handsome Welsh pony, Bryn, who is chestnut roan.



Ben and Bryn riding a line of bending cones.

And Natasha was given the grey joker, Ringo. He has a quirky sense of humour!



Natasha and Ringo riding solo with me pointing the way and Sue L observing.

But new horses are always a challenge and it was fabulous to see how well the riders coped with finding out about their new horses and helping those who were new to

the RDA life and not always sure what we wanted them to do.

As usual the riders had to look after the horse allocated to them, but the difference this year was that the horses were stabled during the day.

Previously the holiday horses were put in the field nearest to the house, but after all the heavy rain this winter that field was not in a fit state for the horses to live in. So they were out in the further fields at night and the staff brought them in for us each morning and turned them back out after we had finished riding.



Peter and Martin tack cleaning.

This allowed the riders to find out about looking after a stabled horse, including skipping out the

stables and feeding hay at lunch time. Plus the usual grooming and tack cleaning that they always have to do.



Natasha and Mary grooming Ringo.



Ben chose jumping for his individual lesson, with Bryn and Jasmine. Bryn went 'boing'!

On the Saturday I tried a new idea, for each rider to have an individual lesson, something we never have the time to do at home. Each rider chose what they wanted to do in their lesson and they all achieved good results.



Peggy and Apollo riding solo.

We did a lot of riding off lead and completely solo (no helper walking beside) in the lessons this year, even jumping over a course of poles without help. And all the riders did really well.

Of course there was plenty of hacking round the fabulous tracks, including the infamous water splash, which everyone enjoyed.



Natasha, Mary and Ringo in the water splash

On the last day we played my Luck Dip game where exercises are written on slips of paper and mixed up in a bowl. The exercises are graded as easy, medium or hard and points are awarded 1,2 or 3 for an easy exercise, 2, 4 or 6 for a medium exercise or 3, 6 or 9 for a hard exercise depending whether the riders performed the exercise adequately, well, or excellently. The points were very close after 7 exercises were performed each, but Lucy came out in the lead at the end.



Natasha picked the hardest exercise in the Lucy Dip – she had to ride over a pole in jumping position while balancing an egg on a spoon! Here with Mary and Ringo, she got top marks.



Peter holding up the bowl of papers for Natasha to take a lucky dip.

Unfortunately Peter was not able to ride on the last day as Erik was lame after he and some of his friends had broken out of the field and had a naughty night out running round the tracks on the Sunday night! But Peter joined in with the Lucky Dip by holding the bowl of exercises for the other riders and helping Martin with the scoring.



Lucy and Mouse jumping.

We were also very fortunate to be allowed to have a ride on the new mechanical horse in the physio centre. The horse has a video screen on which you can choose where you want to ride – the beach, the farm, the zoo, the lake or the forest.



Peter chose to ride the mechanical horse on the beach, here with Sal from Clwyd.

The screen also shows how well balanced the rider is sitting and whether they are putting equal pressure on each rein and other such useful information. It's very clever!



The Team at Chirk Castle – l to r: Martin, Mary, Peter, Lucy, me, Ben and Jasmine



Ben and Mary in the stocks at Chirk Castle

And finally, a special thank you to Marco and Mary who kept us well fed all week with delicious meals.

Hilary's Tea Party



For those of you not involved in the organisation of the group, Hilary has been Norfolk County Chairman for the last 12 years as of January 2016 has passed the reins to Peter. You will all have met Hilary at one time or another since she regularly visited all the groups in the county and was fantastic at presenting rosettes and prizes to the riders.

The county instructor, Lorna, arranged a 'Thank You' Tea Party for Hilary and Chrissie volunteered the use of the Barn as a venue.

The Tea Party took place on Sunday 24th April and was attended by representatives from all the Groups in Norfolk. Everyone brought food for the buffet and tea was served by members of Buckenham House Group.

Hilary was presented with a brilliant cartoon of herself, her car and her bull – long story, but she loved the gift! And everyone had a happy couple of hours chatting and catching up on the news. Many thanks for all your years of hard work, Hilary.

Hilary thanked Chrissie and the Buckenham House Group in a letter, in which she said:

"It was the most amazing Tea Party on Sunday, so many kind words and such generosity, thank you all so much. The tea you brought was the most fantastic feast, the barn at Lyng Farm looked beautiful, bedecked with flowers, and of course such lovely gifts and mementos of my time in the Chair..."

Gymkhana Fun in Hertfordshire

Herts & Essex Border group hosted Hertfordshire's new county gymkhana on 9th June in Furneux Pelham and much fun was had by all. It was a lovely sunny evening for families and riders alike with a picnic field complete with ice cream van! Riders from Rossway, Harpenden and Stevenage joined local riders in 'have a go' dressage, countryside challenge and gymkhana races using a pool of RDA ponies and there was also the opportunity to 'design a rosette' and take a horsecare quiz. On an evening when participation was just as important as competition all the riders contributed points to their team scores with Stevenage and Harpenden doing well at dressage, Herts & Essex Border showing the way in the countryside challenge and Rossway being the gymkhana maestros. Once all the points were totted up it was a home team who won the overall Rossdales Cup.

The evening was summed up by a rider who on their way home said "It's not the rosette that's the prize, it's being able to go".



Thanks must go to Rossdales Herts vets whose fundraising enabled the evening and to all the volunteers who made it possible, especially those based at Brook Cottage Farm Riding School.

THANK YOU

A VERY BIG THANK YOU TO ALL THE GROUPS WHO CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS THIS LOVELY NEW GARDEN SEAT.

THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF ME AND IAN RELAXING IN RETIREMENT IF THAT IS POSSIBLE (?!)



Once again many thanks to everyone in the East Region for your support and friendship over the years.

Sally Campbell-Gray, MBE, FRDA, HLVP

Regional Training Day - Norfolk

A Regional training day was held on Tuesday 14th March at Hill Farm, Hardingham, Norfolk, so several Buckenham House Group volunteers were roped into service to help out on the day. They were doing all sorts of useful jobs from superintending the car parking to serving teas and coffees, to preparing the horses and helping during the demonstrations and acting as the arena party making sure the equipment was set out properly.

Clare and Lorna led the training with physio input from Helen.

The day started with a discussion of tack fitting led by Clare, demonstrating with Drew and Eddie. Then Helen spoke about specialist tack and how it can be used to help riders with particular problems.

Riders were then selected from the audience and Helen described the balanced position with and without stirrups. Helen put markers on the rider's arms and legs to help to show what she was demonstrating. The riders rode Drew and Eddie.

The next session, led by Clare, was about promoting independence in the riders using the 3 stages of leading. 2 new ponies, Lady and Shelly, were used for this session with Lorna and me leading to demonstrate Clare's points. We then handed the reins over to riders, leaders and side walkers from the audience to practice.

This session then led into demonstrations on how to lead for dressage and show jumping, with volunteer riders from the audience again.

During lunch BH volunteers cleared the show jumps and built a countryside challenge course and Drew and Eddie returned to the arena to demonstrate leading for this discipline and while members of the audience practiced with the ponies, Helen discussed the physiotherapeutic benefits of using these types of exercises in RDA lessons.

It was a very busy and successful day, thanks to all the hard work from the BH volunteers and the splendid ponies, Drew, Eddie, Lady and Shelly who were all superstars and coped really well with the intrusion of 70 spectators in the indoor arena!

Following the day, we received many messages of congratulation by phone and email from everyone from grass roots helpers from other groups right up to the RDA hierarchy. Comments included how useful and interesting were the presentations, how super were the horses and facilities and how well run the whole event was. What a fab advert for BH RDA and Hill Farm, well done to all the volunteers involved!



2017 Regional Qualifier - Milton





Photo disks of all images have now been distributed to the participating Groups

Christmas jollity at Buckenham House Group



and at the combined Wood Green/Woodhurst party



A "Thank You" lunch for all our retiring Regional Officers



Elisabeth Curtis Centre 40th Anniversary Tea Party

On Sunday 2nd October 2016 we held an informal event to celebrate just over 40 years of riding for the disabled in Bromham. It brought together 50+ people, mostly former and current helpers. Several riders from each of the five days on which we ride, came with their families. Bella Craven and Veronica Bradley, our County Coach and County Chairman elect were also there.

For "old" / former helpers it was a chance to meet again, to share memories of their joint or separate experiences, to be at the Centre again after an absence (in some cases a long one), and to see it thriving. They also met some current helpers and all our ponies. Several pioneers were present: Janet Barbour, Mildred Frossell and Ann Dew. Other key figures, including Sue Brown and Judy Davies also attended. It gave new helpers, like Hazel Steele, Julia Cox and Katrine Redman, an idea of the organisation they have joined.

Three ponies, JJ, Huggy and Rupert, were each presented with their RDA Long Service Awards for 10 years hard work for the ECC. All our riders are to receive a special rosette.

Angela Norris, the mother of Becky Norris, a Monday morning rider, made a special anniversary cake in our colours of white and green. An icing rosette with 40 at its centre was the main decoration. Many thanks to Angela and all those who contributed cakes and savouries. Many thanks also to those who helped to organise and run the event.



Pauline Evans

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The Suffolk County Meeting was held at the new British Horse Racing Museum in May. We were all given a tour of the premises which included a fascinating demonstration by the retraining of racehorses charity and a chance to have a go on the race-horse simulator. One brave volunteer from the Mid Suffolk Driving Group showed us just how it should be done!



During lunch and just before the business commenced a Thelwell ornament was presented to Sue Diggins to mark her retirement as Suffolk County Chairman. She thanked the Groups and wished the new County Chairman good luck.

Training Report

For this year's programme of Regional Training Days the theme was Promoting the Independence of our Riders. The days included discussions on appropriately fitted tack and equipment and included the importance of attaining the correct balance for the riders with or without stirrups. The delegates were also shown the different approaches and methods of leading and side walking at Group levels which included demonstrations of dressage, show jumping and countryside challenge.

The days were held at Hardingham in Norfolk, the Elisabeth Curtis Centre in Bedfordshire, Barrow Farm in Essex and Gaddeson Place in Hertfordshire. All were very well attended and at some we even had waiting lists! Many thanks to all those organised the days.

It seemed very strange not to have Sally C.G. steering the proceedings and standing at the front with her 'Silence' stick at the ready, but it was good to see her in the audience at a couple of the days.

Upon her retirement Sally sent the Region her thanks:

"As you know, I retired from RDA at the end of 2016 and I am writing to thank you all for being such a supportive, committed and wonderful Region to be part of. I started at the Stevenage Group in 1971 and have held various posts, County, Regional and National, for many more years that I like to remember! It has been a rewarding and happy time and I have made many friends amongst our riders and volunteers.

Keep up the good work!! There are a lot of training opportunities to be followed in RDA, and all these make an excellent basis for the future of the efficiency and progressive outlook, towards individual goals, which we offer to our participants.

However, I would like to remind everyone that within the excellence we are there to provide, the most important piece of special equipment is 'FUN!' - not to mention special relationships forged with our ponies and horses. Of course it was easier in those early days when Health and Safety hadn't really been invented! I have received many letters and pictures from riders over the years which make my time in RDA all doubly worthwhile. I attach just one of them. I have plenty more! Some children have sent me their pictures of ponies and, indeed, me as their instructor! Do remember to ask your schools and centres to think of projects such as these.

I am not disappearing entirely. I remain a Training Advisor - reviewing coaches when requested - available to provide Log Books and undertake Assessments to help train within Groups. I am still a Proficiency Test Examiner from Grade `1 – Bronze. Please continue to ask me to do any or all of these. It will be so nice to keep in touch.

Liz Riding, Val Parker, Shirley Green, Eileen Nash, Kath Hatwell and Janet Abbott retire as County Coaches at the end of this year too, but they remain in position as above. Thank you to them as well for being such a supportive team."

Sue Diggins