

Hampshire & Surrey Borders RDA

Riding for the Disabled Association

Welcome

Welcome to our Spring 2017 Newsletter. Since our last newsletter big changes have been happening. Our venue is different, the ponies we use are new to us, even our riding hats have been renewed (again!) to keep in line with legislation. Both groups have welcomed new volunteers; thank you all for joining us. Inside there is news of our ponies and some entertaining articles from two of our volunteers, one with an insight into the 'delights' of poo picking! More volunteer's contributions for our next newsletter are welcome so I hope these inspire you to get writing. Fund-raising is always an important topic and we have a busy few months ahead as Fleet Carnival's Charity for 2017. We hope you enjoy reading our latest news.



A lesson with Merlin at Badshot Lea; with two helpers and a leader

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Last ride at Badshot Lea

It was with mixed feelings that we had our last ride at Badshot Lea School just before Christmas. The ponies had been transported in our trusty wagon to the school for our riding sessions on Thursday mornings for more years than anyone can remember. We always enjoyed a good working relationship with the staff at the school (which continues at our new venue of course) even when the ponies hooves and our boots made mud of their well-kept playing field!



The last Badshot Lea ride was a Christmas-themed one which the children enjoyed very much.

Special points of interest:

- Several children who started to ride with us were unable to stand or walk independently. Many have now made great progress and have achieved important milestones.
- The games we play while sitting on a pony involves bending and stretching and this is strengthening their core muscles without them knowing it—and it's fun.



The much-loved Smokey at his last Badshot Lea lesson—his future is secure with Pat



The "trusty wagon" and our Badshot Lea team December 2016

From Mavis—a much respected volunteer

In 2001, as I was coming out of my local Sainsburys just before Christmas, I discovered outside some very friendly people who were collecting on behalf of the Aldershot Group Riding for the Disabled (now renamed Hampshire and Surrey Borders RDA).

I thought to myself that I would volunteer with them as in a few months time I would be retiring. I was given the name and telephone number of Rachel Plumbe who was the organiser at that time.

In the following May, having telephoned Rachel, I started volunteering on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Although I had some knowledge of ponies I had never worked with children but I was given excellent training by Rachel, Pat, Christine, Wendy and Lucy to name a few at that time that I particularly remember.

I thoroughly enjoyed helping the children and watching them gain both in confidence and physical ability as they learnt to guide their ponies around the indoor school or field, playing games and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

I also gained by being outside in the fresh air, getting some exercise and keeping my brain



Mavis (left) with one of the Badshot Lea children having a lesson on Pablo

active. There was always someone to ask as to the best way to help a particular child to achieve a goal.

At other times I helped collecting money outside Sainsburys, Farnborough Air Show and assisting Father Christmas with collections for the Rotary (although I seem to remember myself and another volunteer getting into trouble with Santa – but that's another story!).

Happy Days!!!!



Mavis at the term end prize-giving where her star pupil won the award for "most improved rider" that year.

New Venue



As most readers will know, Tuesday group started at the Equestrian Centre of the Four Seasons Hotel, Dogmersfield when they returned to riding after the summer holidays in September. We are delighted that Badshot Lea School have made arrangements to transport ten of their pupils each week on a Thursday morning, which means we all now operate from the same venue.

The move has gone every bit as well as we could have hoped. The Four Seasons' ponies have taken our lessons in their stride and quickly got used to our equipment and the games we play and the Equestrian Centre Staff, led by manager Anne, have made us very welcome.



An enjoyable lesson in the January sunshine

The facilities we have at our disposal are perfect; when we are able to take the children on a lead-rein hack around the hotel grounds on a crisp, sunny morning, what could be better?

"Our volunteers give their time freely—their enthusiasm is crucial to success with the children"

Clare le Marie—Poo-picker extraordinaire!

When I was babysitting for one of my grandchildren in an emergency I got a text from my husband *“love is - standing in a field in glorious autumn sunshine with a barrow full of poo!”*

Yes - he was doing my turn at the poo-picking at Redfields Farm. When I first volunteered for this job at my very first meeting with the RDA I thought it was for just a few weeks until the regulars returned from a long holiday. Somehow I got switched to another day and became a ‘regular’ myself. Be careful what you volunteer for. Every time I am out at the farm I am transported back to my childhood. At the age of eleven I was given a pony by my aunt who had taught me to ride and went on in later years to run a riding and livery stables. We were lucky and had a 2 acre field and some old stables and my father knew a bit about livestock and farming and drew up the rules; my efforts being closely monitored by him and my aunt as to the welfare of fields and pony. I had to carry all the water my pony needed about 200 yards and fill up the old copper she drank from; I had to (on a weekly basis) poo-pick the field, similarly pushing the heavy barrow the same distance to the compost bin (my mother grew amazing roses), hay nets must be filled and delivered and the pony groomed etc. I was only let off these tasks if I was ill. As a family we cut the long grass in our orchard and made it into hay ourselves (I am a dab hand with a pitchfork). Sometimes my pony would be in another field which was on my way home from school, and I would call her up, throw the satchel over her neck and cross the road and up our drive riding bareback with not even a halter. Great for the school uniform!

As the years went by and my ponies got exchanged for bigger ones, and finally a better quality horse, I got more ambitious and wanted to go to shows and hunt a little. Again my father decreed it could not be done with only a grass fed pony, and so I had to ‘earn’ the money to buy oats or pony nuts.



Luckily by this time I had taken up bell ringing and we got paid rather well for ringing at weddings! I never hired a horse box but hacked everywhere in the company of other pony owners, covering many miles to attend gymkhanas, hunts etc and visit the blacksmith, where a new set of shoes cost 16 shillings. At Redfields Farm over 3 years I have met most weather conditions, but surprisingly never torrential rain. Summer is good in the sunshine, but the birds scatter the poo; winter frosts make the poo into one solid mass that can weigh a ton; rain makes it soggy and somehow it gets everywhere; poached fields make pushing the barrow a hard job as the wheel falls into every rut; winter mud gets you slipping and sliding everywhere and threatens to suck off the welly boots. Recently when looking for someone to help me I asked a new volunteer, slightly tongue in cheek, if she would like to join the team. Oh yes she exclaimed ‘I love poo-picking’. You never know what we horse lovers like doing best! I shall miss it.

Rotary Club Presentation



We were recently invited to send a representative to the Rotary Club, on Aldershot’s Presentation Evening, when the money raised during December’s Christmas Float collection is distributed to several local charities. I was pleased to accept a cheque for £300 on behalf of Hants and Surrey Borders RDA. Each benefitting charity was asked to speak for a minute or two about their charity; what it does and what the money will help with. It was interesting to hear about other equally deserving local charities and the ways that they help a wide range of people with differing needs. Many thanks to Rachel for liaising with the Rotary Club to get our ‘slot’ and to Fiona, Martin and Victoria who knocked on doors with collecting tins, while I tried my best to keep up with a very tall Father Christmas as he greeted all the children who had come out of their homes to meet him! Helping the Rotary with their Christmas collection is one way of repaying the support that local Rotary Clubs give to our group.

“Pony-riding is a great way for a disabled child to have their physiotherapy—it holds their interest and is great fun”

Fundraising—and Fleet Carnival 2017

As we settle down to our new routine at the Four Seasons and the extra administration that our move generated slows down, we must not forget the need to apply ourselves to fund-raising for the group. We are grateful to the Lady Captain at North Hants Golf Club, Breeda White, who is going to donate a portion of the money raised during her year as Captain, to Hants and Surrey Borders RDA. North Hants Golf Club is always very supportive of our group and that is much appreciated. The biggest opportunity for fund-raising this year is as Fleet Carnival's Charity for 2017. The Carnival takes place on the weekend of 30th June – 2nd July and we have an allocated prime position on Calthorpe Park, where the procession terminates and most of the weekend's events occur. Here we can fund-raise in any way we choose from 5pm Friday until 6pm Sunday. The theme for the Carnival is 'Under the Sea' and any ideas for the procession float are very welcome. One suggestion is having last year's rag doll rider on a giant sea horse as part of a giant aquarium Ambitious? Watch this space! Your ideas to make the most of our time on Calthorpe Park will be appreciated and I hope that we can cover a good many hours actively fund-raising with a rota of volunteers/helpers. Please put your thinking-caps on.

"Riding improves core and general muscle strength and communication skills are improved measurably"

New Pastures for the Team

Our hard-working ponies, Merlin, Pablo and Smokey, all have a future to suit their individual needs to look forward to.

One of our volunteers, Jenny Healey, generously offered to care for Merlin in his retirement at her own home. Merlin quickly settled into a life of leisure with Jenny's mare Angel to keep him company across the fence. There are also a couple of quite large goats sharing the premises; no official word from Merlin about what he thinks of them! When I visited recently he was having new front shoes fitted and looked well and content.



Merlin

Pablo will soon be going to pastures new to be a family pony. He will be loved and cared for: earning his keep giving rides on a lead-rein to his young family.



Pablo



Smokey will be staying where he is for the time being. He will have Pat's Quiz for company and the rest of the animals at Redfields Farm.



Smokey

The fourth pony that made up the team was Flash, generously loaned to us twice a week for several years by his owner Clare Dobbin—thank you Clare. Flash is still owned by Clare and ridden by her family.

Our "long-serving team" are well-cared for and have earned their semi-retirement—leaving fond memories with many of our volunteers and children throughout the years.

Introducing—The current team

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- The games we play while sitting on a pony involves bending and stretching and this is strengthening their core muscles without them knowing it—and it's fun.



Toby



Ben



Scooby Doo



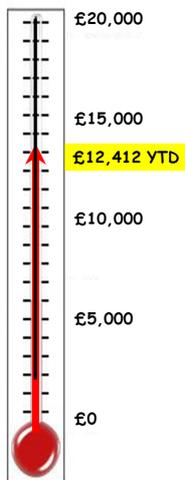
Choice



Chocolate

Fundraising Target

(Financial Year ending March 2017)
 (YTD end January 2017 - 10 months)



We're on the Web
www.hsbrda.co.uk

AND FINALLY

Thank you to all Sponsors, Supporters, Volunteers and Helpers who make it possible for us to keep running, to keep helping local children and help to make a difference year after year – we really do appreciate you all

Hampshire & Surrey Borders RDA

(Registered Charity No: 1074282)

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