Stratford upon Avon RDA

Company No.7623057 Charity no. 1142590

NEWSLETTER

Issue No 37 – Dec 2022

A Member Group of RDA Stratford-upon-Avon

It's what you can do that counts

We're back to our new 'normal'!



We have had such a busy year! It began with continued regular riding for all our riders albeit still with caution. RDA competitions were planned, after a 2-year break, at National, Regional and County level, both live and virtual, and it looked promising that we would return to the Clwyd Special Riding Centre for a holiday. When the weather allowed, we had some great rides around the glorious countryside of our farm location thanks to the generous farm owners who for another year planted a huge field of sunflowers for us to ride through and sell. Queen's Platinum Jubilees, pancake races, dressed up for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, were challenged with a Handy Pony course in the paddock and had spooky Halloween rides through the woods. Many of our riders have gained more confidence and achieved RDA proficiency and Endeavour awards for their riding skills and their knowledge of horse care and tack. We were able to hold three more 'Tea with a Pony' sessions for residents of Galanos House in Southam, Kineton Manor Nursing Home and Deaf'initely Independent in Warwick, who enjoyed watching our riders, patting, and feeding our ponies and enjoying home made cakes and a cuppa.

Amazingly, from January, we have been able to give nearly 900 sessions to 29 riders and 'Tea with a Pony' participants thanks to our wonderful team of horses, ponies, coaches and helpers.

Sadly, we said 'goodbye' to riders Reuben and Sophie who left for pastures new. However, over the year, we have welcomed four new young riders, Taylor, Ricardo, Oliver and Isaac.



Charlotte also left for college. We were so excited to hear that she finally managed to take up her place this Autumn at The Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy in Christchurch after a long battle for funding. She has settled well and looks after a horse called Miller with another student. We look forward to her coming to ride in college holidays so that we can hear all her news. A great achievement and a wonderful opportunity for Charlotte, living independently, whilst studying what she loves.

Very sadly our dear pony, Keira, lost her battle to ill health. She was a treasure and much loved by our riders and volunteers for her calm and gentle nature and her support to our riders during our sessions and competitions. She is so greatly missed.



The search continues for a fitting replacement.

Our volunteer team has been joined by Katherine, Lesley, Julia and Cath who bring a myriad of skills and we have also welcomed Ruth Godfrey as our new West Mercia Regional Chair and Paul Ringer as the temporary CEO of RDA UK after Ed Bracher left at the end of March.

Congratulations to Val Shone, who gained the new **RDA Activity Leader award** which will allow her to run 'Tea with a Pony' sessions, unmounted static horse sessions, horse care proficiency tests and ASDAN without a Coach present.

We would also like to welcome Hannah Spring to our Coach team. Hannah is currently studying at Moreton Morrell College and passed her assessment in October and will be a huge asset to RDA.



Our competition diary started with the **West Mercia Regional Qualifiers** in May. Heather, Harry, and Charlotte entered. Heather and Harry were 1st in their classes and Charlotte 2nd, so they all qualified for the RDA National Championships. Harry was also presented the Rosemary Stretch award for the best Warwickshire Countryside Challenge score and the trophy for best overall CC score. Isabella, who has her own pony Cookie, and is registered through our Group as an 'Independent Rider' also qualified for classes in Dressage and Show jumping.









Next was the **Warwickshire County Fun Day** where Jo White, Jo Pratt, Jules and Kathryn all entered the Town & Country Challenge, Showjumping and Horse Care & Knowledge classes. It was such a hot day! They came away with a stack of rosettes and scored well especially Jo White who gained 98% in her class and was presented with the Rosemary Stretch cup for the highest overall score.









The **RDA National Championships** in July proved to be one of the hottest weekends. Isabella competed in on the Friday and Saturday and gained 2nd place in a very competitive Grade 4 Dressage class only just missing out on the top spot by 0.5%, 2nd place in Showjumping and 5th in SEIB Showing class. She also qualified for the British Dressage Para Summer Championships and was crowned Bronze Champion in Grade IV and 3rd in the Silver section.











Sadly, the National Champs Sunday classes were cancelled due to the hot weather and our 3 riders were disappointed not to be able to compete. However, they have since entered the RDA **National Virtual Championships** where Harry and Heather were both 1st and Class Champions in their classes and Charlotte was 2nd.

Congratulations to all of our riders for their effort and perseverance and a thank you to our coaches and helpers who enabled their great results.

Various training sessions have updated our volunteers in safe mounting and leading practices RDA UK webinars were attended by coaches and volunteers in many various topics such as Safeguarding, Disability Awareness and Autism. Our AGM was held in June.



We had fun for **The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.** Riders, ponies and volunteers were encouraged to wear red, white and blue and we held a best dressed hat competition. Lots of cake was consumed and there were royal themed sessions.









Following the success of our first **'Tea with a Pony'** session we arranged three more over the summer. Gallanos House residents came for our first one having so enjoyed their visit in 2021.





Sadly, it was a blowy day so blankets at the ready and no Gazebo! We were joined again by Sarah, our Founder, Beryl Sainsbury's daughter, and she was thrilled to meet with the residents who had been friends whilst Beryl was also a resident.



Our second visit was from residents of Kineton Manor Nursing Home, thankfully the day was much warmer

They did enjoy meeting and feeding our ponies.



Residents from Deaf'initely Independent joined us for the last session. One of our riders, Lisa, is a long-time resident, but her fellow residents had never seen her ride. She was so proud to show off riding Alfie and brought him to meet them at the end of her session.











We enjoy running these sessions and know that the residents get a lot from the experience too.



After 2 years of not being able to visit the **Clwyd Special Riding Centre** it was a joy to finally be able to stay there again. Five riders and fourteen volunteers and carers arrived on Thursday September 8th. We were let loose on the mechanical horse in the CELT building. All the riders, except for Jo W, chose to ride through virtual landscapes with Jo P riding at the seaside and encountering a light house and big waves in the sea. Heather had to duck beneath tree arches and thoroughly enjoyed herself, whilst looking very elegant in the saddle. Jo W chose to ride virtual dressage and was disconcerted to be told that the screen would be switched off and the horse would be programmed to cycle through walk trot and canter, with the rider's pressure on the saddle and reins being recorded. However, the program malfunctioned with Jo being left at canter rather than the halt which she expected. The printout of the rider's stability and pressure on the reins made for interesting reading!

It was during this session that we learned of the sad news of the death of Queen Elizbeth ll. However, as Jill later pointed out, the Queen's love of horses was well known, so we were doing something that she would have approved of.



We met our ponies on Friday morning. Jo P rode Little Jack, a dark bay cob used for riding and equine learning, Kathryn rode big Jack a dark bay Welsh cob that was used for riding and driving. Anna rode a lovely piebald with a beautiful tail, rather unkindly called Moo on account of his colour similarity to Friesian cows. Heather rode Mack, a very pretty strawberry roan cob with a beautiful blond mane and tail, which like big Jack was used for riding and driving. Jo rode Brian a Clydesdale cross cob cross, use for riding and equine learning. They all seemed to suit us well and later in the day we were able enjoy a ride round the all-weather tracks on the site. This was a first for one for our volunteers who had been warned about the steepness of the hills, but agreed it was worth the climb for the great views.





Saturday morning saw us all riding out and about again after completing stable duties and grooming ponies. Some of the grooming entailed complicated plaiting of manes and tales. Brian decided he was exempt from this on the grounds that he was a heavy horse and would feel silly. Big Jack, with Kathryn aboard, was judged by our two chefs (Donna and Hilary) to be the overall prettiest pony on account of his magnificent tail plait and the kiss curl in his forelock. This was achieved with the use of hair rollers!

In the afternoon those who wished could watch the accession ceremony of King Charles III on the big screen in the CELT building. Some of the riders spent the time doing horse-related activities which turned out to be picking up horse poo in the field. I gather a volunteer used her rake to practice her golf swing! Heather turned out to be our champion poo picker.





Sunday was not a day of rest as we were up and about catching and grooming ponies, before going out for a ride. We had to be back in time for carriage driving with the Wrexham carriage driving group. This is always a highlight of the holiday and this year it was no exception as Anna and Heather in particular will confirm.

In the afternoon some of the riders took on the countryside challenge that was set out in a nearby paddock. From the feedback I had from those that were brave enough to attempt this, I gather the word challenge was most appropriate as riding across steep slopes whilst trying to undertake the required tasks was not easy. Other riders had no less a challenge in the indoor school as they had to ride Verena's notoriously difficult circles which could, at the last minute, turn into figures of eight!

Monday morning came and with it some soft Welsh drizzle. Having come prepared for heavy rain we all donned our raincoats. These were not really needed for our last ride round the all-weather tracks, as the heavy rain never came. We said goodbye to our ponies before having brunch and packing up to leave.



We had an amazing time at CSRC. The staff there made us feel immediately welcome, the weather was warm and dry, the ponies were lovely, the food was excellent as was the company of the Stratford volunteers and carers. I think riders, volunteers and carers all gained from the CSRC experience – written by Jo White

Our second **Christmas Bingo** fundraising event was a great evening. We raised a whopping £1600! Over 100 people arrived to take part in our Bingo fundraiser and the serious task of finding the number on their cards began. Our caller, Keith, kept up a good pace, so we had to concentrate hard. There were some super prizes for 'lines' and 'full house' which brought some lovely smiles especially from Val who won line and house in the same game!





We sold so many raffle tickets for prizes, which included tokens kindly donated by Crowne Plaza Stratford, Fosseway Garden Centre, The Bell Shenington, Stratford Racecourse, The Plough Stretton on Fosse, The Royal Oak Whatcote, Seccombes Estate Agents, Flower Thyme, Warwickshire Hunt RC, Wendy O'Hare Beauty, Loxleys Restaurant, Bluebell Boarding, Moreton Morrell Arena Hire and Bill Levett Eventing together with many further prizes donated by generous individuals.

Thank you so much to Cynnie and her team who once again donated the Bingo cards and ran the door, sold raffle tickets, and to Keith who called the numbers, and generally helped to make the evening such a success. Thank you to everyone who came and to those that couldn't but donated anyway. We hope you had an enjoyable evening and look forward to welcoming you at other events in the future.



The year is drawn to an end with our **Christmas Party & Awards Ceremony**

This year we were by our County Chair, Rosie Fetherston Dilke who joined our Coaches and various award donators to present our trophies to our amazing riders and volunteers. Attended by extended riders' families and some of our sponsors and supporters it is our time to celebrate and get into the Christmas spirit. A welcome visit from the man with a white 'mask' and beard, dressed in red, brought a present for each of our riders.

The full list of award winners for this year are:

Hughes Family Award for the rider '**with fortitude and perseverance**' was presented to **Matthew Andersson**
The **Heather Rhead Award** for '**Confidence**' **(Jr)** was presented to **Kathryn Burnett**
The **Holly Hopkins for Confidence (Sen)** was presented to **Anna Scholder-Harper**
Claudia Paul Award for '**Determination**' was presented to **Harrison Oldrey**
Jack Showjumping Award was presented to **Isabella Benfield**
Claudia Paul Award for being a daredevil was presented to **Ricardo Coelho**
Tracey Perks Award for '**the rider who consistently tries hard**' was presented to **Fi Martin with a special rosette to Jess Mann**
Neil Hancock Award for the '**one who has made good progress**' was presented to **Chris Gerrard**
Pauline Richards Award for '**the rider who can meet the challenge**' was presented to **Taylor Oakes**
Countryside Challenge Award for **the highest score at the RDA National Champs** was presented to **Harry Jones**
South Award for the '**Most Improved adult rider**' was presented to **Lisa McLaughlin**
Liz Jackson award presented by Simon Jackson for **the Most Improved Child Rider** was presented to **Leah Oldrey with a special rosette to Scarlett Lee Lewis**
Horse Care & Knowledge award was presented to **Louis & Ellis Thomas**
Stratford RDA Achievement Award was presented to **Heather Rhead**
Beryl Sainsbury Special Achievement Award was presented to **Harry Jones**

Over the year, the following riders have shown their confidence, skills and knowledge and have been presented with
Grade 2 Riding Proficiency **Leah Oldrey**
Grade 2 Horsecare **Archie Parsons, Ellis & Louis Thomas**
Grade 3 Riding **Charlotte Seager, Ellis & Louis Thomas**
Grade 3 Riding Proficiency & Horse Care **Harry Jones**

Endeavour Certificate
Harrison Oldrey & Scarlett Lee Lewis for dismounting and putting up their stirrups unaided
Harrison Oldrey consistently good steering throughout session
Louis Thomas, Lisa McLaughlin & Harry Jones for transitioning to a different horse
Matthew Andersson for hard work going to the gym to get leg strength back
Peter Colby for confidently riding Diesel
Lisa McLaughlin for confident mounting

The **Boris award** was presented to **Val Shone** for the volunteer ‘always being willing’ after gaining the RDA Activities Leader Award.

The **Young Volunteer of the Year Award** was presented to **Hannah Spring**

Over and Above Awards were presented to **volunteers, Lynda Critchlow, Angela Moorhouse, Karen Johnson, Christine Elliott, Christine Locke and Claire Gardner**



RDA UK Volunteer Long Service Awards
Karen Arnold – 20 years service
Verena Telling – 25 years service

We are very proud that our volunteer, Isobel Ollis, received the **RDA President’s Award** in November for outstanding service to RDA. Isobel said, “I wanted to tell you what a wonderful day I had this week at Hartpury College getting my award. There were several demonstrations, an Italian Olympic rider, Gloucester Police and Maisemore RDA group. There were 7 of us from various parts of the country. Princess Ann was very chatty and put us all at our ease. I received a certificate and badge. Felt very proud, if a bit mesmerised. Speaking to the others there it made me realise what an amazing Group we have with wonderful Members all of whom deserve such an award.” Our congratulations and thanks Isobel. Your Award was very well deserved!

Congratulations to ALL our Riders & Volunteers for their achievements in 2022















We are so grateful to everyone who has supported us so generously this year. Our thanks go to:

- The support we receive in so many ways from Des & Rosemary Wells, Home Farm owners including allowing us to ride around the fields, use their paddock for the summer and for the beautiful sunflowers.
- Our wonderful new and long-standing Rider Sponsors who are exceptional and return year after year, especially in the current climate.
- Admington Fun Ride for another huge donation from their Fun Ride
- CROWN Riding Club for setting up a fundraising page to receive donations for the sale of their photographs.
- FSL Projects of Stratford who nominated us as their Charity of the Year for donations from their events.
- Robert Lunn and Lowth, Solicitors, Stratford, who have added us to their list of recommended charities to support within their billing.
- Walnut Hill Equine Veterinary Clinic for their sponsorship of this year's Christmas presents
- Kenilworth Lions for their contribution towards the Awards Ceremony and party.
- The Plough, Stretton on Fosse for the proceeds of their Quiz Night.
- Saddlers' Company, Betty Kensit Fund, Gravelines Trust, Oaks Solar, Dorridge Probus Club, Inspire Ladies Group, and kind and very generous individual donations.
- Wellesbourne Lions for offering a donation from us joining them collecting with Father Christmas.
- Claire Gardner who has continued to keep us supplied in Jam and Marmalade for sale.
- Christine for the donations from the sale of her eggs
- Those who have donated tack and equipment for use or to sell.
- Laura Dempsey for all the saddle fitting
- Design One for our website support
- Pat Layton who has been selling her second book, equine and household items that have been donated at sales and on eBay.

We would also like to thank our amazing team of coaches, Karen, Pat, Verena, Puffin and Hannah and Jill and her team of helpers, who have worked tirelessly to ensure the welfare of our ponies and help with our various activities.

It is through all your amazing support that we have been able to offer new opportunities and keep our riders 'in the saddle' and keep 'Team Stratford' flourishing.

We are looking forward to welcoming 2023 and to continue to offer opportunities to our riders. Thank you for riding along with us!



We would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope that we can see you either at our sessions, or at one of our events in 2023.

Stratford upon Avon RDA

Proud to be one of nearly 500 Groups in the UK with 28,000 participants helped by 19,000 volunteers.

Don't want to wait for our Latest News? Log into our website and 'subscribe' to receive it as it happens
www.rda-stratford.org.uk or follow us on Facebook

Dates for the diary:

RDA National Championships – 14-16th July 2023

Ways that you could help us:



We are an entirely self-funded organisation that relies on donations and fundraising activities to provide the important services we offer. Your donations, no matter how small might make the difference.

For example, you, your organisation, or someone you know, could ***sponsor a rider*** for as little as £200. As a sponsor you will receive our Stratford RDA newsletter and receive regular updates on the progress of your rider. Contact Fiona, our Sponsorship Secretary at sponsor@rda-stratford.org.uk to find out how.

Alternatively, you might want to make a donation towards the upkeep of one of the ponies. Our current livery costs are £400 per month per pony so every penny gratefully received will be used towards supporting these costs as well as providing the other services so valued by our riders.

You can either donate a lump sum directly into our bank account or use **Give As You Live** or PayPal to donate. Alternatively, you may wish to pay an amount each month, quarterly, or annually by standing order to spread the donation. Whatever you decide we will be most grateful.

If you would like to pay by Charities Aid Foundation cheque, please make cheque payable to: 'Stratford upon Avon RDA'

Note : GiftAid may be applicable to your donations. We ask that you notify us if a UK taxpayer and you are willing to give us the Gift Aid contribution as well as this could increase your donation meaning that if you give £10 using Gift Aid, it's worth £12.50 to us.

If you **online** shop Nominate us 'Stratford upon Avon RDA' as your charity on **Amazon Smile** and we will receive a donation as a percentage of your order with no cost to you!

Via Give As You Live Give As You Live is an online fundraising service. You can either donate, or if you are taking part in an event you may consider entering on our behalf. You can donate or **set up a fundraising page.** Register to shop with over 200 stores including John Lewis, Amazon and Marks & Spencer through www.giveasyoulive.com making our Stratford upon Avon RDA as your nominated charity and you can help us without even leaving your chair!

Donations of equipment, services or items for sale/raffle
For example:

- Farm produce
- Home decorations
- Entertainment Tickets
- Gift/Events Vouchers
- Equestrian equipment new or second-hand
- Stationery/Printing

People do all sorts of things to raise money for RDA and it's always appreciated. Whatever you're planning, why not get in touch and find out how we can support you.

Hold your own fundraising event
For example:

- Sponsored ride/run/swim/walk/skydive
- Coffee morning
- Cake/book stall
- Fashion/Drama show

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