

Hampshire & Surrey Borders RDA

Riding for the Disabled Association

Welcome

Welcome to our Spring 2018 Newsletter. We are all very saddened by the loss of our President, Rachel Plumbe, who as group Chairman for 17 years, made HSRDA what it is today, and of another of our volunteers Sylvia Hebdon: tributes to both ladies are in this issue.

We hope you enjoy reading all of our news. Find out how RDA is helping disabled children in Kenya and why one of our volunteers has a passion for bell-ringing! Snow and bitterly cold weather has led to the cancellation of one or two riding sessions this term but we are looking forward to a long summer term, riding in the warm sunshine.

A very big thank you to Rod Marshall from the Farnborough and Fleet U3As, who has agreed to take over as our newsletter editor. We are always seeking items for our next issue. Please send articles, of any length, and photographs to lesley.bull@tiscali.co.uk.

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Rachel Plumbe

Aldershot Riding for the Disabled was granted full membership of RDA in October 1976 and Rachel joined the group as a volunteer, along with her daughter's pony Snowy, in 1978. After a spell as Secretary, Rachel took over as Group Organiser in 1997, a role that later had a name change to Chairman. Rachel was a member of RDA for 40 years and in the 17 years she was at the helm, steered the group through many changes, including a name change to Hants and Surrey Borders RDA in 2012, leading the way in the search for new ponies and premises and taking the group from strength to strength.

Long before mobile phones and the internet Rachel was in charge of the day to day running of the group, organised both Tuesday and Thursday morning's riding sessions – a full time job in itself – and took the lead in fund raising. Rachel always could get blood out of a stone!

She recruited and trained the group's volunteers, all of whom she welcomed with a smile and trained with practised skill to make HSRDA a highly professional group of people working together with one aim. She embraced all the changes that happened over the years, and dealt with the almost unending demands of bureaucracy with characteristic good grace.

In 2014 Rachel retired and a retirement party was held for her at Crondall Village Hall. The number of guests present and the many gifts Rachel received showed in what high esteem she was held. In 'retirement' Rachel continued to take an active role in the group, then celebrating its 40th anniversary, becoming its elected President in January 2017. She was always ready to help and willing to share her wealth of experience whenever needed, as well as offer a guiding hand to the new Chairman.

Her leadership and dedication to RDA, coupled with an unshakeable determination, was this group's anchor for many years and Hants and Surrey Borders RDA remains a testament to a quite remarkable woman.



Sylvia Hebdon

HSBRDA lost another valued volunteer in February, after Sylvia lost her long and brave fight with illness.

Sylvia joined the group in 2008. During her ten years as a volunteer she helped at riding sessions, turned her hand to photography when we needed good photographs and as a member of the fundraising team she was always to be found in the front line at events.

She joined us in last year's Fleet Carnival procession, walking alongside our float, shaking a collecting bucket to raise funds for the Carnival. In recent years Sylvia - who had a talent for making computers bend to her will! - did an excellent job producing our group newsletters, making them eye-catching and informative.

We will miss Sylvia's friendly, smiling face and miss seeing her out and about in Crookham Village with her beloved dog Milo.



Smokey

Smokey has been brought out of retirement and is enjoying his role as an RDA pony again. In the last few months we have needed an extra pony for our rides and the reliable, experienced Smokey has stepped in. He is enjoying being back to RDA work and we thank Pat for letting us borrow him.



Kim and Smokey in Crondall village



Who IS that handsome pony?

The riding arena at Four Seasons Equestrian Centre has mirrors down one long side and in two corners. One full-length mirror has Smokey very intrigued, and helpers and children laughing, when he goes right up to it to meet the pony he sees in there.

To keep him fit and exercised, Smokey, in the company of his friends Merlin and Pablo, has been walking through Crondall village every Wednesday for over 10 years with a team of pony walkers, led by Fiona and Kim.

Kim writes: He is well known by many locals and they get confused if we go on another day! We know the dustman, the fish man and many local people; people even stop in cars to say 'Hi!' to him. Merlin and Pablo are no longer with us on our walks but they are remembered and often get asked about too.

RDA in Kenya

When riding hat regulations changed we were left with several hats, still in very good condition, that we could no longer use. We hoped to find a good home for them rather than simply throw them away. Through a contact in South Region RDA they found their way to RDA in Kenya. This fabulous photograph of a rider having a lesson wearing one of our old hats led me to ask the sender to write a few words about RDA there.



Thank you so much for letting us have the hats they are absolutely being put to good use. Our riders are aged from 4 to 40 at present so we need a variety of sizes. We cannot access them here so are very grateful to you for thinking of us.

RDA Kenya was established by Sue Anderson in 1996. If I remember correctly the first lessons took place in 1997.

We own five horses of differing shapes and sizes, the right horse for the job is difficult to find as most of the breeding is led by racing so a lot of thoroughbreds; mind you we have two ex race horses who are fabulous.

The lessons take place basically in a field next door to where the horses are stabled. Just as you are in UK we are very volunteer dependent although we do have a groom [known as a syce] to lead the horses.

We work with riders with a broad spectrum of disabilities, including Down's syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy and as is the way of things here some who don't really have a diagnosis. Usually they present with some degree of developmental delay so we simply work with what we see.

The provision of therapy and back up services is very limited here although it has improved enormously in the last 20 years. There also still exists in Kenya a stigma attached to disability. This unfortunately leads to many mothers being ostracized by their families and left to cope alone and disabled children may often be kept hidden at home.

So in addition to riding being the most effective therapy which I know you totally understand, we are providing a platform for disability to be seen and accepted. People are amazed by what a disabled rider can achieve on horseback.

To give an example, if a young hyperactive autistic child can begin to sit peacefully on his horse throughout the lesson, then he may begin to make eye contact with the instructor and

helpers, listen and follow instructions and join in with group activities. When these changes transfer into daily life in school and at home the effect is huge, the child becomes more socially acceptable and can begin to learn.

In the case of a child with a physical disability often they may be able to sit up better on horseback than is otherwise possible. With improvement in their balance co-ordination and muscle strength, posture improves and if you can sit up well this leads to all sorts of benefits. Learning to feed yourself is massive and a child who is sitting up can interact with the people around them.

I am sure you can see how this can lead to a huge improvement in quality of life, especially in an institutional setting or at home with an exhausted single mum.

Riding is also an opportunity for someone who may lead a very limited life to have a unique experience outside on a horse.

Stigma is one issue but it is very difficult on a purely practical level to go out and about with a disabled person in Kenya. We have encountered a number of children who before they were discovered by a local outreach programme had never been outside. One of them was thirteen years old.

This all sounds as if RDA here is very different but in many ways it really is very similar, with our patient kind horses working their magic and the riders having a great therapy session and lots of fun.

Thank you all once again.

Jane Tyrrell
RDA Kenya

Fun with Elvis at North Hants Golf Club's curry evening

We were delighted that Breda White, Ladies Captain at North Hants Golf Club during 2017, chose Hants and Surrey Borders RDA as one of her charities for her year as Captain. Some of our volunteers are members of North Hants Golf Club and our group was well represented at their Curry Evening at Gulshan Indian restaurant in Fleet. During the evening we were entertained by Elvis who worked his way around the room choosing dance partners for a song or two!



Margaret enjoying a dance with Elvis

At the end of her year in office, Breda invited Lesley to North Hants Golf Club where she presented Lesley with a cheque for £2,447.58. This is a huge boost to our funds and many thanks go to all the members of North Hants Golf Club for supporting Breda at her fund raising events, and for this very welcome donation.

Quiz Night 2017

Wendy writes:

Thank you very much everyone that supported the quiz and all the friends, family, workmates and neighbours who made up the teams. It was a really fun evening and we raised a fantastic £1,018.50.

It was a terrific effort on the part of all concerned - those who helped set up, transforming the hall into a place for a fun evening (I loved the buzz and chatter), the brilliant kitchen team, those who quizzed and those who magically restored order to the hall at the end of the evening and helped load the cars.

Super special thanks to Veronica and her husband Graham, who set a quiz that was just right and even I knew one of the answers!

... and the winning team!



Frensham Riding Club

Frensham Riding Club is a small but sociable affiliated Riding Club. Formed in 1968, the emphasis is on enjoying their horses in both a competitive and non-competitive atmosphere, members competing in disciplines such as endurance, dressage and top-level showing.

They very kindly donated £500 to our funds. As the accompanying letter said: 'The RDA do such a lot of good work with disabled children and adults and we know that equipment is always needed'.

Thank you to all Frensham R C members for their generous donation.

Riding or bell-ringing?

'Legs, legs... legs...' shouts the riding instructor to the novice as their horse approaches the jump reluctantly.

'Pull right through, pull harder... pull...' shouts the ringing instructor to the learner as their bell starts to go out of control.

There are so many similarities between ringing and riding, but I have been hooked on both since my teenage years. By the time I was eleven I was lucky enough to have my own Exmoor pony, and was as horse mad as a great many teenage girls: by the time I was fourteen I had the bell ringing bug.

I had been invited to visit the ringers at my local church, and having watched and tried I knew it was something I would really enjoy. Back in the 1950's the team of ringers were all men, so what they thought of this group of three girls joining their group I am not sure. We wore wide gathered skirts, with a couple of net petticoats underneath, and soon learnt to stick the excess between our knees when ringing.



Both riding and ringing demand first of all the ability to 'master the beast'. One cannot enjoy much riding if you do not have complete mastery over your mount, and certainly uncontrolled ringing not only makes a terrible noise but you won't get far if you cannot control your bell. So it takes a few months of solo ringing under close guidance to get that control, standing in the circle of bell ropes rather than going round and round on your own in the dressage school.

Once control is gained in both disciplines much can be enjoyed. A gentle hack out, learning to jump, mastering the intricacies of dressage. In ringing one progresses to ringing rounds first, where the 'treble' bell, always the highest note, starts and all the others follow in sequence to the 'tenor' or lowest note. It must be even and the spacing between the sound of the bells exact to get a good sound. After rounds come more challenging bell ringing 'methods'. This is what we call change ringing. It starts simply, and can get increasingly more complicated, as the novice becomes more proficient, requiring quite a lot of homework and much practice and guidance from more experienced ringers.



"Both riding and ringing demand ... the ability to 'master the beast'"

Like riding, bell ringing has its own vocabulary. Set, plain hunting, backstroke, handstroke as opposed to stand, canter, extended trot, martingale, girth and so on. Bells and ropes have to be maintained as does the horse and its tack, so it is not all fun! Vacuuming the ringing room, clearing pigeon droppings out of the bell chamber or mucking out?

There are some differences though. Riding is an expensive hobby – horses have to eat, have the correct tack and shoes. Ringing is relatively cheap in an established tower. A £10 annual membership fee is common, and a pound or two if you visit another tower. Riding can be a solitary affair, but ringing is essentially team work. A group of ringers will meet to practice. You cannot ring without a team and so there is a very active social life, with visits to the pub after practice and day-long tower outings where the team will visit several other churches. We all belong to a wider organisation called a Guild (here it is the Guildford Diocesan Guild of Bell Ringers) who are there for help and guidance – a little like the Pony Club.

"... there is a very active social life ..."

I personally have rung in many hundreds of different towers and in Australia as well, and although my ringing has never reached the highest standards I have achieved a reasonable level. I now enjoy teaching this skill to others at St Michael's in Aldershot, but often ring at Farnborough, Farnham and Crondall.

Above all, towers are always welcoming, whether you call in for a practice night session while on holiday or if you think you might like to learn. One does not have to be a church member, but once proficient, ringers are expected to ring for services in the church. No more lie-ins on a Sunday morning!

Children can learn from about the age of 10, but many ringers start when they retire. Duke of Edinburgh 'new skills' is a common way that youngsters start. Not all who try become committed to ringing, and recruiting new ringers is always an ongoing task. This year we are trying to recruit 1,400 new ringers nationwide in honour of the 1,400 who were killed in WWI.

So enjoy your riding in the fresh open air, but I think I will enjoy the warmth of the ringing room and the feel of the ropes.

Any takers out there?

Clare le Marie

Thank you!

Fleet Scottish Country Dance Society kindly donated a cheque for £100 to our funds. The picture shows John, from Fleet Scottish Country Dance, presenting the cheque to Sue. John and his wife May stayed to watch Tuesday group giving their riding lessons in the lovely sunshine.



TOMBOLA

We need items for our tombola stall
at the **Zebon Copse Fete** on
Sunday, 1 July

and cakes for the refreshment stall

Please email hantsandsurreybordersrda@hotmail.co.uk
if you have items to donate. Thank you!

Fundraising

Don't forget you can support HSBRDA, and be in with a chance to win a big cash prize, by buying a Hart Lottery ticket for their weekly draws. For every £1 ticket bought we receive 50p.

One of our volunteers recently won a Kindle Paperwhite. Perhaps you will be our next winner!



SUPPORTING

HANTS AND SURREY BORDERS RIDING FOR THE DISABLED

We're on the web - www.hsbrda.co.uk

THIS SPRING
be someone's sunshine

Supporting our cause may not change the whole world, but it could change the world for us

- Your support will make a difference to our community – play for just £1 a week so we can improve the lives of local people
- For every £1 ticket our cause will receive 50p back, a further 10p goes to other great causes in the local area
- Give us a little to make BIG impact and create lasting change
- Whilst it's better to give than receive – you also get the chance to win up to £25,000 every week!

To start supporting - visit:
www.hartlottery.co.uk
and search for: Riding

Supporters must be 16 years of age or older



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)

For more information please contact Lesley Bull on 07858 694636 or email – hantsandsurreybordersrda@hotmail.co.uk

A Member of the Riding for the Disabled Association Incorporating Carriage Driving
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It's what you
can
do that counts



Riding for the Disabled Association

www.rda.org.uk