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RDA East Region Newsletter

No 4.

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Welcome to the latest edition of the RDA East Region newsletter. You will probably notice some changes this year - mostly unavoidable, and entirely due last February's total-loss house fire (for reference, never store your computer's back-up disks next to the computer or even in the same house)! But seriously, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that sent my family their kind wishes at that difficult time, and for the help that I received throughout the Region during our period of homelessness. But the worst is over, we've won through and (apart from a small army of builders/ plumbers /electricians in semi-permanent residence) we are back within our own four walls!



Two quick appeals: does anyone still have a copy of the photo CD we distributed last year? If so, I would love to borrow a copy to duplicate for my files please. Also, our aged Regional caravan is finally expiring (the body-panels are actually detaching from the frame). Does anyone have a 15' plus touring caravan that they are prepared to donate? Minor repairs and cosmetic problems are not an issue, but it must be dry please.

I hope you enjoy our latest offering, and look forward to receiving loads of 'copy' for next years edition!

With kind regards, Sue Diggins

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Cover picture by Hanah Harding, (helper).

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My Five Minutes of Fame



One of the riders that I teach at Buckenham House Group RDA, Lucy Kelly, was kind enough to put my name forwards to the BBC for the Unsung Sporting Heroes competition. It is extremely flattering when someone shows their appreciation of your efforts like this, but between you and me, I didn't expect to hear anymore about it. Imagine my surprise then, when Shaun Peel from BBC Look East phoned to say that I had been selected as one of the top 3 candidates, and he wanted to come and film one of my lessons!

Well it was all a bit of a rush after that, we had only 24 hours to mobilise the Buckenham House Team, and several phone calls later we were all ready with our RDA sweatshirts on, the horses were polished and the risk assessment done. The committee and helpers pulled out all the stops, the proprietor and staff at Middle Farm Equestrian could not have been more helpful getting the horses ready and tidying up the indoor school, then suddenly there we were ~ Wednesday evening and ready to go. Mr Peel and his cameraman arrived and I was wired up with a microphone and told to carry on as normal and pretend the BBC men were not there, so off we went.

The riders, Lucy Kelly, Peggy Holden, Caradoc Lindley and Peter Gorman did themselves proud, showing off their best riding style and thankfully managed NOT to fall off as they all had done during my nightmare of the previous night!

The helpers, Chrissie Gooderham, Martin Kelly, Jackie Scott, Chloe Luccetti, Denise Kennett and Judy Burroughes were absolute stars as always, although a little less ready to make cheeky comments than is usual in our lessons. (Note to self - get my own cameraman to keep the helpers under control!!)



The horses, Dougal, Breeze, Willow and Arran behaved beautifully and batted not a single eyelash at the camera, although they were well aware that it was there as Arran proved when Lucy was interviewed while still sitting on his back ~ he stood at attention, 4 square, head up and ears pricked throughout the whole interview ~ what a poser!

I am most grateful of all to my friend and colleague Lynn Fox, who teaches our groups Friday lessons, for coming along specially to act as a second pair of "instructor eyes" to ensure everyone was safe at all times. This was especially useful when Mr Peel tried to interview me while I was teaching. I know women are supposed to be able to multi task, but I found it quite difficult to watch the ride, teach and string together some coherent answers to his questions simultaneously! Of course, after the event you always think of something you wish you had said or done, but it's too late to change it now.

The proof will be seen on TV next week, by the time you read this it will all be over, I hope we managed to give a positive impression of RDA. If you saw it you can judge for yourself.

Addendum:

Well, I've just seen it shown on TV. Not too bad, although they picked out all the bits I wished they hadn't, of course. I thought Lucy's interview was lovely, especially as I know how shy she is and how hard it must have been for her. And Caradoc's interview was excellent too. Some of Mr Peels' comments seemed a little fanciful to me, but he did put some good points into his narration which played over the action shots. All in all I think it was a very good film. Obviously they have a limited time to fill on the programme, but they seemed to film an awful lot more than they used, hopefully they will send a copy of it all to us for our own promotional videos, that would be very useful. Now all there is to do is to wait to see who wins the trophy. Watch this space!

Lynne Kemp



I know Lynne sent you an article on her 5 minutes of fame, well as you know it turned out to be rather more than 5 minutes and we are very proud of her. My husband managed to take some photos of her being presented with the trophy so I thought you might like to add them to her article. On behalf of the group I would like to say that Buckenham House know that Lynne is a hero but we were delighted to have the BBC agree with us.

Lucy Kelly

Buckenham House Group Secretary



Gaddesdon Place Group Win Prestigious Lees Award

The Betty Lees Award is given each year by the Dacorum Volunteer Bureau (of which Betty is the Chairman) to a local charity who has done the most to welcome and train volunteers. Our Volunteers nominated us.

The Dacorum area covers 10 miles West of Hemel Hempstead towards Tring, Berkhamsted and neighboring villages - volunteers mostly come from within this area. However, we do have one lady who travels out from London every Thursday!

Mencap were the runners up. Mind and Victim Support have been among previous winners.

We were presented with a Certificate, Award to keep for a year and £200.00, plus good local press coverage.

The ponies have benefitted with some new rugs - so they are pleased too!

Sheila Finnie

Below are some of the comments received for the RDA Lees Award

- ❖ I have found the group to be welcoming, friendly, supportive, well organised and safety aware. They offer regular training sessions for volunteers and try to pair experienced helpers with new helpers. The instructors are in charge and always put safety first. Any volunteer who wishes to be on the committee is encouraged to put their name forward.
To sum up, I feel really valued and an important part of the team. I also feel that I have learnt a lot during my three years with the group.
- ❖ I received a very warm welcome at the stables one week after my initial phone call offering my help. I was introduced to all the staff, other volunteers and horses. As I had several years experience of working with horses, I started straight away leading the horses around the indoor school. I have been given training in cleaning out the stables, grooming the horses, leading the horses, side walking with the children on board and health and safety. I have also had the opportunity to attend a first-aid course for a day. I enjoy working with the children as I can see how much pleasure they gain from their classes and how their confidence has grown over the past months. I have helped at their collection day at a local supermarket and know that every penny they are given goes towards the stables and helps to maintain and feed the horses. I find all of the

members of the group very friendly, approachable and are always willing to help and instruct us in any way, no matter how many times we ask the same question.

- ❖ We have a named person always ready to help whatever the problem. Training days are arranged and are very helpful. The insurance and health and safety procedures have been explained in detail. We have been included in all fund raising and social events as well as being invited to decision making meetings. I feel as if I have a second family. Gaddesdon Place is such a welcoming place, there is no selection process, you are invited to spend time at the stables and if you think you like it there you are welcomed with open arms and training is arranged. It is a continual learning process, particularly if, like me you've had no contact with horses.
- ❖ Every member of the group makes each volunteer feel welcome and appreciated. They encourage volunteers to help in a way that is comfortable and appropriate to their skills and experience. Uppermost are the instructor's considerations to the health and safety for both volunteers and riders.
- ❖ They are all very busy people in their own lives but are totally committed to helping make a difference to other peoples lives. They are friendly and patient, no matter what is thrown at them and are a joy to work with. I have seen them not give up and then go on to achieve the impossible.
- ❖ I was welcomed as a friend by the leader and other volunteers. In addition to regular whole day training, ongoing training was always available as we worked with horses and 'special' children. We meet out of the job, at the local pub or peoples homes. There is no pressure except to come regularly and sign in the book if you are likely to be away. The children progress from frightened beginners to confidently trotting and manipulating reins on their own, a high achievement in which I played a part and all the volunteers are delighted too!
- ❖ My Wednesday mornings have become a very special part of my week. After a well supported and informed induction, the support has continued and I have learnt so much. I am always thanked after every session for my time and am made to feel a valuable member of an important team. We have great fun together and support each other and are able to contribute in a meaningful way to decision making.
- ❖ Within 20 minutes of my email enquiry about volunteering, I was phoned by the Group Organiser who arranged to meet with me at the group premises the following day. Despite having no experience of working with horses I was told that my help would be greatly valued – and that I could be trained. I have been encouraged to acquire new skills – and take on new responsibilities – but only those with which I feel comfortable. From my very first day with the organisation I have been made to feel a valuable asset and an integral part of the team. I have always been greeted warmly on arrival and thanked personally at the end of every session.
- ❖ We have training, which deals with the horses and the children regarding safety and confidence for the helpers. I have built up a good relationship with the children and adults we have every week and have also built up a great relationship with all of the horses.
- ❖ The quality of the training is very high and special care is taken because of the vulnerability of the adults and the children that we work with. Training is ongoing as new ponies are introduced and new riders come along with different needs and requirements. The group organises open days, fun days for the children, an Xmas party and an annual ball which brings in much needed revenue.
I am very impressed with the skill, dedication and commitment that the officers, trustees, instructors and volunteers show towards this organisation. I have personally gained an enormous amount from the time spent with the riders and I have seen enormous advances made by the children and disabled adults. These people gain a tremendous amount from their contact with the ponies and skills that they learn.



Outing to "Africa Alive", Kessingland

26th July 2006

Our Annual Outing this year was to "Africa Alive" at Kessingland near Lowestoft. We had a record number of 63 people attending comprised of riders, carers and RDA helpers paid for from the money collected by Jane Ingram on her sponsored walk earlier this year, together with a few family members who paid their own entrance fees.

If we wanted authentic "Africa" then the weather obliged with continuous sunshine and a temperature somewhere in the region of 30°C! Despite the heatwave the animals obliged us by showing themselves in their large paddocks.

After a picnic under some shady trees the party wandered off in groups. One rider, Howard, was celebrating his birthday and his mother had kindly made a lovely birthday cake which was enjoyed by everyone.

It was a great day out for an outing in a very attractive setting with lots to see and do.

Val Soame

Committee Member, Norfolk Broadland Group.

Below: Howard enjoying a slice of his Birthday Cake together with his parents and some of our RDA Helpers



Carolyn Wilson Leaves Cambridge Group



After 14 years of riding with Cambs College RDA it is with deep regret that I have had to leave the group due to back trouble.

I now find that the horses are too wide for me causing me pain in my pelvis and hips. I still ride my pony at home. I have had a wonderful time riding with the group and representing them at Wimpole Hall and the National Championships and of course five years with polo and all that went with it at Cambridge Newmarket Polo Club. Also

1. Guards Polo Club Windsor
that was excellent riding on Queens ground

2. The Beaufort Polo Club in Gloucestershire are some I shall never forget. I was introduced to HRH Princess Anne she is such a lovely lady.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me in any way especially Judith Walker who trained and encouraged me for about 12 years so many thanks for that Judith and lately Rachel Rose.

I have also had a great time with Special Olympics representing the Eastern Region at the Wirral, Milton, Sheffield, Portsmouth, Cardiff and Glasgow. And representing the UK in Belgium, & the world games North Carolina U.S.A. again many thanks to everyone who made this possible & also special thanks to my mum & dad who have supported me from day one these fantastic years, and of course all the many wonderful horses and ponies I have had the privilege of riding one of which was Tilley, a pony Kadisha & polo ponies Badger & Rabbit.

I would like to wish the group every success for the future keep the flag flying.

Kind Regard
Carolyn Wilson

The Rescue Pony

Unlike Anna Sewell, who wrote *Black Beauty*, I do not know the early days of Gingerbread. She came into my life one hot, dusty August, after a friend had told me how while he waited for the London train, he gave his lunch to a thin little chestnut Pony living by the railway station, that always seemed hungry.

I decided to investigate and found a small, bony but very pretty 10 hand chestnut mare in a bald paddock with only a bucket of water for company. After tracing the old chap who owned her, I discovered she was only 2 years old and “vicious” and was to be sold to our local dealer at the weekend. I felt that with training, good food and correct care, she would make a good driving pony and on the spot offered him £50. To my surprise he accepted and I negotiated the rent for his bald paddock until I could move her.

Both her life and mine changed overnight. I contacted an old friend called Stan who, in his younger days was a horse keeper for a local farmer, and asked him to help me break her in for driving. Together we spent about three weeks feeding, grooming and giving her some tender loving care. I called her Gingerbread as her deep chestnut coat shone like copper as her health improved daily. She accepted his training easily, using an old sack filled with straw as a saddle and soon learned to take the bit and respond to the long reins. I went to Wisbech Market with Stan and purchased a small flat cart, together with harness and within a couple of weeks she was merrily “trotting out” with Stan and I around the village. She soon learnt the way to my house where she was allowed to graze on the lawn and also where Stan lived, as his wife Nell was always ready with some apples and carrots. Gingerbread was very good on the roads as the noise from the Railway Station had made her used to loud sounds, bangs and squeaky brakes.

Changes had to come to Gingerbread when I was ill. As I was a helper for the Elysian Riding for the Disabled at Paradise Farm, Ely run by Mrs Enid Bedford, I asked her if she would take Gingerbread to Paradise while I was recovering as she needed exercise and care. The cart and harness went with her so the training could continue. Her new friends in the field were very curious as she was so small, but a big chestnut mare called Shamrock became her best buddy and they spent many hours together watching the riding lessons and general yard routine. At first Gingerbread was quite nervous of so many children and events, but gradually relaxed and became a favourite to be used for grooming practise by the smallest Pupils as they could reach her back very easily.

When I recovered, Mrs Bedford thought it would be a good idea to see if Gingerbread could be used for Driving for Disabled as she was so quiet and willing and the sessions could be combined with the Riding. After various tests to qualify her with the District Examiners, I was mortified to find that she had passed but I needed further training. Me! I thought I was doing everything right, but Stan had taught me the old fashioned ways and it has all been updated!!! However, I was offered a scholarship and after a month of hard work, I qualified to undertake the Driving for Disabled.

Our task had begun. We were offered a special buggy called a “Jackson Daley” which was able to take wheelchairs using a fitted ramp. The size was just right for Gingerbread as she is fit and strong and well able to pull the cart easily. She soon learnt to stand still whilst loading was in process and knew exactly where we were going for each ride. The passengers were able to take a second set of canvas reins fitted to her halter and steer her round the course. I was always in

control using the leather reins but Gingerbread knew what to do without any instructions!

Sometimes we do about 10 to 12 rides during a mornings work and she never makes any fuss while waiting patiently for events to happen. Everyone is very fond of her and bring apples and carrots as a reward for her hard work. She soon knows when the sessions are nearly over and is looking eagerly for her treats.

Although Gingerbread is now 22 years old she is as keen to work as ever. She seems to know when Tuesday morning has arrived and is always waiting at the gate as she knows Jo the stable girl will have her breakfast ready. When I arrive with the harness, she is eager to start her work. Frankie, who leads while the driving is in progress, tacks her up and she is put to the cart ready to go.

When the session is over and the treats have all been eaten, Gingerbread is taken back to her field to join Blackjack, Cody, Rupert, Tigger, Candy, Ginny, Tilly, Smudge and Charlie. After a roll in the fresh grass she wanders off to join her friends and pass the afternoon munching away together.

Gingerbread is an invaluable part of our team at Elysian Driving for Disabled and gives so much pleasure to all the drivers who take part each week. I never dreamt that I would be so proud of an animal that cost so little and has given so much to all.

Iris Copsey



Farewell Faithful Friend

It has been very hard to tell all Dandy's riders and admirers that, sadly, he has passed away. Dandy had been with me since my husband gave him to me for Christmas in 1977.

He began working for the RDA in 1978 for Southend Group. In the early 1980's he joined Mid-Essex Group and represented them at the RDA Championships at the HOYS at Wembley in 1984,85 and in 1986 he won. At this time one of his riders (a blind young man) gained confidence to ride unaided by singing "Nothing can go wrong, I'm riding the Champion" as he trotted. In 1990 Dandy received a long service award from Princess Anne and in 1994 he represented Israel at the RDA World Dressage Championships at Hartpury. His rider was third in the Kür (Dressage to Music).

Innumerable children - both able bodied and disabled benefited from his unique ability to give each rider just the right blend of security and excitement and he became a fixture at Wimpole Hall and Essex Union South Pony Club.

I have received many tributes and anecdotes about him since his passing but I think the one that I would most want to serve as his epitaph came from a friend in Devon

"Kids that stood no chance, got a chance".

Dandy was an irreplaceable part of our lives and he was active to the end. One of our RDA riders had a lovely hack out on him just the day before his passing.

Janet Abbott.

Wimpole Hall 2006

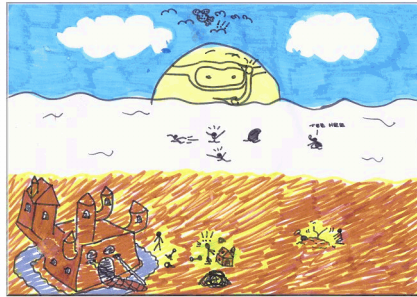
Photos by Andrew Gourlay



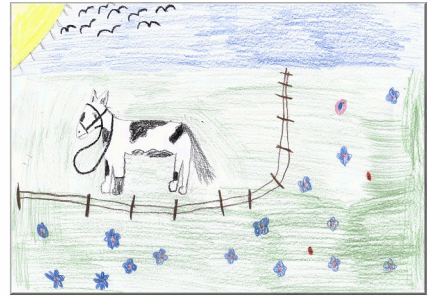
Wimpole Art Competition 2006



Sophie Gosman aged 11 - 3rd - (relative, Buckenham House)



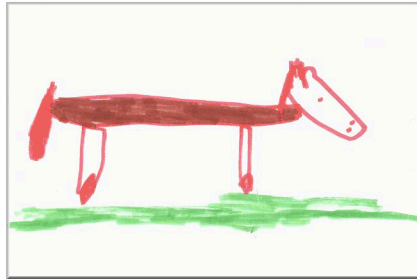
Adam Harding aged 13 - 1st cl.3a - (rider, Elizabeth Curtis)



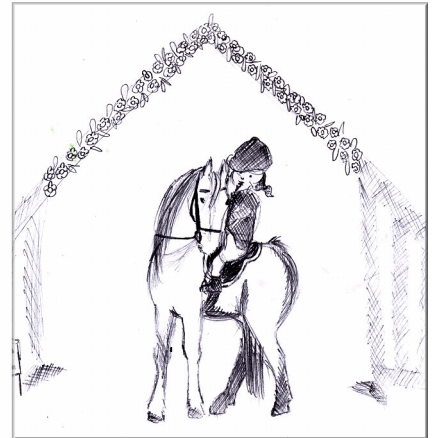
Lucy Cudby aged 17 - 2nd cl.3a - (rider, Digswell Place)



Jack Castle-Gill aged 9 - 2nd cl.2b - (friend, Buckenham House)



Astem Baldwin aged 11 - 1st - (rider, East Herts)



Poppy Harding aged 15 - 1st cl.3b - (friend, Herts & Essex)



James Harding aged 8 - 1st - (relative, Elizabeth Curtis)



Bethan King aged 6 - 1st - (daughter of Treasurer, Stevenage RDA)



George Kennedy aged 7 - 2nd (relative, Mid Essex Thriftwood Sch)



RIGHT - Jemma Tracey aged 17 - 3rd - (rider, Digswell Place)



Sarah Harding aged 'over 18' - 1st cl.4b - (friend, Herts & Essex)

All Groups will have had the experience of sourcing the right horses or ponies for the riders in their Groups.
Here is one story from the Shelley Centre about 'Kent'.

A Little Project

The Centre's new horse, Kent, had arrived and his change of ownership had to be registered on his passport. We needed to find his original breeder. This was little project. A complication. Kent is a Czechoslovakian Warmblood, bred in Czechoslovakia and his passport is 98% in Czech, 2% in English (this in very small print). The search began on the Internet. First stop 'English/Czech' translation. Google (an Internet search engine) came up with `easy look-up for Czech' This proved useful with the next clue in the passport - a website www.uek.cz - which turned out to be the Czech Department of Agriculture, equivalent to our DEFRA. I emailed a request for help to UEK, in English and, while waiting hopefully for a reply, 'Googled' some more. `Czech warmblood' brought up an amazing co-incidence - a horse answering Kent's description and called `Kent' was for sale in South Wales. Lyn followed this up - it was another other horse! Then, two days later, the reply from UEK -

'Export of the horse to the foreign countries reports Czech breeder and because we have it, it is all right. We need no more from you. What you need, is to confirm the change of the ownership by authorized organization in your country - GB.

Best greetings, Vera Nagrova, UEK CR Slatinany'

Not very helpful. Back to the passport. The breeder was given as 'Equus-Kinsky'. What could Google do with this? WOW! www.equus-kinsky.com came up and is well worth a look. Kent has a very distinguished background. Equus Kinsky is the home of the Golden Horse of Bohemia and, more important at the time, their website was also in English. Not only that but Equus Kinsky International also has overseas studs, including the UK - Fairtrough Farm in Kent. Time for another email which brought this reply:

'Hi, yes Kent is one of ours, he should be dark bay gelding no white. You can send the passport to us if you wish and we will be able to change the ownership for you. I may have some earlier pictures of Kent from the stud also.

Equus Kinsky, Fairtrough Farm'

Off went Kent's passport and change of ownership is now registered and we have gained photographs and more details of his earlier life. A little project completed. Many thanks to Google, email and the Internet. Involvement with The Shelley Centre is never dull!

Margaret Rose

Look How Far We've Come



Some of you may remember an article I wrote back in 2003 telling of Buckenham House Groups first visit to the Regional competition at Wimpole Hall. Well, we're just back from our 4th successive visit and I thought you might like to hear how things have improved over the years.

(Peter, Breeze & Jackie)

In that first year we took just one horse and three riders. We went along for a bit of fun, not expecting to win anything but all the riders came home with rosettes and a good time was had by all.



(Natasha, Arran & Sue)



The following year we took 2 horses and 5 riders. To our great surprise and delight, Lucy qualified for the National Championships with Arran in the Horse, Pony & Rider competition! Then followed a fantastic weekend at Hartpury culminating in Lucy achieving a third place at the National Championships – not bad for the groups first attempt!

(Katherine & Arran)

Last year we took 7 riders and 2 horses to Wimpole, and again one rider qualified for Hartpury, this time it was Peter and Breeze in the HP & R competition. There followed a great rush to get Breeze vaccinated in time, but we made it to Hartpury and Peter managed a creditable 9th place in miserable pouring wet weather.



(Caradoc & Breeze)

(Lucy & Arran)



This year we took 2 horses and 8 riders to Wimpole. Once again the weather was unkind, with heavy rain and wind – at one point there was even a bit of added excitement when one of the tents blew away! But the riders, horses and helpers were undeterred and everyone rode to the best of their ability as shown by not just one but **THREE** riders qualifying for Hartpury! Caradoc and Natasha qualified in the HP & R competition, both rode extremely well to reach this standard. Lucy qualified in the dressage – a fantastic achievement as this is the first time we had entered a qualifying dressage test. There is a huge leap in standard required to get from the non-qualifying tests, which are predominantly in walk with one short trot down the long side on each rein, to the qualifying

test, which is ridden mainly in the trot and includes some tricky manoeuvres such as changing the rein on two half 10m circles in trot, medium trot across the diagonal and 10m circles at A and C. Lucy has worked very hard to achieve this standard and deserves her qualification.

The other riders also rode very well in some of the non-qualifying classes, in the senior led dressage test D class Buckenham House Group managed a clean sweep taking 1st to 4th place which was very exciting, the riders in this case were Peter, Laura, Simon and Caradoc. I would also like to mention how dedicated the helpers have been over the years, improving their leading skills so they don't lose marks for the riders by helping too much (the judges like to see the riders doing the work!). The mounting team have worked particularly hard this last year perfecting their mounting technique and reaped the rewards when Katherine won the mounting competition.



(Laura, Arran & Chrissie)



All in all I think we have a great team of riders, helpers and horses at Buckenham House and I would like to thank them for all their hard work and efforts. Particularly entertaining was the leaders' quick-change antics, swapping from sweatshirts to tweed jackets to show jackets to match whichever rider they were leading at the time! Thanks also to Martin, our team photographer, who took over 200 photos during the day – some of which you see here (it was a tough choice to decide which to include!).

(Nadine, Breeze & Chrissie)

But we could not do the job without the support of Michelle Matthews at Middle Farm Equestrian for accommodating our weekly lessons, we have a fabulous selection of horses to choose from, and for allowing us to take the horses out to shows during busy weekends. In addition we could not have improved so much in such a short space of time without the invaluable advice and assistance from RDA officials at regional training days. Particular thanks should go to Carol Hall who gave such useful and productive advice to the mounting team!



(Simon, Breeze & Jackie)



Finally I would like to urge any groups out there to go to Wimpole if you've never been, it's hard work, but the rewards are amazing to see the riders achieving more than you had ever dreamed possible – the sky's the limit. Good Luck!

Lynne Kemp, Group Instructor.

(Peter, Chrissie, Lucy & Nadine)

**They tell me stop and then say go
They say go fast and then go slow
I do the best that I am able
I really want a warm dry stable!**

Dawn Smith (Jessica Smith's nanny) Hollesley

JANE INGRAM - SUPERWOMAN

Jane at Aylsham before she walked the second 9 miles!

On the 9th April 2006 a Nine-mile Walk along the Bure Valley Railway took place to raise money for the Macmillan Nurses. Jane decided to participate and walked from Wroxham to Aylsham with sponsorship for the MacMillan Nurses, arriving half an hour earlier than expected.

She then turned round and walked back the entire 9 miles (also in an equally fast time) to raise money (with different sponsors) for the funds of Norfolk Broadland RDA Group for which she is training as a Riding Instructor. By doing this return walk, in chilly and sometimes rainy conditions, she raised the wonderful sum of £467 for our funds.

Well done Jane – you are a Superwoman!



Val Soame - Group Secretary, Norfolk Broadland Group



The Best Day Of My Life

The day of the National Championship arrived. Everyone got up early to make sure Cleo and myself were clean and tidy. I went first into the dressage, when I had done my dressage test we went down to the handy pony course. I tried my best. At the end of it a lady gave me a rosette. Then we went back to the stable to give Cleo a rest and some hay.

In the afternoon I did stable management. When the results came out I was happy I won the combined training, fourth in the tack and turnout, sixth in the handy pony.

I would like to say a big thank you to Julie Boulwood, Jo, Janet Abbot, Karen. They made a fun team and they worked very hard and without them I couldn't of gone.

Victoria Palfrey



Cambridgeshire Fun Day

Ten children from various Groups around Cambridgeshire met on a (thankfully) slightly cooler August morning at the Coach House Riding Stables in Chippenham for a Fun Day together. Mrs Linda Porter Cohen had kindly given permission for what promised to be a super day at her very special riding stables.

The children were "matched" to the ponies and set off down the bridleway for a happy hack around the Suffolk fields and tracks near the stables. Back at the Riding School, ponies were untacked and rested with hay and water, while children and helpers enjoyed a picnic lunch together. After a fun kick around with a football, the ponies were tacked up and the children split into two groups. One group, under the excellent instruction of Lesley Gross were taken to the outdoor school for gymkhana games, and Linda instructed the other group around an obstacle course. The groups then swapped over. All the children did very well indeed.



Finally, rosettes were given out to all and with "Three Cheers!" and many thanks to Linda and Lesley, all the wonderful helpers, and not least the lovely ponies, ten lucky children went happily home.

This was a very special and enjoyable Fun Day. Without the fantastic support of all the wonderful helpers, Linda's excellent stables and some marvelous ponies, we could not run such days - an enormous THANK YOU to everyone involved.

Philippa Hamilton, Cambridgeshire County Chairman.



WIMPOLE HALL 2006

Its that time of year again and we're off to Wimpole Hall
Three days of healthy exercise and a good time had by all.
I see visions of RDA teams, coming to take their chance
Liz and Sue and all the gang, Kate flying in from France

All will be completed, because Andrew will be there
Measuring, hammering, planning, sometimes pulling out his hair
Striding round the meadow so kindly loaned by National Trust
Keeping his cool at question time - (but sometimes only just)

The ladies of the RDA are champions in the making
And Andrew sometimes gets unsettled, cos. we keep on overtaking
But suddenly - like magic- the whole site comes to life
and though our backs and arms complain, we know it's worth the
strife

We make a start on Friday - on Saturday go back again
Sometimes struggling to make progress in high winds and pouring rain.
Unloading more equipment, we can feel the de ja vous
We laugh and keep on working, - its RDA, its what we do

The language can be barrack-room when setting up the gate
Every year it causes problems - but we don't take the bait
Cut the turf, make firm the hooks, and then put up the wings
Tie on boughs of greenery - the kind an English summer brings

The wind was at its gayest when the marquee was erected
(And the guy who came to put it up was acting as expected)
We had a cup of coffee and longed to see the sun
Then a long look at the site plan - there's a lot more to be done!

We were earlier still on Sunday - there was no time to dally
Some alterations needed doing - Carol heard from Sally
Most of the arenas passed the health and safety test
But sadly several little things were clearly not the best

Out on the JFP course the trees weren't right at all
They were left inside each other which made them rather tall
And because one or two blew over, lifting out the pegs,
Kate and Carol had improvised - and given them blue legs

Some distances were less than perfect, some lines were not quite straight
And there seemed to be a problem with the shutting of the gate!
The gate was having its last say - the latch - it wasn't good
It was changed for something better, health and safety said it should

Reunited with its old latch, we breathed a sigh, fantastic!
(Christine noted in her file - "We must drop the elastic")

Swift to act the team pitched in, and all was put right
The course completed with a smile - (and it all came down that
night!!!)

The flowers nodded in the BREEZE - the wind had blown away
The site transformed, a job well done, let's have that lovely day!

The trailers and the lorries all too soon appeared on site
Ponies and horses washed and groomed, everything just right
The rain clouds started gathering we hoped they wouldn't stay
But they opened up with a vengeance and rained upon our day

Meanwhile, up in the toilets, the doors just would not lock
So you had to stay alert inside, and listen for a knock.

Horse Care marquee lost anchorage, and took off on the wind
And some artwork - all displayed inside - flew loose - though firmly
pinned!

It was all over in a minute, and didn't cause a tear
(Christine noted in her file "We don't want that next year")

The ladies with refreshments were a sight we liked to see
Bringing round the biscuits the coffee and the tea
They called in on the J P course whilst out upon their walk
They stirred the tea and passed the juice and talked and talked and
talked

The entry steward on the gate somehow got lost to view
The course stewards couldn't see her, even though they numbered
two
They didn't see her signals, and got into a tizz
(Christine noted in her file, (Next year make them high viz)

The Competition carried on all through the pouring rain
And we did not hear a single soul grumble or complain
The riders steered through cones, picked apples,
As through the flood they went
(Christine noted in her file - "Joyce Truscott wants a tent!")

Sue presented Trophies, which were received with glee.
We all clapped and cheered and whistled inside the marquee
Then tired but happy riders made the long journey home
(Christine noted in her file - "Perhaps Carol could write a poem")

At last the trailers all were filled, the equipment cleared away,
And we knew, despite the weather, everyone enjoyed the day
Sometime after seven we finally closed the gate
And said adieu to Liz and Anne, Christine Val and Kate

Sue and Andrew dropped me off at the end of a quite long day
(Sue doesn't ask directions 'cos I don't know the way)
Christine drops off the caravan and drives on home with Kate
(She has a final note to add "I must fix next years date!")

Carol Hall

Have you ever been put off applying for a riding holiday because your RDA Group was not in a position to organise such an event? Tristan Hoad wasn't. He contacted Clwyd Special Riding Centre, two years ago, and they put him in touch with a Berkshire group who could accommodate another rider on the holiday - if he brought a tame helper with him! I had always wanted to visit Clwyd and was keen to help on a riding holiday, so we contacted the group (Pangbourne) and set about becoming an 'occasional' rider and helper with them.

Since then we've had two wonderful RDA holidays at Clwyd with them - thanks to Roni Lilley and the rest of the friendly Pangbourne group. The holidays were great fun and honed skills for both of us. The effects on Tristan's confidence in riding and handling horses have been long-lasting and life-enhancing. He was able, while on the holidays, to take proficiency tests and was thrilled, last September, to achieve his (Grade 5) Bronze Award. Tristan now has a part-time job in a local livery yard and is a volunteer, as well as a rider, in our own Rossway Group. I am thrilled that he has produced this diary to encourage others to make their dreams possible.

Anne Nobbs (Herts. County Instructor)

☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

Clwyd Special Riding Centre - A riding holiday

September 21st - September 25th 2006



Tristan on Zak at Clwyd

Anne and I went to North Wales for a riding holiday at the Clwyd Special Riding Centre. We joined the Pangbourne RDA group for 5 days.

Thursday 21st September.

We arrived at our destination at 3:10 p.m. We were just ten minutes late. Not bad after a four hour journey! We were greeted by Ronnie the organiser for the Pangbourne RDA group.

Then we got changed into riding gear to be assessed and get used to the horses we had been given. This was in the indoor school. We had to walk, trot, change the rein steer in and out of cones. It was tiring work after the journey. When we had finished riding the tack was taken to be cleaned. The ponies and horses were put out in the field for the night. We got ready for dinner at 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. At the end of the day we were ready for our beds.

Friday 22nd September

We started the day by getting the ponies and horses in from the field. We took them into the indoor school and tied them up and then we began to brush them off. We went to get some breakfast and then back to tack up the horses and ponies.

We went on a hack for a walk around the track and came back to the stables into the indoor school. We took the tack off and let the ponies and horses stand to cool down such a hot day.

We went for lunch at 1 o'clock until 2 o'clock and then we had an hour and a half to get ready to ride again. After that ride we took off the tack and went to clean it in the tack room. Then we had a short break and went to the pub to have our evening meal. We came back to a nice relaxing evening at the house where we were staying.

Saturday 23rd September

We started the day by cleaning our horses and then had breakfast. We had 10 minutes before starting the ride so did some work in the indoor school. The helpers needed more tack for their horses so some of us dismounted and got the tack. Then we cantered round the track outside. I missed out on the hack because I rested up and studied for my bronze test. When the others came back we had lunch and they said I looked a lot better for the rest. I joined them for their last ride of the day. After that I helped put some of the horses away and I went to the outside school to practise some jumping. I did trotting over poles at different angles and I had to stand up in the stirrups, jump a small jump, and balance. I had to change the reins and do some cantering. We then called it a day and I put the horse in the field, cleaned tack and then took a well deserved rest.

Sunday 24th September

We started the day by getting the horses and ponies in from the field and tidied up in the school. We brushed off the horses and then got the tack up to the indoor school. After breakfast we went back to the indoor school to find that they had laid out an obstacle course for fun. After time out for refreshments the rosettes were given out. Some went for a hack but I stayed and practised for my test. I did some trotting over poles, cantered and practised my jumping position. Whilst I was putting my horse away in the field the group who went out on a hack came back. After lunch we had short lessons in the indoor school when I practised for my test again. Some went out on a hack. I kept practicing until it was time to put my horse out in the field again.

Monday 25th September

It was the day of the test! I had to show how to muck out a stable and answer questions about theory such as tack cleaning, naming different types of breeds, colours and markings of horses and ponies. I named some parts of the saddle and bridles as well as different types of brushes and grooming methods. I was tested on the points of the horse such as shoulder, hock, knee and crest.

Then I had to do the riding test. I had to change the rein, make a serpentine shape, trot over poles, I had to do some cantering and to finish jump over low cross poles. I put the pony in the field when I had finished, put the tack away and then I got the certificate and a rosette.

We put the luggage to go home in the car, but before that we had to help the Centre out by meeting some people who were making a video of the Riding Centre. We had to walk in the front door of the bungalow like we had just arrived and were being shown in and then we had to go into a room and Anne had to explain to me a bit about the room. I had to say what a nice room it was and what a good view it was. Outside we stood underneath the sign on the wall and Anne was asked questions by the Centre staff and then once that was done we could go home. Our five day stay at Clwyd Special Riding Centre was great fun. We worked hard but it was relaxing. We rode four hours each day.

The company was great and I learnt a lot about control of horses. A really good holiday all round and I look forward to going again. Many thanks go to Anne, Ronnie and all the staff at Clwyd.

Tristan Hoad



Hacking out on the Clwyd all-weather track

Ann Suckling - 1930-2006

Ann was Secretary to the North Norfolk Riding for the Disabled Group since the early seventies until the day she died in March 2006. The group started at Kelling in 1975 and soon moved to the Shire Horse Centre at West Runton in January 1976 by kind permission of the Bakewells.

Ann was born in Hertfordshire to a farming family, where she had her first pony. Later, she worked as secretary to Sue Ryder, where her career in Christmas cards began! She, Peter and the family moved to Norfolk in 1969.

In the early days of the group, fundraising began with second hand children's clothes at the Suckling house - proceeds going to a children's society. Our RDA Coffee Morning evolved with Ann's organization to become our most successful fundraiser as we see it today. During the years, she has produced thousands of pounds of marmalades, jams, chutneys, Christmas cakes and puddings and handicrafts to sell. She ran a stall for RDA products for many years in many venues including Sandringham Flower Show and Worstead Festival. When the Charity Christmas Card Shop committee in Norwich formed, Ann was there getting us organized to sell our cards and Christmas fare.

During her years at West Runton, she has helped to give enjoyment to many riders, children and adults, from local schools and organizations. This included giving Christmas parties and even the odd trip to the 'Horse of the Year Show' at White City, this was before the advent of recent 'Health & Safety'.

North Norfolk Group hopes to continue Ann's legacy, she will be sadly missed by everyone and we are so grateful to have known her. She is survived by Peter, her husband, who has supported her work and the group, two sons and two granddaughters.

Ann received a long service badge and certificate at the National Conference in Norwich, presented by the Princess Royal.

Hilary Hodges - Norfolk County Chairman



TRAINING REPORT FOR 2006/2007

2006 was a very good year for Training Days. We are very pleased to have received such a large number of delegates to every single one. Thanks go to all of you for your enthusiasm and for spending yet another day, or days, devoted to RDA!! We are lucky in this Region to have so many dedicated volunteers.

The 'Paperwork Day' at Barrow Farm on 9th March went well with about 45 delegates. The three Helpers' Training Days - at Wood Green on 26th April, The Magpie Centre on 12th May and Hollesley on 19th October were all well received with good feedback - and very well attended! There were about 70 delegates in Norfolk and Suffolk and even more in Cambridgeshire. The physio day for instructors (looking at people and horses!) at Digswell on 13th June was of great interest and there were about 50 very enthusiastic delegates.



A well earned rest between lectures at Gerry Walker's Training Day at Digswell Place

Congratulations to most of our Groups for making sure that all their instructors have been reviewed by their Training advisers within The New Aim Plan. There is a lot of extra paperwork for our Training Advisers who have worked so hard to achieve the target set by RDANO. Many thanks to them too. We are into the next phase which runs from October, 2006 to October, 2007, so please, ALL TRUSTEES make sure you ask for Reviews, in good time, within this period for instructors who need them. Remember - it is up to Groups, now, to make arrangements for this - not County or Regional Officers (Training Advisers). Any Instructors who are not reviewed within the specified time will be taken off the list at RDANO and will not be covered by insurance.

All Groups will know from RDANO by now of the changes for the course for the 'Ride in the Country'. This is to be changed to 'Countryside Challenge' and we do hope that more Groups will enter our Regional Qualifying round which is to be held this year at Oaklands College, St. Albans.

There are also to be some changes to the Musical Ride Competition and all Groups will have had details of these changes. Let's have a much larger entry this year - please! It's a wonderful way of practising school movements.

All Groups will have received a list of our Training Days for 2007 and we hope that this has been passed on to appropriate people. The list is also on our East Region website. There is our annual 'Paperwork' day at Wood Green in March - all welcome. Last year our training days concentrated on our wonderful helpers, this year we are concentrating on our Instructors - at every level. So, please look at the list all you instructors and, bearing in mind that all us instructors are asked to attend one training day each year, please try to come to one of these days.

S.C-G. January, 2007.



Thank you to all the contributors who made our latest edition possible, and we look forward to hearing from you again soon with your latest 'copy'.

I'm so sorry that this edition is a month or so behind the usual publishing date. Attempting to create a newsletter under our present domestic circumstances has proved even harder than anticipated!

It may also be a couple more months until the website is fully functional again. Whilst the 'online' files remained intact after the fire, the software database to edit or update it was totally destroyed and will have to be reconstructed from scratch - a process that has already started, but may take a while to complete. But an updated version will then be posted as soon as possible, with the 2006 Wimpole pictures etc. included.

I expect that most of you have heard by now that 2006 was sadly our last year at Wimpole Hall. As the qualifying date for the 'Nationals' has now been brought forward even further by N.O. and, bearing in mind the very unpredictable weather that we have at that time of year, it no longer seemed practicable to hold the event out of doors. But after much deliberation we have now settled upon Oaklands College in Hertfordshire as our new venue - a modern indoor complex with catering, proper toilets, and dry arenas! It is as central in the region as we can manage, and is located just off major trunk routes for easy access. We'll miss the unique atmosphere of Wimpole terribly, but hopefully Oaklands will become another firm favourite in our events calendar. This is possibly a good time to thank the National Trust and staff at Wimpole Hall for their many years of help and support, and Oaklands for 'taking up the reins'.

Just to finish off, I've included three of my photos from the 2006 National Championships. Sorry I wasn't able to cover more of the event, but congratulations to all that took part and 'flew the flag' for the East Region!

With best wishes, Sue.

