

Newsletter

May 2020

Elisabeth Curtis Centre Riding for the Disabled

Charity No. 1137217; Company No. 7302917



Team pony keeping the fields well maintained during lockdown...No queuing at this 'ride through'

facebook

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A Member
Group of

RDA



It's what you **can**
do that counts

From the Chair...



Since our last newsletter in Autumn 2019, a lot has changed, most significantly with the outbreak of Coronavirus and subsequent restrictions that have been imposed. This led to us having to make the difficult decision to suspend our riding sessions. This is an unprecedented situation, and we very

much hope that all our riders, volunteers, carers, parents and Centre supporters are managing to stay safe and well.

While we have had to strictly limit any visitors to the Centre, the ponies are being well looked after by our grooms, Kristina and Anna, along with Gina, our Pony Welfare Officer. I want to thank them for all they have done in such challenging circumstances.

While visits to the Centre have been limited, there is still a huge amount of work going on behind the scenes, both to support volunteers and riders during the closure period and to keep up with all the other tasks that still need to be done. I want to thank all the coaches and my fellow trustees for all that they have done during this closure period to keep the Centre in as good a position as we can do.

As the Centre is losing a significant amount of income due to the closure period, I want to say a huge thank you to

From the Chair...

everyone who has been contributing in various ways, either through donations via Virgin Money Giving, Facebook, by cheque or into our account, or through buying items on our Amazon Wish list.

We realise that it is a difficult time financially for a lot of individuals and charities, so are hugely grateful to everyone who has contributed.

We continue to monitor the situation and follow the latest updates from RDA UK to understand how and when it will be possible for us to start riding again. We will continue to send regular updates, and will look forward to when we are able to welcome everyone back to the Centre.

In the meantime, there are resources for riders and volunteers in the Resource Hub on our website, and regular photos and updates are posted on Facebook and our website.

I will end this note by thanking everyone for their continued support, and wishing you all the best in these challenging times.

Victoria Liston

*Chairman, Elisabeth
Curtis Centre*



Thank you! With
your help we've
managed to raise
over £5,100 so far!

From the Chairman...

Here are the links to the Resource Hub and the different ways you can support us:

ECC Resource Hub - [http://](http://www.elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk/ecc-resource-hub/)

www.elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk/ecc-resource-hub/

Facebook Donate - <https://www.facebook.com/donate/2907892712624540/>

Virgin MoneyGiving - [https://](https://www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/ECCPonyCareSupport)

[www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/](https://www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/ECCPonyCareSupport)

[ECCPonyCareSupport](https://www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/ECCPonyCareSupport)

Amazon Wishlist - <https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/U8NSEEBS38FX>

For more ways to help including for free - [http://](http://www.elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk/fundraising/)
www.elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk/fundraising/

The Elisabeth Curtis Centre Needs You!

Would you like to become more involved?

- ⇒ Does helping with the Newsletter appeal to you? How about writing an article for the newsletter, or helping to produce the newsletter?
- ⇒ Perhaps fund-raising appeals to you? New suggestions are always welcome, as is help at our events.
- ⇒ There are plenty of other opportunities. Including becoming our next treasurer. Any help, in whatever form, will be greatly appreciated!

If you can give us any help, please contact a member of the Management Committee

Memories of Paula Morris...

The recent sad, sudden loss of Paula hit all those who knew her hard. In recent years she had not enjoyed the best of health.

Paula first started helping at the ECC when she was an Occupational Therapist at Bromham Hospital. She used to escort some of the riders from the hospital down to the Centre to oversee and assist with their progress. She was able to make sure they got the best therapy out of their riding.

When the hospital closed, Paula continued to be a volunteer with the Monday session and was also organiser for that session.

She was always a chatty, cheerful, practical, fun member of the team.

Using her OT knowledge she was extremely helpful (some might say invaluable) in assisting the instructors/coaches with the mounting/dismounting process.

Paula attended weekend camps at Barton, Lilley Manor and one day camps at Bromham. She also helped when we used to do pony rides at Oakley Lower School, Stagsden Farm and other places.

Latterly as her health declined she was much appreciated for her tea and coffee making during the mid-morning break and welcoming to parents, carers and riders.

Memories of Paula Morris...

Her input at the Centre over the years has been much appreciated and she will be particularly missed by the Monday session.

Some words from Liz Riding (with input from others)

Paula Morris joined ECC in about 1986/7, (I think) not longer after I had, helping on Monday mornings with various instructors—Sally, Ann, Annette, Erica, Jassie and Terrie to name but a few. Some of the riders she knew in her professional capacity as an occupational therapist.

Never one to be in the forefront, she was always there alongside the ponies or riders giving quiet hints as to what might help in any way to give the riders a more comfortable or more interesting ride, particularly those who came from Bromham Hospital, and following it's closure, from community homes.

She sometimes used to bring along her mother-in-law when she was visiting from Scotland. One day, Paula had left 'Grandma' as she used to refer to her, in charge of the dog walking. One of the carers who had arrived with a rider, happened to mention that there was a lady all alone in the car park looking a little lost— 'could she be one of the residents from Bromham Hospital? "Oh no" cried Paula, "I've forgotten all about grandma!"

We send condolences to Ed and the 'children' at this sad time.



An update from fundraising...

Just to say 'Hello' to Everyone. We hope you are all keeping safe and well and coping in this unprecedented time..

Since the last Newsletter, the following fundraising projects/ events have taken place.

A Coffee Morning on 13th October to celebrate 50 years of RDA raised £326.04.

Our small collection boxes labelled '50p for 50 years' of RDA went well and these raised over £200.

Just over £750 was made at our Autumn Fair on 16th November, this was a lovely event and we had several volunteers helping with this which made it very sociable and enjoyable.

On 29th November, Victoria and Lisa were invited to a Piggy French demonstration at Keysoe Equestrian Centre and took along a tombola, this raised £70 for the Centre.

We then held a collection at Budgen's of Bromham on Saturday 14th December, the total collected was £192.33. Thank you to Pippa, Hilary, Janet and Sarah for helping with this.

Over the Christmas period approximately £350 was raised by our volunteers donating various different items including a Christmas Hamper, Diamond Painting, knitted toys,

An update from fundraising...

gloves, hats etc, winter survival kits, mistletoe, plants and more!!

Thank you again to Julie, who kindly donated around 100 handmade Christmas cards, these sold very well and raised over £60.

We must also include Daphne in our thanks, she knitted several snowmen, these were particularly popular with our riders.

Tudor Rose at Oakley continue to support us by advertising our events, having a collection box and the 'Sewathon' led by Kate and Chris. These are regular workshops and the items donated to us included several beautifully made cushions. Virginia also gave us lots of handmade knitted mice, snowmen and gingerbread men Christmas tree decorations through Tudor Rose.

Volunteers, carers, supporters and riders were asked to help decorate our Christmas tree. We chose a label, wrote a message, placed on the tree and gave a donation. This proved to be popular and raised around £70.

A Great effort, thank you so much to all involved.



Fundraising continues into 2020...

The FRG are happy to announce that Nicola Avery (handmade jewellery) and Charlotte Daniels have joined our team. They are both most welcome.

Well, we met up in February, with lots of ideas for events, but unfortunately, all are 'on hold' due to the Coronavirus outbreak and temporary closure of the Centre.

So, events to look forward to later in the year/ next year-

Pub Quiz

Christmas Festivities

Barn Dance

Curry & Quiz Night

Childrens' Teddy Bear's Picnic

Autumn Fair

Table Top Sales

Coffee Mornings

And of Course...

Our Summer Fair 2021, this will be the 'Best Ever'

We have the ECC Recipe Book to complete, we will all deserve some tasty treats after all this!

Although the Barn Dance has been postponed, we would like to thank Lesley and Michael Bliss for their help and support with this. We have also received some kind donations. They did a brilliant job selling tickets, but we have agreed to re-schedule the Barn Dance as soon as is allowed. Ye Ha!!!

We have a Quiz Night booked at The White Horse, Bedford for 24th September, who knows? Fingers crossed!

With very best wishes to all our volunteers, riders, carers and supporters-

FRG will be seeing you again soon!

Handmade Jewellery on Sale...



Bromham Mill have kindly allowed us to display and sell some handmade jewellery upstairs with the local crafts.

This is also very good publicity for us, Nicola, who makes most of our jewellery has agreed to be our contact for this project. This is going very well, over £200 had been raised so far.

Thank you Nicola and Bromham Mill for your support. Hopefully, when life settles down a bit and Bromham Mill are able to open again, we can pop in to have a look and eat a lovely lunch.

Be sure to visit when we can and pick up something for yourself ! Or perhaps a gift?



Mondays Christmas ride...

The Monday morning session at ECC has been preparing for the Christmas Games.....

On November 25th we had the 'Christmas Pudding' lesson – each rider had to collect a picture of the ingredients for a pudding and put it in a bucket. Once that was done we used the (felt) Christmas Puddings and practised riding round with them in a holder, before putting the puddings in the buckets!



On December 2nd, we had the 'Christmas Shopping' game. Each rider was given some money and was sent off to the appropriate 'shop' to buy

something. We had a £1 shop, a £5 shop, a £10 shop and even a £20 shop! There were plenty of items to buy, even a box of chocolates from the Queen! All items went into the shopping baskets to be used at a later date.....

On December 9th we had the 'Christmas Dinner' game. Each rider had a laminated picture of a plate which had Turkey, Roast Potatoes, Sprouts and Christmas Pudding written on it. Riders had to collect the appropriate picture

Mondays Christmas ride...

from around the school and stick it on their plate. Once all dinners were collected, into the buckets they went!

On December 16th everyone had to wear their best Christmas jumpers – we had quite a collection, ranging from cheap and cheerful (mine) to some with elaborate light shows (Julia). Karen wore some superb antlers with bells on and Jill wore some too, which soon became too uncomfortable to wear, so Gina decided Sam should wear them – see picture (Page 11)! All ponies had tinsel in their tails and on their brow bands.....

We did have fun! All riders and ponies enjoyed the morning and our volunteers liked wearing their outfits!!

Thank you to all who took part.

Charlotte Dunham

Monday AM Coach



A number of riders from all sessions took part in the Christmas Dressage... Volunteers catch a quick selfie before the hard work began...

Pony welfare update...



The suspension of riding in March due to the pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown, created some new challenges regarding the welfare of our ponies. A great deal of thought, discussions, and planning were required, to enable us to continue caring for the ponies whilst minimising risk to humans.

A big concern for the health of our ponies, was managing their weights at a time when their workload was reduced, and the spring grass was expected to grow. We have worked really hard to address this issue and, continue to do so. The ponies still need exercising for their physical and mental well-being. We have been giving them non-ridden exercise, including lunging, loose schooling, and in-hand work. All the ponies have been enjoying the variety in their exercise, but I am sure that they will be happy to be ridden again, once it is safe to do so. As the spring grass grows, we need to limit the ponies' grass intake. This involves putting up, adjusting, and removing copious amounts of temporary fencing.

Although the ponies are currently not being ridden, they still require their routine health care. The farrier attends on a six-weekly basis, to trim the ponies' feet and shoe those who need shoeing. Vaccinations and dental checks are soon due. All these procedures need to be carried out while observing social distancing and, minimising the

Pony welfare update...

number of people on site. Initially, vets were very restricted in the services they were able to offer but thankfully, this is now easing, and they are able to provide more routine health services.



Caring for the ponies is a team effort, usually involving many of our volunteers. Due to the restrictions, the ECC has been very quiet, with our grooms, Kristina and Anna, working alone for the majority of the time. I would like to thank Kristina and Anna for their continued care of the ponies

during such challenging times. I would also like to thank our wonderful supporters for their generous donations. The wish list has not only provided treats and much needed supplies for our ponies, but also a great moral boost for our grooms. Kristina and Anna enjoy opening the parcels to discover what goodies are inside, and they appreciate knowing that so many people care and want to help.

We don't know when riding sessions will resume, but we continue to make every effort to keep the ponies fit and healthy, so that they will be ready for when riders return. In the meantime, I hope that everyone keeps safe and well, and I look forward to seeing you all when it's safe to do so.

Gina Dunn

Pony Welfare Officer

Thank you...

Last years Christmas Tree Festival was held on the 4th to the 8th December at St Paul's Church, Bedford.

Caroline (Volunteer & fundraiser) donated and decorated a tree for ECC. The theme was '12 Days of Christmas', she did a splendid job.

This event is always very well attended and an excellent way of promoting our Centre.

Thank you Caroline!



Thank you to everyone for the continued support with donations and also purchases from our Amazon Wishlist. Muscadeu **LOVES** his new salt lick and holder. Dixie loves his new stable toys as do the rest of the ponies with salt licks, brushes supplements, feed and more...

A volunteer story– Pearl Farr...

Retiring in March 2010, I spent the first weeks catching up on things I hadn't had time to do, having worked full-time and considerable overtime for years. Then it dawned on me – what will I do as I can't sit at home twiddling my thumbs? I picked up the local paper and hey presto, there was an article about the Elisabeth Curtis Centre, in Bromham and they were looking for volunteers! Yes!



What do I know about horses? Well, very little actually. Have I ever ridden a horse? Yes, I went for a few riding lessons with the girls from work.....when I was 18; a few years ago, well actually, many years ago! Have I ever worked with disabled people? Yes, through the Scout Association, ensuring disabled young

members and adults are integrated into Scouting.

So, yes, I'll apply to become a volunteer. I was invited to attend Monday morning and meet Terri. On arrival, I met Margaret in the garden, who I thought was Terri. After meeting Terri, I took my place in the Viewing Gallery to watch the rides. The volunteers, riders and carers were so friendly and, at the end of the session, my mind was made up. I want to get involved!

So, I was a Monday volunteer with Terri and when June, the Organiser wasn't there, I was happy to do the administration

A volunteer story– Pearl Faar...

job. Multi-tasking? Not a problem! Terri left the Centre as she was unwell and the session was taken by Helen and later by Liz..... I had learnt a little about horses and side-helping but still had a way to go! As the Organiser, I would only side-help when not dealing with the admin. Hence, after one memorable Monday, I went home and said to my husband, ‘I haven’t done anything right this morning.’ But they say you learn more by your mistakes! I did....and quickly! Thank you, Liz, you were so patient when answering my many questions!

After a couple of years, and hearing the Centre wanted new members on the Management Committee, I decided I would give it a go! Having undertaken a great deal of training with the Scout Association, I felt the training would be transferrable. I duly joined the Management Committee, nominated by none other than Liz! The team comprises individuals, coming from different backgrounds, different life and work experiences and bring different strengths and skills. Within Scouting, I am a trustee, partly dealing with Safe-guarding and DBS checking, so this I also do for the Centre. And, of course, there’s always plenty of other tasks to take on (pleasant and less so) and Fundraising. We can turn our hands to (almost) everything that is presented to us, often with laughter and banter!

Our present situation is unprecedented with much uncertainty, but we will come through it. Who knows what ‘normal’ will be? Thanks to our dedicated grooms, the horses are fine, and the Management and Riding Committees are dealing with everyday admin. We are so grateful to everyone who has so generously donated to Centre to help us through these difficult times.

Get involved...

Want something to occupy you at this extraordinary time?

Why not put pen to paper and tell us what the Centre means to you? Any stories you have? You could write a poem or sketch your favourite horse.

We look forward to hearing from you and would love to share them online via our Facebook, in future newsletter and at the centre. Thank you to those who've already shared including riders and volunteers! Why not check these out on our Facebook!

Our very own Audrey has been keeping herself busy doing these lovely sketches.



Safeguarding and DBS...

The safety of our service users, volunteers and staff is of paramount importance to us. New volunteers are provided with the Riding for the Disabled (RDA) Safeguarding information. We have held Safeguarding sessions and more are planned when the Centre is up and running again.

Following RDA policy, all volunteers and staff are asked to complete a DBS check as soon as they join us. Although many volunteers hold a DBS from other organisations, the Centre has to do its own. The cost to the Centre is £9 for each DBS check and has to be repeated every 3 years. On average, repeat DBSs and those completed for new volunteers account for approximately 35-40 per year. Although this is an appreciable expense, we consider it necessary to ensure a safe environment for us all!

The DBS form is given out, together with instructions and a Safeguarding card. Once completed, the form is returned, together with ID documents that need to be checked by one of the three ID Checkers – Victoria Liston, Pearl Farr or Ros Ward. The ID documents only have to be seen by a Checker, they are not retained by the Centre. After checking, the DBS is submitted and the Disclosure Certificate sent to the applicant's home. The Certificate needs to be seen by a Checker, so the number and date can be recorded at the Centre. Job done, repeat in 3 years!

Pearl Farr

Volunteer and Safeguarding Officer

RDA Countryside Challenge Competition

This is your chance to design a **BRAND NEW** element for the RDA Countryside Challenge course, and **win** the chance for your design to be built and feature at the

2021 RDA National Championships!

Open to RDA Participants. Competition closes 31st August 2020. For more information please visit

www.elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk/ecc-resource-hub

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