

Newsletter

November 2013

Elisabeth Curtis Centre Riding for the Disabled

Charity No. 1137217; Company No. 7302917



Hilary in a splendid golden dress with her husband Peter at the Tudor Feast.

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

Editorial

As usual there has been lots going on at the Centre during the last few months. The high point of the year came in July for one young rider. Leigh McInness was our only rider to qualify for the RDA National Championships this year and she certainly made us all proud. She came First in all three of her classes. You can't do much better than that! Well done, Leigh!

The summer holidays were a busy time for the grooms and some of the volunteers. The stables were all emptied and power washed and then re-painted. Painting stables is a bit like painting the Forth Bridge - you just keep on doing it! This year we tried something different. We painted the back wall red instead of the usual white. Hopefully, the muck won't show up quite as much!

We also did something much more interesting on four Tuesday evenings during the holidays. We were training four different groups of firemen in how to handle horses. They are the Large Animal Rescue Squads and while our ponies didn't behave like trapped and terrified animals, it gave the firemen some experience which they wouldn't otherwise have. Most of their training is done with dummies and even our ponies are a bit more lively than that!

At the end of the holidays we held a Camp Day for some of our riders. From what I have heard, a good time was had by all. A detailed report from Eileen follows later.

In July we entered the Sensory Ride into a garden competition run by Frosts of Willington.

We were delighted to come 2nd in the schools section - we didn't quite fit in any of their categories! We took Margaret along to the presentation ceremony and buffet. Unfortunately Caroline was on holiday that week. It was a splendid buffet and we were presented with a £25 Frosts voucher. We put this towards an obelisk which Margaret has trained roses over. It will look beautiful next year when it is covered with flowers, a fine addition to the Sensory Ride. Many thanks to Margaret, Caroline, Steve and other friends who help to maintain our lovely gardens.

On 17th September we were honoured with a visit by Mrs Helen Nellis, who is now the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, the first woman to hold this position for hundreds of years. She is also a Bromham resident and was delighted to come and find out more about us. She met the ponies and chatted with riders and volunteers for some time. She has a charming manner and is very good at putting people at their ease. She also has a wonderful gift for remembering names, something us more mature folks find tricky!

Jan
Chairman/Editor



Leigh on Tom, with Sam and Lisa at the National Championships - having a lovely time!



The Lord Lieutenant, Helen Nellis, with the Tuesday evening session.



Julia shows firefighters the ropes!



Our gardeners L-R: Caroline, Steve & Margaret. Their efforts won the Centre an obelisk from Frost's.

A Moving Experience

Having moved from Bromham to Tadley last October, we took until Christmas to get settled and sorted before pursuing any contact with the various RDA groups in the area.

The closest one to Tadley is in Baughurst but only operates from April until the summer, and at that time, didn't need any new helpers.

We then contacted three or four other Groups but found that they were either a little too far away, or weren't in need of extra help. We finally found a group in Tilehurst, near Reading, which we've now joined.

They ride between 1pm and 2.30pm on a Thursday only, and have 2 rides of 4 or 5 riders on each ride. The children, mainly autistic, come from the local Brookfields School. By coincidence, one of the riders is the grandson of a friend of Sue's she used to work with in London 50 years ago!!

The ponies are borrowed from the Riding School where the Group meets, and are 'delivered', saddled and groomed to the door of the indoor school. All we have to do is change the stirrups for safety stirrups. We usually have the same ponies each week, but this isn't guaranteed.

The indoor school is about half the size of ECC and is open to the elements, where the roof meets the walls. If the weather is good, sometimes the riders can ride out through the Englefield Estate.

Next year on the agenda are trips to Bucklebury Farm Park and Cullinghood Equestrian Centre at Pangbourne, as well as a helpers' training day and an assessment day for the instructors.

There are between 15 & 20 helpers at the group, and 2 instructors, so the instructors usually take 1 session each.

On average though, only about 12 helpers are there at any one time.

The 'tack room' is a portacabin which sits on the side of the indoor school, but is really just a space where riders study Stable Management and do a bit of tack cleaning, whilst waiting for their turn to ride. No luxuries such as tea/coffee making machines or a place to sit down for five minutes!!!

As you will gather, this is a vastly different Group to ECC. Having been involved on the Committee at Bromham, we know how much paperwork, Health & Safety issues, and Fund Raising is involved in running a group of that size – this is much more low key, but with current legislation, all of the above still have to be complied with.

We are happy helping at Tilehurst in our small way; we have been made very welcome and hope to continue to help for as long as we are needed.

Sue & Colin Brown

(For those of you who don't know Sue & Colin, they were involved with the Centre for many years, both as helpers and Management Committee members.)

ONE DAY CAMP AT ELISABETH CURTIS CENTRE ON SATURDAY, 31 AUGUST 2013-09-19

We only had 8 fit ponies so thought it prudent to offer places to 7 riders so leaving one pony in reserve. Unfortunately one rider cancelled the day before so we had 6 riders on the day.

At 9.00 volunteers and leaders arrived and were briefed by Liz Riding on safety, helping, points to watch out for etc. They were given a handout with more details.

At 9.30 the riders arrived, were greeted, told who their helpers were, put their bags in the school and went to tack up the ponies. Each rider's leader went into the stable and put a head collar on the pony and tied him up. Then the rider, accompanied by one or two helpers as necessary, went into the stable, groomed their pony and helped to tack him up. They then returned to the seating area whilst the leader brought the ponies out and gave them a walk round.

Riders then mounted and took a turn around the school to make sure they were comfortable. The girths were checked again and they went off for a hack round the grounds. The distance had been checked beforehand and they completed a 1.5k ride, stopping half way for a drink as it was very hot.

On return they untacked their ponies, checked their water and gave them some hay and apples under very careful supervision.

We then had a scavenger hunt (smallest blue flower, thinnest twig etc).

The spoils were then brought into the seating area of the school and we all voted which was the smallest, thinnest, longest etc. Points were awarded and at the end trophies etc were given out.

It was then time for everyone to have a seat and eat their packed lunch, Some were happy to sit for a while but some were a little restless and played games which Liz had brought.

Then it was time to tack up again and prepare for the afternoon when their parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, aunts and uncles and everyone arrived for gymkhana type games.

These were played in teams and individually and much fun and laughter was had by all – the visitors mainly as they chortled nicely at Eileen forgetting which games were individual and which were team and which coloured stickers to give out. These stickers were numbered, 1 for first, 2 for second etc. The points added up at the end and the one with the least was the winner, and down to 6th.

Then it was time for tea (or orange juice) and biscuits which was appreciated by all. Everyone then collected their bags etc and went off home. They all had a good time as indicated by the thanks given by everyone.

Thanks go to everyone who turned up on the day to help in any capacity as their efforts were much appreciated.

Eileen Nash, RDAI, County Chairman.



Riders preparing lunch for their ponies at the Summer Camp.

Donations

We have continued to receive generous donations from many sources and it is very gratifying to know that other people value our work as much as we do. We would particularly like to thank the 17th Priory Guides (£60), Cranfield Bridge Club (£200), Hilary O'Dell (£500) and the Outreach committee at St Andrews Church, Bedford (£1,000).

Sadly, this year we have received a considerable sum in memory of people who are no longer with us. We would like to give our sincere thanks to the families and friends of Sharon Thompson, Rosie Charlton and Esme Blore-Rimmer who have contributed approximately £4,000.

Jan



Fundraising

As you can see from the list below, our volunteers, especially the Fundraising Group, have been very busy again. We have been making our presence known throughout our local area which has helped us to recruit some new volunteers and, of course, raise some funds! We have also been pleased to welcome some of our younger volunteers to our fundraising group.

Many of our events don't yield huge amounts but they do let people know that we need funds and have resulted in donations from lots of different sources, many of them new supporters. The collection at Budgens in Bromham did well and hopefully the one arranged for 7th December will do as well, or better. It is a very simple way of collecting funds, with no financial outlay, and I always enjoy meeting people and telling them about the good work we do.

The Tudor Feast in October was a new venture for us and involved a lot of work beforehand and on the night. But as usual, our wonderful volunteers rose to the occasion. It was particularly gratifying to see some of the "young folk" working so hard. Kyle made an excellent barman, while Ky and Elliot could be master chefs of the future. Sabrina, Pippa and Jenny were the serving wenches, with assistance from Ros and Siobhan. Special thanks must go to Viv and James, historians and chefs. Audrey was, well, Audrey was everywhere! We must also thank all those who attended, many in splendid Tudor costumes.

The quiz in November made a very healthy £291. Many thanks to Ros for organising it and to Audrey, Jenny, Siobhan and families for providing the excellent supper.

Sat 22 June Rushmoor School Fair. Toy Shop took £55.35, tombola £10, donation £5. Recruited some new volunteers for September.

Sat. 29 June All Saints' Church Fete, Kempston Church End. Toy Shop £111.70, jewellery £7.00.

Sat 6th July Wootton Fun Day. Toy Shop £73.05, jewellery £2.00, tombola £31.50

Sunday 14 July Bromham Show. Toy Shop £32.50, cards £9.55, hats £2.50, jewellery £20.00

Sat 20th July Budgens collection, Bromham. Took £233.50 Well done to all who helped.

Sun 11th August St John's at Moggerhanger, Country Fair, Toy Shop £65.40, cards £9.25, jewellery £18.00.

Sun 8th September Biddenham Show. Toy Shop took £27.45, jewellery workshop £32.50

October 26th Charity Fair Bromham Village Hall. Tombola, calender and card sales made £25.70. Recruited two new volunteers.

October 26th. Tudor Feast Biddenham Village Hall. Made £322

Sat 2nd November Quiz Night, church hall, Church End, Kempston Rural. Made £301

Forthcoming Events

Sat 30th November Christmas Fair at Bedford Girls school

Thursday 5th December Volunteers Christmas Dinner at the White Horse, Newnham Avenue, Bedford. 7.30 for 8.00 pm. £10 deposit and menu selection required asap.

Sat 7th December Collection at Budgens, Bromham. Sign-up sheet is on the cupboard door, by the seating area.

Sat 7th December Christmas Fair at Biddenham Village Hall. Ros taking jewellery.

21st and 22nd February 2014 (Fri and Sat) Tesco Collection. Watch for sign-up sheet in New Year.

Christmas cards, with our ponies on them, and RDA calendars still available, but going fast. Please ask your group organiser to show them to you. Cards cost £5 for a pack of 9, calendars £5 each. Over £2 from each sale goes directly to the Centre.

Term Dates for Bedfordshire Schools

Friday 20th December 2013 - Autumn Term ends.

Monday 6th January 2014 - Spring Term begins.
(Monday 6th is a Bedfordshire Schools Training Day)

Monday 17th February - Friday 21st February 2014 - Half-term.

Friday 4th April 2014 - Spring Term ends.

Monday 21st April 2014 - Summer Term begins.
(Tuesday 22nd is a Bedfordshire Schools Training Day)

Monday 26th May - Friday 30th May 2014 - Half-term

Wednesday 23rd July 2014 - Summer Term ends.

Monday 1st September 2014 - Autumn Term begins.
(Mon & Tue (1st & 2nd Sept.) Bedfordshire Schools Training Day.)

Dates may vary according to session - please check with your Instructor.