

Newsletter

Winter 2017/18

# *Elisabeth Curtis Centre Riding for the Disabled*

Charity No. 1137217; Company No. 7302917



A Member  
Group of

# RDA



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

## Chairman's report

As always, it has been a very busy time at the Centre, partly why this newsletter is a bit later than usual.

We are incredibly fortunate to have so many supporters, many of whom must have voted for the Centre to receive a grant from the Masonic Charitable Foundation. We were lucky enough to come second, so received a grant for an amazing £15,000. This will make a huge difference to the Centre, so we are very grateful to everyone who voted for us. The awards were presented to all the successful charities at the Centre, and the photo on the front cover was taken on the day. We have also been incredibly fortunate to receive a donation of £6,000 from our Honorary Life President, Derek Woods, we are very grateful for Derek's continued support.

As you will read in this newsletter, Liz Riding is retiring. I would like to pass on my thanks to Liz for all that she has done for the Centre.

A number of maintenance projects have been undertaken at the Centre, these have included; trimming of all the hedges around the fields, cleaning the Centre's roof and skylights, regrading the bank behind the stables . My thanks to all involved in these projects, particularly the members of the Management Committee.

Our Fundraising group have also been hard at work, arranging a number of events, including the Autumn Fair and the volunteer's Christmas dinner. My thanks to all the members of the group for their continued hard work and enthusiasm.

Very sadly, one of our members, Janet Durrant, passed away in October. Janet rode with us on a Tuesday evening and I have

many fond memories of the time I was able to spend with her, she is very much missed.

Victoria

### **Donations**

Recently we have stopped recording the actual amount of donations with our list of people we want to thank, as not everyone who made a donation wanted the amount to be published. We will continue to name people or organisations, if they are happy for us to do so, but we will only include the amount if the sum involved is over £1,000. We hope all of our supporters will understand that all donations are important to us and not be offended by this decision. We have been incredibly fortunate to receive the donations listed below.

- Hannah Inskip
- The Hyperion Foundation
- B.J.Yeeles
- Heather, Alistair and Lizzie's NCS Fundraising
- Royal Masonic Lodge 2962
- Mrs C.M. Bull
- Mid Beds Raynet group
- Liz Riding
- Heidi Steer
- T&D Jones
- Barbara Doyle
- The Extra Mile Challenge

## Bedford Young Farmers Club



I was kindly invited to attend the Bedford Young Farmers AGM in September, and received a cheque for £5,749.94, on behalf of the Centre. A number of the Young Farmers had volunteered with the Centre, so it was lovely to see some familiar faces at their AGM. We have put this money to good use, by purchasing Dixie, who seems to be settling in well.  
Victoria

Here is a contribution from the Bedford Young Farmers about how they raised this money, and about their group and how you can get involved;

We raised the money through a variety of different events, we hosted an Auction of Promises last November, where local businesses and supporters of Bedford YFC kindly donated a selection of different lots, including a boat trip for 6 people and restaurant vouchers! We raised £4900 from this one evening. We raised the remaining donation from a raffle held at our

70th Anniversary Ball at Sharnbrook Hotel and from Carol Singing last December.

Bedford and District Young Farmers Club is a group of 13-26 year olds who meet weekly to socialise, learn new skills and have a laugh. We do a variety of different activities weekly including tours, talks, farm walks, sports and fun activities. We also take part in many competitions including; cookery, stock judging, Tug of War, Show jumping, Sports, Drama, Flower Arranging, ploughing, public speaking and so much more!!

We meet weekly on a Thursday Evening and we have roughly 15 members attend every week—and we have a total of 35 members in the club.

If anyone wants anymore details they can contact Ellie Davis - 07557057295, Bobby Wallace 07900188178 or Alice Longden 07546147825 or they can follow us on Facebook and Instagram too!

### **Christmas Raffle Results**

The Kindle was won by Penny Taylor, a Tuesday evening rider.

The Beauty Hamper by Sally Hendrickson.

The Mystery Prize by Alison McEwen

The M & S Biscuits 2nd Prize by Mrs Ward in Bromham.

The Quilt raffle was won by Jenny Barnsdale

## Hunting for Ponies – again

I've been asked to give you another flavour of our (now continual) search for suitable ponies.

We have stables for 9 ponies and haven't had a full complement for quite some time, but currently we have 8 ponies, so I can relax a little, but not completely.

At the end of August, during my daily search on the internet, I saw a pony which seemed absolutely ideal for us. He was the right height, age and temperament. There was only one hitch – he was in Formby, Lancs. The owner wanted him to go to RDA and was prepared to sponsor him for the first year. Texts, emails and Whatsapp messages followed – the owner videoed him being tried with unusual sounds, unbalanced riders, etc. and he passed with flying colours. It was decided that, despite the distance, we would get up a party to try him out.

Off we went – 4 of us in a car, 180+ miles ahead and nearly 4 hours of travel. The pony seemed almost ideal – put up with lots of shenanigans and seemed fine when ridden in the manège. We found a place to have lunch and then made the trip home again. It was a long day.

Next came the vet's report – we waited with hopes and expectations as he seemed to be a great prospect. He failed! He failed on a flaw in one eye and the flexion tests on 2 legs. What a disappointment! All of this took time and we were now well into September.

October. Another day, another pony. Four of us went to look at a pony somewhat nearer, at a local livery yard. When we got there, he was obviously too small for what we required – he'd have been right, if we hadn't already got Ellie and Sam. On leaving I said that I thought we had come to look at the pony tacked up and tied up at the adjacent riding school, which was just the sort we needed. He was owned by the seller's Mother and we were told she would let us know if she would consider selling, but he was a very valuable member of the riding school.

Later, we heard that she would sell him. As he wasn't "on sale" as such, we thanked our lucky stars that we had no competition. Normally this sort of horse is snapped up over the internet, unseen and un-vetted, something that we can't do under RDA rules, so we lose out.

Another party of 4 people went to try him out and he seemed suitable for our needs. So then we got a vetting. Liz, Cathy and I attended and I have to say it was very thorough. We held our breath..... he passed!

And that is how Dixie joined us. At the time of writing, he is in his first few days, so hopefully he is "in harness" by the time you read this article.

Kirsty Brogden

## **The Role of the Management Committee (MC)**

The members of the Management Committee are currently Victoria Liston (Chairman), Allan Bennett (Treasurer), Pearl Farr (Secretary), Charlotte Daniels, Ros Ward and Kirsty Brogden (recently in attendance).

We meet up usually every 6 weeks on a Monday evening at the Centre. Our meeting is always minuted and these minutes are displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall for all to read.

Basically, we are responsible for the day to day running of the Centre, ensuring the safety and welfare of our volunteers, paid staff, riders and carers and our horses. We are also responsible for the maintenance of our land and buildings.

At the meetings we look at correspondence, finance, the Fundraising and Riding Committee reports and all current matters arising.

Please speak to any of the MC members if you have any ideas or thoughts or if you may be interested in joining us, new members are always welcome.



## **Riding Committee**

The Riding Committee consists of coaches, assistant coaches and administrators and a representative of the Management Committee. The grooms also attend. The present Chairman is Eileen Nash and the secretary is Kirsty Brogden, both elected from the committee.

We meet about every 6 weeks during term time, to discuss pony and session related matters for the day to day smooth running of the Centre.

The representative of the Management Committee reports back to them on any matters relating to the ponies and sessions, also any proposals for amendments/additions to the Centre.

Reports on the ponies are given by the grooms and each pony is discussed to flag any necessary treatments/weight reduction/feeding, behaviour, etc.

Health and Safety, etc are discussed and any amendments to procedures and we also discuss each session, riders, shortage of helpers, anything new, of interest, etc. Training is reported on and reminders given for any forthcoming training.

Forthcoming events are noted in “Dates for your Diary” and the meeting ends with Any Other Business.

Notes from the Riding Committee, plus the Grooms’ Report are posted on the notice board after each meeting.

## **FUND-RAISING GROUP (FRG)**

### **What does it mean to be a member of the Fund-Raising Group?**

As the name implies, we organise various events during the year to raise money to help with running costs and general improvements to the Centre. Of course, our main source of income is through generous donations. But we like to do our bit to help! Although the amount we raise is not massive, we also look upon our events as a PR exercise to raise our profile!

### **What fund-raising events do we hold?**

The Summer Fair, with the pony rides, Autumn Fair, attendance at village fairs, quiz nights, etc., BUT ANYTHING is considered! We need NEW people and NEW ideas, so COULD YOU HELP, please?

As part of our on-going fund-raising, we receive contributions from the sale of plants, books and produce, distribute our collecting tins to shops in the area, and do collections at local supermarkets. Extra help from volunteers is always needed and much appreciated!

### **How often do we meet?**

FRG meets approx. every 6 weeks to discuss fund-raising opportunities and make the arrangements, but we do aim to emphasise the FUN part of FUND-RAISING! Join us, give it a TRY.

### **Who are the present members of FRG?**

Present members are: Ros (Leader), Pearl (Secretary), Jenny, Audrey, Pippa.

### **Who do I speak to if I would like to join FRG or offer help?**

Speak to any of the above, please!

## Storm



Sadly we had to say goodbye to Storm over the summer. He had been suffering with arthritis, which had deteriorated, so the kindest thing to do was to put him to sleep. Storm was a much loved pony and is missed by everyone at the Centre

## **Retirement - Liz Riding**

It has not been an easy decision for me, but after more years that I care to remember, the time has come for me to retire from the ECC. I shall still support the Centre and be available as an East Region Training Adviser and Grade Examiner.

Since 2011, when I had a kidney out, my intention was to retire but like all good intentions things snowballed in the other direction. Other coaches moved or departed this life and suddenly I found I was coaching nearly all the sessions. Needless to say this did not go down too well at home but needs must sometimes.

Over the years I have made many good friends, had a lot of laughs and tears and I have met a variety of volunteers, riders and ponies. When a rider holds the reins for half a circuit for the first time, it can be so rewarding. One little rider could not sit up independently or speak. After 3 visits she could say Apple, Cat, the name of her pony, Polo, and she could sit up independently—her parents were amazed. This is all achieved through the therapy of our wonderful friend “the horse” of whom many have served us well over the years.

We used to have profoundly disabled (challenged in today’s language), riders from Rainbow School. We were able to do back riding with them and also hippotherapy. Now all this has to be done under the supervision of a CPTRH (was ACPTR). What this stands for I don’t know but they are Physios who have had extra training with the use of the horse in therapy.

A pony who has a good active walk is invaluable to our riders. As is one who stands still in the mounting block or if a rider is having a fit when mounted. Eileen’s favourite horse, Solly, who

was given to us by the BDHRA group, did not tolerate more than 1 side helper. However, by his movement he was able to teach many riders to do a really good sitting trot , which was so comfortable, rise to the trot and he would canter in hand.

The ponies used to spend some holidays on Lesley and Peter Brown's farm at Stagsden. Blackie the pony usually went home to his owner for the holidays. Later some of the ponies enjoyed weekend camp holidays at Lilley Manor and Barton Rectory, where we combined with other groups in Bedfordshire for a fun, refreshing time for the ponies, hacking out in new territory. They took a lot of organising but were always very rewarding. We only once had to bring a pony back, Alfie, who misbehaved. He was always as good as gold at home which is what we want for 99% of the time. JJ and Storm were the same at the Qualifier. Another extra special horse was Pedro—perhaps not the most comfortable but never got fazed about anything and was a favourite of Jane Holderness Rodden down at the Championships.

Early on my riders were all hospital residents. At that time they had a “composer in residence”. Jean Buckle was in charge of the learning and visually impaired unit in the hospital and she wanted them to experience riding. We started another session for them and I learned so much from Jean about these types of riders who continued until the hospital closed. Some came back as riders from the community.

The stable block made a big difference to the health of the ponies as they were previously sited within the school. The tack was all kept in the office area before the new extension

was built. We had a link through Sonia Minney with the army from Bassingbourne who used to clean the droppings from the fields, built the Giraffe house in the starvation paddock and generally help with anything we needed.

We used to have a hydraulic/ratchet mounting block that students from Allen's engineering designed. I think Eileen's late husband Fred had something to do with that. With the invention of H&S this was not considered suitable and was replaced with the existing one, which of course, due to the correct angles/inclines takes up a lot more space at the end of the school.

We never rugged up the horses in those days and looked after them on a rota system during the holidays as we did not have grooms. Charles Stock used to get the ponies in every morning for the sessions until the arrival of our 2 existing grooms.

We benefited from a 2 year Spastic Society (as it was called then) sponsoring of a yard manager/groom, 2 part time grooms and secretary/groom. They were all young and kept the horses fit by riding them in the holidays or when there were no sessions. In those days there were no Saturday or Wednesday am sessions. Over the years new sessions on Thursday night as well as Friday morning were formed.

I have trained many people on the Instructor/Coach route but alas some have moved, gone to University, had babies, found jobs, suffered ill health in the family so could not commit or sadly died.

It wasn't long after I started when Anne Jenkins said "you can take the session today." No log book, not much paper work,

red tape or H&S other than common sense. “Today” has lasted over 36 years!

When RDA introduced the RDAI (now RDAC), I had the good fortune to take and gain it at The Magpie Centre in Norfolk. To my surprise there were 2 BHSAI’s who failed on the physiotherapy and RDA knowledge. Over the years I have attended many conferences, training days, RDA AGMs and visited other groups, which I always recommend to trainees.

Finding the right ponies has never been easy, but seems even harder now. We really don’t want a yard of geriatrics who are already beginning to run into a few problems, and most of the others on the market are too young as we do not have the structure to bring on young horses to use within the sessions.

We have had many Chairmen over the years, and a few part time grooms. I enjoyed my time on the Management Committee (organising sponsored riders and Tombolas out of the back of my trailer at the River Festival). We found a disproportionate time was spent in the committee talking about the equines and our sessions so therefore started the Riding Committee with Robert Evans as Chair (meetings lasted no more than 1/2 hour then). This was an offshoot of the Management, made up of Instructors and sometimes organisers, who reported to them and permission had to be granted by them before any financial outlays were incurred. This allowed them more time to manage the Centre.

It has been great fun over the years and the good things have always outweighed the not so good. Lots of happy memories, too numerous to recall them all. I have met many inspiring people and will miss many aspects of my past roles.

Remember—it’s what you can do.

## **The Elisabeth Curtis Centre Needs You!**

The Management Committee know, and appreciate, you already give very generously of your time, but would you like to become more involved?

The MC does not know the additional skills you have!

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.

Are you good at designing posters or notices for our events?

Perhaps you might be interested in editing or maintaining our website?

There are plenty of other opportunities. Any help, in whatever form, will be greatly appreciated!

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

We are also in need of a replacement cross-cutting shredder, so if you have a spare one that you could donate to the Centre, we would be very grateful.



## Annual Return

Each year the Centre is asked to provide an annual return to RDA, as part of our membership requirements. The return for the period 01/09/16 to 31/08/17 is as follows;

**Number of participants who took part in group activities;**

Total 101 (73 aged 25 and under, 28 aged 26 and over)

**Number who took part in group activities for the first time;**

Total 33 (29 aged 25 and under, 4 aged 26 and over)

**Total number of activities undertaken by all of the Group's participants in the last 12 months; 1718**

At the date of completion the Centre had 7 ponies for use in RDA sessions

At the date of completion the Centre had 125 volunteers, of which 49 were aged 25 and under

Within the total number of volunteers, 7 would consider themselves to have a disability

At the date of completion the Centre had 3 paid members of staff

The Centre has one independent Rider/Driver/Vaulter

## **Competitions**

### **Countryside Challenge**

To enable more of our riders to enter, the Riding Committee, in conjunction with the Trustees, decided to hold an “in house” Countryside Challenge at the Centre. This was held on Saturday 21st July 2017 in the back field and was well subscribed. It is a test of riding ability and dexterity.

The competition was judged by Sam Jewsbury (who has arranged it all) and Eileen Nash. Victoria Liston, our Chairman, was kept busy adding up the scores.

The competition was enjoyed by both Juniors and Seniors, despite having to abandon the course a couple of times due to heavy downpours. Much appreciated were the tea and cakes provided by a team of Tuesday volunteers. All the riders went home with at least one rosette and smiling faces. Our thanks to everyone involved .

### **Dressage**

We also held a dressage competition on Sunday 8th October in the indoor school. We offered Intro Test 2, which is a walk only test that can be led or unled, and Test 4, with trot, which can be led or unled. Entries for the competition were very disappointing, especially when we had invited Christina Grieve from Hertfordshire, who is a “Listed Judge”. We only had 1 Junior and 4 Senior riders.

Again a mostly happy time was had by all. All riders managed to go home with feelings of achievement, rosettes and at least one trophy each.

For some of our riders it was their first taste of mounted

competition and it was also a useful training exercise for everyone. Our thanks to all who helped in various capacities on the day

Juniors: 1st—Intro Test 2 unled and Intro Test 4 with trot led -  
Roisin McGloughlin

Seniors: Intro Test 2—1st Charlotte Roomes, 2nd Kim Carter,  
3rd Rebecca Norris, 4th Charlotte Daniels

Intro Test 4—1st Kim Carter, 2nd Charlotte Daniels, 3rd  
Charlotte Roomes, 4th Rebecca Norris

### **Forthcoming Fundraising Events**

Quiz night—Saturday, 24th March 2018,

7.00 for 7.30pm at All Saint's Church Hall, Church End

Teams - max 6 people

Cost £10 includes fish and chips + dessert

## **Term Dates for Bedford Borough Schools 2018**

### **SPRING TERM**

***Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 – Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018***

Half Term: Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> February – Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February  
2018

Easter Holiday: Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> March – Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018

### **SUMMER TERM**

***Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018 – Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018***

Bank Holiday: Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Half Term: Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> May – Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018

Summer Holiday: Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July – Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> August  
2018

### **AUTUMN TERM**

***Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018 – Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> December  
2018***

Half Term: Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October – Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018

***Dates may vary according to session – please check with  
Coach***

Edited and compiled by Victoria Liston

Printed by:  
CopyKatz Ltd.  
36 Singer Way  
Woburn Road Industrial Estate  
Kempston  
Beds.  
MK42 7AF  
Tel: 01234 840125  
www.trycopykatz.com