

Newsletter February/March 2017

Elisabeth Curtis Centre
Riding for the Disabled

Charity No. 1137217; Company No. 7302917

VOTE!

VOTE!

VOTE!

*Find out on page 9 how you could help win
up to £6,000 for the Centre!*



RDA

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

Chairman's Report

Since the last newsletter, we celebrated Christmas with a very successful Volunteers Christmas dinner. My thanks to the members of the Fundraising Group for arranging this for us. The riding sessions all celebrated with a range of games and activities. A number of Tuesday evening volunteers joined in the much-anticipated dressing-up game, hopefully there aren't too many photos of the results!

In the run-up to Christmas, our hard-working fundraising group attended a number of events. My thanks to everyone involved in our fundraising activities, particularly at this time of year, when standing with a collecting tin isn't quite so much fun as it would be in the summer.

I was able to attend the carol singing evening, arranged by the Parklands Residents Association. This was the first time I had made it to this annual event, and it was a very enjoyable evening, despite the foggy conditions. We are very grateful for the continued support of the Parklands Residents Association.

Over Christmas new flooring was fitted in the office, toilets and hallway. Our thanks to Serino Floors for fitting us in around our riding sessions, and a huge thank you to everyone involved in getting the area ready for the work to be done, and for putting everything back afterwards.

I must also mention the book that has been produced as part of the celebrations of the group's 40th anniversary. Many, many hours of work have been put into recording the Centre's history for this publication. I want to pass on my personal thanks to everyone who has been involved in putting this book together, including everyone who contributed stories, memories and photographs, everyone involved in proof-reading, editing and sorting out the layout. My particular thanks to Pauline for all her hard work. We have received some lovely messages from supporters of the Centre past and present, who received a copy.

The hunt for new ponies continues. While it isn't always obvious, a lot of hard work goes into searching for suitable ponies, arranging viewings, going to visit potential ponies and negotiating trials. Fingers crossed our luck will change soon. My thanks to all involved in the search.

I will finish with just a few more thank you's – firstly to our grooms Ann and Gayl. They do an amazing job, and their work is always much harder at this time of year. A special thank you to Ann, coaches and members of the management team who went the extra mile to cover when Gayl was injured.

Our volunteers are very special people; the Centre wouldn't be able to do what we do without you. Finally, thank you to Jan and John Tozer, our editors, for putting this newsletter together, and for all they do for the Centre.

Donations

We have been incredibly fortunate to receive donations from the people and groups listed below. We are very grateful to them all.

- The Bromham Show Committee
- St Mary's Chapter
- The Harrold Calvados Society
- Bromham Hobbies Group
- The Wakefield of Hythe Chapter
- Liz Riding
- Mrs A Brown
- Stephanie
- Mr T Jones
- David Saunders
- Mary Hallam-Saunders
- Charlotte Stock – in memory of Charles Stock
- M Cahill
- Mrs V Bunker
- Mrs G Dunn
- Mrs J Meredith
- Mr and Mrs D Boorman
- Mr P Hooley
- Mrs I Mallett
- Barbara Bellamy

Contributions to the Newsletter

We always welcome articles and suggestions for the Newsletter, maybe you would like to share what you enjoy about coming to the Centre? The Newsletter comes out in February, June and November, so if you could let me have any contributions by the middle of the preceding month....

Victoria

Our 40 year history: “A Brush, Shovel and lead Rein”

Three things: a thank you; an update and links.

A belated official thank you to John Tozer for all the hours he spent on his computer arranging my typed pages, and adding nearly 40 photographs, into the document it became for printing.

An update. Nearly 250 copies have now been given to riders, past and present helpers, donors, and other people connected to the Centre. Bromham and Bedford libraries have also been given copies, for their local studies sections.

We have received a number of very kind letters, emails and telephone calls from people thanking us for sending them a copy. All have said how reading the book evoked happy memories of the past for them. Here is a snapshot of them:

“I have so enjoyed reading the history of the Centre. I read the whole thing in one go and was surprised at the memories it stirred. You have included many aspects of the centre, which, as we know, involves so much work from those involved.” Judy Davies

“Thank you for the book. I will enjoy going through it. I have some very happy memories... and good luck for the next 40 years.” Sally John

“What a lovely surprise it was when ‘A Brush, Shovel and Lead Rein’ came through my letter box. I have found it’s evoked so many memories of people and ponies. The whole venture was one of faith, hard work, teamwork and lots of fun along the way.....you have worked so hard over theyears to make sure that the centre benefits disabled riders and the ‘spirit of RDA’ endures.” Annette Brown

“Thank you so much for the book. I have read it from cover to cover. It is such a diverse and comprehensive history – marvellous!” June Meredith

“Congratulations on the publication of the ECC 40 years book. We had many happy times helping at the Centre and made many friends as a result.” Sue and Colin Brown

“Thank you so much for sending the book – my goodness how the time flies! Such a lot has been accomplished over the years, and it is good to know that there is so much local support financially to keep going – the annual costs are rather eye watering compared with our beginnings! Thinking back to when I started helping at Box End in ’75, just getting the riders on board and keeping them there for 30 minutes was considered a triumph, the range of activities they are now encouraged in is amazing and must be greatly satisfying to all the helpers. Great to see Michael Blackeby’s still riding!” Ann Jenkins

Several of the letters also contained cheques, totalling £200. We very much appreciate their generosity, and thank them for it.

As well as being very interested in the Centre’s history, I am interested in links, past and present. Several have been added since I wrote about it, or have been told to me as a result.

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Greys Education Centre, formerly Rainbow School - Bromham's Hospital own school - and our near neighbours, started to ride on Thursday mornings on 19th January 2017. They bring four riders.

On page 6 there is a photograph of the Bromham House Colony staff in 1948. Second from the right in the front row is Mr S R Kendall. Ken, a Monday morning helper, went to school with Mr Kendall's son. Ken was invited to have tea at Bromham Hospital on one occasion. He left school in 1951.

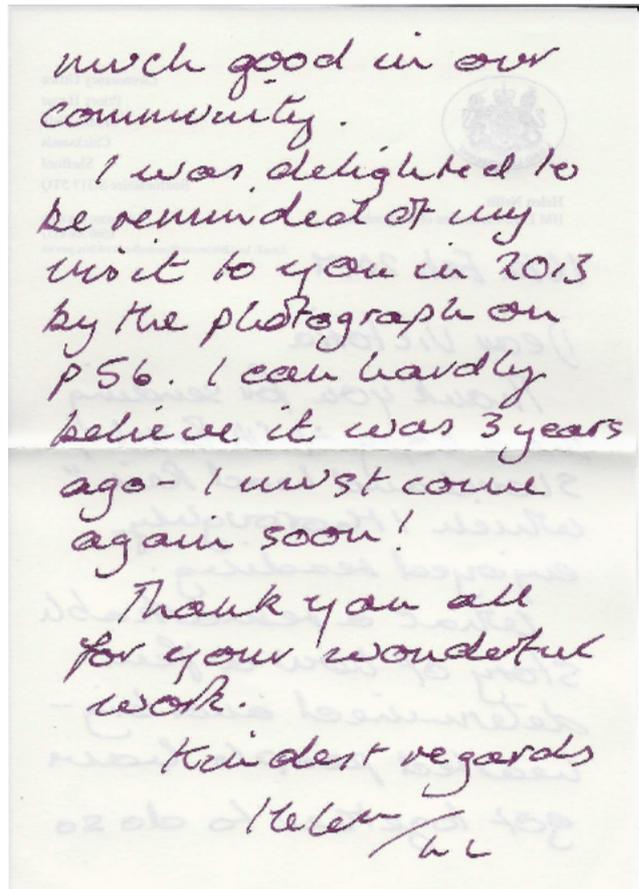
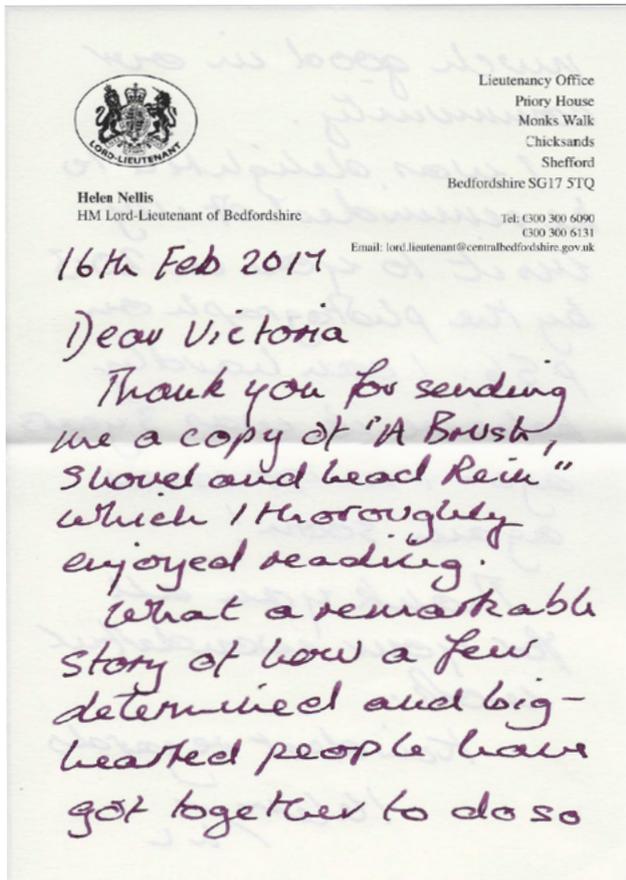
On 21st January 2017 I went to a concert at St Andrew's Church in Kimbolton Road. On the door were two people with past and present links to the Centre. They were June Meredith and Barbara Doyle, respectively. What was particularly interesting, to me at least, was the fact that they did not know each other and therefore did not know of this shared connection.

Postscript: no ECC money was spent on producing this book. It was fully funded by a sponsor, to whom I am very grateful.

Pauline Evans



*"Little One" by Kim Thompson
www.kimthompsonartist.com*



Looking back Early Memories of ECC by Hilary O'Dell



Back in Spring 2016, I ran into old acquaintances Jan and Roger Daniel, who were volunteers at the Centre in the very early days. Roger was involved in laying the concrete slab in what is now the Sensory Ride as a base for the isolation stable. Talking to them started me thinking about my involvement at the Centre.

As a teenager, I helped my Mother at an RDA group near where we lived in Middlesex, so I was interested to see a display in Bromham library appealing for help at ECC.

I started as a helper on a Monday morning when Annette Brown was the instructor and Sue Brown was the Organiser. In later years I tried to trace my attendance back to the beginning but only found records going back to April 1988. However, I think it may have been earlier.

The first ponies I encountered were Polo and Smokey (two little greys who shared a partitioned stable), Indiana, Darwin, Jack, Solomon, Rufus, Oscar and Dusty. Over the years I have seen many ponies come and go. My daughter, Lucie and I enjoyed our Monday evening able-bodied riding sessions and she was light enough to ride the smaller ponies. She also used to help Erica when she ran a Friday morning group. Having been a rider since I was four years old and a horse-owner for many years, volunteering at the Centre was right up my street.

Having gained some years RDA experience with the Monday rides, I was "poached" by Caroline Hailey, then Tuesday morning Instructor, as she was very short of help. We became firm friends and I took on the Organiser's role. She didn't always stick to the rules but her rides

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were safe and fun for the riders. For a time, we had a group of trusted prisoners from Bedford prison who came as volunteers. We always wondered what their crimes had been, but didn't like to ask, assuming they were not murderers or rapists! Many of them became very valuable members of our team.

When Caroline met and married Eric Husher, I attended her wedding. She later re-located to her native USA and on one of our trips "across the pond" we stayed with them at Portsmouth, Rhode Island - she hasn't changed a bit!

My job changed then and I then moved to Wednesday afternoon and became Liz Riding's Organiser for many years.

On each session, we have had a lovely, dedicated bunch of helpers as we do to this day. It has been extremely rewarding to see the riders make progress and enjoy their riding.

I first met Kirsty when she was new to the Centre and when she became Thursday morning Instructor, I offered to help out when she was short-handed. Before I knew where I was, I became a regular! Having a pretty hectic life, I decide I needed to cut out one session and after long deliberation, I reluctantly left Liz and Gina's session to concentrate on Thursday morning and there I remain.

That reminds me that Judy Davies was Thursday morning Instructor for many years before moving away. As I write this in the early hours of a sleepless night (! !) it revives lots of memories of people and ponies I have met over the years, and I have enjoyed every minute of it. I was sorry to have to miss the Centre's 40th Birthday Celebrations. We were away at the time.

Having given up my last horse (Lolly's twin) some years ago, it has been good to keep in touch with horses by coming to the Centre and hopefully I shall be able to continue for many more years.

(I can't get used to Instructors now being called Coaches !!)

Hilary O'Dell

Volunteers Christmas Dinner 2016

This year we tried a new venue on the recommendation of several volunteers. We went to the Bedford Golf Club in Great Denham. The food was good, tasty and fresh, especially the vegetables - not a frozen sprout in sight! The staff were polite and quietly efficient, even coping with Alun's indignation at discovering that somebody had crossed out his dessert. He likes his puddings, does Alun!

The raffle also went very well and raised £177. The fundraisers had already collected enough prizes for a good raffle but on the night more and more prizes kept appearing. This included a generous gift of a round of golf for four people from the club itself. I think every table won at least one prize.

Many thanks to all those who helped to make it such a memorable evening.

Jan

Let there be Light!

Some of the more observant folk may have noticed that it is now much brighter in the stable block. Over the years the brambles and scrub growing on the bank behind the stable block have run riot and were blocking the light getting in the windows. At one point the brambles had crossed the gap between the bank and the stables and were heading off across the roof. We employed the services of The Tree People to clear all the brambles,

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small trees and weeds. Using some very heavy duty machinery, it took three fit young men a whole day to clear it, so not a job for the volunteers then! (Sigh of relief from yours truly.) However, we have been left with a carpet of twigs and small pieces of bramble which we

now need to dispose of. We have already had one work day and burnt a lot of it but there is plenty left! So, if you have some stout boots and gloves, plus a bit of spare energy, watch out for a poster about the next work day. Pyromaniacs welcome!

Jan



Nothing better than a bonfire on a cold and frosty day!

Community Matters at Waitrose

Many of you are familiar with the green token scheme that Waitrose runs. Every month customers vote for a charity of their choice. We were lucky enough to be one of the chosen charities in Bedford during the month of January. This resulted in us being awarded £329.00! Thank you so much to Waitrose and all the customers who voted for us.

Jan



philipmartin.com

Vote, Vote, Vote!!!

What are we voting for, you might ask? The answer is - for ECC to get some lovely lolly! We are one of four charities in this area who has been invited to apply for a grant to celebrate the launch of the Masonic Charitable Foundation and the 300th anniversary of the United Grand Lodge of England. We were nominated by Freemasons and their families living in our region. Many thanks to them! We are guaranteed to receive at least £4,000 but could get as much as £6,000 if we get enough votes.

The voting doesn't take place until June and July, so watch out for a poster or our next Newsletter telling you how to vote.



Fundraising

12 November Quiz night at Church End, Kempston. Took £212.00. Well done to all who took part.

December 3rd Church Fair, village hall, Biddenham. Ros took £130 approx.

December 3rd Bedford Girls School Christmas Fair. Tombola - £50.10, knitted goods - £26.00.

8th December, Thursday. Christmas Dinner for Volunteers at Great Denham Golf Club. A very enjoyable evening! Raffle made £176.00.

13th December, Tuesday Tesco collection. Christmas Collection at Goldington store. Took £196.06

16 December Parklands Residents - Carol singing raised £302. Many thanks to Anthony Heywood for organising this once again.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 11th March Beetle Drive!

Sunday 21st May ECC Summer Fair.

Saturday 24th June All Saints' Church Fete.

Saturday 8th July Wootton FunFest.

Saturday 9th December Budgens Christmas Collection.



**The Elisabeth Curtis Centre,
Riding for the Disabled**

Are you game for a giggle?

Come to our

Beetle Drive

**All Saints' Church Hall,
Church End, Kempston on
Saturday 11th March
7.30 for 8.00 p.m**

Prizes

Raffle

BYO drinks & supper

Teams of up to 6 people

Great Fun! No Brain Strain!

Tickets £4.50, £3.00 for under 12's

Contact: Jan 01234 297456

Charity Number 1137217

Term Dates for Bedfordshire Schools 2017

Tuesday 4th April: Spring Term ends.

Wednesday 19th April: Summer Term begins.
(Tuesday 18th April Bedfordshire Schools Training Day)

Monday 29th May - Friday 2nd June: Half Term.

Friday 21st July 2017: Summer Term ends.

Monday 4th September 2017: Autumn Term begins.

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

Edited and compiled by Jan & John Tozer

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