



Epsom Riding for the Disabled Association



Annual Review 2016-2017

Epsom Riding for the Disabled Association, St Ebba's Farm, Hook Road, Epsom KT19 8QW, 01372 743690

Charity Number: 1073638

INTRODUCTION

After another successful year for Epsom RDA during 2016-2017, we received some very sad news as we moved into the second quarter of 2017. Pauline Humphries passed away on Tuesday 18th April peacefully in her sleep at Princess Alice Hospice in Cobham. Pauline had been ill for quite some time with breast cancer returning and other complications. Pauline will be remembered fondly by all at Epsom RDA as our intrepid secretary and the session leader on the Saturday morning session. Pauline had been a volunteer with Epsom RDA for almost 40 years and was crucial in the land purchase back in 2005. Pauline resigned as secretary of the board of trustees last year due to her illness.

Her Saturday session was a joy, you could hear her voice instructing many riders, *"heels down, sit up, diagonals, well ridden!!!"* Pauline was also very competitive on behalf of her riders and became the epitome of a pony club instructor/parent at all the competitive events.

Above all Pauline was a huge supporter of Epsom RDA together with her husband Ken who manned the secretary's tent at most of the events until he died a few years ago. Pauline supported all her helpers too and gave freely of her expertise, advice and knowledge. Pauline was a big part of Epsom RDA and will be greatly missed, we were all privileged to have known her and to have had this wonderful woman in our association and lives.

Over the last year, we have luckily been given horses on permanent loan, which is preferable to the charity buying horses. We are still looking for a small pony to complement the herd but for several reasons sweet tempered, safe ponies are so much harder to come by. Our small pony Charlie was being underused so he has been taken on by a volunteer who loves him and is now on livery with us and very happy indeed.

The herd are working well carrying out their specialised duties over our thirteen sessions.

We have had a remarkable recovery with Marigold as she had a liver condition and was off work for six months, we were not hopeful that she would return to work but, lo and behold, when her blood was tested at the beginning of the year, her blood count was normal Marigold is back in work albeit at a reduced rate.

We have a team of professionals helping us manage the herd; Priory Equine Vets, Reigate; Gill Maybury, Chiropractor; Peter Ibbotson, Farrier and Ellie Martin, Saddler. We have also been in partnership with Sandown Racecourse by collecting the stable chippings at the end of each race season and this is a huge saving to ERDA.

Our riders represented Epsom RDA once again at the Regional Dressage Championships at the All England Showground Hickstead in May and we had riders and ponies qualify for the National Dressage Championships in Hartpury in July.

Epsom RDA is run entirely by volunteers: looking after the ponies, the grounds, the gardens, the muck heap, pooh picking as well as encouraging our riders to achieve and progress to the best of their ability in their riding. To this end our annual prize giving ceremony in November is an important event celebrating our riders' successes in achieving their Grade 1, 2, 3 and 4 riding and stable management awards, trophy's and Endeavour certificates.

During the year, our Group Coaches are assessed by the RDA Region to ensure that the sessions are run safely, with progression, appropriate games and activities to promote enjoyment and achievement. Each year the Group Coaches and Log Book holders have more paperwork to adhere to and ever more training to keep up to date with legislation and new initiatives. The commitment all Group Coaches, Log Book holders, Trustees and volunteers give to Epsom RDA is exemplary. Many thanks to all our volunteers.

*Thank
you*



Stella Milne, Chair, ERDA

RIDING SESSIONS

There are so many volunteers who help run Epsom RDA and the following reports illustrate the hard work and the amazing achievements of the riders and the volunteers from each session, all of which contributes to the continued success of Epsom RDA.



MONDAY AM SESSION

The Monday morning session continues to be a joy with a great team of volunteers, three adult riders and two school groups. West Ewell infants school rotate groups of 4-6 riders each half term and we're delighted that all of our 2016/17 groups have been able to 'graduate' with success in Stage 1 or 2 tests. It was particularly rewarding to see several riders who were initially too frightened to approach a pony bounce with excitement at the bottom of the ramp while they wait their turn to be called. Wandle Valley school have also introduced several new riders to us this year, all of whom have grown in confidence and ability enormously since their first session.

With the arrival of more weight carrying horses in our herd, both our independent adult riders were able to compete in the Harold Newton dressage this year and did us proud – Dallas coped admirably with Romeo's reluctance to trot on the day, and Simone handled a last minute switch to Sinatra with aplomb.

Our volunteer team continues to go from strength to strength epitomising the spirit of RDA, caring for the horses and ponies, and supporting our riders and each other.



MONDAY EVENING SESSION

The Monday evening session is made up of 3 busy but enjoyable rides attended by mostly teenage riders who have a wide range of physical and learning disabilities. We currently have 8 riders who attend the session with their families to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of horse riding. This year our riders

have been working a lot on steering, they have been steering in and out of cones, through poles and have now begun to practice steering shallow loops as well. They have also been working on trying to achieve a good balanced riding position, so they have been riding without stirrups for part of the lesson and have also been trying to balance a rubber ring on their hats whilst completing an exercise. Whether it be being able to now confidently communicate with their horse and helpers, beginning to ride exercises independently off the lead rein or riding their first canter dressage test, our riders have all continued to make brilliant progress this year. We also had great success at the 2017 Harold Newton dressage competition, with Amy and Leo both coming 1st in their classes and qualifying for the regional dressage competition at Hickstead and Alex coming 2nd in his class. The session is supported by a wonderful group of RDA volunteers who all work fantastically with the riders and horses alike. With an endlessly enthusiastic team of helpers, incredibly hard working riders and lots of support and encouragement from the rider's families, the Monday evening session continues to go from strength to strength.



TUESDAY SESSION

This continues to be an extremely busy session. During term time, we have 2 sessions for riders from Linden Bridge school which caters for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and is one of our longest standing relationships, having been riding with us for more than 25 years. There are 4 classes of up to 9 riders rotating each half term. With these riders age 7-11 we focus on games and exercises to improve concentration and co-ordination, and of course to provide a lot of fun. The older riders also work towards their Grade tests. Because of the size of the classes and the fact that many of the pupils require sidewalkers we need a large number of volunteers and have been delighted to welcome a number of new joiners to the team

this year – Amanda, Simon and Meena Sarah H and Sarah B; Liz; Pat; Rebecca; Alicia; Clara and Selina. We were however very sorry to say goodbye to Mary Clarke, very longstanding volunteer and former Tuesday session leader, and to Edie Hinchin who at 91 was possibly our most mature volunteer, both of whom have retired this year due to ill health.

We also have a third session comprising 8 riders of different ages and disabilities who ride all year round. As they are of varying levels of experience we split the class to allow for more individual instruction. A few of our longstanding riders have moved on so we have taken on 3 new riders this year, Matthew, Anne and Joshua, all of whom have made good progress in the short time they have been with us. Double congratulations are due to Yvonne Clift who took second place in her class at Harold Newton this year but was unable to take up the offer of a place at Hickstead as she is now on maternity leave!



WEDNESDAY AM SESSION

The Wednesday morning session has 2 rides. The first lesson is for the pupils of Dysart School from the upper quadrant of the school and consists of up to 8 participants aged 11 and upwards, who have a range of special needs, mainly Autism and physical disabilities. Our second lesson is for adult participants from the local community who mainly have Autism and physical disabilities.

Our aim for both rides is to encourage the riders to speak to their ponies, control their balance, improve their co-ordination and concentration through a variety of coaching techniques and games, but most of all to try and make the session fun for all!

We also look after Pete the farrier by keeping him topped up with tea and appreciate his expertise and good nature with both the horses and us!



WEDNESDAY PM SESSION

The Wednesday afternoon session continues to be a small but happy session with children from Greenmead School in Putney. These children ride on a six-week half term turnover. The children have many complex needs with both physical and intellectual developmental delay. The school brings support staff that usually helps on the sessions as we require three helpers to ensure that the riders can enjoy their time on horseback safely. The team of RDA volunteers is tireless in their enthusiasm for the success of this session and engages with the children to help with sitting, holding reins, achieving exercises and playing games.



WEDNESDAY EVE SESSION

The Wednesday evening is thriving with lots of new, young helpers having joined us this year. Our riders include pupils from Linden Bridge School as well as individual riders and all continue to make good progress in their riding. We were very pleased that one of our riders who has only been riding with us for a few months won her class at the Harold Newton Dressage competition in March this year.



THURSDAY SESSION

The Thursday session provides both beneficial and therapeutic riding sessions to riders from two schools and two riders who come from home. The majority are in the main profoundly autistic with challenging behaviours. Because of the challenges that the children face in just coming to the stables for example the bus journey, the noises and smells at the yard and then those 'scary ponies' we let the child have some control over each step forward i.e. stopping when they have made just a small amount of progress. This can mean it can take some time to actually get them on board, if that is at all possible. Some children will not enter the yard

at all and when they then make it to the coffee room will not leave that room. We rely on the staff from both schools to advise us on how far we can push. The most difficult things for the children are the hats and the mounting, normally once we get past that it's relatively plain sailing.

We created a quiet ride for one class with children who have hypersensitive hearing. The impact on us all was amazing. The peace and quiet relaxed the children, the ponies and all involved. Hand signals were used to direct the very attentive leaders and sign language was used to communicate with the riders. The loudest noises on those mornings were the parakeets!!!

In December two children from Knollmead Primary School were awarded their Grade 1 Riding with one child also achieving his Grade 1 Horse Care. Also nine children from Papillon House School were awarded their Grade 1 Riding.

In March this year another five children from Papillon House were awarded their Grade 1 Riding with another nonriding child achieving his Grade 1 Horse Care.

We have a couple of new volunteers to join the Thursday gang, the wonderful Hazel Ransome retired and we very sadly lost our friend and volunteer Brian Donovan to cancer last year.



FRIDAY SESSION

The Friday group has 3 busy sessions with riders who have a wide range of physical and learning disabilities. We have two groups of adult riders and a long-standing relationship with Acquired Brain Injury unit of The Childrens Trust at Tadworth Court. They have a dedicated session for up to 5 children who ride with us as part of their physiotherapy, accompanied by their own physiotherapist. These young people, aged between 4 and 16, may have suffered brain injury as a result of

an accident, brain tumour, or stroke; many are in wheelchairs when they first come to us and often have severe mobility and co-ordination difficulties as well as problems with concentration and memory. The length of time that an individual rider is with us can be anything from a few weeks to 6 months, but it is always rewarding to see the improvement in their condition, and know that riding has contributed to this. In addition to the physical benefits, the children get tremendous enjoyment from their riding, and having been introduced to it, some continue to ride, occasionally on other sessions if they are local, or with RDA groups in other parts of the country, when they leave the Trust. Despite the relatively short time they are with us many of the riders achieve their Level 1 and sometimes Level 2 grade tests.



SATURDAY AM SESSION

The Saturday morning session have again enjoyed the Summer BBQ and the Christmas party with the Saturday afternoon session.

At the Regional Dressage competition at Hickstead Showground we had four riders take part, Matt, Tyriq and, for the first time, Felicity & Aaron. Tyriq & Matt also qualified for the RDA National Dressage championships at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire. Matt rode Archie and Tyriq had a last-minute change of pony and rode a pony from the Diamond RDA.

We had nine rider's take part in the 2017 Harold Newton Dressage competition. Everyone did really well and Jon beat his brother Matt by 0.2% to win the Harold Newton Trophy. Matt and Jon will be joined by Felicity, Jay & Freya at the 2017 RDA Regional Dressage on 24th May.

Along with our riders taking part in dressage competitions, some have also obtained their Grade tests. Grade 3 Riding was awarded to Yasmin, Felicity, Aaron, Lily, George and

Freya. The Grade 1 Horse care was successfully obtained by Caitlin & Lucie.

Congratulations also to Louise Jenkins for becoming a Group Coach. Our session is supported by many fantastic young helpers and, unfortunately, we always lose a few around exam time and when they head off to university, so we are always happy to have new helpers come along.



SATURDAY PM SESSION

The Saturday Afternoon session continues to enjoy dedication from our wonderful helpers in order to provide riding to meet the variety of needs of our riders. We have welcomed new riders and said farewell to some much loved riders and friends too. As well as achieving at the RDA Grades system, our riders also enjoyed successful tests at the annual dressage competition; and a special mention to Sophia and Elisa Lai and Harrison Smith who completed this competition for the first time.



SUNDAY 1 SESSION

The past year, as ever, has been busy and challenging including significant changes in our riders and helpers. We have continued with our usual fortnightly routine of lessons, training for grade examinations in riding and horse care, and training for dressage. All our riders passed their grade examinations and will be encouraged to achieve more in the forthcoming year.

We were also successful with our three entrants for the Harold Newton dressage competition who achieved 2nd, 3rd and 7th positions in their class. We are looking forward to another positive and rewarding year.



SUNDAY 2 SESSION

Sunday 2 has seventeen riders at present. They mostly come with their parents and a couple come with a carer. Their ages range from six to sixty. We have said goodbye to three riders, Elanor Sinden, Paul Rowland and Catriona Cuffe. Elanor and Catriona had both been riding with us for about twenty years and Elanor has joined another group near to where she now lives. After much deliberation, Catriona decided to concentrate on her other activities and Paul, the youngest of the three and still at school, has chosen skiing as his main sport. We have welcomed two new riders, Angelina Mama and Ben Patman and both are doing very well and enjoying their riding. On the volunteer front, we have waved goodbye to Ben who has gone to live and work in the wilds of Scotland. We have welcomed three new volunteers, Libby, Amelia and Suzanne.

There are three rides on Sunday 2 and we try and split them so as to give each rider as much attention as possible. We utilise both schools and in good weather we are to be found in the fields. Our ponies are used to these different venues and they seem very pleased with the variety! Each rider has goals relevant to their ability; for some it will be to hold the reins properly and learn to steer their pony, others are riding off the lead with an escort, some are learning to trot. There are proficiency tests to take and the smart new Endeavour Awards to be won. Emily and Moss are planning on doing Grade 3 riding this year, which is very exciting.

Our Christmas session was lovely, with gymkhana games, silly hats and lots of super food and even some mulled wine! We gave ourselves a day off for New Year's Day and some of us came down to check all the ponies and do hay in the fields. We have a fabulous team of caring and hard-working volunteers. Every one of them ensures that our riders are safe and having fun while they are learning

and that our ponies are well cared for. It is not always easy and a sense of humour does help! As always, a huge thank you to my volunteers and here's looking forward to busy and exciting times on Sunday 2.



SUMMER HOLIDAYS RIDING

During the summer holidays we have a holiday riding scheme to replace the various school groups which usually attend our midweek sessions. The majority of these riders are from InterAKtive, a support group for families of children with ASD, with whom we have worked for a number of years. During August, we ran 8 special sessions for these children, many of whom were new to riding and enjoyed it so much that they are now on our waiting list.

We also hosted 2 sessions for sight impaired children from Sight for Surrey, an organisation we have not worked with before. This was very successful and they have asked to participate in the holiday riding scheme again this year.

PONIES

This year we got our first liveries. With the revenue from this one field we can pay for all our forage needs for our growing herd all year round meaning that we can use less grass which is dangerous to our native types and instead give them a diet more suited to their lifestyle and breeding. We are still trying to take the load off the most used of the herd, but ponies of this size are almost impossible to get as every family in the country is looking for the same thing!



We have had a very interesting year with our first pony 'fit for purpose' exam - all passed with flying colours as did our tack which is also included in the vet's report. We have had a couple of behaviourists in too - this after a few of us went to see Gemma Pearson a vet who is also a behaviourist - and we saw what

an amazing job she did with some RDA ponies. We will be getting them back I am sure to sort out problems as they arise.

From a pony viewpoint the RDA Regional Championships were very successful for us, however, the RDA National Championships were more of a challenge with two of our most experienced ponies and National Championship stalwarts off due to illness: Marigold who had advanced liver disease (from which she has miraculously recovered) and Milton who had an allergic reaction on his face which then became infected. As a result, we took only one competing horse, relative newcomer Archie, who having completed the most fantastically accurate and forwards test, decided the occasion was all too much and, as the judge noted, "left the arena at speed." Both Archie and his rider survived the experience in tact.

PROPERTIES

It has been a year in which we concentrated on smaller projects and general improvements, essential maintenance and routinely ensuring we are compliant with regulations relating to buildings and services such as electricity. It has also been a year when we have invested much time in planning to accommodate more rides and better facilities although this has not caused any substantial cost in the year.



We have a regular, loyal and sociable group of maintenance volunteers that handle general maintenance, grading of both arena surfaces and maintaining our buildings. This team mixes well with the riding session volunteers each day. I am pleased to say that we have seen two additions to the maintenance team during the year, each attending when they have time, much as all volunteers do. We welcome additional maintenance volunteers and contact details are published on our website.

We have over the past year had work parties from locally based companies, each on site for a designated day, to take on a task or two. Usually this is quite manually oriented work but because of the numbers attending their work makes a good impact on the task allotted and it is fun for them too. In some cases, these groups also raise funds on our behalf which is always welcome. We are pleased to acknowledge and thank Techno Brain Group, Surrey Council – Customer Care Team, SGN Epsom and Nuffield Health.

Next year we are expecting some of the planning we made during this year to turn into material benefits for our riders.

DATA, STATISTICS AND IT

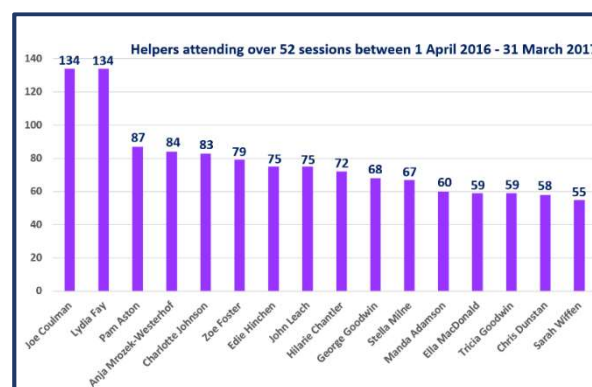
Thanks to the diligence of the session leaders and a lot of hard work, the ERDA sessions database is now completely up to date and we are able to start seeing some interesting statistics come out of it. The purpose of the data is manifold. We will be able to efficiently pull off the information we require for the Annual Consensus which we have a regulatory requirement to do, we will be able to provide numbers for business cases for the future and we also have the opportunity to keep everyone within ERDA (and Region should they require it) completely up to date with specific information they require on an ad hoc basis. Data will also be reported on at each quarterly Trustee Meeting and each quarterly Management Meeting going forward. Following are some statistics that you may find interesting.

Firstly, on volunteers attending sessions during 2016-2017:

- 277 helpers attended riding sessions between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.
- There were 6017 volunteer attendances during riding sessions between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.
- 16 helpers attended over 54 sessions between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

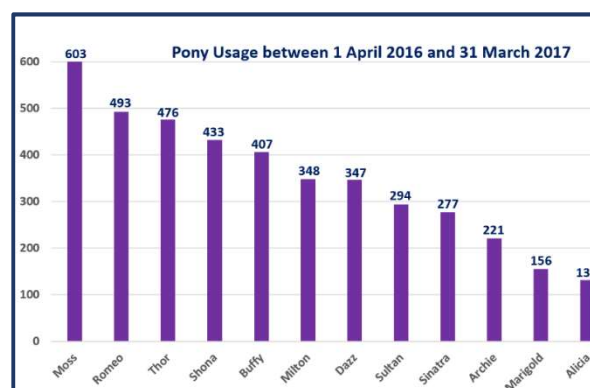
- 2 helpers attended over 130 sessions between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

The above stats emphasise Stella's earlier words about the absolutely outstanding work that all of our helpers and volunteers do and the amazing support they freely give us.



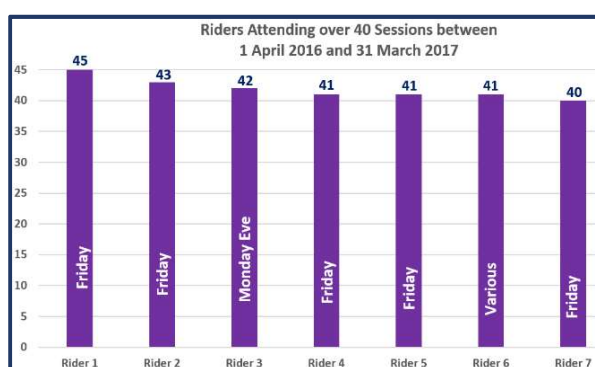
Next, onto ponies being used between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017:

- Moss was used over 600 times from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.
- Five of our ponies were used more than 400 times from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.
- Between the 12 ponies in the stats, they were used 4,187 times between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.



Finally, onto riders and the sessions they attended between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

- There were 330 riders attending sessions at ERDA between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.
- Seven riders attended 40 or above sessions each between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.
- The rider attending the highest number of sessions (45) takes part in the Friday session.
- Ponies used by this rider between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 were Buffy, Alicia and Milton.



This shows you what sort of data we can extract and so please discuss amongst teams and let us know what would be most useful to you. Work we are doing around IT, the Website, policies and strategy is coming on in leaps and bounds and during the rest of 2017 we will start to see some of the benefits that we have been working towards.

EVENTS AND FUNDRAISING

The major fundraising event for Epsom RDA in 2016 was the Open Day held in June.



It was a tremendously successful day with an excellent turnout of spectators who enjoyed a variety of entertainment. The event raised in the region of £4,000 from a raffle, entrance

fees, stalls and other activities. As importantly our visitors, entertainers, stall holders and demonstrators all had a fun day helping us raise awareness and build good relationships with the local community.

The Open Day also gave us an opportunity to launch a range of Epsom RDA merchandise featuring our ponies. The key rings, fridge magnets and car stickers continue to be available to buy for our volunteers and riders. The ever popular [Adopt a Pony](#) scheme has been given a refresh with new photos of the ponies in a presentation mount.

We continue to make use of our facilities to host fundraising unaffiliated dressage competitions and clinics. In the last year these have re-established themselves as popular events attracting a core of loyal supporters from the local equine community. Our yard is also the start point for the September Fun Ride. The routes taking in Horton Country Park, Ashted and Epsom Commons proved popular with returning entrants and new entrants alike.

Ewell Agility Club again organised a well-attended Fun Dog Show in October. The Firework BBQ in November is an ever popular highlight of the events calendar with tickets being sold out.

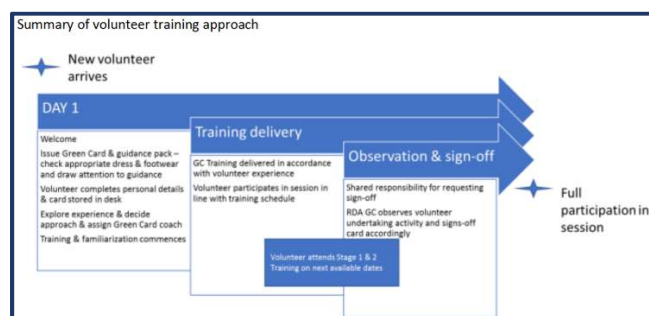
The setting up of the Epsom RDA [Just Giving](#) page to receive one-off donations and regular Direct Debits has proved successful helping us receive donations while keeping our administration to a minimum. We are also grateful to our supporters who use this fundraising platform to raise funds for us while taking all manner of challenges! Donations can also be texted to us at 70070 followed by our unique code ERDA19 and the amount you are donating (maximum of £10). JustTextGiving by Vodafone take care of the

rest. The text message is free on all networks and we receive every penny of your donation

For those who do on-line shopping there is a simple way to raise funds by registering with the Epsom RDA page on [EasyFundraising](#). There are hundreds of companies on the site including big "High Street" names all of whom donate a percentage of your shopping costs to charity.

TRAINING

Supporting the development of our volunteer team is a key priority. The training committee have worked tirelessly over the past year to update the entire training syllabus, continuing to help us operate safely, effectively and consistently. The training team deliver Stage 1 and 2 courses for new volunteers several times throughout the year, giving access to their professional expertise in working with disabilities as well as horse care knowledge. Formal and informal events are also organised for our coaches to share knowledge and explore new ideas between sessions, and all coaches are encouraged to attend Regional and National training events.



DONATIONS RECEIVED 2016-2017

We want to thank everyone who has very kindly donated to us during the year, including our own volunteers and their friends and colleagues.

Following is a list of donations received between 1/4/2016 and 31/3/2017:

- 1 Ruxley Church
- 2 SJ Slumber
- 3 S Sweeting – Saturday BBQ Raffle
- 4 CAF G50166712 – PG McCauley L&G
- 5 Freya Williams
- 6 RDA – Kate Jones
- 7 Guildford Barbershop Harmony Club
- 8 CAF 1611301612CF
- 9 P Redding
- 10 SJ Slumber
- 11 Sutton Mariners - in memory of Janet Sainsbury
- 12 JM Sterland
- 13 MW & DE Simmons
- 14 MJ Solman – Craft Sales
- 15 ST Barnabas PCC
- 16 The Thompson Family Foundation
- 17 AJ Jenner – donation
- 18 Horton Older Gentlemen's Golfing Soc.
- 19 Tullett Prebon Group Ltd
- 20 Mr RA & Mrs RM Cox
- 21 J Solman – Craft Sales
- 22 GR & H Powell
- 23 FatFace Foundation
- 24 FatFace Foundation
- 25 Forsters LLP – Felicity Pocq St Jean
- 26 Mrs CG Spencer
- 27 Mrs CG Spencer
- 28 Tricia & George Goodwin
- 29 B Roan
- 30 Olive J Moore
- 31 Stoneleigh Methodist
- 32 Waitrose
- 33 The Mayor's Charity
- 34 Scotia Gas Networks
- 35 Legal & General
- 36 Legal & General PG McCauley
- 37 Hogben & Lilse
- 38 Papillon School

Without these donations and our sponsorships we would not be able to run Epsom RDA and provide the therapeutic benefits and enjoyment that our riders gain.

Thank you very much to everyone