

EPSOM RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL REVIEW 2017/18



Epsom Riding for the Disabled Association is a Charity registered under charity number 1073638
The stables are located at St Ebba's Farm, Hook Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 8QW. Tel No. 01372 743690
A member of the Riding for the Disabled Association incorporating Carriage Driving – A Registered Charity



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INTRODUCTION

2017-18 has again been a fruitful year for Epsom Riding for the Disabled with our riders achieving personal goals in their riding and stable management. Our riders enjoy the experience of riding with Epsom as sessions are fun, sometimes exciting, always safe and geared to each rider's ability. Some of our rides are pony therapy rides and this year we are using the sensory track and riding in the fields for these riders to enhance their sensory experience. Some group instructors have used initiative and added extra's to this experience, it is so rewarding to see the smiles and excitement on these riders faces especially going up and downhill!!

The Royal Horticultural Society's Hampton Court Flower Show allowed Epsom RDA to take many plants, trees and structures after the show in 2017 to enhance our gardens, perimeters and sensory track. A huge thank you to all involved in securing these items and thanks to the maintenance and gardening teams for planting and maintaining the area. There have been comings and going with the herd over the past year with our main stalwarts still carrying out most of the rides. The newcomers are filling in well and supporting the 'old timers'. It is always difficult finding the right RDA pony and sometimes it works for a while but the RDA life is not suited to all. Our Horse and Pony Manager continues to search for horses and ponies to complement our herd.

The herd continues to support our riders in lead rein work and independent riding. This year a new discipline has been introduced - Endurance riding which complements the

dressage event as concentrates on personal achievements.

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

The Trustees continue to work towards strategies for the future of Epsom Riding for the Disabled. The main areas focused on during this year have been preparing planning documentation for the building of a new Indoor School with integral mounting facilities, viewing area and training room. The coffee room has already begun to look a lot different and a lot brighter. The second area is becoming an Incorporated Charity of which most of the work has now been accomplished. Further to this work a new data base for riders, volunteers and waiting lists have been initiated and will comply with the new GDPR regulations.

Unfortunately, two of our Trustees resigned during the year, Chris Tudor our Secretary who stepped in and did a stalwart job in getting our figures ready for last years' census. We are grateful for the time and effort she has given. And Gordon Thompson, Properties Manager, Gordon has been involved with Epsom RDA for many years, his daughter Naomi rides on Saturday mornings so we will continue to see him and ask advice .Gordon has been proactive in maintaining the property and managing projects, the new driveway, the new stable block, the sensory track, tree felling and maintenance, fencing to name but a few. His contribution and support as part of the Trustee team leaves a huge gap to fill.

Epsom RDA is extremely lucky to have a wealth of support from the Epsom and Ewell community, SGN Depot in Epsom, Marks and Spencer (Dorking), Epsom and Ewell Rotary and many, many more, who not only give their time to help with maintenance but also financially. Some of our volunteers also raise funds, Annette Emery, selling her beautiful jewellery, Judy Solmon, selling greeting cards, Bobbie Roan, collecting coins, George and Trish Goodwin selling eggs and Jean Hoblyn attending tack sales on Epsom's behalf.

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 and Endurance 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 our Group Coaches, Log Book holders and volunteers give to Epsom RDA is exemplary.

There are many volunteers who help run Epsom RDA 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. Thank you all so much.

RIDING SESSIONS

We run riding sessions every day of the week including weekends. The majority are held in the mornings, but we do also have a Monday and Wednesday evening session, a Wednesday lunchtime session and a Saturday afternoon session.

Each session is unique in the types of riders they have and therefore adapt their coaching to be most effective for the individual challenges their riders face. The main object of the riding sessions is to ensure the riders enjoy them and from that enjoyment gain the physical, social, educational and other benefits that horse riding provides.

The Monday morning session in 2017/18 has continued to support a mix of school groups and adult independent riders. Our 10am and 11am rides have grown to welcome two new independent riders, and we have extended our school sessions with West Ewell Primary school and Wandle Valley school to more new riders. To allow this to happen we have introduced a new short ride at 12 o'clock - Jeremy seems to enjoy the undivided attention that he gets from his side walkers!

Three of our riders progressed to the Harold Newton dressage competition and we'd like to congratulate Simone Benzieke and Dallas Pearce on their places. Dallas went on to represent Epsom at the RDA South East Regional Championships, Throughout the year we've had lots of fun and laughs and are proud of everyone's achievements – whether that is a rider getting through a whole lesson without trying to leap off, several of our team facing

illness with good humour and strength, or braving holding Moss, instead of Polly, for the first time – all things which sit at the heart of what is special about Epsom RDA.

The Monday evening session continues to thrive. It all begins at 4:15 with a group of riders from Linden Bridge school who have only recently started riding with us. These riders, work on steering their horses and developing their communications skills. Our second session is made up of riders who come with their parents to enjoy all the therapeutic benefits being on a horse brings. Races and games are very popular with these riders and they enjoy doing exercises with rings and bean bags, with one rider fondly labelling these exercises 'the bean bag boogie'! Finally, the riders in our third session have been learning some basic riding school movements, such as shallow loops and 10m circles and have, much to their delight, started working on trotting too.

All riders have continued to make great progress this year and achieved many personal goals. Two riders achieved their grade 2 riding and horse care with one other rider achieving grade 2 riding. We also had a rider take part in the 2018 Harold Newton Dressage competition this year who did extremely well coming 5th in his class. The Monday evening session have also become regular visitors to the fantastic new sensory track.

The Tuesday session has 2 sessions for riders from Linden Bridge school which caters for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and is one of our longest standing relationships, of some 30 years. With these riders 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.

We also have a third session comprising 8 riders of different ages and disabilities. As they are of varying levels of experience we split the class to allow for individual instruction. We have taken on one new rider Chloe and were delighted to welcome back longstanding rider Sandra following her hip replacement operation. Both Sandra and Yvonne (newly returned from maternity leave) took part in the in-house Harold Newton Dressage competition this year.

We were very sorry to hear recently of the death of Edie Hitchin who had volunteered for some 23 years on the Monday, Tuesday and Friday sessions until ill health forced her retirement last year at the age of 91. In later years she was not able to work with horses or riders but kept the coffee room and yard in pristine condition and always insisted upon making the tea and coffee for everyone.

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 upward, 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. This year we will be attempting some Endurance Riding with a couple of the adults.

Last Summer one of our riders passed her Grade 3 Riding with flying colours! This year we are working towards Grade 2 Horse Care with three of the riders.

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!

The Wednesday afternoon session continues to be a small volunteer intensive ride with four riders from Greenmead School Wandsworth.

These riders have multiple disabilities and the riders are only able to ride every half term so that all those children eligible can gain from riding a horse. This means that we see the riders approximately once a year.

Each rider typically requires three volunteers to enable the riders to have the maximum enjoyment from the riding experience. These riders are usually able to pass grade 1 riding and some grade 1 stable management.

The sensory ride has been a boon for this little ride as it adds extra fun and excitement for everyone. The hill is especially exciting!!

The team of dedicated volunteers are invaluable for this ride and our main aim is fun, social interaction, communication and sitting in a balanced position on our wonderful ponies and enjoying the different seasons at St Ebbas Farm.

Thank you to Greenmead School staff and riders, and our ponies for making this session a joy to be a part of.

The Wednesday evening session have had a year of change. We were very sad to say goodbye to Linden Bridge who have ridden with us for many years (over 30!) but are pleased that they are now riding on Monday evenings instead to fit with their timetable. Instead of the school group we now have a

diverse group of 6 riders ranging from teenagers to adults with both intellectual and physical disabilities who make for a very lively and fun group to work with. We are looking forward to them all achieving great things in 2018/19.

The Thursday session provides therapeutic and beneficial riding sessions for riders from Knollmead Primary School and Papillon House School along with two riders from home. Our riders are mainly, but not entirely, profoundly autistic and some have challenging behaviours. These can be triggered by the simplest of things that we take for granted such as the tractor noise, the smell of horses, the horses that move, wearing a hat, feel of the reins and stepping off the ramp to mount. Any of these could cause a meltdown depending on how the child is feeling, but two of them have passed their Grade 1 Riding and one his Grade 2 Riding.

Our new (from home) rider Louise who attends NESCOL, has attained both her Grade 1 and 2 Riding and Horse Care tests. A massive achievement so well-done Louise, Sinatra and Marigold, a great team.

The Friday session has two groups of adult riders and a long-standing relationship with The Childrens Trust. 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. An individual rider can be with us for 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. Some continue to ride, occasionally on other sessions if they are local, or with other RDA groups across the country, when they leave the Trust.

Money raised from the session traditional Oaks and Derby Day sweepstakes has been donated to Epsom RDA in memory of longstanding and much missed volunteer Edie Hinchin.

The Saturday morning session review starts with great sadness, in April 2017 our long-standing session leader, Pauline Humphries passed away. She was a great friend and dedicated over 30 years to Epsom RDA. She is sadly missed.

Elaine Briggs was Pauline's deputy leader for many years and has now stepped up to be the Session leader. Louise Jenkins is now the Deputy Session Leader with Ella MacDonald and JoJo Julian are trainee coaches. We had 5 riders take part in the RDA South East Regional Dressage competition at Hickstead, 4 of whom qualified for RDA National Championships at Hartpury College. In June, some our riders took part in our first Endurance ride. We did the 1, 3 & 5km rides and all our riders ride in the optimal time. Our joint summer BBQ & joint Christmas party with the Saturday afternoon session had a good turn out from riders, parents/carers and volunteers. The Christmas party saw the return of Bruce and his pair of Bernese dogs. The dogs loved pulling the sleigh full of presents for Santa.

The Saturday Afternoon session has celebrated a range of our riders' abilities through dressage; those who were able participated in the Epsom RDA in house Harold

Newton competition, and then we also held our own internal competition for those riders that would find the competitive and strange environment counterproductive to their participation. Our riders and helpers also participated in the inaugural endurance event at Epsom RDA and, with the support of Jo Lee, had a wonderful time - including one of our riders and a coach, both on horseback, trotting hell-for-leather across the fields to make the time! We have wonderful riders who have been with us for more than a decade and we sadly say goodbye to some stalwart helpers who are off to grow their wonderful wings at University.

The Sunday 1 session has the challenge of not just managing the different riding abilities of our riders; they also vary widely in age and in physical or learning difficulties We manage this by splitting each of our lessons into smaller groups which means that we can give each rider the appropriate level of attention. We have really benefited from being able to ride round the super new Sensory Track - going over the grassy mound has been a particular favourite!

We continue to welcome new riders whenever we can accommodate them and we enjoy setting achievable goals for all our riders. This year we put 3 riders forward for the in-house Harold Newton Dressage competition with one rider, Erin, going on to win first in her class at the RDA South East Regional Championships at Hickstead – this was particularly impressive as she was a first-time competitor there!

The Sunday 2 session has fifteen riders with ages ranging from 7 to 62. Most come with their parents and the session is very much a family affair, with siblings and grandparents

coming along as well.

Our riders vary in their disabilities and we try to tailor to their individual needs. Whenever possible we split the rides: one group stays in the school for more intensive riding and the other ventures into the fields, where we have walking races and weaving in and out of the trees in Shelter field. We also use the sensory track, this has become very popular, with the different surfaces, the hill and the gate. It is always fun to try and be as quiet as possible when walking on the sandy surface!

Throughout the year, our riders work towards a goal; this may be holding the reins correctly, or learning to do the rising trot, or riding independently.

On the volunteer front, Janice Gleeson, my long-time deputy moved to Hampshire and we had a lovely "au revoir" dinner in a local pub. Manda has become my super new deputy and the session.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Rider Competitions

2017/18 has been another successful year for our riders in competition both at home and away. The dressage season kicked off in 2017 as usual with our in-house Harold Newton competition with twenty-eight riders competing across 4 classes. From this we selected a team of nine riders to represent us at the RDA South East Region competition at Hickstead in May. With a total of three first places and three second places at Hickstead, five riders qualified for the RDA National Championships at Hartpury College near Gloucester in July. We are so proud of all our riders and ponies who worked so hard to achieve these fantastic results.

Also, in 2017 we held an Endurance competition for the first time where riders competed to get the closest to an optimum time over a set 1, 2 and 3kn course. 25 riders took part in the event and competition to get closest to the time was fierce!

Holiday Rides

During the summer holidays we have a holiday riding scheme to replace the various school groups which usually attend our midweek sessions. Most 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 9 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 for the second year 2 sessions for sight impaired children from Sight for Surrey.

Horses and Ponies

We have had a good year pony wise having found our lovely Ria, and the addition of Trebor. Sadly, we said goodbye to Sultan, Giles, Archie and Polly. Sultan and Giles have found new homes, Archie and Polly returning to their owners and Giles finding a home with one of volunteers. Both Ria and Trebor are Welsh and boy do they like to sing! In common with many other RDA Groups we are currently short of real weight carriers with the search continuing.

The provision of ad lib hay/haylage worked well over the winter with the tractor taking the strain rather than volunteers having to fill hay nets for the fields every day. It was an

investment in equipment but this is now in place for the foreseeable future.

The schooling team assisted by our two external instructors, Phyl Cambridge and Sarah Sjöholm-Patience, continue to advise with both working to keep our ponies fit and encourage classical riding from the schooling team.

This year we have introduced a fit for purpose assessment for our herd carried out by Priory Equine Vets in line with BHS riding schools fit for purpose assessment.

Our team of professionals continue to help us manage the herd, in addition to Priory Equine vets, we have: Gill Maybury (Chiropractor), Peter Ibbotson (Farrier), John Allen (Equine Dentist), Ellie Martin (Master Saddler) and Tracey Blackman her apprentice. We have also been in partnership with Dominic Toole from Sandown Racecourse collecting the stable chippings at the end of each race season which is a huge cost saving.

SUB-COMMITTEES

Training

The Training committee is continuing to provide regular training to our newer volunteers with great feedback. Training support continues to our Group Coaches as well and with plenty of ideas forthcoming this looks to be a thriving area for the committee to support. We currently enjoy 2 formal and 2 informal Group Coach training sessions each year and have a list of requested topics to continue to work through. There are plenty of additional training needs that are being brought to the attention of the committee for further investigation however the committee do not have capacity to pursue these at present; should any volunteers wish to become involved in the committee we would welcome increased participation from other

people with the hope to expand the scope of our impact.

Properties

It has been a particularly busy year for our maintenance and gardening teams. The donation of plants and flowers from the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show in the summer called for some major unscheduled digging and planting work. The Maintenance team and Gardening teams with help from Session Volunteers rose to the occasion to bed in these unexpected and welcome additions to our grounds. Our new Sensory Track has especially benefitted from this windfall.

The maintenance team were also instrumental in reconfiguring our Coffee Room to make better use of the space and provide a small dedicated office.

All this is in addition to the essential daily routine maintenance work. This work ensures our property and grounds remain in the best possible state of repair providing our volunteers, riders, parents/carers, horses and visitors with an environment that is fit for purpose, safe and welcoming. It is a testament to the hard work the teams put in that we get so many compliments on how lovely our grounds and buildings are.

Events and Fundraising

Our major fundraising event in 2017/18 was the May Ball held at Epsom Downs Race Course. Over 160 people attended raising over £6000. We were so grateful to all those who supported the Ball and contributed to a brilliant evening. The organising team have taken on the organisation of the big social fundraising event for 2018/19 – the Barn Dance in September.

The ever-popular Dog Show (organised by Ewell Dog Agility) and the Firework Night BBQ had good attendance raising valuable funds and giving us the chance to connect with our local community. The Quiz Night made a welcome return to the fundraising calendar being well supported by our volunteers, and their families and friends.

Our fundraising riding events have had a good number of entries from the local equine community in 2017/18. Many of those taking part express their appreciation of being able to ride in our excellent facilities. We are looking at expanding the range of riding events we offer when the opportunity arising including adding lectures and clinics

Donor list 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018

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

Annette Emery
B Roan
Carol Reyes
Clare and John Elliott
Claire Hempton
Claygate Tack Sales
Derby Arms Equestrian Store
Epsom & Ewell Rotary
Epsom & Ewell Women's Institute
Epsom Common Allotments
Esso Petroleum
Ewell Dog Agility Club
FJ & A Mrozek - Westerhof
G McPherson
Glyn School
H Powell
Hogben & Lisle
Horton Older Gentleman's Golf Society
I Innes (In Memory Pauline Humphries)

J&JM Sterland
Jane Hutchins
JE Beal
Jewsons Epsom
Judy Solman
Lower Mole Countryside Trust
Marks & Spencers PLC
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Mike Hutchinson
Mr PL Redding
Mrs JA Corr -
Mrs JM Streeter
Mrs M Grinham
Mrs OJ Moore
PF&TA Branscombe
Ruxley Church
St Marys Church Long Ditton
SGN Epsom
Surrey Beaders
The Freemasons Grand Charity
The Neville Trust
The Phoenix International
The Thompson Family Foundation
The Wheatsheaf Public House

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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.