

# South Bucks RDA NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024



## Hello

"Life must be understood backwards but must be lived forwards". Not a bad observation considering this was written in 1855. I like this quote because is encapsulates the idea that standing still is just not an option and that whilst you may have a plan about how things will go, it is important to not get too attached to it and to forge forwards into totally off script experiences. The 'value added' piece is as you are pushing forward you need to simultaneously look back at what you've experienced and reflect "What do I understand better now?" This is a timely thought, as January is named after the Roman God 'Janus', who has one face looking forward and one face looking backwards and who is the god of beginnings, doorways and transitions.

As your Centre Manager, I am tasked with pushing us forward whilst understanding the route of where we have come and as I've pushed forwards with visions, events, costume requirements and an unrehearsed sing-a-long. Behind me all the way are our staff and trustees who in the last few months have pushed to find ways we can heat the classroom better and make it a community space, they've worked behind the scenes to send invites, have food donated, book assessments and get more people green carded. Our staff have dressed up as witches, phantoms and our Freddie as a spider, and in November when our gorgeous Freddie needed to go to hospital, staff organised it straightaway and Trustees got on the phone as a group and found the funds to pay for his surgery. Since Freddie has come home so many volunteers demonstrated their care for him by asking after him or quietly making donations.

So, what do I understand better? I understand that moving forward is a group effort and vision. We are made up of talented people, that care and are nuts enough to do a Grand prix style dressage test in a pantomime horse.. with piaffe and passage. I am excited about getting to know our newly elected Trustrees, many of whom were already generous with their time and talents to enable our Christmas event to go off well. Running the Halloween and Christmas event has taught me an awful lot. Several people spoke to me about the events and explained to me that as parent/carer who looks after someone with a visible or hidden additional need it can be very difficult to find something to do as a family, where they feel comfortable. It seemed that so many participants embraced Halloween and several people told me how moved they were when watching participants and their families having photos with the costumed horses or with Mari and her medal because it seemed to mean so much. The Christmas event proved the same and so many people from South Bucks history came out to show support. It was just wonderful to get together in a space where people feel comfortable. Which leads me onto my next vision and plan, I'd love us to develop further as a community space. I once heard about a Norwegian Library that installed a soundproof Karaoke booth as they identified that there was a lack of spaces for people to let themselves creatively go in the local community. After hearing everyone's singing voice at Christmas, I am not suggesting we do this! Or definitely double check the sound proofing! But looking at what we offer as a space to our community (volunteers, participants, carers/ family members etc) is now firmly routed in my mind.. watch this space .. for new doorways and transitions.

**Lizzie** (Lizzie.Ragg@southbucksrda.org)





Registered Charity No: 1136630







## **Last Minute Christmas Shopping**



Remember you can support us by using Easy Fundraising. It's easy to use with known brands. www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/southbucksrda

And of course, we still have our fabulous Christmas Cards, which were very kindly designed for us by Elish, Aline and family – thank you. Contact <a href="mailto:Jane.Carmichael@southbucksrda.org">Jane.Carmichael@southbucksrda.org</a> if you would some.



#### THANK YOU.....

We appreciate all the support and donations we received throughout the year. Recently we have received:

South Herts Golf Club £500

Donations in memory of Dorinda Lafone £795.00 total

S Easton-Ams Mrs M Wood-Smith BV and SA Moore Lafone Family

Annabel Northwood and family £25 (Quiz winnings!)

J Attard £100.00
Roger Morris £50
Carol Dunphy £65
Cippenham Dog Ag £10

Freddie Surgery donations £880 total

Meriel Risely Felicity Stribley Emma Domson Carol Moreton













## **Our Participants**

#### **Coteford Junior School**

We started the Term in September when we welcomed 10 riders from Coteford Junior School. This number included four new children who were joining the Wednesday Group. They have all made steady progress, are willing to listen to instructions and are keen to learn and progress. Under the watchful eye of Fern who is their Coach, both Groups have enjoyed doing a bit of everything. It is encouraging that, without exception, all the riders are prepared to try hard even when they find the instructions challenging. They have also learned to be adaptable if things go wrong and to accept and react well to any change of instruction. Currently the riders are working toward Grades 1 and 2 Proficiency Tests in Riding and Horse Care which they will take next Term. In their non-riding time the children write up their "Riding Journey" Booklet and learn about Horse Care in the Classroom. In addition, they are now being introduced to a "Hands On" experience in Horse Care on the Yard, such as grooming, tack cleaning, mucking out etc which allows them to try for themselves the real thing and provides the opportunity for a more rounded experience.

The highlight of this Term's activities was the visit of Mari Durward-Akhurst who, partnered by Athene Lindebjerg, won a Bronze Medal at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games in September. The children were thrilled to be given the opportunity to meet a Celebrity and had prepared well for her visit by watching a video of her performance, being helped to research exactly who was coming to meet them and thinking of questions they would like to ask her. Mari watched them all ride before they returned to the classroom where she told them that, like them, she too started her riding career with an RDA Group. The children then asked their excellent questions and were able to see for themselves a



Paralympic Bronze Medal and the Bronze edition of the Paris 2024 Mascot. Each child received an Autographed photo of Mari and Athene to take home with them as a memento of her visit and had their photo taken with her which was sent directly to their parents. To complete this educational visit, Darwin had been tasked with preparing and delivering an excellent "Thank You" speech. He did it beautifully and we were super proud of him.

The Coteford Riding Term will conclude in mid-December when their last day of Riding will be devoted to Christmas Fun and Games activities.



Can you find Dasher's friends in the Newsletter?









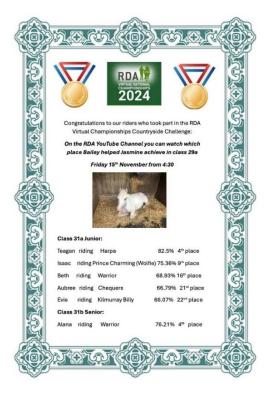


#### **Virtual Championships**

At the beginning of the Autumn term some of our riders took part in the Virtual Countryside Championship. This along with the Virtual Dressage Championships enables riders who would find going away for competition challenging or the ponies and horses that they ride can no longer travel. 8 riders took part in this event representing South Bucks RDA. They rode in one of two classes, led with two side helpers, or led with no side helper.

All our riders did really well, and Jasmine came second in the led with two side helpers' class, on Bailey, this was a first time for both of them. Great thanks need to go out to the volunteers who helped them practise for the three weeks before filming. Jasmine was presented with her second rosette by Sophie Christiansen at our carol service.







Reece enjoyed a lovely walk in the woods with Rosie, Karen, Pip and Lucinda,

Jake introduced Freddie to some of his friends,





And Melissa thought Chequers needed a cuddle.













#### **Events**

It's been a busy few months at South Bucks as Lizzie mentioned in her opening, the creative juices of staff and volunteers have been flowing:

We marked **Halloween** with an afternoon to celebrate our volunteers, which of course meant there was some dressing up.



Athene's face says it all - a new kid on the block.













Mari did a demonstration of her Bronze medal winning freestyle dressage test for us on Athene and then showed off her medal.

Carol, Hazel, Sally, Toby, Emma and Jo were presented with 'Above and Beyond' awards for being amazing volunteers.



Mari also joined us for our Annual General Meeting and gave an inspiring talk on her riding journey.









We then moved onto **Christmas** and our annual Carol Service which was led by Deacon Brent with the Chiltern Music Academy. Everyone was involved including Rosie, Billy and Chequers. It was also lovely to have friends from afar join us, Ros, Gina, Frankie (Rocket & Bee), Sarah, Paul and Helen, Andrew and Rosie. And a very special thank you to SANTA who made a guest appearance.

























#### **Our Horses and Ponies**

As many of you know our lovely Freddie was rushed to the vet a few weeks ago suffering from colic, he had an operation, is now home after a short stay and is on the mend. His recovery will take quite a few months, in the meantime he has been keeping Grace company at night and has been sporting a number of new hairstyles. Thank you to our staff who noticed he wasn't well and acted so quickly to get him to the vet. For a little chap Freddie has and still is racking up rather a large vet bill, thank you to everyone who have made donations to help us with this, he's worth it.......







## Snoozes, spooks & sparkles by Lucinda

The competition season continued with the virtual championships, and at a youthful 15 years, Bailey (with his ace team of supporters) confidently made his Countryside Challenge debut, adding to our seasoned gang's ever-growing clutch of ribbons and demonstrating it's never too late to try something new. Though I'm still not convinced if Bailey's prize-winning performance excuses his choice to ignore the pleas whispered into his forelock the night before, not to roll in the dustiest spot... Does anyone else query Billy's bad influence?

A firm believer that strangers are only friends you have never met before, Connor joined Bailey in warmly welcoming Wit to South Bucks and helping him to feel at home. Meanwhile, Wolfie, with a definite skip in his step, volunteered to show Wit the local sights of the common... notably, the infamous wooden giant frog to be treated with utmost caution.











Not even Wilma has been able to resist Wit's well-meant, if occasionally pestering, affections, but it is only when our other newcomer, Grace, makes her way to the field, that the munching of hay is momentarily interrupted in the vain hopes of catching her eye. Though the baby of the group, Grace has squeezed a lot into her early years and now, with the help of her devoted two-leggeds and with Freddie's friendly, easy, breezy company as he convalesces, she can hopefully begin to settle into the peace so many of us find at Mill House Farm.

For Peggy and Wolfie, the peace of an October afternoon was rudely broken in order for them to be spruced, hoof-oiled and adorned with baubles and bells. Ever the professionals, they lay their bemusement aside to be an attentive audience for Sophie's enthusiastic acorn juggling. This allowed Katie to capture their finest festive side, now proudly printed on Christmas cards ready to decorate mantelpieces from Fulmer to Flackwell Heath.

From acorn acrobatics, things just got weirder as Halloween rolled around. Quietly working on his rehab, Duke was somewhat perturbed to be joined in the indoor arena by an arachnid that made he who lives down the bathroom plughole look positively tame. Once reassured his intruder was simply Freddie subjected to an RDA-ism, Duke then got caught out again discovering dear Rosie held an affiliation with witches (secretly, he had always believed Mabel a capable accomplice in an apple, assuming they were Bramleys, heist, and well, giant pumpkins being more mouthfuls to munch than small pumpkins, Chequers' costume caused him no qualms either).

As the growing fluffiness of coats and sparkles of ice crowning muddy puddles announced autumn's passing into winter, poor Harpa's fence-line grumbles of 'There is no grass in this field, nothing, nada, not a single blade.' have grown louder. As we endeavour to make her feel better with piles of sweet hay from the barn and, only when invited of course, a forehead rub or two, her new field pal Peggy, conscious to conserve calories in the colder weather, opts out of the walk to reach the opening to the new grass. Instead, in plain sight, she flicks up the top strand of electric fence with her head and neatly pops over the bottom one. Clearly, she has been learning from the masters of escapism, the disgruntled dieters Shane and Wilma.

Over the driveway, Connor, Wit and Bailey have joined the ponies to form one big herd. Together, they delight in as much high jinks as they do snoozy time, able to relax knowing there is always a friend watching over them or ready to scratch that out-of-reach itch... plus there is the added bonus of taking turns when it comes to appearing charismatic Pip's diva-ish demands.

On that note of friendship and togetherness, I think I have come full circle to the sense of joy and belonging I brought home from our Christmas carol concert. Though these winter nights can be cold and dark, may you too feel the warmth and light found in our RDA family.



Athene sporting her crotchet poppies, thanks to Lucinda who made them for each of our equine friends.











#### **Volunteers**



We are always in need of volunteers, no experience is needed, minimum age 14 years. If you're interested contact Jane (jane.carmichael@southbucksrda.org).





Sharon has been volunteering for 30 years, and she hasn't changed at all.





And Romilly for 20 years.

We asked Romilly to share her experiences of the Paralympics in Paris.



## Paralympic Games – Paris 2024

I was not expecting to go to Paris 2024 so you can imagine how amazed and excited I was to be invited by the British Equestrian Federation to go to Paris as a member of the British Team supporting the legendary Athene Lindebjerg. What a wonderful "Once in a Lifetime Experience" this was for me. I was on Cloud Nine! It is almost impossible to describe the emotionally charged, electric atmosphere which pervaded the entire week of the Paralympic Games. Every competitor who had been selected to represent their country in Paris was a winner in their own right, irrespective of whether or not they achieved a medal. The crowd understood this, and everyone supported each rider with lots of flag waving, applause and loud cheering. When a Nation won Gold











their National Anthem rang out and when the Netherlands won they had a large contingent of supporters all dressed in their bright orange team outfits who sang their words loudly and so proudly. It was very moving. At every performance, we had excellent seats in the Grandstand and whenever there was a break in the Test Riding the very large Paris Mascot, supported by the Gamesmakers were sited all around the Arena entertaining and whipping up the crowds so that everyone joined in the moves.

You will have seen the magnificent setting of the Paralympic equestrian venue with the long avenue of gardens leading up to the Palace of Versailles in the background. A visit to the Gardens and Palace was a must. The gardens were magnificent with ornamental lakes and beautiful fountains everywhere. Individual gardens and alcoves led off the spectacular Avenue from the Palace to the venue. The Palace itself was magnificent, sheer grandeur and opulence. There was so much to see that you could easily spend days taking it all in.

Proudly wearing our Paralympic uniforms, we were treated like Royalty. Wherever we went we were met and escorted through long queues of other travellers. We were made to feel so special. Along with many other Nations we all stayed in a beautiful, newly refurbished Hotel on the outskirts of Versailles and so we had the opportunity to meet many of the competitors and their support teams.

The four riders of Team GB did us all proud. Each member of the team (Sophie Wells, Natasha Baker, Georgia Wilson and our own Mari) came home with Paralympic medals. In their individual Tests they had all obtained good scores and so qualified for the Freestyle to Music competition. Once again, each member of Team GB won a Paralympic Medal, but I have to admit that my proudest moment was when Mari and Athene came into the Arena with Rob Waine (her Trainer) looking "a million dollars". It was the culmination of many months of effort and hard work to get her fit and ready to once again take her place on the World Stage. It was an unbelievable feeling of pride and my emotions were fully charged. You can imagine the feelings of euphoria that erupted when Mari and Athene won the Bronze Medal. Uncontrollable tears just rolled down my face. I am so proud to have been a part of "Team Athene" and to have been given the opportunity to **Share the journey to Paris.** 

A request from Jane, can all volunteers please remember to complete the diary on the yard so we know who is coming for each lesson, we can then call for additional support if we need to.

## Thank you











#### **Trustees**

We have four new Trustees – Whooppeeee. Leanne, Angela, Vicky and Claire will be joining Di, Hilary, Julie, Theresa and Emma.



#### **Claire Fryer**

I have been a regular Tuesday volunteer since June 2022 and love being part of the SBRDA Community - a truly special group of people and ponies & a place that brings me a great deal of happiness.

I work as a freelance marketing consultant and have particular experience with social media, websites and graphic design. I live in High Wycombe, am married with two teenage sons & a lovely golden retriever - they all keep me on my toes!



#### **Leanne Cottrell**

I have been volunteering on a Saturday since 2020 having been lucky to have grown up around horses.

Outside of RDA I am a mum to a two year old boy and a crazy labrador, and work as a lawyer.



#### Vicki Burke

I started as a volunteer for SBRDA at the start of the year, and am part of the regular Thursday gang. I started to ride ponies as a tot, and horses have been a key part of my life ever since. I'm married, with two daughters in their twenties, and we live in Chalfont St Giles with our two cocker spaniels.



#### **Angela Hoey**

I am joining as a trustee through a mutual connection of South Bucks RDA: my sister, Jillian Wilson and nephew Finn. I bring over 20years Senior HR experience and am currently a Fractional HR Director with People Puzzles. I am looking forward to working alongside our team to ensure we're proving the best service to our participants through our engaged and highly motivated teams.

Please remember that our trustees are very happy to have conversations with you, we can be contacted through Jane in the office, or you will find our email addresses on the noticeboards at the Yard.











You will have noticed one name missing from the list above, Alan has decided to stand down as our Fundraising Trustee. Thank you, Alan, for all of your hard work over the years.

After 10 years as a trustee, I've made the decision to stand down and also handover the fundraising duties, during this time I've had the privilege of working with some fantastic people on the fundraising team, they've given their time to attend and work at events with me sometimes in some awful weather conditions and they've worked hard in the background on the lead up to events to prepare.

I've met some very generous people who have donated funds to SBRDA, others who have put on events themselves to support us, people who have taken on marathons and other physical challenges to raise money, some have kindly paid our entry fee for events, and then there are the people who always step up and donate prizes for our tombola's.

My team of fundraisers are some truly wonderful people who I hope will carry on, some are SBRDA volunteers, a couple of other trustees were also part of the team, staff, someone who used to ride with us and another couple of people who helped with everything fundraising, I've made some really good friends in the team and I'd like to thank each and everyone of them for all their amazing help, I couldn't have done it without them and will miss them all.

South Bucks Riding for the Disabled is a very special place, with some very special people, it's an organisation I was passionate and enthusiastic about and something I'm proud and privileged to have been involved with.

I'd like to wish whoever takes over from me the best of luck, thank you once again to everybody involved in fundraising and keep up the great work to support SBRDA.

Alan

### **Fundraising**

Our team recently attended Stoke Poges Carols on the Green, it was the weekend of the first named storm, and we were very grateful to be inside and impressed that the organisers were able to continue with the event. Thanks to Teri and Claire for their handcrafted goods which went down a storm! Teri even had a commission (there are still a few knitted horses for sale in the classroom).

















Theresa (because she doesn't have enough to do) completed the Thames Bridges Trek, all 25km of it, and raised over £1000 for the group.



Don't forget you can play the Buckinghamshire Lottery in support of the Group. www.buckinghamshirelottery.co.uk



Support Buckinghamshire Lottery

Win up to £25,000

#### Leaving a gift in your will

We are very lucky at South Bucks that we are often remembered by people in their wills. Each year, around £1 in every £5 of RDA UK's charitable income is received thanks to people who have remembered RDA. Even a 1% gift in your will would make a huge difference to us as a Group. If you decide this is a way that you can support us the information you need is:

- Our Registered Charity Name: South Bucks Riding for the Disabled Group
- Our Registered Charity Number: 1136630

If you have any tombola prizes or gifts for the fundraising table, please can you leave them in the classroom for Emma.

#### **Our Staff**

## Many thanks to Lizzie, Jane, Fern, Kim, Lucinda and Sophie for all their hard work this year.

Jane has been out competing again – her homebred 8 months old Section C filly foal "Starcrest Shebang" (Kara at home), was only Overall Supreme Mountain and Moorland Champion at the Midlands Foal and Youngstock show.

We're all very proud.















#### **Training**

Over the year we have hosted training events for the South Region for our volunteers and coaches as well as coaches from other groups. We will be holding a regional training day in March 2025 the exact date is to be decided. We hosted a medical and therapy module course for coaches in training where they had the opportunity to learn more about disability and the effect of the horse's movement on riders.

disability and the effect of the horse's movement on riders.

Lizzie and Kim are coaches in training and Karen, Teri, Lucinda and

Emma L have all completed their pre-coach training – well done! They are a great asset in lessons

If any volunteers are interested in learning more about coaching, please contact Theresa. Theresa.drake@southbucksrda.org

enabling the coaches to give individual riders more support when needed.

Over the summer several of the coaches updated their first aid training and so did some of the volunteers. Every ride has a trained first aider in attendance, their names can be found on the noticeboards.

### **Health & Safety**

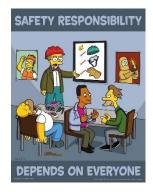
A Reminder for everyone (Riders and Volunteers) to sign in and out when visiting so we comply with fire and safety regulations. This is very important.



There are some nasty bugs around so please remember to sanitise your hands.

We still have some speed merchants amongst us, please drive slowly and carefully when you are on the premises, if you are late call us, we will wait for you.

And if you have an accident, no matter how small, please record it in the accident book, speak to a coach or member of staff. Records are stored confidently. They also help us modify our training.

















As the weather is getting colder, please ensure you or your young person has suitable clothing when riding. Long socks are useful, so that ankles don't get cold. If they don't want to wear a warm jacket when leaving, please bring it with you as our indoor arena does get very cold. Coats always need to be secured so they do not flap. Make sure that they can open enough at the bottom or be short enough for the rider to mount and dismount. Gloves are also a good idea. Please avoid scarves and hoodies as they can get caught if you do ride in the woods.

It's great meeting up with other parents to catch up and share news however please be mindful if you are having a great chat, riders and their volunteer may not be able to hear their coach. Please use our classroom (there's a kettle!) And we will if the weather gets too cold or stormy, cancel riding for everyone's safety. Your coach may offer stable management session or short mechanical horse sessions if they think it is safe for you to travel.

Please make cheques payable to South Bucks Riding for the Disabled Group not just Riding for the Disabled. We cannot pay them into the bank if they are payable to RDA – Thank you.

If you have any thoughts or comments about the newsletter please let Emma know <a href="mailto:emma.ford@southbucksrda.org">emma.ford@southbucksrda.org</a> or 079564 82911. Thanks to everyone for their contributions.

## Final thoughts from Di

It was so good to see so many of you at the Carol Service even though the weather wasn't all that kind and a big thank you to all those who made it happen. It is very fortunate that there is an indoor riding school here, as during the next few months it will probably be much needed, and many RDA Groups are not so privileged and have to cease riding during the bad weather.

The horses and ponies will all have a rest over the Christmas and New Year holiday and my thanks go to those staff and volunteers who will be here to feed and look after them

I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and Happy and Healthy New Year and I look forward to seeing you all again after the festivities

#### Di Redfern, Chair













#### Where does Santa live? What colour is his suit? What colour are his boots? □ Italy □ Black □ Green □ Antarctica □ Red □ Red □ North Pole ■ White □ Black Is Santa married? Santa Claus is... Does he wear glasses? □ young ☐ Yes ☐ Yes □ old □ No □ No ■ Sometimes How does he go from house How many reindeers pull Who's the most famous to house? Santa's sleigh? reindeer? ☐ On a reindeer □ Three □ Rudolph ☐ On a sleigh □ Comet ☐ Six □ By car □ Nine □ Dasher What colour is Rudolph's How does he enter into Who helps Santa to make nose? your house? Through... toys at the North Pole? ☐ Gold □ a chimney □ Penguins □ Black □ a door □ Elves □ Red □ a window □ Reindeers What do children hang up What does Santa carry the What night does Santa for Santa to put the toys in? toys in? come? □ December 24th ☐ A sack □ A pocket ☐ A box □ December 25th □ A stocking ☐ A box ☐ A sack □ January 6th









