

# KESTEVEN RIDEABILITY

Newsletter July 2020

Reg. Charity No. 1074079

We began writing this newsletter during lockdown but with the situation improving we have been able to bring some of our riders back. It has been a very strange place to be but we have had to be safe. Whilst we cannot provide all of our riding activities at the moment we thought we would keep you up to date with our plans for the future. They may have to happen later than we anticipated but nevertheless they are exciting things to look forward to as we slowly emerge from our enforced lockdown.

## We're Back....in a small way!

With the situation now improving slightly we have been able to reopen and bring back some of our riders. Primarily this means those who ride independently and have a family member who can assist with mounting and dismounting from the pony. Social distancing is still paramount so we can't let those who ride on the lead rein or who need close contact help come back just yet. But it is wonderful to be able to do a gentle restart after what has been a difficult time for everyone.



First off the block was Emily who enjoyed a lovely lesson on Fudge. During lockdown Fudge has been a revelation really enjoying his lunging and jumping and looking a million dollars. As our eldest RDA horse he merits a great deal of respect. He is a real stalwart and it is so nice to see him looking so healthy and enjoying getting back into work and reconnecting with his RDA riders.

## Silver Hour by Zoom

As our regular Silver Hour clients are not able to visit at this time we thought it would be nice to connect them with our ponies and the yard by having a Zoom meeting. It worked really well and our wonderful elderly care home residents from Newton House in Grantham were thrilled to see how the ponies were keeping. George was particularly pleased to see his beloved Murphy who he has built a real bond with. They really miss coming up to see them and being able to stroke and fuss them. George, a very enthusiastic attendee, is very fond of our horse Murphy and Liz his owner sent him one of Murphy's horseshoes. This has pride of place on the wall in his room and we have heard that all the care staff who are able to enter his room come in and touch it for luck! It is wonderful how technology has helped us through this lockdown by enabling us to innovate in the way we connect with our clients



## Reconnecting with our ponies in our “quiet area”



For those who can't ride just yet we have a new option. We have set up a “quiet area” with seating and space for the ponies to come and be stroked and fussed which will help these riders reconnect with their mounts until such time they can once again get on board. Sue, one of our riders tried out this “quiet space” whilst meeting up with her pony Rio who she has not seen for some weeks. It worked really well. Rio was happy munching away at the grass and Sue could stand and stroke him as well as give him a bit of a brush which he enjoyed. There will be other situations where this space will be of great use particularly for those clients who cannot ride but who want to maintain a close connection with a specific pony or just want to spend time with them.



We are fortunate to have so much outside space and an arena which supports the necessary social distancing guidelines. Hopefully

things will get better soon and more of our riders will be able to come back again and continue their riding journeys.

## Exciting things to look forward to!

Whilst our activities are curtailed for awhile there are many new exciting things to look forward to as we slowly begin to reopen.

### Our new horse-riding simulator!



Last year Lloyd our horse riding simulator finally reached the end of the road and became irreparable. He has given stellar service over the past few years but finally it was clear that he was not able to carry on for us. His trots became slower and slower and sadly we had to make the decision to send him over the rainbow bridge. What to do now? We desperately need a simulator. It enables us to provide riding sessions for those who cannot, for whatever reason, ride a real horse or pony and it helps us to maintain our income over the winter when riding outside is not possible. We had a small amount of money but not nearly enough to pay for a new one; they are very expensive.

We approached the **Sir Peter O'Sullivan Charitable Trust\*** to find out if it was the kind of things they might fund and were pleased to hear that it was. They invited us to put in a bid which we did in October 2019. All through the following months we kept our fingers crossed knowing that there were lots of other deserving charities out there who also needed funds. By early January we knew we didn't have long to wait for our answer and on January 18th we received an email with the amazing news that they were awarding us a grant to fund our new simulator. We just could not believe it and walked around with huge smiles on our faces for weeks after. We are so grateful to them and can't thank them

enough. As I write this newsletter he is being installed in our simulator shed and will soon start work with those clients who are able to return. What a way to celebrate coming out of lockdown—a new horse riding simulator!

\*The Sir Peter O'Sullivan Trust was set up by “the voice of racing” Sir Peter O'Sullivan. He was passionate about animals and animal welfare and this is reflected in the kinds of charities supported, mainly equine or equine related. Now in its 24th year it has distributed over £11m to charitable causes. [www.thevoiceofracing.com](http://www.thevoiceofracing.com)

## Carriage Driving

Just before the lockdown we became a designated Carriage Driving Group and ran our first carriage driving session. This is an exciting activity which will enable those who can't ride or who have to give up their riding to take on a new challenge whilst still maintaining their links with our horses and ponies. Pepsi is on loan to us as our carriage driving pony and is perfectly suited to our needs. One of our older riders took the reins (along with her coach), for the inaugural session. It's quite different from riding a pony but nonetheless no easier! Turning corners whilst remembering you have not only a pony but a carriage to take account means some neat manoeuvring and taking and releasing the reins is required to ensure a smooth curve with no over tensioning of the reins or unbalancing of horse or carriage. Lots to learn!



## A new pony

More exciting news is that we have a new pony called Bob. Bob [pedigree name Trefenter Fred], is a half welsh cob and came along just before lockdown. He is currently going through his RDA training programme although he already has a calm and steady nature. Along with Rio and Fudge he too has been doing some desensitising training and with the “flappy flag” was perfectly happy showing Rio how things should be done! He is just a little taller than Rio and will be perfect for a range of riders once he has completed his RDA training. Since late last year we have been approached by many parents with disabled children and this has been challenging with a limited number of horses and ponies. Now that we have Bob we can once again say yes, which is very heartening. Bob is getting to know all the other horses and ponies and seems to have taken quite a shine to the redoubtable Bonny, a legend in her own livery yard who does not suffer fools gladly. If Bob can tame Bonny there is hope for us all!



## How we've kept our ponies fit and well in lockdown

During the past few months and onward into the summer we worked hard to keep our ponies and horses fit and well so that they would be ready to begin working again as soon as could re-open.

In our last newsletter we told you about our “Flagship Pony” Rio. Well Rio has been excelling himself as usual and in December last year won another first place rosette, this time at Arena UK in the Unaffiliated Dressage. Ridden by our head coach, Karen, he won his class by scoring over 70% and coming 5% ahead of the second placed horse.

Since then he has been taking part in de-sensitisation training and doing a bit of jumping on the lunge rein. He is taking both in his stride and seems to thoroughly enjoy the jumping being quite the little jumper. The “flappy flag” we used for his desensitising training was largely ignored as he tolerated it before asking for his treat!

**Rio taking the “flappy flag” in his stride.  
(and we know it's upside down—slapped wrists for us!)**



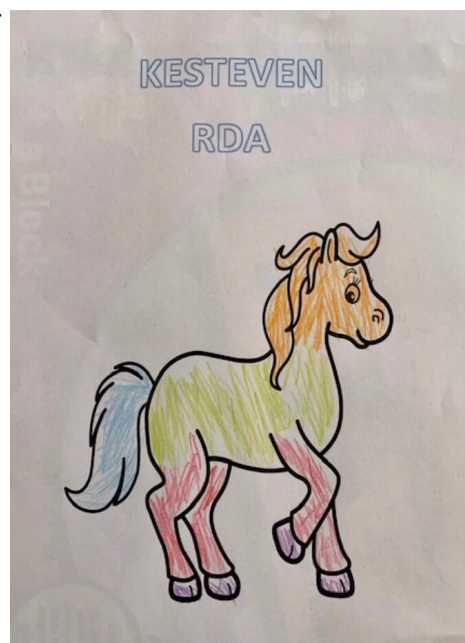
As mentioned already Fudge has also been keeping fit with lunging and jumping and has also done some desensitising work in the arena. He seems to have taken on a new lease of life as at 21 years old (he celebrated his birthday during this lockdown) we thought last year that we might lose him. But with lots of loving care he has bounced back and is once again enjoying life. He is our most long standing pony and can show the others a few things having helped numerous riders progress from nothing to riding independently. He is a sweet and calm natured pony and is loved by everyone at the yard. He has been working well with those riders who have been able to come back because as independent riders they need little assistance to mount and dismount.



## Young Rider Achievements



Victoria having gained her Endeavour Award for independent riding this summer, after only a year of riding, followed it up by becoming the first rider we have ever had to gain a Blue Peter sports badge. Not only this but she also produced our winning picture in our “lockdown” art competition. What a multi-talented girl she is. We are so proud of her!



Victoria's winning picture

After her picture was posted on our Facebook page another one of our younger riders, Thomas, was inspired to produce a picture of his favourite pony Rio. We have a real talented group of children who are such a credit to Kesteven Rideability.



Thomas's picture of Rio—and he's not forgotten his fluffy feet!

## Fundraising

It has been a challenging time for us as during the lockdown our income stream dried up and with ponies to look after this potentially could have been a real welfare issue. However, we have been heartened by the amazing support we have had from our local community and they have helped us through this difficult time in many ways including by donating to our 2.6 Challenge or by choosing us as their charity to support. As we slowly emerge from this enforced closure we are more and more hopeful of picking up from where we left of and we are so grateful for everyone's support during this time.



the  
**2.6**  
challenge  
Save the UK's Charities

The London Marathon could not take place this year but as an alternative the 2.6 Challenge was setup to encourage people to take part in a virtual fund raising effort. In May we therefore pulled together a team of ten people, made up of riders, trustees and volunteers, to take part in a virtual relay race, each person walking, jogging or running 2.6 miles. It



was a beautiful day with lots of sun. Each of our team members set off on their socially distanced effort wearing a variety of apparel—some in tutus a few with sparkly ears and many with amazing face paint. As each team member set off and completed pictures were loaded on to Facebook so our supporters could see how things were going. By late afternoon we had passed our baton over the “virtual” finish line. The whole experience was a resounding success and we raised over £2,600 which given we only had a week to organise ourselves and get fit was quite something! To everyone who supported us and donated to our cause - we are so grateful. Thankyou!

**Karen finishing her section of the 2.6 Challenge “virtual relay marathon**

## The Twelve Days of Christmas

At the end of last year we were lucky enough to be chosen as one of the Twelve Days of Christmas Charities by RAF Cranwell. As part of this we were invited to bring one of our ponies to visit the base to showcase Kesteven Rideability before they presented us with a cheque for £500. We took the lovely Pepsi along who will take part in our carriage driving sessions and our equine therapy and saddle club sessions when we can resume. She behaved impeccably and was quite a draw as many visitors came along to give her a pat and a stroke.



## Annual Quiz

With our fundraising activities seriously curtailed by Covid-19 we were fortunate that we were able to hold our annual quiz in January. As always it was a very popular evening and we welcomed nearly 20 quiz teams who arrived with all the necessary supplies including copious amounts of food—quiz teams marching on their stomachs!

It was a close run thing but the winners were “The Mad Pandas”.

We raised over £700 which was a very important injection of funds just before we faced the challenges of lockdown.



**The “Mad Pandas” with their winner’s shield**

## In the press

Although we were forced to close back in March we still had a team of dedicated volunteers working behind the scenes and in strict social distancing mode to look after our three RDA ponies. We also wanted to ensure that all of our riders and supporters were kept abreast of what was happening. Much of this was done through the medium of photographs and videos on our Facebook page but there were also opportunities to be cited in a few articles and press reports. First up was a mention in an article in the latest edition of Equestrian Life about how RDA groups were coping during lockdown and how their volunteers were keeping things going ready for reopening. Sue a trustee and a rider was featured as a representative of Kesteven Rideability complete with a picture of the wonderful Betsy. Betsy is stalwart of our Silver Hour sessions and loves meeting all our elderly clients who, during the Summer, come to visit and to give her a bit of a fuss.

Following this we were also mentioned more than once in the local newspaper, the Grantham Journal. First up was a lovely piece about how one of our Silver Hour participants was gifted a horse-shoe from his favourite horse. Not being able to come and visit for the time being George was really missing his moments with Murphy so this was a lovely gesture by Liz, Murphy’s owner.



**George with his beloved Murphy**



**The Kesteven Rideability “Lockdown Team” with their certificate of thanks from South Kesteven Council**

This report was followed by coverage of our 2.6 Challenge and then we appeared again as part of a report by the local council about their scheme to publicly thank the many volunteers working through lockdown. Even whilst open many small charities get little press coverage so when groups are more cutoff from their communities press coverage can be even more important as a reminder that they are still there and still ready to help whenever circumstances permit. Many thanks to all those who chose to mention us in their publications.

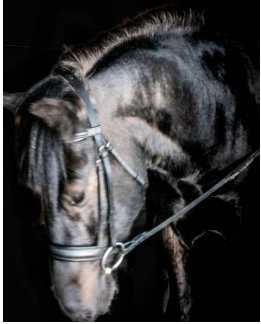
**If you want to keep up with our monthly exploits, one of our riders is now contributing a blog on the Genius Equestrian website. Find it at:**

**[www.geniusequestrian.com](http://www.geniusequestrian.com)**

## How you can help us

We are in unprecedented times and because we are only able to provide limited riding activities it means that our income stream is much depleted. Our ponies still have to be looked after and kept fit and well so they are ready to go whenever we reopen. If you can help and would like to here are a number of ways you can do so.

For those who are already supporting us as Pony Angels or by individually donating we are extremely grateful—thank you.



### Become a Pony Angel

Pony Angels are supporters who by pledging a fixed amount every month or year help us cover the costs of our RDA ponies. They are very important to us and we are always grateful for the support they give us. Have a look at our website at [www.kestevenrda.org.uk](http://www.kestevenrda.org.uk) or contact [ponyangels@kestevenrda.org.uk](mailto:ponyangels@kestevenrda.org.uk) to find out more and you could be helping to continue the work we already do teaching disabled children and adults to ride.



If you use Amazon you can join their charitable donation site Smile Amazon and every time you shop with them through Smile they will donate to your chosen charity. Like easy fundraising, it costs you nothing to do this. Go to

[www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) to sign up.



Join easy fundraising and every time you buy something online you can raise money for Kesteven Rideability. It doesn't cost you anything. Just go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) join up and select us as your charity then whenever you shop online remember to shop via easyfundraising. It's simple and they even had a little reminder app which will mean you never forget to shop this way.

You can support us and join via our website [www.kestevenrda.org.uk](http://www.kestevenrda.org.uk)



### Take part in LotterySK \*

Many of our supporters take part in this and in December one supporter was the lucky recipient of £2000 having matched five numbers !

We retain 50p from the cost of each ticket.

You can buy tickets via our website [www.kestevenrda.org.uk](http://www.kestevenrda.org.uk)

*\*LotterySK was created in 2018 by South Kesteven District Council.*

*Set up to support community projects in the local area, LotterySK operates on the principle of raising money within the community for the community. We empower local good causes to raise money in a fun and effective way. In a time of shrinking budgets and increased community need, LotterySK enables people to support the causes they care most about, helping good causes to connect with their supporters.*

A ticket for LotterySK costs £1 per week and 60p will go directly to good causes! There is a top prize of £25,000 and each ticket has a 1 in 50 chance of winning.



You can also donate via Virgin money giving.

Go to our website at [www.kestevenrda.org.uk](http://www.kestevenrda.org.uk)

We realise that it is a difficult time for many people and that finances may be stretched but donating the cost of just one lesson could make a real difference to us. We need to be there for our riders old and new as we slowly begin to open up again. Thank you.

A **BIG** thank you from all of us to the following people for their very generous donations...

The Sir Peter O'Sullivan Charitable Trust

Helen & Avril Bill

Maggie Clark

David Rofe

Mrs E Charlton

Mrs J Neasham

Sleaford Lionesses

Hon Mrs C Sacks

Sir Douglas and Lady Sarah Hogg

South Kesteven District Council

Skylark Endowment Fund

RAFC Cranwell

Dan Edwards

Tryac

Gill Smith

thank  
you!

Marie Ashton



Andy Honeywood

Jane & Vince Heslop



Paul Johnson

**Chandlers**



...and **'Thank You'** to our  
lovely Pony Angels



Gay Hatton

Kathy Blake

Laura Lynch



Stephanie Smith-Maxwell

Sarah Shelbourne

Suzanne Sanders

Rachel Stothert

Rachel & Lee Williams

Mark Frazer

Ros Wenworth

## Kesteven RDA Uniform:

If you would like to purchase Kesteven RDA badged clothing, follow the link from our website, [www.kestevenrda.org.uk](http://www.kestevenrda.org.uk).

You can choose from a range of garments including smart polo shirts, cosy hoodies, gilets and jackets.

The orders are sent direct from Print Bureau, or you can collect your order from their unit in Grantham.

### Contact Us:

On our website...

[www.kestevenrda.org.uk](http://www.kestevenrda.org.uk)

By email...

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By phone...

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You can also find us on...

