



BELVOIR VALE RDA

ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017

Registered Charity No. 1162970

REVIEW OF BELVOIR VALE ACTIVITIES 2016-2017

Belvoir Vale RDA Group has enjoyed a very busy, successful and fun-packed year with many highlights.

RIDERS

Over the last year rider numbers have grown slightly but the number of actual riding activities provided has increased by almost 25% to over 720. Despite this impressive increase we still can't keep up with demand as we currently have 7 riders on our waiting list.

VOLUNTEERS

All this work is only possible through the dedication, hard work and generosity of our wonderful team of 22 volunteers and coaches. 3 of our young volunteers gained their bronze Youth Equestrian Leaders Award (YELA) and 2 are finalising their portfolio for their silver Award. Volunteering with Belvoir Vale RDA has also helped several of our team complete their volunteering requirement for their bronze and silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards. The Group will continue to support all of our volunteers to get the most out of their experience with us. We are especially grateful for our slightly more mature ladies who regularly give up their time at weekends and help us at Special Events.



COACHES

The coaches have been busy too with Abi Walker and Tara Senuik both successfully passing their UK CC level 1 Coaching certificate in February, and Lesley Davies continuing her County Coach & Training Advisor roles for Nottinghamshire. We are indeed very fortunate to have these 3 coaches registered with the group and be able to call on the expertise of two other coaches, Cath Brightman and Patricia Stevens when we need extra help.

PONIES

Of course the stars of the show are our ponies. We should never forget that they form the vital element of our work - Pumpkin, Bluey, Ali, Roma and Baloo all providing their special brand of magic to our riders.

One of the main objectives for this year was to acquire a larger pony to accommodate our older children and adult riders. After much searching and a few false starts Tommy was bought at the end of April.

He is a very handsome, Black 15hh Irish cob and at only 6 years old he is younger than the usual RDA mount. He is kind natured and is very keen to please. After several weeks of in-hand training, getting used to the equipment and working with side-helpers, he was introduced to RDA in early July.

Tommy has taken to his new role really well and has 4 regular RDA riders, all finding him calm but responsive and very comfortable. At the end of July, Tara took him to his first ever Dressage competition. He was a little distracted at times but they came away with a very credible score and some lovely comments from the judge.



EVENTS

RDA COMPETITIONS- REGIONAL & NATIONAL

Belvoir Vale RDA has again been incredibly successful at RDA events, both at regional and national level.



In early May, sisters Louisa and Sophie Heath represented the Group at the Regional Dressage qualifiers at Hill House Equestrian Centre near Market Rasen in Lincolnshire. For Louisa and Roma this was their first ever dressage competition and together they won a second placing in the I/D WALK only test so qualified for the National Championships in July.

Sophie rode Ali extremely well, who was a bit naughty in the first class, but came back very strong in the walk and trot test winning a 3rd placing in a very competitive class. Well done to both girls and ponies.



Later in May, 6 riders then represented the Group at the North Midlands Regional Countryside Challenge Qualifiers at Scropton, Derbyshire. Belvoir Vale came away with a fabulous haul of rosettes, in very stiff competition. Kira Majithia won Class 1 juniors riding Pumpkin, which was particularly special as Kira has been trying to qualify for the National Championships for the last few years. This achievement was then matched by Louisa Heath on Roma winning Class 2 juniors with a score that saw them being awarded the shield for the highest junior score of the day across all the classes.

The Group are equally proud of our other 4 riders, Barnaby Pilsworth (5th Class 1) Chellie Coddington-Baxter, Joshua Newham and Sophie Heath (5th Class 2) who all rode very well and came home with a rosette.

June and early July was spent busily preparing for the National Championships. These were again held at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire and run over 3 days. They were the culmination of lots of practice and patience for all the qualified riders from each of the 18 regions across the UK. Roma and Ali travelled down on the Friday supported by a large team of volunteers and 3 coaches with of course our Group mascot Eeyore.

On the Saturday morning Kira and Louisa rode Roma in their respective classes for the countryside challenge and both girls did amazing well- each winning a 2nd place. After a celebratory lunch the Team got busy cleaning tack, polishing boots, plaiting and grooming the ponies for the Tack and Turnout Class. Sophie on Ali won 4th just pipping Louisa on Roma who came 5th.

Sunday was Louisa and Roma's turn at the dressage classes. First was the freestyle to music class in the International Indoor Arena - quite a daunting environment. However both were on great form and Roma 'danced' to the music from the film Titanic winning Louisa another 2nd placing.

The weekend was rounded off with Louisa earning a very credible 6th place in the Championship class. The whole team of riders, parents, volunteers and ponies came away exhausted but totally elated from another wonderful weekend. Huge thanks again go to all those volunteers back at the stables in Colston Bassett looking after the ponies at home.

RESIDENTIAL RIDING HOLIDAY TO WALES

Another project for the year was to take a group of riders on a residential riding holiday. So, in early August, 6 riders, their parents and 9 volunteers packed their bags and travelled to Clwyd near Wrexham in North Wales

On arrival we quickly unpacked and the riders gathered together in the indoor arena to meet and ride their pony partner for the holiday. This time allowed the coaches, Lesley and Tara, to assess the pairing of the riders with the ponies and for everyone to settle into the new surroundings.

After a good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast the riders were ready to groom their ponies. They were split into 2 groups, led by Tara and Lesley and then set off to explore the tracks around the Centre.



In the afternoon each child had the opportunity to have a go on the special interactive mechanical horse. This enabled them to experience what it feels like to canter and to ride on a beach or through a forest of wonderful creatures.

For the coaches the mechanical horse allowed them to assess more easily the rider's position and posture, and highlighted ways that they could better support them during their regular RDA sessions.

Friday evening was Quiz Time (horse related of course) - lots of fun especially with the funny animal noise buzzers.

On Saturday morning the riders and their ponies went on an Animal Safari Hunt with the riders challenged to find various animal toys dotted around the grounds of the Centre. The weather was rather wet in the afternoon but that didn't stop everyone climbing into the minibus and heading off to Llangollen to enjoy a trip along the canal in a horse-drawn barge.

Sunday was gymkhana time. The riders split into 2 teams and enjoyed various gymkhana games in the indoor school all cheered on by parents and fellow team members.



As part of an arts and crafts activity the riders and many of volunteers made Hobby Horses from swimming noodles and old socks, decorated with braid, buttons and colourful pieces of fabric. Sunday saw the Noodle Hobby Horse Championships involving each of the riders and volunteers presenting their handmade Hobby horse for a fun 'vet' inspection and then a first phase of judging on turnout and 'manners'.

Phase 2 was a timed jumping course around a section of the outdoor tracks followed by Phase 3 - a polo match between pairs of competitors.

Final judging occurred in the local pub' on the Sunday evening during the celebratory dinner for what had been a fabulously fun and rewarding experience for the riders, parents and volunteers alike.

FUND RAISING

All of the Group's activities would not be possible without the Group fundraising and huge thanks go to the trustees and volunteers who have been extremely successful to meet these needs.

The year was launched with a fabulous Winter Wonderland Ball held in the the village hall in Colston Bassett. 90 guests enjoyed delicious food and danced the night away but more importantly raised over £12,000, primarily through the auction of prizes and ticket sales. The trustees were overwhelmed by the quests' generosity and wish to send a heartfelt thanks to all those involved.

A large debt of gratitude is also due to the ladies of the Colston Bassett Fundraising Committee who kindly held a A Wine Tasting evening in April on our behalf. This evening was very well supported and raised over £1500 - special thanks go to one of our lovely parents, Kate Dawson, who spoke so eloquently on the benefits her son Tom has received through his riding with Belvoir Vale.

Another triumph was our Summer Afternoon Tea Party held in a marquee in the garden of our chairman's home. Over 110 quests gathered in the June sunshine to enjoy home-made sandwiches, scones and delicious cakes all washed down with a glass of prosecco and lashings of tea. A tempting selection of cakes on the cake stall and extremely generous raffle ticket sales resulted in the afternoon raising over £2200 for our funds.



Various other very kind monetary donations have been received through the year - Mr and Mrs Wildman donated money through contributions in lieu of their 70th Birthdays. Dr M C Davies contributions in lieu of 60th Birthday gifts and through the continuing sponsorship of Ali by Mrs J B Williams.

Every pound is very much appreciated so that we can offer our riders the very best opportunities to ride.

And so to next year..... we have unfortunately had to turn away 2 riders this year because we were unable to mount them using our current static mounting block. This is prohibitive for those riders confined to a wheelchair and who are unable to climb up steps.

A very kind engineer has offered to design, construct and install a bespoke hydraulic lift system allowing riders in wheelchairs or with limited mobility to access our services. We hope that this new piece of equipment will be installed during the next year.

The Group is also looking into the possibility of establishing a Sensory Walk for the more challenged riders. It has been shown in other groups that these special Riding areas help to stimulate the riders. A field has been very kindly made available to us locally for this purpose by our secretary and her husband. The project will require careful planning and a degree of construction of the various activities. It is hoped that the Group can engage with other charitable groups within the community to assist in its construction and funding.

