

WATERSHED RDA IT'S WHAT YOU CAN DO THAT COUNTS



Welcome to the annual Newsletter for Watershed Riding for Disabled

This year has been a quieter one for Watershed RDA but we continue to flourish and attract both new riders and volunteers.

Many of our riders have gained qualifications this year. The following awards were achieved: Starting with our Monday riders, Natalie Folkesson and Elin Riley achieved grades 1 and 2 in riding and pony care, Harry Smith and Luke Vaisey both achieved Endeavour Awards. Moving onto our Tuesday riders, Rachel Colley gained her stage 2 riding and both 2 and 3 pony care awards. Chloe Johnson has been working extremely hard at all aspects of the theory of caring for ponies and all the other Tuesday afternoon riders have achieved stage 1 show jumping certificates.

Watershed also held an in-house dressage competition from which the standout moments were a beautifully ridden accurate test from Amy in the walk only section and a lovely forward rhythmic test from Finn ridden by Lucy in the walk and trot test. We both congratulate and encourage all our riders whether they have gained awards or enjoyed the benefits that riding gives to us all. Our riders also continue to enjoy hacking out in the surrounding countryside.

We have had several changes amongst our ponies this year. Sadly, Heidi was found to have an annular ligament problem and had to be retired. Luckily, we found a perfect home for her in Eastleach where she is much loved and very well cared for. Sunshine too, suffered suspensory ligament damage but after several months of treatment and care she was unable to return to work at Watershed. Sunshine was returned to her owner Tim Ward and has subsequently found a happy retirement home. Both Finn, Bobby and Hamish remain happy and well and Ben continues his weekly visit kindly brought in by Kate. We have a new pony on loan to us. He is a coloured cob called Blue who loves people but not his stable! He has made great progress and is signed off for use now. Unfortunately, new guidance on the weight restrictions for all equines in RDA has restricted our ability to take as many riders as previously. Equine Care has assumed a very high priority within all RDA groups.

Watershed is now very fortunate in having appointed a new yard manager Sophie Cole. We have welcomed her into the Group and she has settled in extremely well and has proven to be very proficient in all areas of pony and yard management. The ponies all look extremely well and are thriving on the additional attention.



Waterlane Equine have continued to provide a very high standard of veterinary care and Bernie Tidmarsh continued his 31 year tenure as their farrier. Our thanks go to both Waterlane and Bernie. We would also like to thank Stuart Philpott, equine dentist, Steff Targett, equine chiropractor, and Maurice Emptage, master saddler, for donating their services during the year.

Our new venture - coffee and friendship - is proving to be very successful under the guidance of Trish Lash and Di Alexander. Coffee and homemade cake is served in the mess room on a weekly basis in a friendly and caring environment. Our visitors are able to watch the comings and goings of the ponies from the safety and warmth of the room whilst enjoying a cup of coffee and conversation. We have received many expressions of gratitude for this event and how meaningful it is for our visitors.

We have designed and produced our own Christmas cards and notelets for a few years now thanks to a couple of our talented volunteers and these have sold well both promoting RDA as a charity and helping our funds. The Christmas Lunch held at Coates village hall was as popular as ever in December 2023 and is taking place on Friday the 13th of December this year. Our thanks go to everyone who contributes to making this a most enjoyable social occasion open to all.

In the spring of 2024, a new CEO was appointed by National RDA - Michael Bishop - previously director of Corporate Strategy at Historic England. The trustees decided to invite Michael to visit us in Coates shortly after his appointment and were delighted when he accepted. His visit was very successful, and he was most impressed by our facilities, riding sessions, commitment and governance of the group.



Two local companies, Kohler Mira Ltd, and St. James's Place kindly offered us some corporate volunteers for a day and they dutifully strimmed, washed equipment and tidied up both the site and the hay storage barns. These events make a huge impact in maintaining the site and our sincere thanks go to Kohler Mira Ltd and St James's Place. The beautiful garden areas are continually maintained and updated by the same volunteer for many years now and they considerably enhance our premises.

The Group continues to receive many unexpected donations and legacies. We truly appreciate each and every one and they are either generated by kind friends and family who understand what riding at Watershed means to our riders or as result of our high profile locally. We are extremely grateful for every donation received.

Watershed are delighted to have welcomed a number of new volunteers this year, some of whom have slotted in on Mondays and Tuesdays and a completely new group have joined us to assist with the Wednesday sessions. We are proving to work extremely well together and most importantly have fun and ensure the riders get as much enjoyment as possible.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation and without them we could not exist. Volunteers not only help with lessons, they care for ponies at weekends, they repair implements, they mow the grass and care for the garden. They act as coaches and trustees ensuring financial stability and good governance. Watershed RDA is truly indebted to every volunteer, supporter and the owners of loan ponies and together with our riders we run as a happy and well organised team - The Watershed Family.

Our sincere thanks are extended to all of you.

