

Andover RDA

Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1170641

ANNUAL REVIEW Autumn 2023



Trustees

Alex Hanbury-Williams	Chair Children's Riding Coordinator Tuesday Ride Leader
Jaci Abdollahzadeh	Secretary
Mark Hyson	Treasurer
Sean Cannon	School Liaison
Pauline Copping	Operations Lead
Sue Cox	DBS and Safeguarding Wednesday Ride Leader
Rosie Davies	Fundraising
Penny Wilkins	Abbotts Ann Ride Leader
Maureen Wood	Coaching Coordinator

Ride Leaders and Coaches

Adult Ride:

Ride Leader: Penny Wilkins

Coaches: Maureen Cox, Barry Curd, Sarah Oldham

Spring Meadow Tuesday Children's Ride:

Ride Leader: Alex Hanbury-Williams

Coaches: Juliet Grieves, Siobhan Booth

Spring Meadow Wednesday Children's Ride:

Ride Leaders: Sue Cox, Sarah Dodds

Coach: Janice Miles

Golden Children's Ride:

Ride Leader and Coach: Mary Childs

Binley Thursday Children's Ride:

Ride Leader: Elizabeth Maclay

Coaches: Mary Childs, Elizabeth Maclay

Chair's Report

When I stepped into Mary Child's very capable shoes as chair of Andover RDA last November, I warned our Board of Trustees that I would lean very heavily on them for support. Goodness, have they stepped up to the mark! Without their unflagging help and commitment, I cannot imagine how I would have managed. We have created a new and, dare I say it, very successful model for our Board so that each Trustee has a specific role such as safeguarding, coaching, fundraising etc. and I am hugely grateful to each of them for their incredibly hard work, excellent management skills and patience in explaining the details of various issues to me. It has meant that I can continue to run my own business, carry on as the Children's Ride Co-ordinator and fulfil other commitments without feeling overburdened, and I hope that this will encourage future chairs to step forward knowing that it is not a 24/7 role.

I would like to welcome Sean Cannon, Headteacher at Icknield School, who has joined our Board of Trustees. I am sure he will be an invaluable addition to the team, especially in providing a fresh perspective on the needs of the children who use our services.

We have had a fantastic year, organising over 70 riding sessions in the summer term alone with at least another 40 planned at the time of writing. Our brilliant coaches have excelled themselves helping almost every one of our child riders to achieve either Grade One or Grade Two Proficiency Tests in both Riding and Horse Care. I am so proud of them all. Watching the children from Icknield, Norman Gate, Mark Way and Wolverdene schools really blossom under the sensitive and inspirational encouragement of our coaches has been a huge privilege. We really are very lucky to have such talented coaches as Jules, Siobhan, Maureen, Sarah, Barry, Janice, Mary and Elizabeth.

The Adult Ride had a difficult start to the year with horse and transport shortages but Maureen and Penny have persevered and we are now the proud owners of 'Boots', our new horse, who has already proven a great success and quickly settled into his new home. We are very grateful to John Benson for leasing his paddocks to the horses used for the Adult Ride, to Frenches Farm for the loan of their indoor school and to Pegasus for the use of their paddock in the summer. In the end, the Adult Ride has actually gone from strength to strength and this has culminated in the really

sensational achievement of our rider J-J Entwhistle (who is blind) winning the Rachel Plumbe cup awarded for outstanding progress or improvement in difficult circumstances. Huge congratulations to him and to Maureen for coaching him.

I'm not sure everyone is fully aware of how much planning and effort goes into each session and our wonderful Ride Leaders Penny, Sue, Sarah, Elizabeth, Mary (and myself!) put in an enormous amount of work to make sure that each session has enough ponies, volunteer leaders and side-walkers. We also ensure that the venue is safe, first aiders are present, tack is correct and each rider is matched up with a suitable horse or pony. It is amazing what we achieve, even though I say so myself!

We have had a successful recruitment drive for new volunteers and I am heartened by all the new faces that have joined our ranks of long serving seasoned helpers. We currently have more than 60 active volunteers across all rides. We have instigated a new system whereby new volunteers undergoing training are also nominated a mentor by the Ride Leader to help them settle into the role and make them feel welcome, and I think this has really paid off. Of course, we always need more volunteers – after 11 years of being a Ride Leader I have realised that you can never, ever have too many helpers! We are so very grateful to them for their time and effort, for keeping smiling and encouraging ponies or children sometimes in challenging circumstances.

From November this year we will also trial hiring horse transport from Abbots Ann to the indoor school at Frenches Farm from a local horse lorry driver who has offered us a very competitive rate. It is hoped that this will relieve the burden on the few volunteers who are willing and able to drive horse transport. Our new(ish) little horse lorry had a bit of a bumpy start, but we have managed to get it up and running relatively smoothly and, now that our intrepid group of volunteer horse lorry drivers have got used to it, it is proving very useful.

Of course, our most important assets (apart from our riders) are the 12 wonderful horses or ponies that we have used for RDA activities this year. Six of these are owned by RDA and the remaining six are loaned to us by their owners, Penny Wilkins, Sue Baker, Louise Banbury, the Orange family and Jo Strong. We are hugely indebted to all of them. Sadly, Jo Strong has decided to give up the two ponies which she kindly loaned to us for the Binley riding sessions. Jo has been a wonderful supporter and we are really indebted to her for lending us various ponies for so many years. As I write,

we are in the process of looking for replacement ponies to use on Thursday mornings.

Of the six ponies owned by Andover RDA, four are fully looked after by volunteers who generously contribute to the care costs. I would like to say a really big thank you to Maureen, Barry, Jules and Elizabeth for all their hard work and commitment. The other two ponies owned by us, Smarties and Linford, are cared for by a fantastic team of volunteers and paid staff at Spring Meadow – Chloe, Brenda, Willow, Maggie, Jaci, Louise, Tanya and her daughter Poppy, Siobhan, Abby, Mary and myself. These two ponies were used for all six children's sessions during the Summer and Autumn and for the adult ride during the winter, so they really earn their keep.

Thank you to Mary and Rob Childs for loaning us their paddocks at Spring Meadow – I don't know what we would have done without them, especially during the difficult Covid years. Mary has been amazing at overseeing the pony care rota and paddock maintenance. Both she and Rob would now like to enjoy retirement and regain their fields with exciting plans for re-wilding, so next year we will be moving our children's rides and ponies to Stoke House in the village of Stoke. John and Catherine Scott have very kindly agreed to let us graze Smarties and Linford in their paddocks and we will use their wonderful arena for our sessions on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I will initially take charge of the pony care and maintenance there but hope that I can train up someone else to take this on.

I am very grateful to Gilly Summers for her IT skills and expertise in helping update our website and social media pages – she has put in a lot of work and has done an amazing job. She, Jaci and Pauline Copping, who carry out a huge amount of our administrative chores, are wonderful and never make me feel like an IT dinosaur. We will be welcoming Gilly to our board as Trustee Secretary next year when she takes over the reins from Jaci. A huge thank you to Jaci for all her hard work, knowledge and enthusiasm. You have been an amazing Trustee Secretary. Thank you also to Maggie Donovan, who ensured our activities were reported in the Press, and to Sue Cox for making sure our rides meet safeguarding requirements.

We are very fortunate to have an excellent fundraising and social events team and they have achieved great things this year which Jaci has written about below. Their work and our supporters' generous donations have meant that we have been able to buy our new horse, carry out transport

repairs and continue with our everyday costs without causing our brilliant treasurer, Mark, too much pain.

In June, we once again brought along three of our ponies to The Hawk Conservancy to provide pony rides to disadvantaged children attending their wonderful Dream Night. A big thank you to all the volunteers who turned up and did such an amazing job. The Hawk Conservancy team were thrilled and sent a lovely email saying 'You, your team, and the ponies were all fantastic. We've been receiving thank yous from folk all day.'

Finally, we rely on the kindness and support of people such as yourselves to continue enriching the lives of so many through the magic of horse-riding therapy. I'd like to wish all Andover RDA members and supporters a very Happy Christmas and give my best wishes for a joyful and successful New Year.

Alex Hanbury-Williams



Alex receiving a cheque from Bruce Randall of the Andover Chamber Choir

President's Award

I am delighted to announce that both Elizabeth Maclay and Penny Wilkins have been awarded The President's Award. This award is made to volunteers who have given at least 30 years' service to RDA and have shown exceptional dedication to the Association (or one of its Member Groups). Where possible the award is presented by HRH The Princess Royal. Each year a maximum of 12 volunteers nationally will receive the award so to have two volunteers from our group is amazing.

As many of you will know, Elizabeth was Chair of Andover RDA for 17 years and she continues to lead the Thursday children's ride at her home in Binley. Penny has been leading the Adult Ride for 30 years and continues to do so with her unique blend of humour and warmth. Their unflagging dedication, exceptional organisational skills and wonderful enthusiasm continue to change the lives of many and we are thrilled that they have been chosen for the award. Many congratulations to them both for the very well-deserved recognition of their achievements.



Penny Wilkins



*Elizabeth Maclay with Mary Childs
in 2014*

A New President for Andover RDA

After many years as President of Andover RDA, Jennie Loriston Clarke is handing over the baton. We are extremely grateful to Jennie for her commitment to our wonderful charity and very pleased that she is keen to continue to support us and be kept in touch.

I am delighted that Elizabeth Maclay has agreed to become our new President. She will be a dedicated and inspiring figurehead for us.

Adult Ride

Mondays Monxton: April - October;
Frenches Farm: October - March 1-2pm

The adult group started the autumn term, 2022, at Five Acres in Monxton, then moved inside to Frenches Farm, Little London, at the end of October. However, we did have some very nice weather and held some sessions outside.

After the sad death of RDA horse Danny on November 2nd 2022 from sycamore poisoning we had to stop our heaviest rider from coming. RDA horse Timmy was also ill and lame for a while which added to our horse shortage problem.



Another hitch we encountered was transport. One week, when the lorry broke down and an RDA trailer was off the road with brake problems, we had to cancel because we would only have had two horses for six riders.

However, despite these problems we had 21 sessions in the autumn/winter and 10 in the summer before having a break in July and August. As there was no Fun Day this year, we held a Handy Pony competition and a very thrilled Simona Parish, pictured, was the trophy winner.

Penny Wilkins

The Rachel Plumbe Cup



John-James (J-J) from the Adult group was awarded the RDA Rachel Plumbe cup.

Rachel Plumbe was an RDA volunteer for over 30 years and the cup is awarded annually in her memory. The Award recognizes outstanding progress or improvement in difficult circumstances. Groups from across the South were invited to nominate a rider whom they thought would be worthy of this Award.

Andover RDA nominated J-J who, despite being blind, only riding once a fortnight and being coached in a group situation, has made huge progress due to his positive outlook and 'can do' approach to everything. His answer to anything he is asked to do is 'I'll give it a go' or 'I'll try'.

He is indeed a worthy winner – congratulations!

Boots



And, GREAT NEWS, after a long search to find Danny's replacement we finally found Boots, or to give him his posh name, Best of Both. He was certainly thrown in at the deep end as his first session, just six days after arriving from West Sussex, was a Handy Pony competition, won by a very thrilled Simona Parish, which we ran to replace this year's cancelled Fun Day. He behaved impeccably and didn't put a hoof wrong!!!

Maureen Wood

St Mary Bourne Tuesday Children's Ride

Spring Meadow: Tuesdays 10 - 12pm

We had a very successful summer term with our riders from both Icknield and Mark Way Schools. We were blessed with good weather throughout, even managing to escape the torrential rain forecast for our final session.

Four children came from Icknield School and they were all wonderfully enthusiastic and quickly mastered the basics under the careful and enjoyable guidance of Siobhan. We were thrilled that by the end of term they not only easily passed their Grade One Proficiency Tests in both riding and horse care but three of them also achieved Grade Two level – a first for children from Icknield and a huge triumph for them, Siobhan and our wonderful volunteers.

Jules coached four new children from Mark Way school in her usual highly effective and great fun way. The boys were a delight and kept us amused throughout the sessions.

One of the boys in particular, Corey, is very keen to continue his riding and he showed real talent. He would like to work with horses in the future and we will be looking into ways that he can gain work experience in a yard when he is a little older. All the Mark Way children, including those who had come in the autumn term, passed their Grade Two Riding and Horse Care tests with full marks! We were delighted that Frances Lochrane, acting Chair of National RDA, very kindly came to assess them and was really impressed by their abilities.



Our group of volunteers, both new and experienced, thoroughly enjoyed helping the children and were as proud as the children of their achievements. Thank you to them and to Jules and Siobhan and to Louise Banbury for lending us the lovely Mickey.

Alex Hanbury-Williams

St Mary Bourne Wednesday Children's Ride

Spring Meadow: Wednesdays 10 - 12pm

2023 was my first year as a Ride Leader. I was blessed with wonderful support from Sarah Cox and the volunteers both old and new. We were delighted to welcome children from Icknield and Norman Gate Schools.

We are lucky to have Janice as our Coach and along with the experienced volunteers from last year we have been able to welcome a new group of volunteers who have been amazing. (We would also like to thank the volunteers from other groups who have supported us and become part of the Wednesday family).



Some of the children who attended had never been near ponies but with patience and support they soon became enthusiastic and engaged riders.



Our children from Icknield School grew in ability and confidence and their progression has been so gratifying for the whole team. All of them achieved the Grade One Proficiency Test in Riding which was fantastic.

Norman Gate has been able to bring different children for each half term which has been a joy as we have met new personalities.

All in all, a wonderful and rewarding summer term for everyone and we look forward to welcoming the children next term.

Sue Cox

Binley Children's Ride

Binley: Thursdays 1.15 - 2.15pm

We have had 15 sessions this academic year. It would have been 17 if not for a teachers' strike and a 'residential'. 14 different children took part. Each week 6 children, 6 patient ponies and 6 enthusiastic helpers make the sessions fun and educational and progress, whether physical or emotional, is remarkable.

The School staff are very supportive and quick to notice if a child is about to get upset. I soon learn those you can push and those you can't. The school's classes are now arranged according to need rather than age which can be a bit confusing when some of last year's kids turn up and then you have a mixture of those who know it all and complete beginners. Five of the year 6 did their Grade 1 Riding and Pony Care very competently and, when I did the leaving certificates, I discovered that one child had clocked up 17 lessons over the years! This varies from about 5 to 9 and so no idea how he got to 17.

Mary and I shared the coaching mostly in the field but a ride through the woods and enjoying the trees makes for a relaxed time. I am very grateful to Mary for bringing Smarties and Linford each week and we have my granddaughter's Poppy and evergreen Toby, and Razzle and Bobby so kindly lent by Jo Strong. These latter two are on the move and so I am searching!

We had a very happy (think only one melt down!) Fun Day with help from Alex and Jules and all went away with handfuls of rosettes. One child who had come 3rd in the gymkhana race said 'it's not winning that matters – I just love Linford'. As ever none of this could happen without a brilliant team of faithful helpers who turn out whenever they can, and I have a new helper who comes all the way from Salisbury!! Very many thanks to them all. Going forward – we will start in September with a dismounted day to fit hats and boots and to learn about the mounting block and tack and then ride until half term and have fun.

Elizabeth Maclay

Children's Golden Ride

Spring Meadow/Binley: Thursday 11.00 - 12.00pm

We started the Golden Ride in May 2022 when Andover RDA was 50 years old. Hence "Golden!" It serves children from families who self-refer. It is a small ride, 3 riders at the moment, and it is designed to offer riding for children who would not be able to come with one of the 4 special schools in Andover but who have a burning desire to ride! The riders have a wide range of challenges, and I must say that it has been a pleasure to see their progress.

We had a great summer term riding at Spring Meadow in two sessions because we only have 2 ponies for 3 riders. All the riders did very well, and



we decided to try to all ride together in the Autumn Term. Thank you to the Maclay and Orange families who have agreed that the Golden Ride can ride at Sladen Green in Binley this September. The Spring Meadow ponies, Smarties and Linford, will be transported to join Toby pony at his home in Binley. Then they can all have a spot of lunch and a break before Elizabeth's ride with the Wolverdene children begins!

All our volunteers were new this year and they have been really super. They are very pony-savvy and tuned in to the children who ride making their riding journey so much easier for them. Two of our riders had never ridden but the encouragement and help that our volunteers gave has transformed their experiences.

By the time this goes to press we will have had our first spell of riding at Sladen Green and at the time of writing this I must say that I look forward to it very much.



Mary Childs

Meet our ponies



Toby 13hh

Toby has been with the Andover RDA for over 12 years, as both a riding and previously a driving pony. His calm and patient temperament makes him the perfect pony for children. He has attended Pony Club camp for several years and taught generations of riders.

Timmy 14.3hh

Timmy is the perfect RDA pony for both beginners and more advanced riders. Everyone loves his shiny black coat and kind nature. He is beautifully cared for by our children's coach, Juliet Grieves.



Linford 14.1hh

Linford began his new career as an RDA pony in 2022. He was given to us by Siobhan Booth who is training to be an RDA coach. He has quickly become a firm favourite, reliable and easy-going. He is quite a character and likes to boss Smarties around in the paddock which he shares with her!



Smarties 14hh

Smarties has been an RDA pony for ten years and counting. She is loved by the children and adults alike. She can be a bit lazy sometimes but soon perks up if gymkhana games are involved. Smarties is kindly sponsored by Kate and Simon Vernon.





Mickey 14.2hh

Mickey is new to RDA and kindly loaned to us for the children's riding sessions by Louise Banbury. We don't know what breed he is but his show name is Special Addition which we think is just perfect as he is a very special boy. He is kind, gentle and totally unflappable and always takes great care of his rider.

Maggie 12hh

The lovely Maggie is very kindly loaned to us for the children's riding sessions by Louise Banbury. She is a great character and very popular with our younger riders. Maggie is a cheeky little Welsh Section A pony. She is very greedy and loves eating but she also loves being ridden and going out and about and doing gymkhana, jumping and just about anything!



Jack 14.2hh

Jack is a 23 year old Irish Cob and has been with Andover RDA on loan since 2018. He can be quite an escape artist & has been on several adventures to the village, resulting in some security upgrades to his field! Even so, he still manages to confound us occasionally by "swapping paddocks" with Indie! However, when at work with the RDA and when out on a hack, Jack has impeccable manners- he responds well to both verbal & physical aids and does well in traffic. He unfortunately lost his best buddy Danny last year, so he is eagerly awaiting a new best buddy.

Indie 15.2hh

Hello my name is Indie, it's really Scipion but everyone calls me Indie. I am a 15.2hh Polish Warmblood and I came to England when I was 5. I am now 21 and have lived in Abbots Ann for nearly 7 years. My owner, Penny Wilkins, runs Andover RDA's adult ride and I



have been helping her since she bought me. I am well behaved when I have a disabled rider on my back and I'm plodding round the school, but out on a hack on my own I am a bit frightened of things like wheelie bins, litter and strange new road signs which suddenly appear.

With other horses, like Jack who is on loan to ARDA and lives in the paddock with me, I am not so scared.

P.S. I love carrots and once stole a sackful from the back seat of a car!



Boots 15.1hh

After 8 months of looking, many miles travelled and numerous disappointments ARDA has another horse. Boots, (passport name Best of Both), arrived from West Sussex at the beginning of July and wasted no time in making himself at home. Boots is a 15.1h, 13 year old Piebald – Black Tobiano gelding. He has a rather laid back approach to life and a nice temperament. Boots loves food, attention and treats. He lives at Abbots Ann with Indie and Jack and is used in the Adults ride.

Fundraising

When Mary Childs stood down as Chair in November 2022, the Trustees knew that future fundraising would be more challenging as Mary had always done a huge amount of successful fundraising 'off her own bat'. The Trustees appointed a Fundraising Team to take on the challenge and we aim to have fun at our events as well as bringing in much needed funds.

In March 2023, we held a Country Quiz Night in St. Mary Bourne which was a sell-out success. In May, we were exceptionally fortunate to receive a very generous donation from the Test Valley Charity Clay Shoot and many thanks are due to the support of Sarah Dodds (one of our volunteers) and her husband Alistair who organised the event.

We are very grateful for generous donations from the Andover Chamber Choir Easter concert, the Upper Clatford WI, the Whitchurch WI charity shop and the Andover Ladies Choir. In addition, we raised money by selling tickets for Music on the Test at Houghton Lodge, Carolanne Bowyer's amazing card sales, Liz Snowden and her team's Christmas wreath sales, the Asda token scheme and a stall at the Abbotts Ann fete. The funds have helped us to buy our new horse, carry out transport repairs, purchase a new tack lock-up and continue with our everyday costs.

Back in 2021, Rob Childs obtained sponsorship funding from Hiscox Insurance for our first ever very successful Golf Day. Since then, the number of teams and sponsors involved has increased and we are very grateful to the many Andover businesses who support the event. This year Hysons Chartered Accountants sponsored the Golf Day and Mike Strong and Mark Hyson, ably supported by our Fundraising Team, worked their magic to make it a great success which raised approximately £9,000.



Happy golfers at the 2023 Golf Day

Thanks to Hysons Chartered Accountants and also

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Social Events for Volunteers

On the social events side, we encourage our wonderful volunteers to meet up outside of the riding sessions to share their experiences, learn from each other and have fun together. When the children’s riding sessions stop over the winter months, we like to stay in touch until the sun comes out in April and riding can start again. This year, we had a successful (albeit very rainy!) trip to the Royal Mews in July, then some of us went together to the Blenheim Horse Trials in September. We also held quarterly lunches that were popular with our volunteers.

I would like to thank the Fundraising team (Sue, Pauline, Rosie, Julie, and Maggie), and all those who helped with our events (including husbands!).

Jaci Abdollahzadeh



ARDA volunteers enjoying a day out at the Royal Mews, July 2023

Andover RDA wishes to thank

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Andover Ladies Choir	Upper Clatford WI
The Rotary Club	Whitchurch WI
The Sofa Club Charity	

Also, a big THANK YOU to all those who donated raffle prizes for our fundraising events this year.

Printed by Bulpitt Print Ltd




Andover RDA wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you for your support.




Card design by Olivia Sims

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www.andover-RDA.org.uk

 Andover RDA

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