

# Andover RDA

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1170641

## Since 1972

### ANNUAL REVIEW

December 2022





Andover RDA would like to thank Bulpitt Print for continued support.



Thanks also go to Hiscox for distribution of the Annual Review.



### **Cover Photo**

*Jules Ursell with some of her riders at our anniversary Fun Day at Frenches Farm. July 2022.*

**Below**

*Smarties, carries children but also some of our lighter adults in the winter. She is sponsored by Kate and Simon Vernon.*



Would you like to be a sponsor? Do contact us for details.  
[paulinecopping30@gmail.com](mailto:paulinecopping30@gmail.com)



## THE ADULT RIDE REPORT

AUTUMN 2022

Ride Leader: Penny Wilkins

Coaches: Sarah Oldham/ Maureen Wood/ Barry Curd

Riders from a variety of settings

Mondays during term time 1 – 2pm

The adult group clocked up 31 sessions during the past year after cancelling three sessions due to weather conditions... too wet, too windy and too hot!!! During the summer we rode at Five Acres in Monxton courtesy of Fiona Gready and in the winter at Frenches Farm thanks to Charlie and Anna White.

With the relaxation of covid restrictions it was great to be back to normal and able to physically help our riders if necessary. During the year we lost two riders and welcomed four new. Sara and Julian have just started in the last few weeks, but J-J and Jacky have been with us throughout the year. Jacky used to be a linchpin of our driving group but has developed Parkinson's Disease and her two ride and drive ponies don't like her shaky hands if she rides them. J-J is blind, so it has been an interesting learning curve for a lot of us too. Despite only being able to come every two weeks he is now able to steer good old RDA horse Timmy on his own with someone telling him when to turn. J-J's favourite thing to say is: "I'll try". And he always achieves!!!

Penny Wilkins.  
November 2022.





*JJ on Timmy.*



*Jacky on Timmy.*

## **SPRING MEADOW TUESDAY RIDE REPORT**

AUTUMN 2022

Ride Leader: Alex Hanbury-Williams

Coaches: Jules Grieves/Siobhan Booth

Riders from: Icknield Upper School and Mark Way School

Tuesdays during term time 10.00 – 12.00

We had very successful Summer and Autumn terms with both Icknield and Mark Way school children and were blessed with good weather for almost all the sessions.

Two of the Icknield children, Kieran and Gus, were very challenging for both coaches and side walkers but they remained mounted most of the time and even progressed to some trotting. In the end, though, Kieran's propensity to fling himself out of the saddle with no warning meant that we and the Icknield staff reluctantly decided that it was unsafe for him to continue. However, he clearly enjoyed the experience of riding. After the Summer Half Term holiday, Icknield decided to bring some new riders – Summer and Maciej who both did exceptionally well and were very rewarding to teach. Maciej proved a spectacularly fast learner and kept us entertained with his perfect memory of everything said on previous occasions and very literal interpretations of instructions! This Autumn term Gus returned and amazed us by happily getting straight on to Timmy, our biggest pony, and smiling his way through the sessions whilst following some instructions. He was a different child from the one who refused to even go near a pony at the beginning of the Summer.

The children from Mark Way, Mercedes, Isla, Lacy, Lily and T.J., progressed enormously under Jules' and Siobhan's expert tuition. All of them were able to ride competently off the lead rein by the end of term and, most importantly,

had lots of fun. Isla very sweetly said it was the best time she had ever had! They and Maciej and Summer from Icknield came to the Fun Day. It was fabulous to see how much they enjoyed the day and how beautifully they rose to the occasion.

The three new children from Mark Way this Autumn, Brian, Naas and Ethan, were transformed in just six weeks from nervous, uncertain riders to three boys who couldn't wait to get in the saddle. They are all now able to do exercises off the lead rein and trot and sailed through their Grade 1 tests by Half Term. They will return next summer and will no doubt excel in their Grade 2 tests and, of course, have lots more fun.

Siobhan's coaching has blossomed under the influence of Jules and I am sure that she will be able to 'go solo' as soon as she has been assessed. It is so good to have new coaches coming forward and we are truly grateful to them and to the fully accredited coaches who help them along the coaching pathway.

At the start of summer term, we used the ponies Smarties, Molly, Charlie and Timmy for the children to ride but sadly, Molly's condition deteriorated, and it was decided to discontinue riding her. We are very fortunate that Siobhan's pony, Linford, stepped in and he has proved so reliable and steady, that he is now living at Spring Meadow as a RDA pony.

I am full of hope for 2023 and firmly believe that we are in a good place to offer the best that RDA has to offer.

Alex Hanbury-Williams.  
November 2022.



*A Tuesday Rider and volunteers with Linford, Molly's replacement pony, kindly loaned to us by Siobhan Booth.*



*A rider and volunteers from Wolverdene at the Binley Ride*

## **BINLEY RIDE REPORT**

AUTUMN 2022

Ride Leader: Elizabeth Maclay

Coaches: Elizabeth Maclay/Mary Childs

Riders from Wolverdene Special School, Andover

Thursday during term time. 1.15pm

The Binley Ride for six children - mostly boys, and mostly Year 6, from Wolverdene Special School in Andover happens during the Summer and first half of the Autumn terms on Thursdays. Post pandemic it has been a joy to get going again with a consistent group of children and we achieved nine sessions in the Summer and five in the Autumn with new riders. All made remarkable progress thanks to Mary's inspired and careful coaching and the cheerful support of the pony leaders. Luckily for me we do not need any side walkers which lessens the need for last minute calls for help.

The highlight obviously was the Fun Day and many thanks to all those who planned, set up and organized it all. I was so proud of the Wolverdene kids as they had to cope with so much that was new for them. New surroundings, lots of other riders/ponies, unfamiliar adults telling them what to do and when. They all coped brilliantly, and I did not see any negative behavior. The head teacher came too, and I was so pleased that she did and could see for herself how these children benefit from what we do for them.

I make certificates for each child with a photo and how many times they have ridden and pony's name etc. and these were handed out at the Leavers' Assembly with suitably garish rosettes at the end of term.

Six new children for the Autumn with another very supportive teacher and more happy riders and more garish

rosettes but they will wait until they leave to get a certificate. As ever, none of this could happen without my helpful and cheerful band of helpers, ponies loaned by Jo Strong and RDA ponies ferried by Mary – grateful thanks all round!

Elizabeth Maclay.  
November 2022.



*Our Wednesday Icknield rider enjoying one of Louise's ponies, Maggie, who has served us so well.*

## **SPRING MEADOW WEDNESDAY RIDE REPORT**

AUTUMN 2022

Ride Leader: Mary Childs

Coaches: Janice Miles/Mary Childs

Riders from: Icknield School and Golden Riders

Wednesdays during term time 10.00 – 12.00

**Our Wednesday Icknield** children have enjoyed their riding immensely and although they are learning disabled, and not easy to communicate with, there is obvious benefit and improvement in most of them. One child stopped coming as he ceased to benefit, seemingly because his mood changed as he entered puberty, and he could not handle the experience. He may gain confidence again with maturity and be able to ride again in the future.

We were so glad when Janice passed her coaching assessment in October. Her thoughtful, gentle approach is highly successful with these children.

One of the highlights last season, was with identical twins, Jakey and Jo Jo, who were very learning disabled and despite being identical, had a different response to mounting ponies for the first time. They spent several sessions getting used to the environment and then we tried them on Louise Banbury's little ponies, and they were quite happy!

We don't know whether we will see the same children in April or not. Wednesdays will become 2 sessions of Icknield children in 2023 as the children from Norman Gate School will ride on Tuesdays, taking an Icknield slot (lovely to have Norman Gate back) and the Golden Ride will move to Thursdays. We plan to have Sue Cox as Ride Leader deputised by Sarah Dodds on Wednesdays and I will focus on Thursday Riding with the Golden riders and



volunteering with and co-coaching the Wolverdene children with Elizabeth. All change! It will all settle down again and become a way of being!

**Our Golden Ride** has seen a fair amount of change as the parents, and we get to grips with everything in what was our first term.

We had one little girl, Kyla, who was far too good to be in our ride! She enjoyed being with us, however, she will not re-join us as she has moved to a different school. She has Autism and her riding is faultless!

Scott is a very ill child, and he comes when he can and can only ride for about 10 minutes, the benefit to him however is immense. Coming to see the ponies and touching them gives him a great deal and if he does manage to ride, that is the icing on the cake! Daniel has ridden before and joined us this term. Oliver Banbury is our stalwart participant, a founder Golden Rider! It was thanks to his family ponies, Tiny Tim, Charlie and Maggie, that we were able to carry on last term after the demise of Molly.

We ask for £10 contribution for this ride and that has not been an issue at all. We feel that the schools cannot offer to contribute however individual referrals can, they are often able to recoup this amount from the authorities. We offer 2 sessions with no contribution to test the water for the rider and for us when we get a new rider.

We have lost Molly pony, as we all know, and we were very worried that we would not have the right size ponies to manage. Siobhan came to the rescue as Alex has said, and we now have Linford, her 14hh New Forester, who is a perfect RDA pony, now on loan to us. Lindford is also helping the adult riding in the winter along with Smarties.

We are thankful to Louise Banbury who lends us her ponies each season.

Our volunteers have been wonderful, as always, some of whom turned up for a paddock/arena clear up (with cake) after half term as we put Spring Meadow riding under wraps; the ponies will eat all the grass down, ready for April 2023!

Mary Childs.  
November 2022.

*Below, Spring Meadow riding in action.*





## The Mark Way School Inspirational Special School

The excitement starts the second we get in the car. Three 12-year-old boys laughing and chatting about their horses, Timmy, Smarties and Linford. Each one bursting with excitement and telling me to hurry up... we're going to be late!

On a sunny Tuesday morning, in the middle of Spring Meadow in St Mary Bourne are 1 fabulous teacher, 3 patient horses and 6 wonderful volunteers, all waiting to greet 3 slightly anxious but very excited boys.

Boots and hats on, then off they go to say hello to their trusty steeds.

In the capable hands of Jules and her team, the boys begin an hour of fun. Well, that's what they think is happening.... there are so many different things going on. From improving the boy's communication - listening to instructions, engaging with the leaders and side walkers, and giving calm instructions to the horses – to improving posture, balance, spatial awareness and core strength. Apart from the obvious joy and happiness, so much is being gained from this amazing experience, respect, self-control, and empathy.

It has been a privilege for me to sit on the mounting block and watch the horses and wonderful ladies work their magic on 3 very nervous boys. Their confidence has grown so much over the six weeks that they have been lucky enough to be part of the RDA.

The boys cannot wait to return to Spring Meadow and their four-legged friends in the summer term next year for their Level 2.

The car journey back to school is a much calmer one – 3 exhausted boys!

Thank you, Louise Stormer from Mark Way School, for this lovely piece.



## 51<sup>st</sup> AGM

We had a very relaxed and enjoyable evening on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November in St Mary Bourne.

The Trustees Committee said farewell to Carolanne Bowyer who had been a trustee for many years. We are thankful for her cards, which are very popular and for her help at the events which Andover RDA puts on.

Dr Rosie Davies has joined the committee, and everyone is very thankful to her for stepping forward.

Mary Childs has resigned as Chair and Alex Hanbury Williams has been elected to fill the roll. Everyone was delighted that Alex agreed to become Chair. Mary was presented with a wonderful gift voucher from everyone for Penwood Nursery, a highly appropriate present for Mary!

Long Service Certificates were presented to Barry Curd and Sue Baker (10 years), Penny Wilkins (30 years) and Elizabeth Maclay (40 years). Also, a card was signed to present to Gilly Walker, who could not attend, but who for about 12 years led the Ride at Hare Warren for the smallest children from Icknield School.

Mark Hyson presented the Treasurers Report which brought confidence as our finances remain robust.

We were delighted to welcome Frances Lochrane, Regional Chair of Riding for the Disabled. Also Sean Canon, Head Teacher of Icknield School.

### **Our speaker was Tamara Hudleston.**

Tamara rode in the Mongol Derby in 2013. Genghis Khan's horse messenger system has been re-mapped and is the route of the longest, toughest horse race in the world.

You choose your horse at every horse station that you arrive at from the mostly unriden, wild horses that are

caught off the plain. The horses are vetted; however, they only really enjoy responding to the saddle by galloping, often 40 kilometres or more, between horse stations!

You must be courageous, tough, and probably quite young to survive! Lara Prior Palmer was the winner in 2013 and was 19 years old. Tamara also survived and told her quite amazing tale with slides to an enthralled audience. She is very supportive of RDA and did this to help the Pegasus Centre who benefitted hugely. We were very grateful to her for being our speaker.



*Tamara Hudleston*





Left to right Above: Mark Hyson, Treasurer, Penny Wilkins, Adult Ride Leader, Alex Hanbury Williams, newly elected Chair, Pauline Copping, Operations Trustee, Mary Childs, retiring Chair, Maureen Wood, Trustee with responsibility for Coaching, Jaci Abdollahzadeh, Trustees Secretary, Dr Rosie Davies, newly elected Trustee and Sue Cox, Trustee with responsibility for Safeguarding.

Carolanne 2<sup>nd</sup> from left, at Fun Day in 2019



## **Andover RDA at 50 Some Reflections**

Our 51st AGM, after 50 years of Andover RDA, marks something to be thankful for, half a century of therapeutic and meaningful association between horses and ponies with adults and children. These participants have benefitted from being with the magical creature that is the horse. It is something which we all recognise to be powerful, healing, and profound.

In our 50<sup>th</sup> year, having survived the Pandemic, we have many new faces to welcome and so I hope that what follows here may explain a little more about Andover RDA and serve to further welcome you to this group. I also want to give a flavour of what we have achieved, where we are now and what we anticipate.

Our riders, and previously our carriage drivers, have included children and adults with learning difficulties, often exacerbated with conditions such as Autism and developmental delay. We have helped people with debilitating diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease. We have worked for years with children with mental health challenges and behavioural difficulties. Over the last 10 years we worked, for about 18 months, with war-wounded, from Tedworth House. We helped set up an Accessibility Mark group at Sparsholt College and although they have not managed to keep that going, hopefully it can be resurrected one day. Penny has written about JJ a blind rider, who has been making excellent progress with Maureen giving him auditory aids.

All in all, I believe that we have made an effective impact upon the lives of many in the Andover area. I



wonder whether Dinah Murdoch and her friends and co-volunteers who formed the Andover Group, had any idea what they might have started in 1972 and what the range of activity might turn out to be!

Our 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations were planned by a terrific committee. Alex, Maureen, Sarah, Penny, Sue, Carolanne and I organised a lovely party for volunteers kindly hosted with great flourish, by the Hanbury Williams family in Katya and Max's wedding marquee. Then a super Fun Day for our participants hosted by Charlie and Anna White. Admiral Iain Henderson, Vice Lord-Lieutenant, thoroughly enjoyed his visit to us at the volunteer's party. Clare Scheckter, Deputy Lieutenant, came to our Fun Day for the riders. Highlights for me at those events are the pleasure of seeing some familiar faces from years ago together with our participants' clear enjoyment of the Fun Day. I know that one of our adult riders, who finds communication with others and expression of feeling very difficult, warmed everyone's hearts when he showed great care and kindness to a fellow rider as they came to collect their rosettes at the end of the day. The event had obviously unlocked something within him and although his consideration to his fellow rider may seem a small thing, it is those small things which we, who volunteer with Andover RDA, value because we celebrate the growth and valuable progress within the individuals who we see.





*Sarah masterminded the catering with Penny Wood at the party in May.*



*Previous page, Alex and Mercedes deep in conversation at our Fun Day at Frenches Farm.*



*Oliver Banbury receiving his rosette from Clare Scheckter.  
Oliver's family generously lend us their ponies.  
Below, Barry with Simona on Jack at Fun Day.*





*The children from Elizabeth's Ride from Wolverdene School had a fantastic day! Below, Clare Scheckter, Deputy Lieutenant with us and the wonderful cake which everyone thoroughly enjoyed!*



I have commented upon how Covid has affected our activities before, and I would like now to mention how we are emerging from that very difficult time. National Office at last gave us a format to provide an annual report. We have submitted that we have managed to provide 26 participants with riding in the year from April 2021 through to March 2022. You will notice that this does not include this summer's figures which have been greater. We had 36 volunteers with which to achieve this and provided 67 sessions of riding. That report described the emergence from the various lockdowns and challenges from the disease. Since then, to November 2022, our activities have further developed and consolidated and are scheduled to grow, most notably, after next Easter when the children will re-start their riding. We will be serving Icknield, Mark Way, Wolverdene and Norman Gate Schools again and our Golden Ride, a small ride which we hope will expand next year and which serves individually referred children, looks set to further develop and hopefully remain with us.

Throughout all this the adults have ridden, apart from lockdowns, and their ride has settled down to a stable way of being again. We are grateful that they can ride at Frenches in the wintertime and at Five Acres in the summer. Both venues are relatively new ones and look as though they will endure.

We have very good relationships with the schools that we work with, and we derive a great deal from our association with them. Who can forget Sean Cannon's presentation a few AGMs ago! Sean is the Head Teacher at Icknield, one of the Andover special schools which does wonderful work, and with which we have had a long association.

The volunteers that we have are very committed. It is a pleasure to work alongside so many who bring varied skills and knowledge to the organisation. Whether as a ride helper, leading, side-walking and communicating with our riders. Or as a coach, carefully thinking about how we can take a session and make it meaningful to our riders. Our ride leaders ensure that each week everything is in place. Our pony or horse carers keep our animals happy and loved for our riders. There are those of us who raise funds and who help to organise events such as the AGM. Those of us who keep the organisation in mind in our daily lives so that we can grasp opportunities in the community which will benefit Andover RDA. I think of people like Maggie, who as well as volunteering as a pony carer and side walker and pony leader, helps with the local press. Also, Kate who is a volunteer, a pony sponsor and organises our First Aid courses.

The Trustee Board is first rate. Jaci has settled into her role as Trustee Secretary, she is a ride helper too and she is a pony carer and a fund raiser with Sue and Pauline. Sue also works as our Safeguarding Coordinator and has agreed to be a children's Ride Leader with Sarah Dodds on Wednesdays. Pauline is our operations trustee and is assuming a lot of responsibility for the smooth running of everything. Mark marvellously steers our financial wellbeing and has been so helpful with fundraising. Penny is not only a Trustee but also runs the adult ride and has always provided her horse for the ride to use. Maureen oversees our coaching, is a coach herself, and she ensures that we all pass our coaching reviews and attend our training. Maureen is also a horse carer. Alex, we are thankful to for stepping into my shoes as chair, however she has also been a ride leader for many years, and she is a

pony carer. The trustees are delighted to welcome Rosie Davies to the board and very thankful that she has agreed to join it. Rosie is a ride helper too.

We sadly say goodbye to Carolanne, who has been on the Board of Trustees for many years providing a wonderful sense of continuity, good counsel, and reliability. Thank you Carolanne, for your time with the board and thank you also for staying with us as a volunteer, notably continuing with the cards, which everyone loves and helping us when we have events and being an all-round brilliant supporter.

Apart from the Board we have Elizabeth, who, for 17 years, was chair and organiser and she hosted the driving group (when we had one) plus her own children's ride which she leads. She and I coach the Wolverdene children in Binley. Barry is a coach and a horse carer, Sarah coaches the adults and Janice has recently been approved as an RDA coach with the children's rides. Siobhan is a trainee coach and is hoping to be fully fledged and approved before too long. Our RDA horse, Timmy, is cared for by Jules and her family. Jules brings Timmy to the Monday adult ride and the Tuesday children's rides which she also coaches.

These are the operational group members who plan, enable, care for, and organise. However, as mentioned we also have over 30 side walkers and pony leaders whose patience and commitment is vital. It is they who are close to the riders and who help them to fully participate. It is they, or you, who step in to enable a rider to succeed at the point where they may struggle. We are always looking for new volunteers, but I am happy to report that we have a good many and that feedback has shown that we enjoy what we do!





*Maureen stepping in to coach the Tuesday Children's Ride*

An enduring activity, which never relents, is fundraising. We have added expenses now as we have a pony van which, although lovely, is old and requires TLC. This vehicle is to provide transport which can be driven by a wider number of dedicated volunteers than have traditionally been available, to move our ponies about. Andover RDA thrives on having more than one site to operate from and upon borrowing ponies and horses to bump up numbers. This means that we must have appropriate transport which can be utilised by more than one person. I foresee that this element of what we do will become something that the adult ride will want to look into next year. Although the van will bring ponies to the adults in the winter, their own arrangement for transporting their heavier horses depends upon the goodwill of drivers and their own vehicles. Running a towing vehicle is something that is becoming increasingly expensive, and which does not give us flexibility. There are fewer and fewer people who tow in



our organisation. So, our “new/old” pony van is a step towards changing the balance of responsibility for equine transport.

We have looked, extensively, at trying to develop a hub where all the equines live and where all of the activity can happen, seeking to dispense with the need to transport animals. We worked on a number of ideas and proposals, with prospective partners such as Enham and Frenches Farm, but we found that it would be prohibitively expensive to develop and maintain such a hub. RDA groups who have these facilities are usually in receipt of very generous and consistent benefactor donations.

So fundraising is key to our “agile” survival. Mark and Mike Strong have led a very successful Golf Day for two years now, with the help of Sue and Jaci and others of us including Rob my husband. Sue, Jaci and Pauline are “on the case” utilising many opportunities to raise funds and I and they will organise the “Our Country Life Quiz” on Thursday evening, 16<sup>th</sup> March next year. Save the date! In addition, Alistair Dodds has managed to get us accepted as one of the charities for the Test Valley Clay Pigeon Shoot on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May. Contact Alistair for details as teams are needed. [alistairdodds55@gmail.com](mailto:alistairdodds55@gmail.com).

There is a short survey document available, and which was distributed at the AGM which seeks to ask you the members and supporters what you feel about fundraising. We have a pony sponsorship scheme which you can read about on the website and this scheme is set to be developed and enlarged. If anyone would like to support the fund-raising team, developing this idea or anything else, I know that they would welcome you!

Many people have been very generous with donations of money and gifts for our various raffles and auctions. For

example, we thank the Dodds for their lovely cottage in Cornwall, Park House Stables for breakfast on the gallops, Apsley Farms for their dumpy bags of mulch, people who sponsor, donate and hold events for us such as Andover Round Table. Elizabeth Snowden and her friends have been selling wreaths for Christmas for us.

There are too many to mention them all and if I have left people out of this report I apologise. We appreciate and rely upon every single fundraising event, donation and kindness.



*Winners! Golf Day 2022  
Thanks to Mike Strong for organising this.*





*John Rudland, Chris and Barry Curd at Houghton Lodge.  
Jaci and Sue organised us at the Andover Sofa Club's  
Sparkling Cream Tea!*

The website and the Facebook page are very important to us. We communicate well through these mediums, and they need to be brought up to date and made more visible. Alex and I were delighted when Gilly Summers stepped forward and offered to take these on in 2023. Volunteering with Andover RDA is something that can take many shapes and forms. We need all kinds of skills and talents.

For myself, I became involved with RDA in about 1992 after Elizabeth spotted that we and the Hoyes family had a nice pony called Brandy. Caroline and I started to volunteer with Andover RDA. I remember volunteering with Elizabeth's Wolverdene children who, in those days, were secondary age. Later, Rob and I went overseas for a while with his work, and I got my RDA fix volunteering in Bermuda during this time. Here at home and over the years, I was involved sometimes hardly at all and at other times quite intensively and was very glad to become a trustee, somewhere in the early 2000s! I became chair after Elizabeth, who was a hard act to follow, in 2014. These 8

years have flown by, and I have gained a great deal of personal satisfaction from the experience of leading the group. I am looking forward to coaching, to looking after Spring Meadow and the ponies for the children's rides and to enjoying my continued association with this fantastic organisation. Thank you for your support over the years. I know that you know that we are in good shape with a strong and talented board, a remarkable operational group and loyal and creative volunteers. Especially we all know that Alex will lead the organisation with humour, talent and care. She is a safe pair of hands with solid support. Andover RDA will thrive in the future, and we will all be part of that outcome.

Mary Childs. November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022





"Thank you for the lessons.  
Giving your time up and  
giving us the horses to ride  
on."

From  
Jack, Flinn, Craig and  
Riley



*Andover RDA Annual Review written, compiled, and published by Mary Childs. November 2022. Thanks to all contributors.*