

WOODCHURCH DRIVING GROUP RDA 2019 NEWSLETTER

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Review of the Year

This year we started the season sharing our venue, in particular the parking area, with a plethora of workmen who were building the new carriage shed (hurray!) and an indoor school facility which, once complete, we will have the opportunity to hire allowing us to lengthen the season and avoid cancelling sessions due to inclement weather

The brick built carriage shed means we now have secure and dry storage for our carriages and other equipment, additionally there is a kitchenette and a disabled toilet for use by the group. After many years of dealing with a leaky and increasingly unstable wooden shed the new premises are a dream facility for the group. On completion of the new building a small bevy of willing volunteers decorated the inside walls ready for the grand opening in August

Sadly building delays and inclement weather meant the indoor school could not be used but hopefully it will come into its own in 2020.

It was a year of mixed blessings for our drivers, a number of whom suffered health issues and injuries (not I hasten to add whilst carriage driving) and had to miss several weeks of driving. Two drivers from last season did not return due to health issues but we welcomed five new drivers all of whom brought a new dimension and vitality to the group, and Monday sessions in particular became very busy.



Didn't we do well!

On one of the hottest days of the year five of our drivers attended the Regional Annual Carriage Driving Show held at Hadlow and had a great days driving winning the Group Shield for the most points for the day. Neil Simmons won the Open class with Teddy beating Liz Jarvis into second place also driving Teddy and Liam Wright was delighted with his third place in the dressage. Martyn Rhydderch and Ben Dearsley also did well coming away with rosettes for their achievements. Main picture shows the group receiving the Group Shield from Mr James Tucker, Master of The Worshipful Company of Wheelwrights who sponsored the show.

**Liam driving Winston
in the dressage at
Hadlow**



As usual the season was a mix of shows, fun days, and fund raising events and changeable weather conditions.

As in previous years we attended and took on the challenge of Bradbourne Le Trec on a warm day in early July. Always a fun day where our drivers and ponies did well coming home bearing rosettes and trophies. Also in July we travelled to Hadlow for the SE Regional Carriage Driving Show (see main feature page 1) two really fun days out.

Sticking with the show theme, we held two fun days of our own where the greatest challenge was the somewhat inclement weather, which forced a postponement of the first day, which was rescheduled for the following week where, would you believe, the weather, was worse! But we are a tough lot and with much laughter and our own wet tee shirt competition we battled on with 8 drivers taking part. Afterwards they enjoyed lunch with the Mayor of Ashford Cllr Jenny Webb who presented the prizes both for driving achievements and some great entries in the art competition.

For our second fun day on 4th September we were pleased to welcome the Mayor of Tenterden Cllr Jean Curteis and Cllr John Link and Regional staff Lindsay Correa (Regional Chair) and Miranda Purves (Regional Carriage Driving Rep). All our drivers did well with Neil Simmons once again the overall winner and recipient of the Group Challenge Cup. Congratulations to Neil and all our drivers for their achievements not only at the shows but also on the weekly sessions throughout the season. They, with the help of the RDA Coaches and Instructor Celia Swayne, have worked hard and shown significant improvement in their driving and levels of co-ordination.

HOPEFULLY THEY ALSO HAD SOME FUN ALONG THE WAY.



The opening of the new carriage shed

Monday's Fun day with Cllr J Webb Mayor of Ashford who helped with prize giving. Still smiling despite the rain.



Having fun come rain or shine!

FUND RAISING EVENTS A PLENTY!

Quiz nights were held in February and November: These have become a regular feature on our fund raising calendar as popular events guaranteed to raise funds for the group. Of course they wouldn't happen without the efforts of RDA Coach Jo Rose and her quiz master husband Geoff. Many thanks as always go to them for their support.

Dog Shows: Bodiam played host to two Dog Shows and a Horse Show where we were recipients of the funds raised. Thanks go to RDA Coach Judith Dawson and her wonderful family for organising these events for us. All funds raised went towards group funds and the ponies keep.

Open Garden: On a beautiful sunny day in July, volunteer Cathy Dalton and her husband opened their lovely garden in Tenterden to raise funds for the group. Thank you to Cathy and Maurice and all the volunteers who helped to make this a perfect and very successful day.

On the same weekend volunteer Ann Achow once again organised and ran the annual **Tenterden Street Collection**, while other volunteers attended and supported the Annual **Tennis Tournament** at Benenden of which we have been beneficiaries in the past.

Possibly the most ambitious event in 2019 was the personal achievement by new volunteers Jacqui and daughter Mai Lee Xavier - Rhodes who undertook a **50K + walk** to raise funds for the group. This they did on the hottest day of the year raising nearly £1000 through their Just Giving Page. I think we are all in awe of their stamina and generosity.

In October we tried something new when we held a fund raising **Talk** by Chris Wiggins, farrier and son of the group's Treasurer. A seasoned speaker, Chris's talk titled **"Hoof Dissection"**, attracted an audience from those linked to the equine world. Chris gave his time for free and brought along (with the owner's permission) 3 real horse legs and some gloves so the audience could have a hands on experience.

December was also a busy month with two seasonal events: For the second year in a row we were invited to help at and benefit from the proceeds of the Ashford Community Choir and Ashford Sinfonia **Christmas Concert**. Always a lovely evening guaranteed to put everyone in the Christmas mood whilst raising funds for the group.

SANTA CLAUS aka Jeff Longman (Adopt-a-Pony supporter) once again undertook to support the group by raising funds as Santa Claus at many venues and children's parties raising a fantastic £2,600.00 –how will we ever thank him enough.

This marked the end of a busy but very successful fund raising year for which we thank everyone involved.

In addition we continued to run our **Adopt-a-Pony Scheme**, **50 Club** and **Smartie Appeal** and as always we are most grateful and indebted to all our friends and supporters for their continued commitment to the group.

And to our wonderful volunteers who gave so freely of their time and talents.

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU



Team X-R take a well earned break during their epic 50K walk



Santa Claus doing his thing!

Its what you can do that counts!

The Wednesday Group show off their skills at their fun day attended by the Mayor of Tenterden Cllr Jean Curteis and long term supporter Cllr John Link. We were also pleased to welcome the S.E Regional Chair Lindsay Correa and Regional Carriage Driving Representative Miranda Purves.



Winston causing some amusement when he thought Lindsay Correa's hat looked rather tasty!



And the winner is Neil Simmons who won the Fun day Group Challenge Cup

Many more images can be viewed on our website: www.rdawoodchurch.co.uk

OTHER NEWS: We were pleased to be invited to join in the local Church Christmas Tree Festival and delighted when volunteer Cathy Dalton offered to make the decorations in the form of 70 ceramic horses which looked beautiful and were such a good advert for the group. Thank you to everyone who helped with this project.

Congratulations go to KEVIN JAMES who was our volunteer of the year for 2019

PONIES

Of course this Newsletter would not be complete without mentioning our 3 loyal and hardworking ponies, WINSTON STANLEY, TEDDY and GEORGE who give so much unconditional love and pleasure to all our drivers and without whom the group could not function.

RAINBOW I am pleased to report continues to live in happy retirement with his mares cared for by Steve and Carol



HELP NEEDED

Do you know of anyone who would like to volunteer with the group?

If so here is an overview of the group and how to contact us

The group is made up of drivers with varying disabilities, companion drivers and volunteers. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring many skills and interests to the group. Our common bond is the ponies that give so much to everyone. They have the ability to instill trust and confidence and a sense of personal achievement where other channels have failed. We meet twice weekly from spring to autumn and drive in beautiful fields, woods and an outdoor arena.

As a registered, self-funding charity we are constantly fundraising for the ponies' upkeep and essential equipment, which is achieved with events and social gatherings throughout the year.

If you feel you could help by volunteering with the group you can find us at our website

www.rdawoodchurch.co.uk or if you prefer please call 01233 860750. Thank you.

Previous experience is not required, as training will be given.

New Drivers: are always welcome. If you know of anyone who would benefit from driving with the group please contact us. If we do not have a suitable vacancy at the time we will add their name to the waiting list.

2020 DIARY DATES

Group AGM: 2pm 4th March

Vol Training Days: 1st and 8th April

Start of new Driving Season:

Wednesday 15th and Monday 20th April

First Fund Raiser of the year:

60's Night with Backbeats Band 9th May *See Website for details*

Dates for shows and fun days to be announced when known.

Thank you again to all our wonderful volunteers, drivers, friends and supporters of the group we look forward to your company throughout the year ahead.

