

2019 has been a good year for Riding for the Disabled in Jersey and the group continues to work towards improving the health of our riders by giving them confidence, increased strength, core stability and enjoyment whilst achieving their goals. We have ten rides weekly, during term time, and our age range is from 3 years upwards.

The new sand school has bedded in well and we have been able to hold rides throughout the year even if the weather has been poor as the surface drains and dries very effectively. The ponies all benefit from the new sand school as do our volunteers as walking on the new even surface is a great deal easier.

In May our County and Regional Coaches visited the island to assess our instructors on their annual reviews and we were delighted that all our coaches were successful. RDA National has changed the coaching pathway which will encourage our volunteers to think about stepping up from a leader or side walker to a Coach and a very illuminating training session was held. We have our first new Coach on the pathway and we are all finding the training very informative. New online training has also been developed for all our volunteers which was explained at a practical training session and it was good to see this attended by a great number of our wonderful dedicated helpers.

During the coaching week, a Friday rider from Haut Vallee School and Anne, who rides with us on a Tuesday, were examined for their Grade 3 riding and horse care certificates and passed with flying colours. Also, during the year, we had six children from Rouge Bouillon achieve their grade 1 certificates, four teenagers from Granville also passed grade 1 and three adult riders took their Grade 2 riding and horse care certificates. These proficiency tests offer a valuable opportunity to recognize and reward achievement at all levels of ability. They are a real motivator for all involved, not only for those working towards and actually taking the tests, but also for volunteers and staff taking part in the sessions.

On July 2nd and 3rd fourteen students, from Mont a l'Abbe, came to the stables as part of their activity week and RDA provided Pony Care activities. They all enjoyed the 2-hour sessions and were awarded the Endeavour badge and certificate.

The annual RDA Bridge Tea afternoon was held on 14th February at Trinity Parish Hall with eighteen tables sold. Thanks to a successful raffle, together with an auction, the afternoon raised £1,762.

We have had some changes to our Committee during the year. Lucy Johnson has become Joint Group Organiser, as Rachel Andrews has stepped down from this position. Two long standing members of the Committee, Charlotte Bashforth and Joan Turner have retired and it is pleasing to see new members coming forward and willing to give time to their group. Rachel will still be a Coach and she will remain very involved with the activities of the group.

RDA National celebrated their 50th anniversary this autumn and so in Jersey we had a week of special rides when our riders were challenged by a Handy Pony course. The Handy Pony course consisted of a number of obstacles. There were poles to bend around and walk over, fishes to catch out of buckets and hang up, letters to post and two poles to halt between and move things from one side to another. All this was enjoyed with riders cheering each other on. It was a real challenge not only with the different things to do but also remembering the correct order of the course. This proved to be great fun for everyone involved and each participant was presented with a Golden Rosette and a Gold Medal.

We have been fortunate to have received many donations throughout the year but special mention must be given to the monies received in memory of Frank le Sueur. We used the monies to replace well-used equipment. Our group has also been nominated as a Waitrose Community Charity in all three shops in Jersey for which we are very grateful and, apart from donated funds, this exposure gives much needed publicity of the work we undertake.

We look forward to a successful year with many more riders taking their proficiency tests and achieving their goals. Thanks, as usual must go to our band of extremely hard-working coaches and volunteers who give their time so freely to put smiles on the faces of young and older riders alike.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year

Cathy Fricker and Lucy Johnson
Chairman and Joint Group Organiser, RDA Jersey

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