

The PONY POST

COTSWOLD RDA NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2024

Cotswold
RDA



Riding for the Disabled Association

RDA NATIONALS 2024

by Debbie Powell - General Operations Manager

Cotswold RDA achieved some fantastic scores at this years RDA National Competition, held over two days in July.

On Friday 12th July, Sophie won the title of Class Champion for her Dressage test! She and Morph performed a beautiful test and were awarded a fantastic score to match. CRDA Chairman Tim Baylis also came to congratulate Sophie in-person at the Dressage arena, joining the team after she was awarded her rosettes. Morph also won 3rd place in Best Turned Out, thanks to Head Groom Holly.

The next day saw six of our riders competing in the Countryside Challenge and Dressage classes. Millie and Erin each won their Countryside Challenge classes with excellent scores, a huge well done to both of you! We then saw Mackenzie, Hannah and Poppy secure some amazing scores over the day, in some very large classes. Lee, on his own horse Whisper, also competed in two Dressage classes and achieved 2nd in both! You can read more about Lee's story further on in the newsletter. Well done to everyone who competed, you should be so proud of yourselves!

Thank you to NAF, an industry-leading equestrian supplier who recently donated some of their fantastic products to us. These were used to make our ponies look smart, with the help of our wonderful grooms! And thanks of course go to our dedicated team of coaches and volunteers, who make Cotswold RDA proud every year with their enthusiasm, dedication and passion for helping our riders achieve their best. Thank you also to Jess-Photography for capturing our riders beautifully over the two days.

We are so proud of everyone involved, go Team Cotswold!



▲ Chairman Tim with Sophie



▲ CRDA Team with Sophie
(Photo by Jess Photography)



▲ Millie and Sunny



▲ Sophie on Morph
(Photo by Jess Photography)



▲ Mackenzie and Sunny in the arena



▲ Erin and Bruno



▲ Poppy and Sunny



▲ Holly with Morph's Rosette



▲ Hannah and Bob



▲ Mackenzie and Sunny

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

■ by Tim Baylis - Chairman of Cotswold RDA

With what passed for a summer now over and autumn cancelled in favour of an early start to Winter it's time for another Pony Post article and so much has happened since I last sat at my keyboard.

I first met Judy Johnstone, one of Cotswold RDA's two Vice Presidents, in April this year where I learnt not only that she is one of the founders of our RDA but was also closely involved with the project that led to the construction and opening of the Jackie Bruton Arena. In addition to this her knowledge and understanding of corporate and charity finance, compliance, best practice etc. is without equal. Your Board and Trustees were therefore delighted when she agreed to take on the role of CRDA Treasurer, where she gives us real confidence that our standards of governance can match the high operating standards CRDA delivers under Debbie's direction.

Judy has also kindly agreed to give a short presentation on the history of Cotswold RDA at this year's AGM on Monday 14th October, from 6:30pm, in the Sovereign Suite at Cheltenham Racecourse so do please come along to hear this fascinating story.

In the same spirit I am also delighted, as reported elsewhere in this edition of Pony Post, to welcome Claire Jenkins to our fundraising team. I had heard nothing but good about Claire's energy and 'can do' approach to life from people both within and outwith CRDA and then purely by chance, had the pleasure of meeting her at this

year's Cheltenham Gold Cup meeting as we prepared for the bucket collection. I'm very much looking forward to seeing the results of her drive and energy.

These two appointments significantly strengthen the CRDA team and help put us on the front foot for the challenges that will come with our ambitions for CRDA and the arena extension.

Best Wishes, Tim



OPERATIONS REPORT

■ by Debbie Powell - General Operations Manager

As we head into the new Autumn term I would first like to share my excitement in welcoming Claire back as Fundraising Manager. As many of you will know Claire and I have worked very successfully together in the past at Cotswold RDA! It is fantastic to have Claire back in the new role; she brings expertise and a passion for our charity.

The summer holidays brought new opportunities for participants to experience interacting with our ponies, and the chance to ride. It was also a pleasure to welcome Cottesbrooke RDA to our arena once again.

Our 'Mini Olympics' show proved very successful and was well supported, great fun was had by all. Please note our next show is on Friday 1st November if anyone would like to enter!

During the Volunteers Training Week we held our second-ever Volunteers Get-Together, where I shared the latest news ahead of the new term. It was great to hear feedback from our volunteers, and listen to their ideas. Thank you to all who came along!

As we look ahead to Christmas, our popular Carolokee is back (after heavy demand!) on 6th December. Please see details near the back of the newsletter for more information. We would love to see another fantastic turnout after the success of last year, so join us for this special festive event!

We are so proud of all our riders who attended the Nationals this year, coming home with some great results! I would like to thank

our amazing team of grooms who make sure our ponies look their very best, which was made easier this year NAF who very kindly donated some of their quality products to us.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Cotswold RDA so far this year. I would like to mention Clare and Paul from Spirax Sarco, who put together a promotional video using their volunteering time for us. Thank you to all who participated! Also thanks to Jess Photography, who is helping us refresh our photo library.

Let's hope Autumn brings us some more settled weather! As always, thank you all for the valuable time you give to Cotswold RDA.



COTSWOLD RDA VOLUNTEER WORKING PARTY

■ by Judith McNeill-Wilson - Trustee

The Board wants to ensure good communication with and between our volunteers and to guarantee that our volunteers have a voice. Our large group of wonderful volunteers help on specific days and never meet all together.

For this reason, we have formed a very small Volunteer Working Party and will be using our existing structure of coaches and heads of day as our channel of communication. We are encouraging coaches and heads of day to give a team briefing before each half day shift and will provide a bulletin of items for them to raise, at the same time asking them to pass issues, concerns and feedback back up to the working party. Whenever we have an event, we can then be sure that everyone gets the opportunity to help – at present we rely on a list on the notice board which not everyone reads and the office to suggest appropriate people.

Running and taking part in events is definitely the most successful way of building bonds between volunteers whom we may not meet up with on our normal daily 'shifts'. For example, this year we have run a dog show, the Mini Olympics Show, provided a team to run the RDA's Badminton stand and supported our teams of riders at Regional and National Championships. The goodwill and enthusiasm for ensuring these events are successful and enjoyable

is an end in itself. If we can return to several shows a year and some evening events, we will raise a little more money and give the opportunity for more team spirit. Debbie and the team also put trips on such as the Horse of the Year Show and a Carriage Driving centre to encourage volunteers and their family friends to come together. These trips do encourage us to expand our reach out to other people in the community too.

Coming up next is our **AGM on Monday 14 October 2024** where members will be treated to a talk with photos on the beginnings of Cotswold RDA in the barmy days of bareback riding, borrowed ponies and Royal visits.

We do want to invite volunteers for a drink sometime soon – perhaps with a musical ride – what do you all think?

So please lookout for posters and join in team briefings and – of course – thank you so much for being a volunteer at Cotswold RDA.

NEW FUNDRAISING MANAGER

I am so excited to be back as a part of the fantastic Cotswold RDA team as part time fundraising manager!

I have really missed being a small part of making a real difference to our riders and their families.

Debbie and the team are doing amazing work to maximise the timetable, but Cotswold RDA needs additional core funding to ensure riding continues to be affordable for our riders.

My focus will be writing applications to grant making trusts and foundations but also reaching out to our local companies to introduce ways that they can support our work. There are many lots of ways to get involved - maybe Charity of the Year, sponsorship opportunities, payroll giving, fundraising at work, or volunteering time in the arena. If you know of anyone who maybe interested in hearing more about how they can get involved, then please

ask them to contact me at claire@cotswoldrda.org.uk or 07979690158.

I will be splitting my time between working from home in Merseyside and time working at the arena. I am looking forward to seeing you all again and hope to see many of you at the AGM on 14th October.



VOLUNTEERS TRAINING WEEK

We held our annual Volunteers Training Week from 2nd to 6th September, which is a fantastic opportunity to learn new skills, meet volunteers from other days, and brush up on your knowledge.

This year we had an insightful course on Deaf Awareness, held by Carmen Williams. Thank you so much for coming to the arena, we have had some lovely feedback from those who attended your session. We also held our helpful grooming, tacking-up and leading sessions, which are great for new volunteers to learn the basics, and for and existing volunteers as a refresher.

We rounded off the week with our second ever "Volunteer Get-Together" which saw a brilliant turnout! We talked through changes to the new term timetable, our new fundraising endeavours and our plans for the future. Thank you to those who very kindly baked some delicious cakes for the occasion too!

Thank you to everyone that came along to any of the training sessions during the week, we hope to see even more of you next time!





COTSWOLD RDA HALLOWEEN SHOW

Our next show will be held on Friday 1st November, and is open to all of our riders!

Dressage, Show-jumping and Halloween Handy Pony classes.

£10 per class.

Please complete an entry form to enter, available from the arena.



SUMMER FUN AND HOLIDAY RIDING AT COTSWOLD RDA

■ by Katharine McNealey - Thursday Coach

As always, our summer holiday riding programme offered a range of lessons and fun activities for riders who for various reasons may not be able to ride with us during school term time. We are always happy to welcome back old friends and meet new ones. Our 'Groom and Ride' sessions gave everyone some hands-on experience of horse care (just how does Bob get so dirty?) and the lessons included lots of games and music that everyone enjoyed.

One of our first activities was to teach riders a bit of 'road' safety. We used cones and signs to make a pretend road junction and used red and green signals to indicate Stop and Go. The volunteers joined in to act as realistic hazards and riders learned how to give way to pretend cars, trains and real people crossing the road! They also learned how to signal left and right and to make the appropriate turn.

Later in July we had our own 'Olympic games' which were enjoyed by everyone: riders, volunteers and families who came to watch. The indoor school looked cheerful, decorated with flags from the UK, Australia and the United States and lots of red, white and blue bunting. Although the ponies had a good stare at the bright colours, they soon settled down to be their usual well-behaved selves.

Riders had to compete in 'gymnastics'; ride with their held arms out while pretending to walk along a balance beam. It was particularly important to impress the 'judge' (coach Kathy) with a big smile. We also competed in 'swimming' races; (front crawl or breaststroke); bean bag shot putt and a canoe slalom race. For music we enjoyed a jazzed-up version of the National Anthem, and the wonderful theme tune from Chariots of Fire. There were no medals, but some well-done rosettes were awarded.

Not long now until October half term and Halloween. Who knows what spooky fun might be lurking in the dark corners of our indoor school? See you then!



JENSON'S RIDING JOURNEY

■ by Chantal, mother of Jenson

Jenson (age 11) has been riding at Cotswold RDA since the age of 4 and continues to enjoy his sessions with the wonderful Tuesday team.

He was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy on his 1st birthday and we were told the progressive muscle wasting condition is life limiting and he would struggle to take part in physical activities. However, we were so thrilled for Jenson to start riding at CRDA all those years ago and he continues to mount and dismount with assistance and enjoy his riding with confidence. It's so great to see him achieve so much despite what we were initially told.

Riding certainly is helping his condition and also for his mental well-being as he can achieve so much independently. Also each week Jenson doesn't realise he has a great physio workout while riding to help with his posture and stretch out his muscles.

Over time the amazing team have adapted his lessons so he now dismounts at the mounting ramp and uses special reins which he can use with one hand. This assists with his mischievous muscles which cause him weakness. We are so thankful to the amazing team for their incredible support; encouragement and friendship who have supported not only Jenson but also myself during difficult times.

We love our Cotswold RDA family and know Jenson will have plenty more memorable moments from his riding sessions.



LEE AND WHISPER

■ by Margaret, Lee's mum

Lee has been a rider at Cotswold RDA for over 8 years, always having his lesson on a Saturday with his own horse Whisper, who is now 27 years old. The pair have progressed so much with us during their time together and have shared their story to the RDA Nationals this year and beyond.

Year 2023 was a write-off for Lee and Whisper as Lee was diagnosed with cancer, but we are relieved to say that later in the year his operation to eradicate the cancer was a success. Lee returned to riding in January 2024. In his mind, if he qualified for Regionals that would be a big achievement after what he'd been through the previous year.

May arrived for Lee and Whisper, and they competed at Grade 6 and Grade 7, but as an "Open Rider" he qualified in first place for both grades.

At the RDA Nationals in July, Lee and Whisper came 2nd in the Grade 6 Walk and Trot Open and Lee came 2nd in Grade 6 Freestyle Open. Unknown to Lee, he scored 71% which meant that he had qualified for the British Dressage Equissage Bronze/Silver Summer Para Championships!

In August, Lee and Whisper competed at Hartpury, in a very large class of 12 including some excellent para-riders! This was a big



eye opener for Lee, as he had not competed in an event this size before. Lee said he would be so happy if he got within the top 6, and exceeded his expectations by achieving 4th place and received the most beautiful rosette! It's a good job that Whisper doesn't seem to want to retire anytime soon!

I must thank Gill his coach, for getting them both there, and to Cotswold RDA for all their help and support over the years.

Lee and Whisper will start back at CRDA in the Autumn term and we look forward to seeing what 2025 brings for them.



HAPPY RETIREMENT SUNNY!

Sunny has been a loyal Cotswold RDA pony for the past 9 years, and has given so many people wonderful experiences, including wins at Regional and National levels.

As some of you know, former groom Lou has been part of Sunny's life from the day he arrived at Cotswold RDA, and always expressed an interest in giving him a forever home for his retirement. On Lou's birthday it was a perfect day to give her a very special present, and to give Sunny a lovely retirement home! At the end of August Sunny said goodbye to Cotswold RDA, although he is sure to be back for the odd visit!

Thank you to Sunny for being such a fantastic member of the herd and thank you to Lou for giving him a wonderful retirement home. Please keep us (and all his fans!) posted with photos and updates.



WELCOME TO THE HERD HATTIE!

In August we welcomed our latest addition to our herd!

Hattie has nearly completed her training and will be joining in with lessons very soon. She has taken to life at Cotswold RDA very well, settling in to routines and getting along with the rest of the herd.

Hattie is looking forward to meeting everyone in the coming months and receiving lots of fuss from riders and volunteers!



SPONSOR A PONY

Are you looking for the perfect gift for a horse-loving friend or family member, this Christmas? Why not sponsor one of our ponies!

For just £36 for the year or for £3 a month, you will receive our fabulous welcome pack including the following:

- Certificate of sponsorship
- Framed photo of your pony
- Welcome letter
- Keyring of your sponsored pony
- Pony information sheet
- Sponsors Afternoon Invite

**Special offer:
Limited time only!**

Purchase a pony sponsorship pack between now and Christmas and add a Pony Bauble for the reduced price of £3 (normally £5!)



POSTCARDS FROM THE PONIES

During the ponies' two-week break over the summer holidays, the whole herd has enjoyed getting out and about. It is important for our ponies to enjoy some different activities, as, just like us humans taking a holiday, a change of scenery and a different environment can leave them refreshed and re-energised for the coming weeks!

The herd enjoyed some lovely hacks over Cleeve Hill and the surrounding areas, while a few of the herd went to their off-site holiday homes. They have all enjoyed their break and are looking forward to starting the Autumn term!



MAGPIE

by Helen Kingscott, CRDA Volunteer

I don't know how many of you will remember Magpie, but he went over rainbow bridge recently at the grand old age of 28.



He was a great favourite at Cotswold RDA and was one of those ponies that was always going to retire then stayed another year and another and another! He loved his work but eventually went on to 'retire' with his lovely new owner, Becca. Becca used to ride him out at the weekends and he was her favourite - hence the reason she bought him. He enjoyed many hacks up Cleeve Hill with his new friends.

Magpie arrived at RDA with two other ponies and I too fell in love with him. I had some money from my Grandfather's estate which was due to go to another charity which had folded so I was allowed to choose where it went and that's why I bought a third of Magpie. I always said I bought the back third as I loved his tail so much! The late Janet Freeman bought another third and her church group bought the last third.

Magpie had an amazing temperament and was used for musical rides and lots of competitions. He attended the racecourse in the parade ring, met The Princess Royal and will forever be remembered in the "Dave and Darcy Have a Party" book along with his friends Ross and the late Max who he also loved coming to stay with for his holidays.





CARRIAGE DRIVING VISIT

■ by Debbie Hunt, CRDA Volunteer

In August, five of us from Cotswold RDA were invited to share a morning with our counterparts at the Royal Forest of Dean RDA Carriage Driving Group, based at Chaxhill House near Westbury on Severn.

They meet every Tuesday and Thursday mornings offering carriage driving sessions for people living with a range of physical and mental disabilities, including wheelchair users. They have just two ponies who belong to the people who run the group and are brought to the school by trailer each day. We were able to sit and watch whilst the users were settled in to the driving seat next to the coach who had overall control of the carriage. These have been specially built to accommodate all levels of disability. One carriage has a pull-out ramp and removable seat to allow a wheelchair to be pushed up onto the platform and locked in place next to the coach. A moveable set of steps has also been constructed to assist those with restricted movement.

The “drivers” can then hold a separate set of reins to give them an experience of driving the carriage. Unfortunately, due to the limited amount of time each “driver” has, I was told that very few ever really learn to drive the carriage. But as with our young students riding the ponies, the drivers get an enjoyable and enriching experience from their visit, which you could see by the joy on their faces. Once on board, the carriages drive off down the lane for a short while, before returning to the school.

As it is necessary for additional helpers to accompany the carriages in case of emergency whilst they are out, at least 4 volunteers mount their own trusty steeds (bicycles!) to accompany them down the road and back. I had a chance to ride a bike with them on a couple of their outings, before each of us were given a chance to “drive” ourselves. We were there for a couple of hours and had a very enjoyable time.

The people who run the group are all very friendly and if you can ride a bike, they are always looking for additional help. You will be trained how to tack up the pony and attach it to the carriage and how to assist the drivers in getting on and off etc. Thank you for allowing us to visit, we all had a very enjoyable morning.



HELEN'S BRIDLE FUNDRAISING

■ by Helen Kingscott

Over the past year, Helen has set herself a target to get all the ponies a new bridle.

She has been very busy selling items on marketplace and Lois has given her some money for overpayments on her book sales.

So far four lucky ponies have had a new bridle and she should have enough now for another two!



CAROLOKEE

We are so pleased to announce the date of our next Carolokee! After the huge success of last year's event, we hope to see another fantastic turnout this year for our Christmas celebration, on Friday 6th December at 11:30am at the arena.

Led by the wonderful Rev. Louise Brown, join us for a festive service including sing-along carols, audience participation and of course our ponies in Christmas fancy dress! Everyone is welcome.

If you'd like to come along please let us know, by emailing info@cotswoldrda.org.uk, call 01242 584420 or pop into the office when you are next at the arena. We hope to see you there!



▲ Carolokee 2023



CURRY NIGHT WITH DAVID CROSSE

Join us for an entertaining evening with former jump-jockey David Crosse and listen to a real racing legend telling his story!

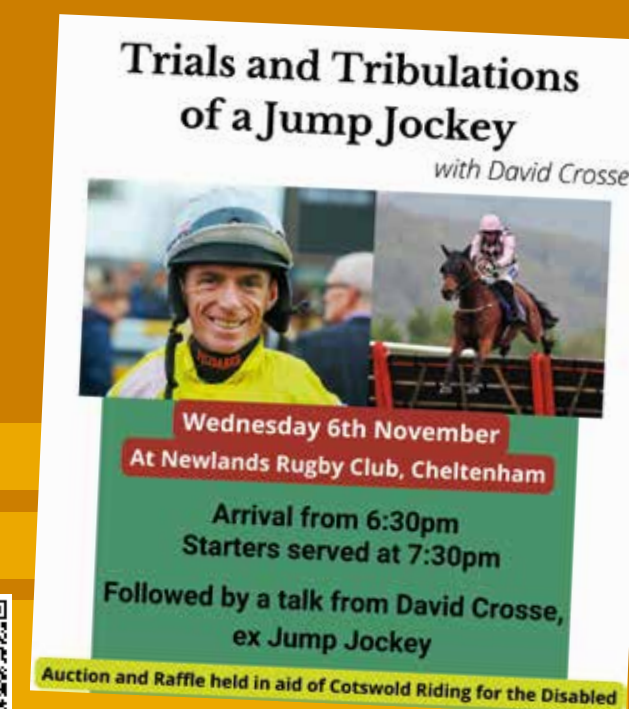
David's talk will be followed by a two-course curry, courtesy of Spice Lodge Cheltenham.



WEDNESDAY 6TH NOVEMBER FROM 6-30PM

NEWLANDS RUGBY CLUB, SOUTHAM LANE, CHELTENHAM, GL52 3PE

£35 PER TICKET - TO PURCHASE TICKETS PLEASE
SCAN THIS QR CODE, OR CONTACT info@cotswoldrda.org.uk



CRDA CHRISTMAS SHOP

Pony Baubles - £5 each

The perfect gift this Christmas!

Personalisation is available, why not add your short message to the back of the bauble and choose which pony you'd like to feature. Please mail info@cotswoldrda.org.uk to order. Collection from the arena.

Personalisation available for additional £2.





RETAIL UPDATE

■ by Fiona Hanks – CRDA Longlevens Charity Shop Manager

Hi from the Longlevens Charity Shop!

Since our last update in the Summer Pony Post, our CRDA Tewkesbury charity shop has now closed, following a successful closing down sale. Many thanks to those of you who supported the Tewkesbury shop.

Our presence in the Longlevens Co-op store in Gloucester very much continues, and we have lots of lovely clothing and bric-a-brac for sale. We also have a large book area where you could buy a coffee, relax and have a read! We have a small selection of equestrian clothing, so please do come on down for a browse, grab a bargain, and meet the friendly staff and volunteers.



SUMMER STALLS

Fi and Helen have been out and about with their tombolas again. Firstly to Brockhampton Fayre where we made £112 and then on to Willersey dog show, which raised £152 for Cotswold RDA. Thank you for inviting us.

Our Country Stall is heading to Cheltenham Racecourse again this year, you can find Helen and the team at the October, November and December meetings in the Shopping Village.



DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US THROUGH EASYFUNDRAISING WHEN YOU SHOP YOUR FAVOURITE BRANDS ONLINE?

Over 7,000 brands are already registered, and will donate to us every time you purchase from them via easyfundraising.

And now you can donate to us when you do the food shop too! Simply complete your online grocery shop at major brands including Tesco, ASDA, Sainsbury's, Ocado and JustEat and we will receive a donation through easyfundraising. All you need to do is sign-up!

Simply sign-up by scanning the QR code, or visit the link below:
www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/cotswoldrda

Scan me!



THANK YOU



We would like to thank the following grant-making organisations for their support over the past couple of months:

Gloucestershire Disability Fund

PF Charitable Trust

Masonic Charitable Foundation

Charles Irving Trust

Thank you to **The Merseyside Entertainers Golf Society** for raising an amazing **£250** for Cotswold RDA through your charity golf day!

We would like to thank the volunteers who helped with bucket collecting outside Tesco on Saturday 3rd August. Thanks to you all we raised a fantastic **£126.45!**



A huge thank you Norton CofE Primary School, who, after their last ride before the summer holidays, presented us with four bags of garden ornaments for our Sensory Garden! Thank you to everyone who made this donation possible, our garden looks very smart!

AUCTION AND RAFFLE FOR CRDA

A huge thanks to Eddy Oakey, who has organised a super raffle and online auction, so far raising £300 for Cotswold RDA!

Eddy's son Mackenzie rides with us every Friday, and this year even made it to the Regionals and National RDA Competitions. Every penny raised will help riders like Mackenzie benefit from horse riding with us! Please visit Eddy's Facebook page to see the lots currently up for auction.



TACK SALE AT CRDA

On 14th September, we held a tack sale at our arena, where there were plenty of equestrian bargains to be had!

Thank you to everyone who came along to support the event, we raised an amazing £1407 which will go directly to helping Cotswold RDA's cause.

Keep an eye out in the new year for the date of our next Tack Sale.



MEET OUR STAFF



DEBBIE POWELL
General Operations Manager



JANE MONTELLIER
Operations and Volunteer Coordinator



LAURA BENNETT
Office Administrator



CLAIRE JENKINS
Fundraising Manager



HOLLY BROOKS
Head Groom



DEE GRIFFIN
Groom and Coach



LOUISA BROWN
Groom



GILL AINSLIE
Coach

MEET OUR TRUSTEES



TIM BAYLIS
Chairman
chairman@cotswoldrda.org.uk



MELANIE POMFRET
Vice Chair
melanie@cotswoldrda.org.uk



JUDY JOHNSTONE
Treasurer
judy@cotswoldrda.org.uk



LOUISE DENNISON
Secretary
louise.dennison@cotswoldrda.org.uk



LINDSAY BAKER
lindsay@cotswoldrda.org.uk



LAURA BROOKES
laura@cotswoldrda.org.uk



JUDITH MCNEIL WILSON
judith@cotswoldrda.org.uk



HOLLY EARL
holly@cotswoldrda.org.uk



STEPHEN PIDGEON
stephen@cotswoldrda.org.uk



HELEN GREEN
helen.green@cotswoldrda.org.uk

Cotswold
RDA



It's what you can
do that counts

Riding for the Disabled Association

Cotswold Riding for the Disabled Association

Cheltenham Racecourse, Prestbury Park, Cheltenham GL50 4SH

t. 01242 584420 e. info@cotswoldrda.org.uk

www.cotswoldrda.org.uk

Patron: Natasha Baker MBE

Vice Presidents: Edward Gillespie OBE and Judy Johnstone

Registered Address: Cotswold Riding for the Disabled, Cheltenham Racecourse,
Prestbury Park, Cheltenham GL50 4SH.

(Registered under the Charities Act. 1960) Charity No: 1160676. Company Number 9080110.

THE PONY POST - AUTUMN 2024 EDITION