

The PONY POST

COTSWOLD RDA NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024/25

Cotswold
RDA



Riding for the Disabled Association

CHRISTMAS CAROLOKEE

■ by Debbie Powell - General Operations Manager

Festive fun was had at our annual Carolokee, on Friday 6th December! For the second year in a row, we saw a fantastic turn-out of volunteers, riders, residents of local care-homes who have visited us for Tea with a Pony, friends, families and supporters. Reverend Louise led the highly entertaining re-telling of the Christmas Story, even featuring star guest Paddington Bear!

We were also treated to a special musical ride, performed by our equine team, and ex-staff member Lou who brought Sunny along to join in! It was lovely to see Sunny enjoying his retirement and welcome him back to the arena for the Carolokee. Everyone had great fun singing along to traditional and new carols, and not forgetting the CRDA '12 days of RDA Christmas' song delivered by our volunteers, staff and trustees (ensuring no-one is left out!).

Thank you to everyone who came along to celebrate with us, and as always thanks to Rev. Louise Brown for leading the service and for keeping us all entertained!

We hope to see you all again this year!



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

■ by Tim Baylis - Chairman of Cotswold RDA

A belated Happy New Year to everyone associated with and interested in Cotswold RDA.

We had a very well attended AGM at the racecourse in October, courtesy of the Jockey Club, without whom Cotswold RDA could not function in its present form. On a similar theme we wish Ian Renton all the very best on his retirement as Managing Director at Cheltenham Racecourse, and welcome Guy Lavender as the newly appointed CEO. We look forward to further developing our relationship with the Jockey Club through Guy and his team. Debbie is also looking forward to welcoming Guy and Andre Klein to our arena in Mid-January.

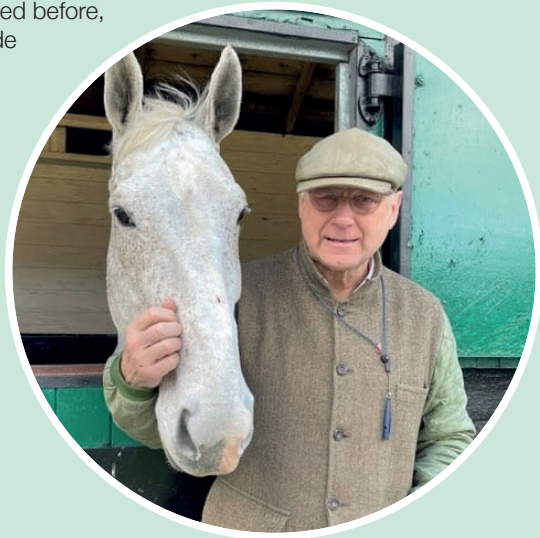
The board continues to work on the detail of the Arena development, parallel to planning the major fund-raising launch in April/May of this year, so watch this space for updates. As reported before, construction costs have increased significantly in recent years, and whilst we have made good progress with raising funds through some very generous donations, there is still some way to go. For this reason we plan to hold a major launch event later this year.

Debbie is transitioning to become CRDA's General Manager from her current General Operations Manager role, taking on additional responsibilities whilst passing on some of her current workload to other members of her very capable team. This includes, I'm very pleased to say, Dee's promotion to Head Coach. In addition, we are looking to recruit a new apprentice groom. This reorganisation of the team is all part of preparing for the Arena development, and the increased activity that will result from the improved facilities.

As part of her new role Debbie is getting more involved working with Fiona on our retail operation at Longlevens, and their joint efforts are having a very positive impact on the weekly takings.

I wish everyone who is a part of the CRDA community a very happy and healthy 2025.

Best Wishes, Tim



OPERATIONS REPORT

■ by Debbie Powell - General Operations Manager

I will start off by wishing all our supporters a very Happy New Year, and I hope that you've all had a good rest over the Christmas period with family and friends. We are looking forward to seeing you all again soon as 2025 unfolds!

A few of the ponies enjoyed Christmas at their holiday homes, thanks to those who kindly looked after them during this time. If they could talk I'm sure they'd love to tell us about all the adventures they've had!

Last year, before we broke up for Christmas, we were once again thrilled to welcome Rev. Louise Brown to the arena for another brilliant Carolokeel! This year I was a part of the service, along with Laura and Gill, who all agreed that standing at the front and seeing the smiles on the audience' faces truly made the dressing up worth it. Thanks to all who came along, it really is an occasion not to be missed. Who knows what we may be dressed up as next time!

On New Year's Day two groups of volunteers helped us at the Racecourse, both with Junior Jumpers tent and bucket collecting. As always we are so grateful for the time you give to help us, do read further on to find out how much we raised this year!

I'd also like to thank our incredible staff team for their continued efforts, especially during the winter where we have faced extreme weather and other challenges! Fiona and the trading team also continue to raise much needed funds and awareness at the Longlevens charity shop, a huge thanks to them all for their commitment to CRDA.

We have lots of events in the pipeline for this year, so do keep an eye on the noticeboard, website and our social media channels for the latest news. Thank you to everyone for your continued support, and we wish you all a happy and healthy 2025!



AGM 2024

■ by Debbie Powell - General Operations Manager

On Monday 14th October we held our annual AGM. It was great to see another fantastic turnout of volunteers and supporters, and to celebrate the achievements of the past year.

We were also treated to a talk from CRDA Treasurer Judy Johnstone, who informed us of the history of Cotswold RDA, right from our early days in 1964 in the grounds of what is now Ellenborough Park and Hotel. Judy began at the age of 16 as a helper at the stables, and after many dedicated years with the charity, Judy has now returned to the role of Treasurer. Thank you Judy for this wonderful insight, everyone left having learnt something new about Cotswold RDA!

Congratulations to our award winners, who were:

- Junior rider of the year – Hannah Drewitt
- Senior rider of the year – Holli Cockram
- Volunteer Award – Debbie Hunt
- Volunteer Award – Emilee Johnston
- Volunteer Award – Phoebe Stokes

If you would like to become a member of Cotswold RDA for just £10 a year, and have one vote at the AGM, please visit our website: www.cotswoldrda.org.uk/membership



In Remembrance

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Sophie. After riding with us for several months, Sophie began to volunteer with us, and then progressed onto her traineeship. She is very much missed at Cotswold RDA, especially by her two favourite ponies, Dave and Oreo. Our thoughts are with her loved ones at this time.

If anyone who has been affected by this news would like a confidential chat, or further support and advice, please email info@cotswoldrda.org.uk or see Debbie in the office.

We are planning to plant a tree in Sophie's memory. If anyone would like to contribute toward this please do get in touch with the office.





ALL ABOARD THE SANTA EXPRESS!

We are very grateful to the Gloucestershire Steam Railway team for offering our riders the chance to board their Santa Express, on Sunday 17th November.

50 of our riders and their families had a lovely morning, riding the train to Broadway and then back to Toddington, and then repeating the journey once more. During the trip we even met Santa himself, along with a few of his friends who had some special presents to hand out to riders.

Our riders and their families all had a fantastic time, thanks to the volunteers at Gloucestershire Steam Railway who made the event so special (and even arranged for the sun to be out for the duration of the morning!) Thank you again to everyone who made this event possible!



"Brilliant first-time riding experience for my 8-year-old. Well organised, staff were patient and kind. My daughter loved it and can't wait to go again. Huge thank you to all involved."

Parent of rider who came for their first ride during the October half term.

If you are the parent/guardian of a rider who rides with us, we would love to hear your positive feedback! Please contact us at info@cotswoldrda.org.uk or call 01242 584420.



JENSON'S WINTER WHEELS CHALLENGE

Jenson has been riding at Cotswold RDA for many years now on a Tuesday afternoon, on his best pony pal Bruno.

In November Jenson won a competition and rode his electric wheelchair for 5k with Equestrian Paralympian Sophie Christiansen! The team were part of the Superhero Series event at Dorney Lake, Eton. It looks like great fun, and well done to Jenson for completing the challenge!



COTSWOLD RDA HALLOWEEN SHOW

by Willow's grandad

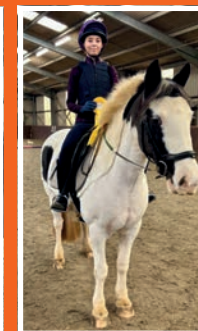
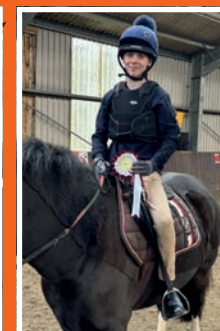
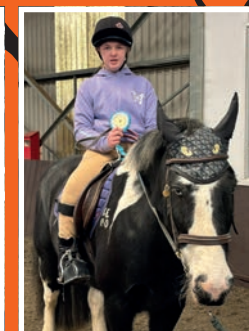
We were lucky enough in half term week this year to take part in the Cotswold RDA's fun Halloween Riding Show. My granddaughter, Willow, and I had no idea what to expect other than Willow had to dress sensibly for the occasion but obviously in an outfit with suitable theme. On the Tuesday beforehand, I was instructed by Linda to come suitably attired as well! Oh dear I thought, with regard to the latter request. Hey ho, in for a penny, in for a pound as they say.

As you can see from the photos, Willow's Mum, Sarah, came to my rescue, and my wife Helen made sure Willow was cleverly and lovingly kitted out.

On arrival, we were amazed to see how much thoughtful effort had been put in by so many to make the training area so fabulously Halloween-ey, and the multitude of people there so beautifully engaged with their own outfits. With cakes and teas and coffees galore, so many had contributed so marvellously, it made for a really great day.

With normal professionalism, care, love and all-round happiness, the CRDA folk present made things tick along in organised fashion, including the assignment of a professional event photo-taker to ensure everyone playing their part was beautifully captured for both their own memories and for any future, embarrassing, moments of posterity.

Thank you so much to everyone, Willow's happy face after her two events just said it all and we went home very proud, very excited to talk about it all, and full of joy. How lovely. What a day....Gramps says don't miss it next year!



DRESSAGE WALK ONLY

JUNIOR

1st Willow 68.09%
2nd Lily 67.14%



SENIOR

1st Emma 70%



DRESSAGE WALK AND TROT

1st Hannah 75.71%
2nd Mackenzie 71.5%



Thanks to all our riders who participated in the Fun Halloween Show on Friday 1st November.

We are so proud of how everyone presented themselves on the day, and how beautifully you all completed your tests and rounds.

We hope to see you all at the next show!



PONY VISIT ON ARMITAGE DAY

On Monday 11th November, Topsy and Bruno had a very exciting trip to the Racecourse for an educational visit from local schools. The pair enjoyed meeting lots of children and young adults, while showing how special RDA ponies' jobs are.

Bruno especially loved releasing his inner racehorse as they walked down the gallops, he really felt the wind in his mane!

Thank you to the Racecourse for inviting us, we all had a great morning.



SPONSOR A PONY - SPONSORS' AFTERNOON 2025

Our next sponsors afternoon will be held on Wednesday 30th April at 3:30pm.

The afternoon will include:

- A tour of our arena and facilities
- Light refreshments
- Meet your sponsored pony and find out more about their life as an RDA pony

There is no charge to attend but donations on the day are very welcome!

COME AND MEET ME AND MY FRIENDS!



TO GET YOUR INVITE PLEASE SPONSOR A MEMBER OF THE HERD TODAY!

You can sponsor one of our very special ponies for just £36 a year, or £3 a month!

How to purchase:

- Scan the QR code to visit our website
- Follow this link to our website: www.cotswoldrda.org.uk/sponsor-a-pony-2/
- Pop into the CRDA office at our arena

Scan me!



Sponsor a Pony

Looking for the perfect gift for the horse-lover in your life?

For just £36 a year, or £3 a month, you will receive a Welcome Pack and 4 updates a year from the herd!

Sponsor me and my friends!

Hi, I'm Freddie

Cotswold RDA It's what you can do that counts



A "CHRISTMAS WISH" WITH RADIS

On 19th December we were honoured to host Radis' event. Radis offer community based social care and support for vulnerable adults and children in England and Wales. Our grooms performed a musical ride, and afterwards Harry and Tom greeted the visitors in their Christmas outfits!

Many stalls and even Santa himself joined the occasion, and of course our mechanical horse was on display with coach Linda explaining how he works, and the benefits of having him at Cotswold RDA.

Thank you to everyone that came along, and to the team from Radis for hosting the event. We look forward to working with Radis in the coming year on some different events and projects!



CHELTENHAM ROTARY SPONSORSHIP EVENING



In October we welcomed members of Cheltenham Rotary to our arena to meet their two sponsored ponies – Morph and Haribo. The group also enjoyed watching our Para-Dressage rider Victoria perform a dressage test to music.

Later on during the same week we were delighted to be presented with a cheque from Cheltenham Rotary, for £250. Thank you for all your support of Cotswold RDA and we hope you continue to enjoy your sponsorship of Morph and Haribo!

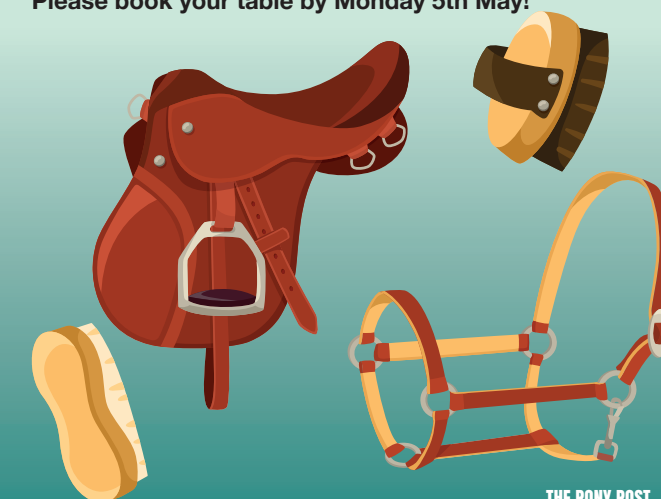


Save THE Date THE NEXT CRDA TACK SALE - 10TH MAY

Our next Tack Sale will be held on Saturday 10th May 2025 from 4:30pm to 6:30pm, in the CRDA arena.

Please contact us if you'd like to book a table for just £10 on info@cotswoldrda.org.uk or call 01242 584420.

Please book your table by Monday 5th May!





FUNDRAISING AT CHELTENHAM RACECOURSE

COUNTRY STALL

Helen was joined by her group of stall volunteers during the November, December and New Year's Day Meetings in the shopping village this year, manning the CRDA Country Stall. Helen and her team managed to beat all previous totals raised from the stall, this time taking over £2,000 for Cotswold RDA at the November meeting alone! The total is now close to £3,000 in January! **This is absolutely fantastic, and we cannot thank them all enough for their dedication and hard work.**

JUNIOR JUMPERS

Our team of volunteers once again did excellent work in the 'Junior Jumpers' family tent on at the November and New Year's Day meetings, helping families and children to create rosettes, signing visitors in and making their day memorable. **Thank you to everyone from CRDA who offered their time to help over both dates!**



SHOP AND DROP AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING

This year we were selected to run the 'Shop and Drop' service, adjacent to our country stall in the shopping village. Over the two days we raised £161.44 from shoppers leaving their bags with us while they enjoyed their day. **Thank you to the volunteers who ran the table over Friday and Saturday.**

We are so pleased to say that the New Year's Day collection raised an amazing £2257.76! **Thanks to all the collectors who once again braved the cold to give their time.**



▲ New Year's Day bucket collectors

If you'd like to join our team of 'bucketeers' on Cheltenham Gold Cup Day (Friday 14th March) please contact the CRDA office.

Thank you

We'd like to say a huge thank you to volunteer Helen Kingscott!

Helen organises our Bucket Collections at the Racecourse throughout the Racing season, manages our popular Country Stall at Race meets and over the summer, and also volunteers every Tuesday afternoon! Helen has supported Cotswold RDA for many years now and has contributed immensely to our fundraising efforts, along with her friend and fellow volunteer Fi.

From everyone at Cotswold RDA, thank you Helen for all your support and for the difference you make!

TESCO BUCKET COLLECTION

Thank you to all the volunteers who offered their time to bucket collect for us, at the Tesco superstore on Tewkesbury Road. We are so pleased to announce the total raised was £363.24 over the two collection dates!.

Thank you to Tesco for allowing us to collect at their store, and for their ongoing support of Cotswold RDA



▲ Fi and Helen collecting at Tesco on 7th December



CURRY NIGHT WITH DAVID CROSSE

On Wednesday 6th November we held a Curry Night in aid of Cotswold RDA at Cheltenham Rugby Club, featuring a talk from former jump-jockey and CRDA Ambassador, David Crosse.

The evening was well attended, with guests from both Cotswold RDA and David's community coming together to hear all about his "Trials and Tribulations" during his jockey career.

We are pleased to say the event raised just over £3,000 for Cotswold RDA, through ticket sales, the raffle and a few generous donations from attendees. Thank you so much to David Crosse for all your support, and of course to the Rugby Club for organising the venue and catering.

We hope to run another similar event next year so watch this space, and we hope to see you there!



▲ David Crosse



EASYFUNDRAISING

Did you know you can donate to Cotswold RDA while doing your weekly food shop, at major brands such as Tesco, Sainsburys and Waitrose? With over 7,000 brands registered, you are sure to find your favourites and start raising money while you shop online!

Easyfundraising is the UK's biggest charity shopping site that partners with over 7,000 brands. When you shop through their platform, part of what you spend is donated to a cause of your choice, without any extra cost to you. The cost is covered by the brand.

Support us
through

easyfundraising

SCAN QR CODE



To sign up to EasyFundraising and start raising money for Cotswold RDA please scan this code or visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk



FUND RAISING

THINKING ABOUT FUNDRAISING IN 2025?

There are so many ways in which you can fundraise, from running a marathon to holding a bake sale, every contribution to Cotswold RDA can make a huge difference!



SCAN QR CODE

If you'd like more guidance on holding your own fundraiser, please see our Fundraising Pack by scanning this QR code or by visiting our website.

Or contact the office to chat to us about your ideas, we'd love to hear them! You can email info@cotswoldrda.org.uk or call 01242 584420.



RETAIL UPDATE

by Fiona Hanks – CRDA Longlevens Charity Shop Manager

It has been a busy Christmas period in our Longlevens Charity Shop! We have been busy selling Christmas cards, and attending events at the CRDA arena including the Carolokee, Radis' Christmas Wish and also selling bespoke items online. Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, by purchasing items or donating. We hope to see you all again this year!

Could you spare a few hours a week to volunteer at or Longlevens charity shop? We are a small friendly team, and there are always plenty of different jobs to do, from putting out stock to cleaning and chatting with customers. Please contact shop manager Fiona on shop.manager@crdatrading.org.uk or call 07949 115080.



▲ Fiona and her daughter at the arena pop-up shop

CONGRATULATIONS TO DEE!

We are very pleased to announce that Dee has now taken on the role of Head Coach at Cotswold RDA.

Dee will continue to coach both mounted and mechanical horse sessions in the arena, and will enable us to expand our offering of private lessons, Pony one-to-one activities and increase our number of ASDAN participants. Dee will also organise our coach team, and take charge of training and development for both coaches and volunteers. Our ongoing work experience programme will be headed by Dee, as will our apprenticeships.

Dee will continue to work alongside our Head Groom Holly on the yard when needed, and to also enhance Cotswold RDA as a Registered Pony Club Centre.

We hope you will join us in wishing Dee every success in her new role!



▲ Dee with Eric

FEBRUARY VIRTUAL RAFFLE

Keep an eye on our social media and arena noticeboard for the wonderful array of prizes on offer!

thank you



A huge thank you to the **Edwards family** for their donation of **£2,000**, raised through their annual craft fayre and also through selling donated plants.

Bethan handed the cheque over to Cotswold RDA in January, after finishing her lesson on Hattie.



Thank you to **Cheltenham Skittles League** for their donation of **£300** to go towards our running costs. It was great to meet you in person at the arena, and thanks for all your support!



Thank you to the **Manor of Ashley Lodge Masons** group, who generously donated **£600** to us in December. The presentation was done at the group's December ceremony, to which Debbie and Claire were invited. Thank you for such an enjoyable evening and for your ongoing support of Cotswold RDA!

We'd like to thank **Eamon O'Connor and his team** for sorting out our sensory garden and areas affected by water recently.



A big thank you to the **Gloucestershire Association of Woodturners** for their fantastic donation of **£1073.16** which was raised throughout the year, at various fundraising events. It was so good to meet you all and have the cheque presentation at the arena, thanks for all your support!



Cheltenham Rotary Club have supported us with a donation of **£250**, and also sponsored two of our ponies! A big thank you from all of us, and of course from Morph and Haribo! You can read more about our evening with the Club in the events section. Thank you for supporting Cotswold RDA and we hope to see you again soon!

We would like to thank the following organisations for their support of Cotswold RDA over the past few months, by their generous donation of a grant:

Bruce Wake Charitable Trust
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Dame Violet Wills Will Trust
Langtree Trust
Hospital Saturday Fund
Sport England - Movement Fund
National Lottery Community Fund
John Lewis Community Matters Scheme



We are so pleased to say that our **Winter Hay Appeal**, which began in November 2024, has so far raised **£346**!

This money will go directly to funding hay for our herd of very special ponies over the cold winter months.

Thank you so much to everyone who has donated so far!

You can still donate via JustGiving:
www.justgiving.com/page/crdahayappeal2024
or by visiting our website:
www.cotswoldrda.org.uk/winter-hay-appeal-2024

MEET OUR STAFF



DEBBIE POWELL
General Operations Manager



JANE MONTELLIER
Operations and Volunteer Coordinator



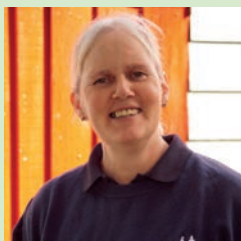
LAURA BENNETT
Office Administrator



CLAIRE JENKINS
Fundraising Manager



HOLLY BROOKS
Head Groom



DEE GRIFFIN
Head Coach



LOUISA BROWN
Groom



GILL AINSLIE
Coach

MEET OUR TRUSTEES



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**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.

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