



Hope in the Valley RDA Group



Annual Review 2020/21

A CLEAN START

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 1074384



Hope in the Valley is run entirely by volunteers. Our aim is to give physically disabled children from the ages of 3 to 16 the opportunity to experience the pleasure, independence and therapeutic benefits of riding a horse.

In the year up to 31 August 2021

Patron:

Dane Rawlins

Trustees & Management Committee:

Lesley Morrill (Chairman/Senior Instructor)
 Tony Pannett (Treasurer)
 Liz Mills (Hon Secretary)
 Sheila Camilleri (Group Organiser, Instructor & Child Protection Officer)
 Nicola Cramond (Pony Transport Manager/Adviser on Horse Matters)
 Margaret Fogg (Adviser on Horse Matters)
 Karen Potter (Training)
 Miranda Dart (Publicity & Fundraising)
 John Jackson (DBS)

Bankers:

National Westminster Bank plc
 11 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2ZX

Solicitors:

Griffiths Smith Farrington Webb, 47 Old Steine, Brighton, BN1 1NW

Independent Examiner:

Tracy Rhys-Williams, 7 Rosebarn Close, Burgess Hill, RH15 0HN

Governing Documents:

Group Constitution
 Membership Agreement with RDA National

Contact Address & Telephone No.

The Hon Secretary – Liz Mills
 End Cottage, High Street, Barcombe, BN8 5BA
 Email: info@hopeinthevalley.org
 Web Site: www.hopeinthevalley.org

Hope in the Valley is a member group of the Riding for the Disabled Association, incorporating Carriage Driving. Reg. Charity No. 244108. Company limited by guarantee No. 5010395.



Enriching lives through horses!



CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS...

So, what a start to the year... Would any of us ever have imagined that a virus with us in March 2020 would still be affecting us at what was the start of our next riding year.

Covid was very much a part of all our lives as the 2020 Autumn Term started, and although schools had returned, for us at Hope, the prospect of returning was not on the immediate horizon due to our riders' requirements of very close contact and many needing three volunteers-who themselves may be classed as vulnerable-per equine, making our return not possible.

Trustees, however, continued to meet via Zoom, and after initial apprehension, with meetings going well using this media, our AGM date was agreed so that we met our constitutional requirements.

Although not everyone was keen to attend the AGM via Zoom, training was offered beforehand, and a copy of the Chairman's report was emailed out to all to ensure openness and inclusion.

Ponies continued to give their families joy and sanity, whilst our Facebook page offered everyone an insight into what was, and is, going on behind the scenes. Do try to take a look, which can be done via our website link.

In January Sussex was almost in lockdown due to rising Covid cases and then very soon after the country went into lockdown again. Any RDA group that had taken the plunge to restart, was now forced to stop. It really felt as though we were heading backwards rather than forwards and it was sometimes a struggle to feel optimistic about our return.

As we headed towards Easter, the future did seem brighter, and we even thought that maybe a return in the Summer Term could be possible. This was very optimistic and was not to happen.

However, with a large amount of paperwork and red tape completed we were able to plan our road to restarting. During this term we invited ponies, volunteers and riders for reassessment, and discussion about our proposed return in September.

In a period of uncertainty, our patron Dane Rawlins surprised us with a hydraulic ramp that he has paid to have made and gifted to us. This will change our future as some of our children have become too heavy to physically mount, even though they remain within our weight limit for equines. It opens up a whole new prospect to mounting wheelchair reliant children with very limited walking ability. Of course, there is much training of volunteers and equines to be done, and the inevitable paperwork, but with luck we may see this in use later this Autumn.

We are extremely grateful to Dane and Alistage who made the lift, for this amazing piece of equipment. Plumpton College have also gone the extra mile to make use of this ramp possible.

The continuing financial support of organisations and individuals has been appreciated even more than usual. Because of this generosity even in the depths of the pandemic we were able to plan with confidence for our return to riding whenever that was going to be.

The year has brought with it sadness as well as joy, for individuals and for the Group.

It is with a heavy heart that I have to report the passing of both Marcus Brown and Sylvia Ager. This time last year we reported that Marcus was very unwell, and he sadly passed away a few weeks later. Sylvia, a stalwart past volunteer of our Group could always be found in the tea shed (as it was then) looking after children and volunteers alike. Our condolences go to Jenny Brown, Libby, her brother and all of their family and friends.

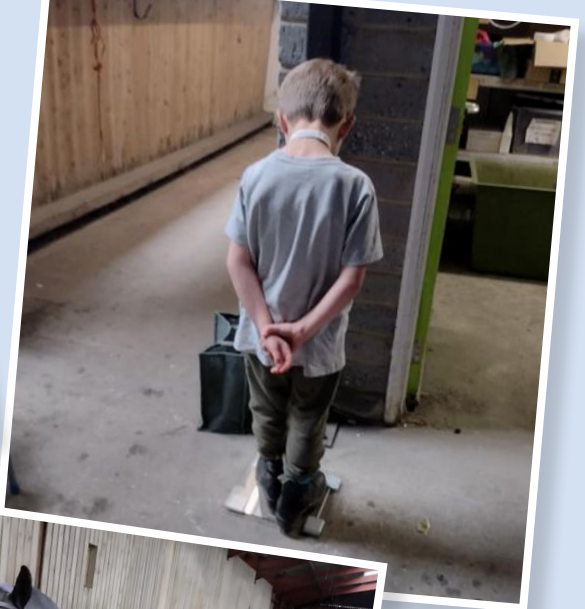
It has been a year of managing our own expectations, how we might pick up where we left off, and a time to look forward to new beginnings and a clean start.

Lesley

PHOTO GALLERY

Our ponies kept busy before they and our volunteers prepared to re-start....





PONY NEWS

One of the strengths of Hope in the Valley is that as we only meet once a week, our ponies do have a life outside RDA which means that the absence of any RDA sessions has not made an enormous difference to their routines. It means that Rose has had time to recover further from her veterinary issues and adjust to her new normal of restrictive grazing. Polly has continued to enjoy hacking on the Downs and not to be out done by Ru is also sporting a new haircut which suits her well.

Early on this year Ru did a stint at a racing yard not to race (really!) but to give confidence to the nervous thoroughbreds who were too scared to leave their yard. Dom has apparently been expanding his escapology repertoire but enough said about that perhaps...

This year competing has been adjusting to a new normal and both Toby and Billy have been active and successful. Not to be outdone, Heineken (Highland 'lager lout' retired from RDA 2017) has recently won the veteran class at South Brockwells Farm Horse Show.

In preparation for returning to RDA sessions in the autumn the ponies have all been to Plumpton for reassessment, to reacquaint them with the environment and to introduce new measures such as mask wearing and sanitiser. We are delighted to report that that not one of them showed any cause for concern, a clear endorsement of their varied lifestyles.

Nicola Cramond
Pony Transport Manager



FINANCE: APRIL 2020 TO MARCH 2021

Hope in the Valley receives no external funding and relies on the generosity of its supporters to finance its activities.

Our income fell this year, due to the pandemic which made our regular riding activities impossible so we received no income from riding donations. However, we continued to receive generous donations from our regular supporters. We are very grateful to the companies, societies and individuals who have given to the Group in 2020-21. One donor gave a significant amount every month from June 2020 onwards for the upkeep of one of our ponies. Their kindness helped us to keep our deficit down to a similar level to the previous year.

Our expenditure, particularly on regional and national competitions, fun days and the Welsh holiday was much reduced because events just could not take place due to restrictions outside our control.

We are determined to spend our funds wisely and keep our overheads to a minimum. Most of the Group expenditure is on the cost of upkeep, care and transport of horses. We spent 90% on direct charitable expenses, 5% on income generation and 5% on administrative expenses.

Behind the scenes, we all continued to work hard to keep a steady course and steer our finances through the storm in order to be able to re-start riding activity for the children on a sound financial footing.

Tony Pannett – Treasurer

OUR ROAD TO RESTART

Ending our riding sessions in March 2020 was straight forward – just a few emails to volunteers, pony owners, parents or carers and Plumpton College. However, getting ready to restart has been another matter!

Some RDA Groups with independent* riders were able to get going following the end of the first Covid lockdown in the summer of 2020. This was not an option for our Group. Not until the Government restrictions were eased in the early summer of 2021 and with Plumpton College's approval, were we even able to consider our restart. RDA National, who provide our insurances to enable us to operate, quite rightly laid down strict start-up rules including guidance on the use of sanitiser for all attendees and pony tack, number limits in areas to ensure social distancing, clear signage, the re-assessment of ponies, volunteer inductions, the re-assessment of riders, the use of masks for all involved and other general risk assessments.

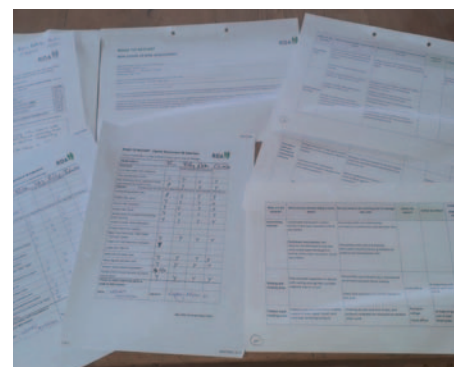
Following much form filling we were given the green light by RDA National to begin our restart in early July 2021. Under ever changing Government regulations we finally began the re-assessment of all our ponies to ensure they were safe and happy in the arena, at the mounting ramp, with all the equipment and with 'masked' volunteers!

On two Wednesdays later in July our volunteers were invited to Plumpton to introduce them to the new Covid procedures and to ensure they were comfortable with our plans. Volunteers are the crucial element to the running of an RDA session and without their support we would not be able to operate. August was the moment to begin re-assessing our riders – and how they had all grown! Stirrups needed changing and clothing re-fitted. Not all our riders will be returning for a variety of reasons.

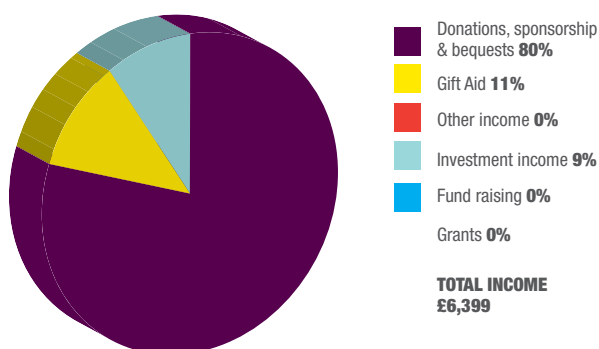
Finally, a small group of volunteers met at Plumpton to clean and sanitise all our tack and equipment. Phew!

Sheila Camilleri
Group Organiser, Instructor and Child Protection Officer

*Riders requiring no physical assistance with mounting, and no need of a pony leader or side walkers.

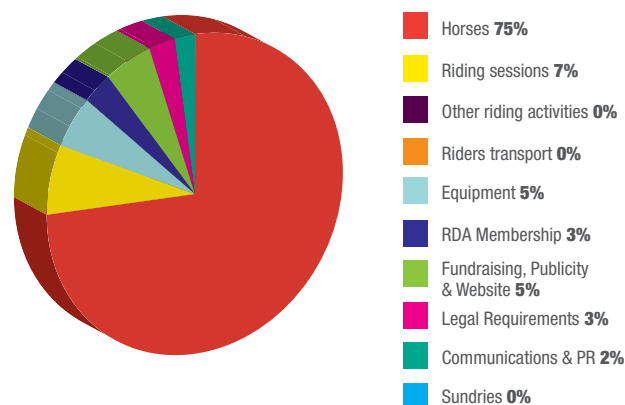


INCOMING RESOURCES



Total expenditure £7,862
Of which:
Direct charitable expenditure £7,047
Income generation £376
Admin £439

APPLICATION OF FUNDS



Plumpton Project 0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE £7,862

GROUP NEWS

VOLUNTEER NEWS

With the absence of riding came an absence of the awards for Volunteer of the Year or Long Service. However special mentions do need to be made; firstly, to our pony owners, who have ensured that all the ponies we use have been well cared for and also to the Trustees who have not been idle during the enforced closure. Meetings continued via the technology of Zoom with discussions held about how to keep in touch with our riders, volunteers and supporters along with the task of planning our Road to Restart.

Additionally, a huge thank you must go to volunteer Sconaid Wastie.

Sconaid undertook a 100km fundraising walk for Hope in the Valley over the last weekend of May 2021. The walk began at Richmond-Upon-Thames and Sconaid crossed the finishing line 36 hours later at Brighton Racecourse just after 8pm on the Sunday.

Sconaid raised an amazing £1350. Thank you so much from us all.



MARCUS BROWN

Many of us at Hope in the Valley only knew Marcus as a brilliant Father Christmas who mesmerised many a wide-eyed young rider at the annual Christmas party, a role which he carried out for many years. He was however much more than this, supporting his wife Jenny during her chairmanship of our charity, organising fund raising events at their home and nudging his fellow Rotarians into making generous donations to our group. He was always at ease with all our riders and ponies, calming the inevitable excitement caused by his festive appearances. He will be greatly missed by all of us.



SYLVIA AGER

Sylvia was recruited by Mary Gethen, the founder of Hope in the Valley. She continued to be involved with us for more than 30 years sharing her enthusiasm for ponies and children with countless volunteers, a significant number of whom remain actively involved with the group today. Margaret Fogg having moved from Yorkshire in 1981, not knowing anyone recalls "This happy smiling face appeared on my doorstep. This was the start of my association with Hope in the Valley. Thank you, Sylvia, happy memories". These wonderful enduring legacies are a testament to her easy manner. Those who fondly remember her recall her ability to inspire anyone and everyone in any task which needed doing.

