



Hope in the Valley RDA Group



Annual Review 2025/26
EXPANDING HORIZONS

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 1074384



Hope in the Valley is run entirely by volunteers. Our aim is to give 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 2026

Patron:

Dane Rawlins

Trustees & Management Committee:

Lesley Morrill – Chairman and Senior Coach
 Tony Pannett – Treasurer
 Frances Hovey – Honorary Secretary
 Sheila Camilleri – Group Organiser and Coach
 Juliet Turner – Waiting List Co-ordinator
 Karen Potter – Training
 Miranda Dart – Publicity, Fundraising
 Carol Plater – DBS, Safeguarding and Coach
 Vanessa Anscombe* – Pony Manager and Transport Organiser

Bankers:

NatWest plc, Brighton

Independent Examiner:

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

Governing Documents:

Group Constitution
 Membership Agreement with RDA National

Contact Address:

The Hon Secretary, Frances Hovey
 46 Leicester Villas, Hove, East Sussex. BN2 5SQ
 Email: info@hopeinthevalley.org

Website:

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.

*Co-opted onto Management Committee



CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS...



Here we are at the end of another very busy year to reflect on the last twelve months.

Our training session on "Communication" last September led to a termly newsletter to volunteers which helps keep all informed of the Group's news. Thank you to Shirley Crowther and Miranda for getting that off the ground.

A special mention must be made to Nicola Cramond and Liz Mills who resigned as Trustees and Pony Manager and Honorary Secretary respectively. Both contributed many years of dedication to their roles. Liz has helped new Trustee Frances Hovey settle into the role of Secretary. Liz can still be found in the gallery making teas. Nicola has supported Vanessa Anscombe who took over the reins of Pony Manager. Additionally, at the AGM Juliet Turner was elected a Trustee and is now in charge of the riders waiting list.

In October, at the Regional Conference I was honoured – and humbled – by the presentation of a trophy and a jacket with the statement of 'Legend'. Later in October, Michael Bishop, new CEO of RDA National visited us at Plumpton, giving the opportunity to air our views on RDA.

November saw confirmation of a grant from Sport England's Movement Fund, supported by the National Lottery, towards the purchase of Big Tom. A generous legacy from the late Marlene Davey of the Ninfield Pony Stud provided us with the funds to complete the purchase.

We finished the Autumn Term in style with a wonderful Christmas party and Jenny Brown making us another fabulous cake.

Spring term began with the sad news that an original supporter, Janet Hodge had lost her battle with cancer. Her family generously asked for donations to our Group in lieu of flowers. Janet had been the Chief Instructor at Hope in the Valley Riding School in Lewes at the time that Mary Gethin, our founder, had begun the idea of children with disabilities riding. Horse & Hound summed up her life "farewell to a woman whose life was anchored by kindness, dedication and an abiding love for horses". I personally taught alongside Janet at Pony Club camp and rallies; she was a well-respected colleague and was loved by all the riders she taught.

In January Big Tom moved to Plumpton College – cementing our Partnership with the College. He joined us several times in the arena whilst we waited for him to reach his 5th birthday in June, the age required for RDA work. He was a delight with our first riders.

As Easter approached riders completed Grade Tests either ridden, or horse care, or in some instances both.

Summer Term began with Carol Plater being assessed for her Group Coach certificate – which she passed with flying colours, and we began practicing for Hickstead in earnest. An equine flu outbreak nearly halted our practice sessions. The College swiftly put in place enhanced biosecurity measures to minimise risks to our equines and theirs too.

Competition day arrived. This year, riders entered either Dressage or Countryside Challenge which, given the number of horses and volunteers available, allowed more riders to experience Hickstead. Much to everyone's delight, all the riders entered into a qualifying class either won or came second so they were all off to the Nationals in July! Riders in non-qualifying classes did brilliantly too.

Having cancelled a session in February because of an emergency road closure, June saw us cancel another session because of gales, heavy rain and thunder, and again 2 weeks later due to 37°C heat.

Whilst July saw the last of our weekly sessions, where trophies were awarded, some had not quite finished. In the height of the heatwave, with some trepidation, but with fans purchased for the horses, we set off for Hartpury. The journey was uncomfortable for the humans, but amazingly the horses unloaded without a sign of sweating up. The riders did so well in the extreme heat, as did the volunteers who led the horses in the arenas. Much ice cream was consumed.

Sadly, for the committee, Margaret Fogg stepped down as Trustee in July. We owe Margaret huge thanks for the 45 years she has dedicated to the Group. She has supplied us with numerous horses and transported others' ponies; she hosted picnics at Mopeshole and undertook a million and one jobs. And she isn't stopping just yet! Margaret will continue to support the Group, in particular assisting with transporting ponies and bringing Cuddles when he is required.

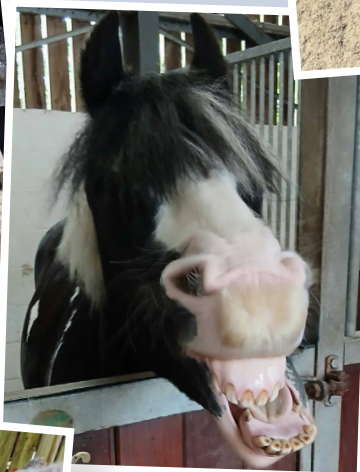
Our riding year finished with another trip to the Clwyd Special Riding Centre in Wales. As always, we were warmly welcomed. The weather was perfect, allowing us to experience all of the outdoor riding opportunities.

It certainly has been a year of new volunteers, new horses, new riders and totally expanding our horizons.

Lesley

PHOTO GALLERY

Here is a reflection of a wonderful year of riding!





PONY NEWS

As I'm sure it has been said many times before, without these wonderful steeds, there would be no RDA, so firstly a very big thank you to them, their owners, helpers and everyone involved in their health, welfare and transportation to our Wednesday afternoon sessions – **THANK YOU**

This year has seen a few changes and challenges not only due to the flu outbreak at the beginning of May, but also the exceptional heat when it was too hot for both humans and horses alike. With a reduced number of equines available, we were in the position of having to ask our trusty friends, especially Polly and Bonnie to take on extra lessons, which they took in their stride, I heard it said that they preferred that to going to the gym!!

We now have Big Tom, who belongs to Hope in the Valley RDA Group and he will be working hard with us every Wednesday while also teaching students at Plumpton College the art of horse management. As a larger horse he will be sharing the workload with Lady in assisting our more mature riders experience the joy of riding a big horse.

Our ranks now include Fanny and Ben who are kindly brought by Franc. We have been hoping Honey would join us. She has been living with Lesley and passed her basic training at RDA. Merlin and Ossie have proven invaluable this year with their laid back and willing nature giving their services every week without fail and boosting the confidence of those who ride them. Helen Waters, who has retired much missed Coco from RDA activities, helps Val bring these two little cobs and accompanied Merlin to Hickstead and Hartpury. Harry belongs to our rider Rhys whose mum kindly brings them both, Harry gives us the opportunity to juggle other ponies around allowing our riders to experience how different it can be when riding an unfamiliar horse. Rose has helped out a few times, showing she has not forgotten her role as an RDA pony, as has Cuddles who lives with Margaret Fogg.

We unfortunately no longer have the use of Derek due to his owner's family commitments, however in short his time with us, it was very much appreciated and we wish them luck in any other equine activities they may undertake.

Vanessa Anscombe
Pony Manager and Transport Organiser



FINANCE: APRIL 2025 TO MARCH 2026

Hope in the Valley receives no external funding and is reliant on the generosity of its supporters.

We are now running with a full quota of riders and volunteers. We are grateful to the companies, societies and individuals who helped us in 2025-26. We had a significant legacy from a kind lady who remembered us and donations from longstanding supporters of the Group. We received donations and riding fees from the parents of our child riders. We thank them for their support.

We endeavour to spend our funds wisely and keep overheads down. Most of our expenditure was on keep, care and transport of horses. We spent 94% on direct charitable expenses, 2% on income generation and 4% on administration.

During the year, the team has built on past achievements. We came through 2025-26 stronger and the team has a positive outlook. We have bought a new horse named Big Tom for the Group and look forward to seeing him in action with more of our riders.

We are proud of the achievements of all our children and look forward to continuing to expand their horizons in the coming year.

Tony Pannett-Treasurer

COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

We had 9 riders, including Will our senior Associate rider, compete at the RDA South East Region Combined Countryside Challenge and Dressage Competition at a chilly Hickstead Showground on 20th May 2026. We took our weekly stalwarts Polly, Merlin and Fanny whilst Will took his own Flying Ant. It was an outstanding day for the group.

This meant a big and successful team trip to Hartpury, supported by Cliffe Equine, for the RDA National Championships 10th-12th July 2026 in very hot conditions.

HICKSTEAD

Countryside Challenge-non qualifier:
Alex on Polly 1st, Josie on Merlin 5th

Countryside Challenge-qualifier:
Chelsea on Merlin 1st and Camden on Merlin 2nd

Dressage Walk-qualifier: Idris on Polly 1st

Junior Dressage Walk and Trot-qualifier:
Rhys and Azalea, each riding Fanny achieved 1st and 2nd respectively.

Senior Qualifying Walk and Trot: Indie on Polly 2nd.

Qualifying Dressage Walk & Trot Senior Grade 6 Open: Will on The Flying Ant 1st

HARTPURY

Performance Showing:
Rhys on Fanny - Junior Led - 4th
Will on Ant - Senior Open - 1st

Dressage:
Indi on Polly Led Senior - 6th
Azalea on Fanny Led Walk & Trot Junior - 66.5%
Rhys on Fanny Led Walk & Trot Junior - 64.5%
Idris on Polly Led Walk Junior - 65.95%
Will on Ant Open Grade 6 Senior - 4th

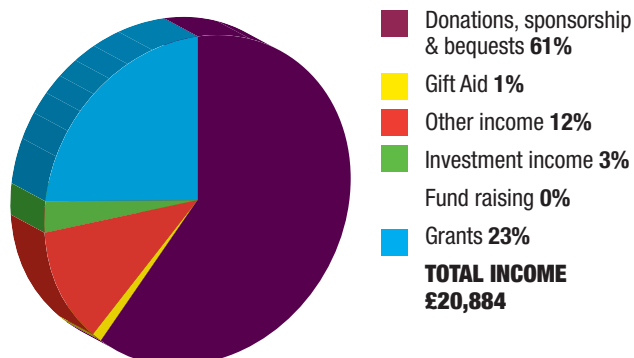
Countryside Challenge:
Led & one side walker:
Chelsea on Merlin 2nd and Camden on Merlin 4th



Shelia Camilleri
Group Organiser and Coach

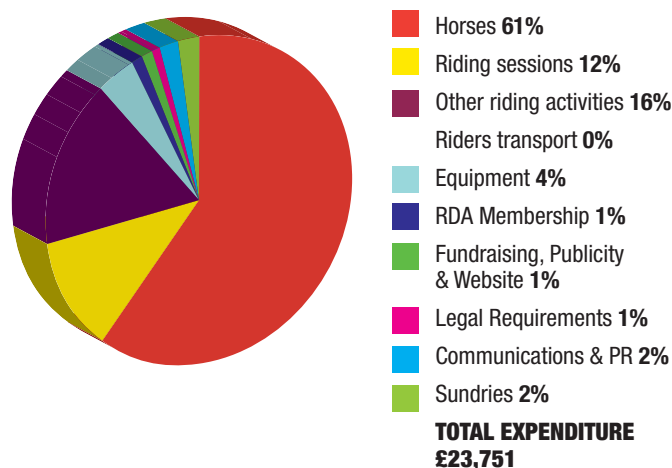


INCOMING RESOURCES



Total expenditure £23,751
Of which:
Direct charitable expenditure £22,371
Income generation £356
Admin £1,024

APPLICATION OF FUNDS



GROUP NEWS

JANET HODGE

It was with great sadness that we learned of Janet's death in December 2025. Janet was a founding force of our RDA group at Hope in the Valley in Lewes where she helped create a supportive, accessible environment for riders with disabilities, something she was immensely proud of. Her legacy lives on today with a number of our current volunteers who were inspired by her teaching and respect for horses. We wish to thank her family and friends who have made generous donations to us in her memory.



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

At our Christmas party 2025 Val Eyres was voted Volunteer of the Year and presented with the trophy by Lesley. Val shows tireless dedication bringing the much-loved "ride and drive" ponies Ossie and Merlin to Plumpton every week, all the way from Heathfield. Merlin competed at Hickstead and his success with his riders resulted in a trip to the National Championships for him too. Thank you, Val.



PONY OF THE YEAR

Also at the Christmas party, Polly was awarded Pony of the Year. Dear Polly is one of our most dependable and versatile ponies, partly because of her size but mainly because of her amazing temperament and ability to step up a gear when required. She calmly helps some of our most challenged riders and then is always up for it at competitions.



OVER AND ABOVE AWARD

For 5 months, over a particularly wet winter, Claire Gosling took on Big Tom, not just his day-to-day management but also his schooling and introducing him to many different situations so that he would be ready for life at Plumpton College and, most importantly, his future with RDA. Claire was awarded RDA's Over and Above certificate in recognition of her exceptional service to our group.



RIDER AWARDS

End of year awards were made to the following riders:

Alex - Novice Riding Trophy

Izzy - Junior Cup

Anna - Sarah Baverstock Cup for Personal Achievement

Josie - Fred Clarke Cup for Progress and Endeavour

Idris - Pam Hazzell Cup for Joy of Riding

Indi - Senior Riding Cup



THANK YOU

Thank you to inspection engineer Pete at Stallion Plant Services, Rob the badminton playing international lift engineer and Gary Coleman for giving their time to keep our lifting platform in safe working order. Also, to Jerry and Sine, organisers of the steam engine display at the South of England Show who gave us the opportunity to fund raise. And thank you to everyone who through their acts of kindness have supported us over the past year.