

## **BHS Dressage Evening - Tue 5 February 2008**

### **Indoor arena at Rodbaston College**

This is particularly aimed at those wanting to have a go and without much experience within an informal and supportive event.

**Class 1** - Walk and Trot Test Intro A 2008 – British Dressage

**Class 2** - Prelim 4

### **Entries**

Either by post to:

Marcus Clinton  
c/o Rodbaston College  
Penkridge  
Stafford  
Staffs  
ST19 5PH

Or via email to: [marcus.clinton@rodbaston.ac.uk](mailto:marcus.clinton@rodbaston.ac.uk)

Entries to be received: via email, Sun 3 February;  
by post, Fri 1 February.

Please just state horse and rider details and which class.

Charge is £5 to BHS members – please state membership number on entry – and £6 to non-members

Times available on Mon 4 Feb from 2.00-5.00 on 01785 710529 or on the Rodbaston website from Monday 2.00 pm - [www.rodbaston.ac.uk/extranet](http://www.rodbaston.ac.uk/extranet) look under equine shows.

## **Riding & Road Safety Courses**

### **Rodbaston College, Penkridge**

13-15 Feb 2008 – Half-term 9.30-3.30pm - inc exam on last day

22<sup>nd</sup> April 6-8pm

29<sup>th</sup> April 6-8pm

6<sup>th</sup> May 6-8pm

13 May 6-8pm

17<sup>th</sup> May 10-1pm

18<sup>th</sup> May 10am - Exam

**Tel: 01782 712 209**

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Driving home from Devon last night it snowed and that's pretty typical as we approach our BHS dressage evening - following the endless rain that preceded our Summer Show in July. Fortunately we managed to run the show on the good ground at Marquis Drive and it turned out to be a well supported day in all areas and did a lot for helping our grass root members have a go in a hopefully supportive environment. The show provided some unexpected memorable moments with show jumping suspended for an hour as we battled a swarm of bees making a home on fence 6 and the lorry carrying all our equipment finding the only wet patch in the whole field and sinking to the axles, the driver shall remain nameless for good reason!

Huge thanks to the committee and all the extra helpers who worked tirelessly literally from dawn to dusk - these events can't run without you.

Other successes were our over subscribed trailer driving courses which we will be doing more of in the new year and the dressage starter evenings of which we have two more planned. The pleasure rides continue apace twice yearly in April and September and are always well supported. Thanks to Doug and Lesley for the trailer driving and pleasure rides respectively.

We shall continue to keep you informed via the newsletter and on the West Midlands BHS website (the region that Staffs comes under). We recently had our annual meeting and this included a race night. It was a shame that more members didn't attend a great evening and we shall be pulling out all the stops to encourage more of you along next year to hear what we have been getting up to and have a nice evening at the same time.

As always we would love to hear from our 1,000 plus members in Staffordshire what we could do for you, don't forget our committee also has ongoing work very actively on bridleways and access, welfare and safety if you wish to get involved or contact us regarding any issues on these areas.

We have discussed at length ways in which to try and connect with grass root members/potential members who could benefit from the activities and support Staffs BHS. Hopefully over the next year and in future newsletters you will see and hear about these initiatives and any impact they might be having. That's our aim and all support and views are actively encouraged.

Well for now, it's time to wish you a Merry Xmas and a safe and productive winter with your equine friend. On behalf of all the committee may I wish you a prosperous new year for you and your horse or pony. I'm off to get married and spend some time in New Zealand so sadly will be unable to spend the cold weeks with you for a while but will be thinking of you all !

Best wishes

Marcus Clinton  
County Chairman

## Staffs Area Autumn Events Round up

As usual, our autumn pleasure ride took place on the last Sunday in September. Approximately 60 horses and riders took part, in excellent weather conditions, enjoying the route starting from the car park near the Visitor Centre at Marquis Drive, and crossing 10 miles of Cannock Chase countryside. Once again, a big thank you to Lesley Simmons for all her hard work getting the event off the ground, and for planning and marking out the ride route. Thank you too, to the many volunteers who acted as stewards at each of the check-points on the route – particularly at road crossings.

The Annual Meeting for the BHS Staffs Area Committee took place on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October at the Gatehouse Theatre in Stafford. Committee Chairman Marcus Clinton gave a summary of the year's achievements, and Amanda Watson, West Midlands Development Officer, brought everyone up to date with the regional and national news. There followed a buffet and race night, with eight nail-biting races. The betting was fast and furious, with Welfare Officer Natalie Mincher-Lockett managing to scoop up most of the winnings!

## Horses on Public Roads – Doug Smith

There have recently been several radio and TV programmes and some articles in the press concerning the presence of horses on the roads - the inference from many of them being that horses should not be on our roads.

The horsey fraternity has, as would be expected, reacted with horror and affirmed their right to ride on public roads. Of course it is true that horses and riders do have an absolute right to be on roads, except obviously for motorways and some dual carriageways. However, with rights go responsibilities; to ensure that horses are insured at least against third party risks, to check that all equipment for the horse is in good condition and that riders wear appropriate protective and high visibility apparel.

Just as important is the training of the horse to deal with situations that can occur whilst riding out and the manner in which the riders not only ride but conduct themselves. Having seen the behaviour of some horses and riders on the roads whilst driving my car I can, to a certain degree, see how many people could form the opinion that horses should not be allowed on our roads – and the remedy is in our own hands! If a horse and rider cause problems for other road users it is amazing how a simple 'Thank you' goes a long way – even a nod of the head will do. We are, after all, a nation of animal lovers. The BHS Riding and Road Safety Test is a way for all riders to become more conversant with rules, regulations and manners when out riding.

The other issue which must be addressed is how horses are 'trained' not 'schooled'. The 'bombproof' horse does not exist – many are steady and take more stimulation to 'wake up' but once they do the same problems exist as with the 'sharp' horse. It may well come as a shock to the rider who has not experienced any problems with the horse before and is unaware of how to deal with them. This is especially true of the more nervous or novice rider who has bought a 'steady' horse. The idea must surely be not to stop any horse reacting to what it sees but to deal with the 'recovery rate' so the spook becomes just a flick of the ear. One of the most common issues is riders who 'school' the horse very nicely in the manage and then as a 'reward' take the horse out onto the roads, which statistics show is the most dangerous place you can possibly be on a horse.

This change from a relatively safe environment to one which is far more hostile in itself raises the pressure on the horse. It is at this point the rider often almost totally relaxes contact with the horse (as the reward) and becomes virtually a passenger. Therefore in a situation where the horse needs most support to deal with problems which may be encountered he is 'abandoned' by his rider. From this horse's perspective he is thus being given tacit permission to respond in whatever manner he sees fit to anything which may provoke a reaction. The animal then does what comes naturally, the problem is that the response may well not be what the rider wants or is expecting. The rider then has to regain control, often punishing the horse (consciously or otherwise) whilst doing so. The next time the horse sees whatever provoked his initial response he will be bothered not only by the stimulant but also the reaction of the rider which he knows will follow. This double fear makes an even bigger issue for the animal. From then on it becomes a steady downhill progression for both rider and horse as they enter the realm of the self – fulfilling prophesy. Each observe a problem and know they have an uncomfortable time ahead. This is just one of the many issues that can affect the safety of not only horse and rider but other road users.

As with the 'bombproof' horse the 'perfect' rider does not exist (although I am sure we all know riders who would disagree strongly with this!!). The aim of this article is to stimulate some inward looking thought by riders who use the highways and bye ways of Staffordshire to examine the preparation and training of horses before considering taking them out. We, like everyone else have responsibilities, both moral and legal, to those around us on the roads – and indeed in some cases the pavements.

Of course the one insurmountable problem we all have is that horses do not read articles like this or training manuals!!

Staffordshire British Horse Society supports responsible horse ownership and riding throughout the county.

*Doug Smith spent over 20 years as a Mounted Policeman riding the streets of the West Midlands, performing varied duties and competing. He is currently a Director of The Riding for the Disabled Association and a Regional Instructor*

## **BHS Dressage Evening - Tue 27 November 2007**

### **Indoor arena at Rodbaston College**

This is particularly aimed at those wanting to have a go and without much experience within an informal and supportive event.

#### **Class 1** - Walk and Trot Test A

This can be found on

[www.cadora.ca](http://www.cadora.ca)

#### **Class 2** - Prelim 1

#### **Entries**

Either by post to:

Marcus Clinton  
c/o Rodbaston College  
Penkridge  
Stafford  
Staffs  
ST19 5PH

Or via email to: [marcus.clinton@rodbaston.ac.uk](mailto:marcus.clinton@rodbaston.ac.uk)

Entries to be received: via email, Sun 25 November;  
by post, Fri 23 November.

Please just state horse and rider details and which class.

Charge is £5 to BHS members – please state membership number on entry – and £6 to non-members

Times available on Mon 26 Nov from 2.00-5.00 on 01785 710529 or on the Rodbaston website from Monday 2.00 pm - [www.rodbaston.ac.uk/extranet](http://www.rodbaston.ac.uk/extranet) look under equine shows.

## Safety Issues This Winter

Instead of me banging on as usual about dark nights, reduced visibility, the need for Hi-Viz gear, hats of the correct standard, light coloured gloves and boots that will not get stuck in your stirrups, can we take it that you are aware of the dangers and know what the recommendations are?

The subject I would like to broach is your personal safety when doing the usual chores as the days shorten. How safe are you on your yard? How many go trudging off through mud and mire to bring in their horses or turn them out before daybreak? Who else is on the yard, do you have your phone with you, have you a contingency plan in case of accident or attack?

As most yards are quite isolated, surrounded by thick hedges and trees, how safe are you? Should someone unknown approach you when you are on your own on the yard how would you deal with it, and how would you know if they were about to attack you? If you do not know the answers to any of the above it might well be worth considering having a day course for your yard from *State 11 Ltd*. The Safety Conference at Coventry earlier this month had a demonstration from this company which was invaluable and hilarious, certainly the highlight of the day and, though dealing with a very serious subject, they made it memorable. They also run a Junior Cavalry 3hr session for younger riders.

On a similar safety front, just have a look round your yard - how hazardous is it? Are there wheelbarrows, jump poles, bales of hay or straw in the way of gates/access routes that could cause problems? Is there a contingency plan in the event of fire? When evacuating the stables where would the horses be safest?

Recently when attempting to school in a waterlogged manage on a blustery day when all the goblins and trolls were hiding behind every jump post I noticed that some kind person had parked the hay tedder next to the railings between the manage and the adjoining empty field. Doing a quick risk assessment regarding the likelihood of either jumping over the rails or my being thrown over the rails due to the aforementioned trolls and goblins, I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and we schooled furthest away from the machinery.

Travelling horses brings its own hazards, please do check simple things such as all lights functioning on your trailer/box. Applying grease to ball hitches and locks before the weather worsens could save you time and effort with a lump hammer! Partitions that are infrequently moved have a nasty habit of rusting up. If you are unsure of reversing your trailer then why not book yourself onto one of our trailer driving courses. It may be preaching to the converted, but as I travel around I see many double trailers with a single occupant closest to the roadside where the camber of the road will not only give the horse a rougher ride but also will lessen the stability of the vehicle and trailer.

I try not to sound too pessimistic but do look at your surroundings even on the quietest hack, do not assume it will be the same peaceful situation as last time.

Be alert, highly visible and don't have nightmares! (But are geldings that much safer?)

**Eileen Foy**  
**Regional Safety Rep**

## **Events Diary 2007-2008**

- Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2007 – BHS Dressage Evening at Rodbaston – informal and fun (See page 5)
- Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 2008 – BHS Dressage Evening at Rodbaston – informal and fun (See page 11)
- Feb 2008 -Trailer Driving Course – NB: this course is already fully subscribed – further courses will be run in the future
- Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2008 – Pleasure Ride
- Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2008 – Summer Show
- Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008 – Pleasure Ride
- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008 – BHS Staffs Area Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony – Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford.