

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2015

I now know how Helen feels about the thought of presenting her report to you all. This my first time so I apologise for any errors and omissions.

I have been on the committee for twelve years and took on the position of Chair last year when Marcia stood down. It has been an interesting and testing year.

A comment was made that the riding club used to be just a group of like-minded people with horses getting together and having fun but that now it was more like a business. Unfortunately times have changed and in this era of litigation and health and safety the club has to be run efficiently and correctly and account for everything. Our committee work very hard to ensure this is the case. We hope that it is still fun for everyone but I am pretty sure it is a lot safer. We try to cater for all abilities and create opportunities for members to improve and achieve their dreams and goals.

The club has had a successful year and we have been able to hold a full season of competitions. The equine calendar seems to be growing with a huge choice of events for riders to attend. Despite this our club competitions remain well supported and this I believe is largely due to the fact we have a reputation for running well organised events. This is down to all the hard work put in by the committee and our other volunteers. Some of our jump judges are here this evening and I would like to thank them all for giving up their time and spending hours sitting in their cars in all weathers so riders can safely compete at our Hunter Trials and One Day Event. Without people like them we could not hold the events we do.

Attendance at the Open Show was marginally down on previous years but even then the judges said it was one of the best turn outs they had seen this year at a showing show and that the standard was good. It was a great delight to see one of our own members, Rachel Ashford and 'Ces't La Vie' win the Supreme Championship.

Recently the club lost one of its longest regular attendees, Greenlinks Portia, owned by the Cattermoles, who are themselves great long term supporters of the club. Portia was 27 yrs old and had helped numerous club members to learn to ride including both Charlotte and Georgia Cattermole, Flynn Regan and most recently Lauren Tattersall. Our sympathies to all of you that had the privilege of knowing such a stellar (pun intended!) pony. The Cattermoles are hoping to donate a new trophy to be presented next year in memory of Portia. This will be awarded to the Junior Member gaining the most points at the Open Show.

Another stalwart of the club also departed to heavenly pastures – Molly who belonged to the Colmans. I loved having Molly at XC events as I could always recognise her when looking through photos for the web site. Our sympathies to everyone that has lost an equine partner over the year.

Our teams were present at all the Area Qualifiers and did a super job of representing the club. The Juniors have been particularly successful once again. But I know Helen is looking forward to telling us about all the team achievements later.

Due to the pressure of her new job Georgie Bell had to stand down as Senior Team Manager but fortunately Steve Small stepped forward to take on this role for which we are extremely grateful. He has done a great job at such short notice.

We are very proud of all our team members and I would like to say thank you to all the parents, husbands, wives, partners, family and friends that support the competitors as they represent the club.

We have organised several training clinics at different venues which have been very popular with other members and non-members in addition to the usual Evening Training sessions for members on the club field. The club strives to offer quality training at affordable prices which I believe is a corner stone of the riding club organisation. We are grateful to Marcia, Zoe and Marie who have been instrumental in organising these events. In addition to rider training the club ran a jump judge training session at the start of the year which was well received. Three committee members also gave up a weekend to attend a two day equine specific first aid course which means they are qualified to act as our medical cover at training events and dressage competitions.

I would like to express sincere gratitude to the members of the committee who work so hard for the club and without any personal gain. It would be unfair at this moment to single any one out but without their selfless dedication the club would not be able to hold the events we do. The analogy of the serenity of a swan swimming is very apt for the club. We may appear to glide gracefully from one event to another but beneath this is a committee working frantically hard to make it happen.

The club is very lucky to have its own equipment and to be able to rent a club field. Few other clubs in Area 14 are in this position. However these facilities come with a cost. Our lease is up for renewal at the end of this year and after negotiations a new three year lease agreement is being finalised. The rental for the club field and barn storage is set to increase by 20% this year.

It costs the club £1,000 + to run any event on the park and about £600 at indoor venues. This inevitably means we will have to increase some entry fees next year as we need to make some profits to cover our outgoings. But with the amount of events for competitors to choose from we have to stay competitively priced. More details on the finances of the club will come later from the treasurer.

It is your club which the committee run on your behalf. We like to hear your suggestions. This year, as a result of a request made at last year's AGM, the Combined Training schedule was amended allowing members to enter two combined training classes and have a greater choice of the show jumping heights to combine with their dressage.

Thank you to all our members who have supported the club throughout the year and particularly to you that have come this evening. We hope you will continue to support us next year.

I think that should be all now as we have more interesting things to come like supper and the presentations!