

Chairman's Welcome and Report

Gipping Riding Society AGM 21st November 2025

Thank you so much for coming along this evening, I couldn't be more delighted to welcome you to Gipping Riding Society's 2025 AGM. Whilst it's always a bit daunting for me to stand here and talk to you, I actually love this opportunity for us to all to meet up, chat and relax. This evening is all about coming together to share what's been happening with GRS and have fun with friends.

1. Introductions.

Present committee members: me - Jill - Bex - Katie - Amanda - Elaine - Jayne - Rachel

Absent committee members: Sarah

2. Our format this evening is pretty much the same as usual; first is the formal part, the club's AGM and this will be followed by presenting club awards, in the form of rather splendid rosettes and trophies. Either during this or just after will be the dash to the Fish & Chip Shop for one of the evening's most important part - the food!

Afterwards, we're delighted to have Mel Ibbotson, from Worming Wisely, to help us understand why and how controlling worms in horses needs to change. Like so many other aspects of our lives, things don't stay still!

After Mel's talk I'm not quite sure what will happen but there'll be "Fun" organised by Jill, and also chance to chat and catch up with what's been happening with us and our horses. We're aiming to finish by 9.30.

3. I always seem to start my Chairman's Report with the phrase "I can confidently say that 20xx has been another very successful year" but it's true! This year has built on 2024 and using several different measures has been extremely successful.

As Chairman of GRS I remain committed to us being a kind, inclusive and friendly club, which places horses' welfare at the centre of what we do. We continue to be a club for all: no matter what level of rider or type of horse, and we're certainly a club for all ages. And whilst we run competitive events, have competitive riders and achieve well in Area 14 and National Championships, we equally focus on people wanting to enjoy and appreciate time with their horses in other ways.

Again, we have aimed to have a balance of activities so that all members can take part in something - whether that's stress free, fun events or competitive riding- ridden or inland – at home or at a venue.

This Spring as in previous years, we held online groundwork challenges event. I'm particularly keen on this type of activity as you can do it in your own time, it doesn't involve travelling, you can practise as much as you want or trying to keep clean! Additionally, it's an opportunity for owners of non-ridden horses to participate and there are rosettes for every level achieved. In a similar vein Sarah has run two online dressage leagues- a winter one which finished in February and a summer one which ended in September. Results later!

Once again, we held our Spring and Autumn Dressage Competitions at Crow's Hall - sincerest thanks to Caroline Spurrier. These days are always very enjoyable, whether you come as a helper, rider or spectator. It was noticeable this year that alongside our usual good entries for Intro and Prelim, Novice and Elementary classes have become much more competitive - both in numbers and standard. Nowadays you have to do more than just turn up to get a rosette!

As well as two dressage events, we (i.e. Bex) organised two very different shows - the more formal showing show at Helmingham in May and the Charity Fun Show at Tophthorn in September which raised money for East Anglian Air Ambulance. Huge thanks to Bex and her helpers for running these big days so successfully.

For the third successive August we held a Club Camp at Forest Edge. It's always a bit daunting to repeat things that have been so successful, but all was well. In fact, 'well' is a bit of an understatement! This year we organised training groups slightly differently and also invited people to join us for a Day Camp if they couldn't make the whole duration. We're very likely to repeat those adjustments next year. If you haven't been to a camp, I'd urge you to consider it, as I'm confident you'll enjoy three days with a mix of wonderful training, unlimited off road hacking, fabulous food and masses of support and laughter.

Training and education remain as foundations for our successes as a club. Most months have 6 different training events catering for every level of rider and horse, from lead rein to competing at Area 14 Qualifiers and National Champs. By using regular, well qualified BHS Accredited Trainers; Anne Gayfer, Rachel Lee, Michael Paveley and Tammy Ruffles, opportunities are created to build relationships and achieve progression. That said if people only want to come to a one off that's fine, too. Our trainers are skilled in creating genuinely supportive sessions where successes, whatever form they take, are shared and enjoyed.

I continue to place importance on horse welfare and always mention an aspect of it in my monthly Chairman's Chat. Whilst data can often be found to support many views and ideas, the research findings of WHW into public attitudes towards equestrian sports shouldn't be dismissed or forgotten. The researchers gained the views of 5000 adults, representative of UK society, in order to understand the current state of public sentiment towards equestrianism and the drivers behind public trust and acceptance of equestrian activities. If you're interested to know more it's easy to find by googling WHW Public Perceptions.

4. One of the most enjoyable parts of preparing for this evening is for me to take time to reflect on my highlights of the year.

- Opening Horse and Hound to find a double page spread about the Winter Dressage Champs of which one whole page was devoted to our Gipping riders; Jess Baldwin, Maria Adlam and Jo Eldridge. I had a seriously proud moment to see my club, our club in such a prestigious publication.
- The re-introduction of a Pleasure Ride in our calendar of events.
- I place high value on riders working with their horses to achieve a harmonious partnership and to that end I've so enjoyed watching the progress made by many of you. For some of you, success has been rewarded with rosettes in high level competitions and for some of you your success can be measured in lower stress levels and happy smiles!
- Camp 2025. The absolute highlight of my year. Why? The opportunity to ride and relax with so many of you. And so good we've booked dates for the next three years.
- The continuation of so many different training opportunities that cater from lead rein through nervous and novice horses and riders, to Qualifier/Champs. And is also for horses and riders that are not focussed on competition.
- GRS being ranked 33rd out of 480 riding clubs in the BRC Championship League Table. I credit a lot of that success to riders' preparation and confidence being built through their feeling supported and helped. And then there's the club's secret weapon Jill and her input 33rd and that's without taking an elitist approach of only allowing our most successfully competitive members to represent us.
- On Monday Jill and I learned of another highlight but I'm going to let her tell you.....

5. Club membership currently stands at 138, having been at 123 this time last year. I was thinking back to when I took over managing membership about 10yrs ago and at that time membership was steadily around 70/80. And I remember passing the milestone of 100, well we're way beyond that now! BRC defines a large club as having more than 71 members, so we're heading towards being a double size club.

I remain very proud that our current membership reflects our ethos of being inclusive, for all ages and for all abilities and levels of experience, horses and riders.

Membership fees. BRC are increasing their prices by £2, irrespective of age they'll charge us £27 per person and a flat fee for the club to be affiliated to them of £241.50, up from £230. There'll also be an increase from £1.75 to £1.90 per transaction when using Sport:80.

The committee has discussed membership fees and decided to pass on this increase to members and also draw to a close phasing juniors' fees with seniors. So that means membership fees from 1/1/26 will be Seniors and Juniors £34 and non-Riding £28. I'm keen that we continue to offer non-riding memberships for several reasons. One being that any one of us might find ourselves without a horse and secondly there are many ways in which non-riders can positively be involved and help with club activities.

I'd like to explain how the committee arrived at the figure. The membership price you pay needs to cover £27 individual membership to BRC, the club affiliation fee to BRC and the costs of WebCollect, website, insurance, hall hire for tonight etc

As always, I'd like to reiterate that we'll continue to operate as a not-for profit organisation. We aim to price all club events for members to cover costs, to break even, non-members pay more and this is where our 'spare' money comes from. Each club event is costed separately and in practice this means some training prices differ due to trainers' rates and venue hire.

6. Club Constitution. Changing our club constitution to ensure it's fit for purpose and protects individuals from any personal liability remains an ongoing project. Kate Rosten and Sarah Lock are still on the case, for which I'd like to thank them most sincerely - their determination and tenacity to successfully convert Gipping Riding Society into a CIO, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, is admirable.

7. There is one aspect of the club which myself and the Committee are struggling with and that is with helping at some club activities, specifically training. Generally members are really good at offering to help at shows, dressage competitions etc. The problem arises as most of our trainers use equipment and appreciate help with moving it. And also we'd like to have a person on the ground to help solo travellers.

My self and the Committee have looked at different ways of finding 'volunteers' and have currently sent out a questionnaire and linked the questionnaire to Sport80, sadly with a low return.

Please would you mind giving some thought to possible resolutions?

8. Feedback. I like to receive feedback, particularly if it's phrased in polite terms, but I don't receive much. If you've got any suggestions or comments for improving GRS, please let me know. And if you're too worried or scared to talk to me, let one of the committee members know.

GRS is not just for me or the Committee, but for all of its members and I want to ensure there's no 'us and them'

9. In conclusion, Gipping Riding Society has had yet another very successful year with a strong, active, supportive and happy membership. We continue to have a good reputation for being friendly and welcoming, and this is a feature that we can all be proud of, as every single person contributes to this. A reputation is hard earned, needs to be actively maintained and could be critically damaged in a split second.

I'd like to end by thanking all of you for what you bring to the club, particularly your kindness to each other and your horses. And finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to

publicly thank our GRS Committee - Bex, Jill, Katie, Sarah, Amanda, Sarah, Rachel, Jayne and Elaine. Without their enthusiasm, hard work and commitment to making sure you have fun and enjoyment, GRS would not be the club it is. Thank you.