

Chairman's Report

Gipping Riding Society AGM 27th November 2021

I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to Gipping Riding Society's AGM, and for a second year in a virtual form.

How to hold this year's meeting has exercised a lot of my time but having listened to a range of views, consulted government advice, and tried to keep abreast of the constantly changing picture; I decided that planning an indoor, social event carried a degree of risk that's at variance with the club's duty to protect members' safety.

That said we are a kind, friendly club and so I'm very keen for all of us to meet socially in the summer when it should be warmer, drier and easier to mingle safely.

However, for this evening, I hope you're very comfortable and have your favourite nibbles and drinks to hand.

2021 got off to a very quiet start due to lockdown. Usually at that time of year we'd have been struggling into jodhpurs that had mysteriously shrunk over Christmas and been taking layer after layer of mud off our lovely horses and ponies but all horse events were cancelled. So instead we considered what we could do from our own homes and yards. Bex organised a very successful Photo Show and I instigated weekly Chairman's Challenges, which were based on groundwork and culminated in a Virtual Horse Agility Competition.

The year continued in very much a stop start manner and it was difficult to make plans and long term commitments.

However, Holly managed to run both our usual Spring and Autumn dressage competitions at Crow's Hall and both ran with full days of competitors. Whilst it is always lovely to have inexperienced horses and riders take part, it was gratifying to have increased numbers ride the novice test in October.

For the second year in succession there was no Helmingham Show- a disappointment for many as it has played such a large part in Gipping Riding Society's history. However we have a date for 2022.

Nicola and I took on the challenge of running the Charity Fun Show at Tophorn in September. We were on a very steep learning curve but everything came together, the sun shone and a full day of competition in three rings meant we could give East Anglian Air Ambulance a donation of £1600.

During the summer Bex and Anne organised two jumping evenings at Crow's Hall. Again these were well attended and enjoyed by a range of members and friends.

Training sessions remain a valuable part of club life and their organisation has passed from Emma to Lynn Eldrett. As always, trainers and sessions have been varied in an attempt to cater for all members and horses.

If I were to pick a couple of club highlights the first would be the participation of our junior members. It is wonderful to see young people taking part in club activities; sometimes when they're having to overcome anxiety and stress,

and enjoying achieving new things with their ponies. Bex has worked hard to organise fun activities suitable for our youngest recruits – the Mini Members. There can't be many riding clubs where so many juniors are included and seen as an important part of the club.

The second highlight in 2021 for me is GRS being so well represented in Area 14 competitions and members riding at National Finals. Historically, Gipping members haven't tended to be very competitive with other Area 14 clubs. However with Jill and Kerry's enthusiasm and organisational skills all that has changed significantly! Managing the entries is a big undertaking and I feel indebted to Jill and Kerry for what they are bringing to the club. Whilst competitions aren't part of every member's club experience, it is nice to share in the success of others.

The year is ending with a degree of frustration over the club's banking arrangements. Changing to Nicola as the club treasurer and swapping two of the signatories has resulted in considerable and slow bureaucracy. Currently we can't access our financial situation without joining long telephone queues. Therefore we want to offer our apologies that accounts can't be presented tonight. As soon as possible they will be sent to you.

Moving on to membership; 2021 has seen a big increase which is really pleasing, as more support from more people means that we can do more. Last year we had a total of 64 members but this year we are just short of a hundred, at 98. This includes 44 juniors (up from 15 in 2020) As BRC affiliation is remaining at the 2021 charge, we can keep our membership prices the same for 2022

I would like to end with some thank yous.

Firstly, a huge thank you to the longstanding stalwarts of the committee Lynne, Bex, Holly and Nicola; to Katie who has rapidly earned her spurs with the Website and with helping at so many events; to Jill (ably assisted by Kerry) who has rallied so many members to take part in Area 14 competitions and get GRS members to National Finals and to Lynn who has stepped into Emma's boots for organising training.

I'd like to especially mention Emma Jardine – as a junior rider she's been a wonderful ambassador for the club and what we stand for, but beyond that she willingly and successfully took on organising club training, a role normally done by an adult. Well done Emma and good luck at uni.

GRS members are very fortunate to have this enthusiastic committee. But we are a very small team and would dearly like to have some extra people join us. Now that we hold our meetings via Zoom, there is far less of a time commitment. So please do consider it- you don't need any special skills! And finally, I'd like to thank you the members. Your kind, positive support for GRS makes being Chair a pleasure!