

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Lesley Donaldson

The BHS Buckinghamshire committee has worked hard this year, and I am grateful to the committee for their efforts and support. A great deal of the work that our volunteers do goes on firmly 'behind the scenes' and is not necessarily even heard about by the membership. Welfare work, for example, has to remain confidential in the most part due to the legalities, and our Welfare Officer Helen Evans works tirelessly responding to concerns raised by the public. Similarly our Access and Bridleways Officers have had a very busy year, many of their results going under the radar. Be it ensuring a fallen tree is cleared from a bridleway, getting a broken gate replaced or putting in an application to have a much-loved ridden route classified and recorded as a bridleway, the access team have been working hard to protect and expand the Buckinghamshire off-road riding network.

Of course some of our work is extremely visible, and none more so than that of our Safety Officer, Jo Millward-Croft, and her recent hi-viz initiative. The BHS would love to see all riders hacking out in hi-viz, and Jo is a huge advocate of this. She has designed a road safety quiz that has been distributed to riding schools and livery yards and, on completion of the quiz, children receive a free hi-viz hatband. It's a great way to combine a little bit of road safety education with promoting the use of hi-viz – if you'd like a copy of the quiz for children at your yard, please get in touch jo.millwardcroft@btinternet.com (free hand bands will be given away while stocks last).

In 2015 we hope to welcome some new committee members, as we have recently had several enquiries from people keen to volunteer. There are usually some vacancies available, so if you'd like to get involved please contact me or Hannah Marsh, the BHS Development Officer for our region. We plan to put on more events over the year, and would love to hear your ideas so if there is something you'd specifically like the BHS to run in Buckinghamshire do let us know. We will also be launching a training bursary competition, enabling those training for BHS qualifications to win funding towards their exams – if you are thinking of taking an exam, keep an eye on our website pages, e-newsletter and British Horse magazine for all the details once they are released.



Our Committee

All of our activities are undertaken by our committed volunteer team.

Chairman - Lesley Donaldson
ladonaldson@hotmail.co.uk

Vice Chairman - Jan Eedle-Wells

Secretary - Alison Stewart-Gillman

Treasurer - Claire Simkins

Membership Secretary - Claire Simkins

County Access and Bridleways Officer -
Alison Heath

Access and Bridleways Officers -
Alison Clayton (Wycombe)
Dana Green (Milton Keynes)
Viv Lynch (Aylesbury)
Tina Munday (Buckingham)

County Riding and Road Safety Officer -
Susan Gibson

County Safety Officer -
Jo Millward-Croft

County Lead Welfare Officer -
Helen Evans

Committee Vacancies

We are always keen to welcome new volunteers. We are especially looking for people to fill the following vacancies:

Access Officer (Chiltern)
Access Officer (South Bucks)
Access Officer (HP18)
Education Officers (North & South)
Events Officers (North & South)
Welfare Officer (Milton Keynes)
Welfare Officer (Aylesbury Vale)
Welfare Officer (Chiltern)
Welfare Officer (South Bucks)

Email volunteer@bhs.org.uk to find out more.

Development Officer - Hannah Marsh
hannah.marsh@bhs.org.uk

Access and Bridleways - Alison Heath, County Access and Bridleways Officer (CABO)

There have been some great successes within Buckinghamshire for equestrian access, including: two applications made to upgrade footpaths in the Parishes of Hedgerley and Quainton to bridleways; two new gates provided by Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) have been installed to replace old gates that couldn't be opened from horseback; several Access and Bridleways Officers contributed to the new BHS guidance leaflet "Riding through Cattle and Livestock".

Early in the year, Alison Heath and Janice Bridger (BHS South Regional Access and Bridleways Officer) presented a report to Janet Blake of BCC to highlight the importance of bridleways for the equine industry in the county. Our volunteers have responded to requests by BCC to comment on Definitive Map Modification Order applications and in one case called an on-site meeting. Research on unrecorded bridleways in the County Record Office is ongoing.

In Taplow, the future of a bridleway where access had been revoked was secured. Using historic rider evidence, a group of riders led by BHS member Alison Adcock (pictured, with local riders on the bridleway) were able to save the popular route.

The BHS Buckinghamshire CABO gave a talk to the Whaddon Chase Pony Club in October, to prepare the children for their Countryside Access badge. It's excellent to have the chance to teach young riders about rights of way.

Please continue to report problems on the bridleway network - overgrown, blocked paths, dangerous bridges and other problems can all be reported to Buckinghamshire County Council Rights of Way department.



Safety - Jo Millward-Croft, Safety Officer

Various safety issues have arisen during the year, starting with aggressive dogs on a bridleway and reports of abusive drivers on the roads during the football World Cup. In both situations, advice was to report the issues to the police on 101 and to record them at www.horseaccidents.org.uk.

There have been reports of serious injuries caused by faulty or damaged lorry ramps - in one case the springs had been removed by thieves, causing the ramp to drop on the owner. A basic horsebox safety day is being considered in conjunction with a local motoring organisation, to offer lorry safety checks and training for owners.



A road safety quiz was launched at the Bucks County Show and has subsequently been taken round local riding schools too, to educate young riders about the importance of wearing hi-viz when hacking. Children completing the quiz were given a free hi-viz hat band.

Riding & Road Safety - Susan Gibson, RRS Officer

There were five tests held at four venues during the year - a total of 52 riders took the test, with an excellent 94% first-time pass rate.

RRS works closely with both Access and Safety to help make hacking safer and more accessible. Please contact us for more information about road safety and the training and test available.

If you experience an accident or near-miss on the road please report it at www.horseaccidents.org.uk.

Welfare - Helen Evans, Welfare Officer (South Bucks)

There have, unfortunately, been many cases in the county throughout the year. Most of them are of neglect through ignorance. For example in one case, 14 horses had been moved to a site of less than two acres. Recognising a disaster waiting to happen, Helen immediately contacted the RSPCA, who had, coincidentally, been looking for the owner in question. Subsequently, a vet and farrier have both been in attendance, the horses have hay, and the numbers are being cut back. Cases like this tend to be of too many horses, not enough money to care for them, and, sadly, either a lack of common sense or a refusal to admit that the situation is not feasible.

Another case involved two ponies belonging to the same owner, one obese and one emaciated. Eventually Helen was able to persuade the owner to call the vet, who sorted the teeth of the skinny pony, and get the owner to erect fencing to limit the grazing for the obese pony. Again a case of ignorance and indifference.

Due to lack of welfare officers, Helen is covering the entire county to attend new call outs and revisit cases to check up on progress. If you might be interested in becoming a volunteer welfare officer, please get in touch with the welfare department at HQ.

BHS HQ plan to organise castration clinics around the country, working with partner agencies. Many different agencies are coming together to combat the fly grazing problem, implementing changes to the legislation. These measures, along with education, will see an end to this dreadful welfare issue.



Education and Events

Pleasure Ride

On 28 September we ran our popular pleasure ride at Widmere Farm, Marlow (pictured), and were once again blessed with fantastic weather – albeit the ground was a bit hard this year, but this didn't stop the riders having a good time. Blue skies greeted the volunteer team and riders on the day and showed the breath-taking views of Widmere Farm at their best.

A mixture of riders took the course at their own pace, some having a leisurely walk and trot, others taking advantage of the jumps, but all with a smile and a cheery wave as they passed the checkpoints. Many thanks must go to the landowner, organiser, volunteers and, of course, the riders and their horses for a fabulous day out.

We would love to see you in 2015 as a rider or a volunteer!

Equine Car Boot Sales

We held four equine car boot sales this year, three at MARES in Amersham and the last one of the year was held at Pyatts Farm Livery in Lane End. The sales are growing steadily in popularity and will be returning next year with some new venues included. Would you like to host one in your area?

We are grateful to everyone who supported the events, in particular the sellers who donated items to BHS Buckinghamshire to sell to raise money to support our work.



Our Members

BHS membership gives a huge range of benefits to help you enjoy your life with horses. But more than that, membership is vital for helping us raise funds needed to improve access, safety, welfare and education for all.

In Buckinghamshire we have 1,386 members that is a growth of 5.48% in 2014.

We would like to thank each of our members for supporting the BHS and please do get involved with the activities in Buckinghamshire and encourage others to join us.

Our Finances

Below is a summary of our finances from January 2014 to December 2014

A proportion of The British Horse Society membership income is provided to each committee every year to cover volunteer expenses and support local activities.

The events and training fees raised by Buckinghamshire go to help with welfare, access and subsidising our training sessions.

Income

Funds from BHS HQ Capitation	£1043.44
Grant from BHS South Region	£1000.00
Pleasure Ride Entry Fees	£700.00
Quiz Night	£160.00
Tack Sales	£268.00
Newsletter Advertising	£90.00

Expenditure

Pleasure Ride	£90.22
Tack Sales	£200.37
Hi Vis	£501.99
Access Volunteer Expenses	£49.50
Welfare Volunteer Expenses	£303.20
Promotions	£321.95
Administration and Communications	£656.70
Postage	£150.00
Meetings and other expenses	£327.92

Our Plans for next year

We have some great plans for 2015, and would like to get some new regular events off the ground - including (hopefully) running a fun ride towards the north of the county!

We hope to welcome some new committee members - in particular, we'd love to boost the number of welfare officers in the county - and it would be great to make 2015 the year we reach a full compliment of committee members.

Our membership within the county has been steadily growing over the past year, and we plan to ensure 2015 is a bumper year for recruitment - are your horsey friends all members?

Congratulations Amy!



Amy Smith was the winner of our recent hi-viz competition. Amy correctly answered all the questions in our Road Safety Quiz and received a free hi-viz hatband. She then sent in a photo (above) of herself riding her pony, Nana, wearing the hi-viz hatband, and this was chosen as our favourite entry! Amy will receive a fab hi-viz prize in January.