

## **Chair-person's Report: Brook Cottage Farm RDA – Sept 24 – Sept 25**

The year began with a volunteers' coffee morning in the Village Hall, with very interesting talks from a special needs teacher talking about her years of experience teaching children with autism, our Chair talking about how positive attitude can shape outcome in RDA, and a couple telling us about the challenges and wonders of life with their now adult non-verbal son. This morning was open to other groups and we received great feedback about the talks.

**Riding:** We started term with around 30 riders on a Thursday. Several new riders were phased in, and all did well. Every third session we went up the track. Progress was made in all areas, including working with poles, working as part of a team and endurance riding. The last sessions of term were devoted to dressage tests, giving out of certificates, themed rides around the track, (with the Easter Bunny giving Easter eggs, and Father Christmas giving presents) and in summer, the performance of a musical ride for all groups.

**Carriage Driving:** the annual trip to Royal Windsor Horse Show took place in May, with 1st prize as ever in the RDA Fancy Dress and a 1st prize in the Cones competition and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Showing. Our two adult participants were delighted with their success and rosettes.

We were delighted that one of our coaches was short-listed for and then WON the Dudley-Smith Award, an RDA national prize for a person who has contributed significantly to carriage driving at a group. Two of our other coaches attended the celebrations for our coach at the National Championships at Hartpury where our coach received a glass plaque, huge green rosette and a lot of applause.

We have 3 or 4 participant drivers coming on Friday mornings. We are hoping to start up new sessions on Wednesday mornings very soon with 4 drivers from a nearby residential home.

We have recently had a new pony, Jim, join the RDA team. He is a 14.2hh piebald cob with a big moustache. He passed his assessment in August with flying colours and will share the workload with Bruce and Freddie.

We continue to offer carriage driving for wheelchair users, with success and around ten outings over the past year.

**Tea with a Pony:** In the summer holidays Laystone Care Home brought five participants to enjoy grooming, stroking the ponies, cleaning tack and filling haynets, all with a cup of tea and cake. If anyone knows of a Care Home in the area who would like to bring participants, we can arrange this for next spring and summer.

**Projects:** In March 2025 we managed to build the last section of track, so we now have completed the whole half-kilometre loop. This has been in use since then. It is a real triumph that we have managed to achieve this, and our riders and drivers can benefit over the coming years. The challenge now is to manage volunteers to help us maintain the area weekly, and create planted spaces with sensory shrubs.

**Fundraising:** At the very end of November, the annual Panto, Trotty Trotty Bang Bang, went very well, with four shows and the bar bringing in around £1500 as usual.

In July we organised another fundraiser called Ploughman's and Puddings, which was a celebration of all we have done in the last year, and also raised over £1200. Woodforde's Brewery kindly gave us many crates of craft beer for the event and Gü puddings from Bishops Stortford provided 120 puddings! The 30-piece band Take Note performed free for us outside the café, which was a great spectacle.

One of our coaches did the London Marathon in aid of RDA, raised £2000 for big RDA and around £800 for Brook Cottage Farm RDA, an amazing achievement. One of our Trustees did a very long 24-hour over-100-mile walk and again raised substantial funds for our group through the donation page – a fabulous fundraising effort.

We would like to thank everyone who has raised money or donated to our cause over the last year: THANK YOU SO MUCH!

**Publicity:** We were very lucky (due to our very supportive facebook followers) to win the opportunity to have six double-page spreads (over one year) in CM23 Magazine, a publication that goes out free to every house in Bishops Stortford, Takeley and surrounding villages. We have already written five of these, centering on what we do, why we do it, how we are helping participants, how we raise funds, and the structure of our organisation as a

smaller charity within Big RDA. We also have a small section in which to publicise our events and a section for thanking specific people and companies. Many people have contacted us due to this coverage, which is wonderful.

**New Beginnings:** We have started the new school year already with the organisation of an Eastern Region training morning in the Village Hall from a company called Inspirational Breathing. Their founder taught volunteers and coaches how to use the breath for their own well-being and how to help others use their breath if they are suffering from anxiety or a panic attack. We have also held this year's coffee morning for volunteers, refreshed all the paperwork for volunteers and riders, updated our risk-assessments and checked all policies...and are now raring to go!...(with more riders and a longer waiting list than ever!)

**Fundraising for the year ahead:** we have the Riding School show coming up on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October, at which we hope to hold a raffle and the Pantomime Horse Grand National as an awareness-building and small fundraising event.

We have this year's panto dates: Friday 28<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November. Publicity is already ongoing for this. The Panto is Muckerella (2<sup>nd</sup> edition!)

Future new fundraiser: There is a brilliant Royal College flautist who would like to do a concert for us. We are in discussion with the Bishops Stortford College about one of their venues and a date for this (she needs a proper grand piano for accompaniment).

Any other fundraising ideas are gladly received and anyone wanting to join the fundraising team, please speak to anyone of our trustees.

# BROOK COTTAGE FARM RDA

Annual account 1.9.24 - 31.8.25

## SUMMARY

opening balance	bank	£	12,661.08
	cash	£	938.58
	total	£	13,599.66

opening balance

Track  
Equipment  
Activities Panto  
Pony Plod  
Plough &  
Shetland £  
Yard show

Fees/Insurances  
Grants and awards  
Sarah Baker Legacy  
Bambers Green  
Lesson fees  
Sundry donations  
Sundry expenses

Subtotal

Pmts rec in error, re  
Pmts/receipts refund

Total

	bank	£	10,292.49
	cash	£	96.78
closing balance	total	£	10,389.27

closing balance

Income

Expenditure

£ 13,599.66

£ 1,010.00 £ 16,386.46

£ 111.60

£ 2,433.30 £ 969.04

£ 2,670.86

£ 2,278.00 £ 906.05

£ 95.00

£ 371.50

£ 1,701.00

£ 2,200.00

£ 3,550.00

£ 6,737.57

£ 1,949.53 £ 6,217.00

£ 1,531.71

£ 2,289.71

£ 24,827.47 £ 28,580.86

£ 543.00

£ 210.00 £ 210.00

£ 25,580.47 £ 28,790.86

£ 10,389.27