



## AGM REPORT 2017

Elstead Riding Club's annual general meeting took place on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

Our club has continued to have much success at both Area and National level and there have been Elstead members competing at every championship this year. We should never take qualification for a championship for granted and its brilliant that we have continued to qualify for so many years. Reports of how our members have done at championships have been included in our newsletters and there are more detailed team reports on the website as well as updates as to how we are doing appearing on Facebook. While it's the taking part and having fun that is the most essential, coming home with a championship rosette is the icing on the cake and getting into the presentation arena for a top three place is amazing. Team championship wins this year are the Senior Combined Training at the Festival of the Horse, Senior Style Jumping and Dressage Team of Six at Lincoln, and Dressage at the London & South East Championships, with other top three places championship places at all three of these venues and at the National Winter Intermediate championships. A total of 51 members (41 seniors and 10 juniors) took part in one or more teams this year. Our club has again retained the Foss Trophy for the Club in Area 11 with the most points in teams – now the 21<sup>st</sup> year in succession and the 24<sup>th</sup> time in total!

British Riding Clubs HQ view Elstead as a fun club with great team spirit and so when Horse & Country TV offered to produce an advert for BRC, sending a camera crew to the national horse trials championships, our club was asked to take part in the filming. Our members were interviewed and filmed relaxing by the horsebox camp, washing horses after competing and cheering our members on. They asked lots of questions of our members and we spent about three hours with them in total. There are quite a few of our members in the finished advert which can be seen on Facebook.

During this year we were very sad to hear of the passing of three people who have been committee members at one time or another and who have all made a very positive impact on the club: Maggie Murphy who was a founder member of the club, Robin Francis who raised our standard of jumps and jumping competitions, and Dan Shean who was still competing in our teams this year at the age of 79 as well as being a great help and supporter to not only Elstead but other clubs in our Area.

At the end of the year the Club had 114 riding and 10 non-riding senior and 45 junior members. This is a slight decrease and we will be looking at this in the new year to see whether previous members have overlooked renewing membership, or there are other reasons for not renewing. This year we revised our approach to the presentation and circulation of our newsletters, and we have more recently sent email newsletters to some previous members. We had hoped this would encourage rejoining but it may have led them to believe they had rejoined. We are now addressing this. We always welcome feedback and suggestions on ways to continue to maintain a healthy level of club membership, recognising that these are very competitive times with other clubs or organisations providing a range of equestrian activities. At every committee meeting we review past events. This year we have particularly noticed that we have had some lovely feedback on Facebook about our open events, and at closed club events members have said how much they have enjoyed themselves. We want to continue to provide fun, well run, events and training for all our members, and feedback is invaluable.

Based on information from last year's AGM, we listened to the feedback that our show jumpers and eventers wanted to attend the two showing shows and therefore changed our schedule to run working hunter classes followed by arena eventing. This appeared to work well, but we would still like to see a few more jumpers out on showing days!

Last year we re-introduced evening dressage and show jumping during the summer months, and repeated these events again this year. Whilst competitors have said how much they enjoyed them, we didn't have quite the number of entries anticipated. So again, feedback would be very welcome.

Other open events during the year included three show jumping, six dressage (3 at our club field and 3 at the Priory), 3 fun shows including the festive show, and a number of clear round jumping sessions.

As well as regular instruction with Brian Hutton and Tracey May, and our annual "have a go" training with Lesley Hill, this year we also arranged "ride a dressage test" training with Helen Apsimon. Heidi Reed ran a BHS Essential Horse Knowledge Course which led to successful participants gaining a BHS Level One Award in Essential Horse Knowledge. Several of our members attended Area run training, including grassroots cross country training, and a bio-mechanics session.

In addition to activities that involve horses, we had a Christmas Party, afternoon tea socials, and the very successful quiz evening - very many thanks to Jo Baigent for organising this fun evening.

The number of members hiring the club field has continued to reduce. We have discussed how to make the access easier for members, but have concluded that the key is the best and most secure way to ensure access, the safety of our jumps and other goods stored at the field. The field is usable all year, and is an expensive asset to maintain. Your thoughts on how we can improve the use of the field are always appreciated.

As ever, our events cannot run without the support of you, our members. A big thank you to you and the contribution you make to the continued success of the club.

Caroline Dobbin and Jenny Patrick stepped down from the committee at the AGM and were thanked for all their hard work. Fiona Foster and Julie Tavener were elected on to the committee. There were no other changes.

Following the formal business of the evening, members were treated to a very interesting and inspiring talk by Nicky Greenhill, a local dressage rider who is blind, and her support team: husband Gary (who acts as groom, driver and in tests calls out the markers) and Hebe a lovely black Labrador Retriever who is "Nicky's eyes". Nicky is supported by Equestrian Team GBR on the World Class Podium Programme squad for elite level athletes representing Great Britain. Nicky competes in both para and non-para BD dressage competitions and is trained by Charlotte Dujardin. Nicky and Gary were happy to answer lots of questions from our members. Nicky buys young horses and brings them on as this is cheaper than buying a 'made' horse and her most recent horse was found in Belgium. In answer to the 'who tries out a horse you are interested in buying' question it is Nicky herself, although she does first ask 'do you think this horse is suitable for a para rider?'. As a thank you to Nicky for her talk, the club has made a donation from the AGM raffle to Guide Dogs for the Blind.

The evening finished with the annual awards, kindly presented by Diana Terry (one of the founder members of our club). The overall senior champion was Marion Spencer (on George Bailey) and Suzi Stanner (Out Of Your League) the reserve champion. The overall junior championship was won by Anna Holmes (William), with Sydney Aldred (Jimmy) and Katie Milburn (Hunter) joint reserve champions.