



Willow Farm Newsletter

March 2008

Dear Customer,

March has arrived with a slightly warmer outlook, after a rather nippy February. As the weather warms up, we hope to do more hacks and have been successful in taking a number of our youngsters for their first outings. Of course, as you can imagine, they are a little jittery, it's never really the cars that worry them as they are used to tractors in their fields and live next to the M2, it's the other hazards of the road. Things such as scary tarmac lines in the road, slow signs and a man building a brick wall – which we faced the last time we were out - Roy and I ended up rather red faced in our efforts to push them past this horrendous hazard. We have two fast hack this month on Saturday 8th and Sunday 30th, one of our customers has kindly written about the last hack and all the fun that was had (scroll down).

The big event for us this month is our Easter Show on Monday 24th March (see schedule below). Even if you don't ride, why not come along to watch some of the events and maybe try a pony ride? (Er that's the kids mainly). There will of course be other activities over the Easter holidays, which I will circulate to you – just as soon as I have deciphered when the school holidays are!! Pony For The Day is always available within a reasonable booking period, and we are seeing more of these as the weather warms up. On Friday 22nd February, we had seven girls for the whole day, which was an experience! A lesser woman would have turned to the drink.

All our staff are training towards professional examinations, and we have a regular lecture on Tuesday mornings. This month we have been looking at the subject of horse parasites – yes worms! It's a complex subject and rather frightening for any horse owner; I also noticed that the girls didn't eat as many chocolate bars during the sessions, there's something about an encysted worm that puts you off your Twix. We then wormed all our horses, when they are next due we plan to send dung samples off for analysis, to see how successful our efforts have been. Worm damage can cause colic and ultimately death so it is important to keep on top of this aspect of horse care.

As one of our livery horses had been rushed to Bell Equine Hospital recently, we decided to go and visit him (he's getting better now) and have a tour of the facilities too. This was valuable on a number of levels, as many of the discussions during the tour referred to terms we had been discussing in our training sessions, so we could look at each other smugly when 'peristalsis' was mentioned! It also gave us an insight into how to increase opportunities for healing. At the hospital, they have a fully equipped horse spa, but before you start donning your bikini, it's not exactly Eastwell Manor. The water is set at 2 degrees, a little cool for my liking, but standing the horses in this for extended periods of time has been shown to double the speed of the healing process.

As I mentioned last time, Kelly Marks is coming to Willow Farm on May 25th, but now we have a double whammy, Richard Maxwell is also coming on May 8th. Both are very well respected in their field (groan) of natural horsemanship, which is a system we employ at Willow Farm when re-schooling and starting horses. For more information on this intriguing subject, I recommend you check out their web sites and that of Monty Roberts. Both evenings should be entertaining and educational, even if you are not a horse person, it is enthralling and sometimes moving to see a horse 'join up' with the trainer. Tickets for both events will be available in the shop soon.

We are hoping to establish a social committee at Willow Farm, and I would like to do this soon so we can organise a quiz night. If you would be willing to be a part of this, (many hands make light work) please e-mail me. If you are really rushed just reply to this e-mail and put *SOCIAL* as the subject header. We would like to use the social activities to raise money for equine charities such as Brooke as well as to have fun. We horsey people don't get out much you see! Have a great month. *Liz Burgess*

In the Saddlery At Last! Bob the builder has sorted out the lighting in the shop, it is so bright and cheerful now and we hope our customers will feel the same! March has arrived and so have the new Spring/Summer clothing ranges. We have a special discount on (some) half chaps, at only £6.99 per pair, in many sizes and colours. We have also been offering discounts in the shop on anything PINK, so if you are a fan of this delightful colour, HURRY! It can't go on forever. It's also worth going just to check out the interesting window display. As if that wasn't enough, over the Easter weekend we are having a special offer on show jackets – up to 15% off.

Sharon Paskell

Willow Farm Easter Show Schedule - Monday March 24th

• 9.30 am	Outdoor Arena	Clear Round Jumping	£2
• 10.30 am	Outdoor Arena	Handy Pony	£2
• 11.30 am	Outdoor Arena	Pony rides for the tinies	£2
• 12.00 pm	Outdoor Arena	Pony rides	£2
● 10.00 am	Indoor Arena	Best Turned Out (ridden)	£4
● 10.30 am	Indoor Arena	Prettiest Mare & Handsomest Gelding**	£4
● 11.00 am	Indoor Arena	Veteran – over 15 – (ridden)	£4
● 11.30 am	Indoor Arena	Easter Parade – Fancy Dress class, on an Easter Theme – get creative !	£4
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● 12.30 pm	Indoor Arena	Show jumping – ht 1 ft (lead rein permitted)	£8
● 1.30 pm	Indoor Arena	Show jumping – ht 2ft	£8
● 2.00 pm	Indoor Arena	Scurry	£8
● 3.00 pm	Indoor Arena	Show jumping – ht 3ft	£8
● 4.00 pm	Indoor Arena	Chase me Charlie	£8

Rosettes to 6th place, Willow Farm Gift Vouchers (£10) for all class winners

Willow Farm horses available for hire for Riding School customers

Check with your instructor for a suitable mount

Riders Fitness

We are now in the second week of this new activity at Willow Farm, and we are all looking forward to this week's challenge. Last week we were jumping up and down on a trampoline, skipping and generally running around with gay abandon! Roy has termed the evening 'lumpy club', which is very unfair and probably a little hypocritical of him, but I shall keep that thought to myself. In between sessions we are required (well encouraged) to complete four exercise periods of at least 30 minutes, anything that makes us sweat. Those of you who know Sharon will understand that she is now hoovering (her favourite hobby) twice as fast as she used to. It will be interesting to see how we all improve over the course of the 10 weeks; we have had our BMI, flexibility, peak flow and weight measurements taken so we can measure our performance. I'm finding it very handy as my instructor seems to be attempting to kill me on Wednesday nights; honestly, you would never catch me pushing riders so hard! Keep your eyes out for the next 10-week course, it will be nicer weather and for the last time, for those of who are still confused – THERE ARE NO HORSES AT RIDERS FITNESS CLUB!!!!

The *Fast Hack* - - - (thanks to Caroline H for this)

Dear Willow Farm Riders,

Liz has asked me to give a short account of the fun and frolics I've been having on the fast hack so here goes...

Since my recent move back to Kent from "the big smoke" I have become a regular on "the fast hack". Lulled into a false sense of security by Liz after my "evaluation" turn in the indoor school I was very keen to pick up my riding where I had left off nearly 3 years before.

After my first ride, I managed a pretty good impression of John Wayne for about a week while I adjusted to the fact that I had become a soft city dweller who hadn't used a single riding muscle in a good long time. But never let it be said that a bit of pain, misery and a silly walk put off a determined horsy girl like me! The next fast hack saw me back on the long suffering Griffin for another go.

The indubitable Roy has been leading the hacks since in his own distinctive style. Sadly poor Roy does hold a fond delusion that he will one day win the gallop that the fast hack always enjoys. As usual Roy was sorely disappointed being left far behind by this week's winner, Bella. Still, there is always next time!

Griffin and I had a great time as usual but were pipped into third place on the gallop by that young upstart Spike.

Roy is trying to get me to take lessons to improve my balance but as his score of falls is now in double figures I think I will risk sticking with my current levels of wonkiness!

Sadly I shall miss the next fast hack on the 8th March, so someone will need to take Griffin or she will feel left out, but I'll be back for the outing on the 30th March so I hope to see you there... if you dare!

Kelly Marks	www.intelligenthorsemanship.co.uk/
Monty Roberts	www.montyroberts.com
Richard Maxwell	www.richard-maxwell.com/
The Brooke Charity	www.thebrooke.org/
Willow Farm	www.ridewithwillow.co.uk

Thank you to all those of you who have added your reviews to the Touchlocal site (which is a link on our web site). At the moment, we have no references to Samantha, Jasmine or Megan – if they teach you could you please find time to write about them? If you want to send us a testimonial directly then please email us at willowfarmkent@yahoo.com

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LOOK OUT FOR OUR FABULOUS NEW SIGN FROM THE M2 (but not for long periods of time!!!!)

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Finally..... just in case you were curious, yes we did manage to wean the foals. They are all happily living with their foster mothers and their real mums are enjoying a well-earned break, two feeds a day and no pestering for regular milk breaks from their beloved offspring