



In the Riding School: Easter proved to be as busy as we expected at Willow Farm; our Open Show was well attended again and Colette seemed to be here most of the month! The team dressage was very well attended and we had a great write up in Pegasus magazine. Our Easter activities schedule was every popular and we are now gearing up for half term, (do they ever go to school? It wasn't like this in my day.....20 miles through the fields....barefoot...snow and rain etc. etc.)

Our Riders Fitness (Phase 1) came to a close and we all underwent yet another fitness testing session, and yes! We were fitter! Most of us are going on to do the next 10 week course – but we need new blood – you don't have to be a rider to benefit from the course, so why not sign up? If you are interested or would like more information please e-mail and I will get back to you.

Bonnie finally gave birth to a foal on May 1st at 2:30 in the afternoon. She had been 'bagging up' for a while so we knew the day was close. Roy had attempted to bring her in from the field the week before to no avail. Bonnie - once aware of his cunning plan, had decided she was happy where she was, and promptly laid down and refused to get up! Bonnie can be rather obstinate and only got up again when Roy agreed to let her stay where she was.

Unfortunately there were some complications with the birth and Bonnie had to have veterinary attention the same evening. We had to make sure she was clean inside and that she wasn't suffering from colic. She was getting up and laying down repeatedly and was obviously uncomfortable. I shan't go into details of her treatment as this is a family publication and you could be eating – but suffice to say she's very well now! The same cannot be said of the foal – Lizzie May – who has very lax ligaments, which means her joints are not locking into place correctly. Mother and daughter are on box rest, homoeopathy and general attention overload to see how things pan out. The vet is keeping a close eye on progress and photographing her limbs to assess any changes. So far things are changing very slightly and slowly, so we all have our fingers crossed. The most important consideration is to ensure she is not in any pain; she is a very spirited foal and incredibly independent too, she doesn't want our help to do anything and gets quite cross if you try to help her. We are all hoping that this 'attitude' will help her through. We are now looking at the option of remedial farriery, to see if special shoes could help her. As you can imagine, the vet's and farrier's fees are piling up – for a horse that will probably never be ridden. To help raise funds towards her ongoing treatment we are going to hold an auction of favours on Friday 13th June. This will be combined with our Quiz night, the cost per person for the quiz is £4 per head (or brain) and you are welcome to bring your own drink. There is a maximum of 8 per team and the questions are wide ranging – there is even a section on the Bible (which I have been secretly reading up on). Tickets will be available soon in the shop and any funds generated will also be shared with the Brooke Hospital for Animals. If you can offer something for the auction please contact me urgently, nothing in the 'biblical sense' though please. Willow Farm will obviously be contributing prizes and favours themselves, but we hope to list the auction items in the café to encourage people to attend, sealed bids will also be accepted. Suggestions as to what Roy could offer will be discussed at the Team Meeting – answers on a postcard please!

Richard Maxwell was at Willow Farm on May 8th and the evening was a roaring success – if I say so myself – which I do! His ethos and methods have changed greatly throughout his equestrian career, but they are based on experience and results. Richard worked with Chino to discourage him from moving around when being mounted, when being asked to stand still and from rearing up when he didn't want to do something. The whole process was gentle but assertive and Chino reacted very well (apart from the time he sneaked off across the school when Richard wasn't looking). Two beautiful horses came along with 'Max' and his team to demonstrate just how well behaved horses can be – if you train them properly. Like children they benefit from structure and learning through working out when they get a positive result. Max said that horses – like men – couldn't take a hint, he may think that, I couldn't possibly comment. If you missed Max – or even if you didn't- make sure you get a ticket soon for the Kelly Marks demonstration on May 25th. She uses different methods to Max, but again she gets the results. Tickets available in the shop.

If you haven't already had our list of activities for May, please send me an email and I will send it through to you. Our Musical Formation ride is almost full for next Saturday and the jumping clinics in our new jumping paddock are proving very popular. We have also started doing late nights on (most) Friday evenings, the shop is open and we are running lessons and hacks. We have discovered a new fast hack which takes us for a long canter through the woods and then after a short walk (to cool off) down the country lanes, alongside the orchards, we have another canter down the next bridleway. If you would like to go on a hack please contact your instructor. One of our regulars commented on the last hack....."Just wanted to say I thought this Sunday's ride was the most fun yet that I've done, as I loved the route and I loved riding good old Rodney as well!"

Thank you to all those of you who have written in with testimonials, including one slightly risqué one which cannot be printed but would probably bring in some custom!?! These are all available to read on our web site www.ridewithwillow.co.uk and are always welcome.

Sadly, I have to report that Samantha is no longer working for us, but you will still see her around as she is keeping her horse at livery here. Like the politicians always say, she had family commitments, but I think (unlike them) she is telling the truth. Working with horses can be extremely demanding, physically, emotionally, mentally and time-wise. That is why we are all mad and have no lives! Or is that just me again? Adam is our new member of staff, who is working on the yard and in the shop, he is very shy and retiring so you probably won't notice he is around for a while. *Liz*

In the Saddlery: This month's special offer is for 15% off winter jackets – what a bargain! There are also other discounted items in store on special nights and we have a newly established bargain area in the Café – so have a browse when you are next in. Liz has mentioned testimonials – we don't have many for the shop. If you have something you would like to contribute or if one of our staff has been particularly helpful, please e-mail us your comments. I have to say that I also attended the Riders Fitness course and thoroughly enjoyed it (OK maybe not every minute) and the Riders Fitness team were incredibly supportive and encouraging. We

hope to see you soon – and especially on the 13th June for our Quiz and auction night – why not start putting together a team now? We are hoping to make it a regular event. *Sharon*

STOP PRESS: Auction items latest wine rack made from horse shoes, pull mane & tail & full trim, half hour schooling session, fast hack, car wash, bath your horse, steak dinner for two, ticket for 4 to Leeds Castle (we hope), pink bridle, half a day of hedge trimming, use of indoor school for one hour, use of jumping paddock for one hour, neck and back massage (by a professional!), mini trek for two, half hour video lesson.

Please contact me ASAP if you can contribute in any way, thank you

www.thebrooke.org



Lizzie May

