

2012 AGM report

The date, 8th February. The venue, Court Lodge, Bodiam. The event:, AGM - not an Angry Gathering of Martians, but the much more civilised Annual General Meeting of the Rother Valley Riding Club.

If you have not attended this annual excuse for a get together and gossip before, thinking it may be an evening of heavyweight speeches, tedious accounts and a formal business agenda, think again!

Of course there is the essential business to get through, but we aim to make this as lighthearted and brief as possible so we can get on with the fun.

This year was no different, although in a slight break from tradition we opted not to have a guest speaker or demonstration but to leave time, before and after the main agenda for general socializing, eating and drinking. It is not often members get together without the company of their four legged friends demanding attention, and it's a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and get to know new ones.

Our outgoing Chairman Sue Clark kicked off the evening with an amusing account of the past year's events, letting us into some of the secret panics behind the usually calm and unflustered exterior that can be seen at the RVRC events. Such as the discovery that there were no dressage sheets for Friends of Freddie on site ten minutes before the start which had Sue racing cross country from Brightling back home to pick them up off her kitchen table where they had been left out ready the night before. She then outlined another event packed year for 2012 with a couple of changes. No Easter Dressage this year but two Saturday Roadshows and the inclusion of a 'have a go' class and the return of the Bull Farm Hunter Trials, now an eventers' challenge being run over two days. Sue also expressed thanks to all of you who come along to help at the events - without you there would be no events and without events, no Club., so the role of helper is one that cannot be underestimated and thanks to everyone who played their part in 2011.

Treasurer, Nicky Saint followed Sue with a summary of expenditure - your membership has been used to invest in a new website that is updated by a dedicated professional on a regular basis. This really is now 'the hub of the Club' and is the place to go for news, show reports, team news, clinics, schedules, entry forms, horses for sale and a range of advertisers of local services. The advertising to date has been successful and we hope to grow this revenue to cover most of the ongoing costs of the site. Another change is the replacement of the quarterly newsletter with our new Annual Revue. As news is now posted on the website the need for the newsletter was decreasing so the save on printing and posting costs we have amalgamated news from key events into one publication - as some of us still like to sit and read news in print with a cup of coffee! One third of your membership fee goes to BRC to cover insurance at all club events, from clinic and fun days to our open and members only shows. Income was down in 2011 from 2010, and we anticipate another tough year, but aim to keep costs as low as possible to use funds to provide you with a varied calendar of events and the basics of a flourishing Club.

Team talks from Emma Baker and Kate Ludden followed with Emma relating the highlights of a fantastic year for the junior teams and Kate, in spite of suffering with broken ribs, gave a detailed account of an equally successful year for the seniors.

Presentations of the Club points cups came next with every winner and runner up being photographed by Dom (Bailey) Witham, and special mentions for Sharon Baker, Sean Langdon-Down and Frank for all the help and support they have given to Sue and the Club, being there when needed and putting up jumps, clearing away, running raffles and so on. The Chairman's Cup went to Karen a non member without a horse who, none the less, is on site feeding everyone and helping to keep everyone going throughout some long and busy days.

As mentioned earlier Sue Clark, our chairman for the past three years and committee member since time immemorial, is stepping down, to have a life outside of the Club! And it was with some sadness we said goodbye. Incoming Chairman Dominic Langdon-Down, equally committed to leading the Club, outlined his plans ,to ensure we have something for every member, and gave a superb speech to Sue, littered with horsey innuendo throughout and Bess Collins followed this with her own tribute from the Club and presentation of a framed caricature of Sue in her role as Chairman.

Business over the eighty plus members who turned out on a cold February night tucked into second helpings of food and drink before the final highlight of the evening - the raffle!

Prizes included free membership, free entry to events for one year, complimentary clinics and cross country schooling sessions, vouchers and high vis tabard and whip , plus seasonal sledge donated by GG's Tack and of course a bottle of wine.

The AGM provides an opportunity to reflect on the previous year and look forward to the present one, catch up with other members and get enthused for the year ahead. If you were not there with us, I hope this report gives you a flavour of what your Club is planning for 2012. You should receive your pack of schedules through the post and remember to look on the website for the latest news and upcoming activities. We have a busy year ahead...