

EASTERN REGION AGM REPORT

The postcard mail-out initiative, spearheaded by Liz Wright, was aimed at raising further awareness of events in our region. These feature in our Newsletter but we hoped an additional 'push' could encourage greater involvement from different areas, which are locationally widespread in the East.

A good number of members attended Sarah Booth's Zoom on 'Developing ENTHUSIASM', discussions took place and pointers were given on further promoting the DBS in inventive ways.

We explored two new venues in 2023, a purpose-built carriage-driving centre at Blandings Farm (2024 is at planning stage, to include additional sections) and Milton College, Cambridgeshire, where a Training Day, open to members and non-members, took place in October. Demonstrations with 4 donkeys, help and advice on: weight tapes, condition scoring, introduction to carriage driving, show preparation (with insights from Judge Elaine Lewis), long-reining and travelling your donkey were given. Fund-raising in the form of a raffle, refreshments, DBS collecting boxes and donations to Purple Poppies also took place.

Generally shows and parades with commentaries were well attended with participation from familiar competitors and new faces. Several members tried Stewarding for the first time. Connecting with the public at shows and events is a way in which new members can be recruited, ie. a talk with a non-member at Gransden Show resulted in her attendance at the Milton Training Day. We have also experienced an upturn in the number of Junior Members.

The stock of specially produced 2023 Commemorative Coronation luxury rosettes were awarded to as many members as possible throughout the year and were happily received.

The Donkey Walking Miles scheme was established to encourage members to get out with their donkeys, submissions were collected at the end of September by Annette Staveley and rosettes for 25, 50 and 100 miles will be distributed. Similarly, Annette's HeeHaw Hikers walking group meets monthly in various locations and her Thursday Club continues to provide hands-on help and encouragement.

To round up the year, preparations are in progress for YHL, a Winter Newsletter, a second photo show (Christmas themed). Following an enjoyable day making Spring wreaths, a repeat event creating festive ones will again take place at Gate & West Farm.

Joss Goodchild

Regional Delegate