

AQHA Youth Team Training

Due to the adverse weather conditions, January's Clinic was cancelled. Up until the last minute it was not known if February's Clinic would run either, as a further bout of heavy snow had hit East Sussex, our venue for the clinic. Luckily roads were cleared just in time, as we arrived from the West Country we viewed the beautiful Garden of England in all its glory. Bright sunshine accompanied us the whole weekend & the snow covered valleys with signs of spring already peeping through, was a sight to behold.

Jonathan Vine-hall had kindly donated the use of his facilities for our training. We hired his Oast House for accommodation & he put up six temporary stables for our use in one of his barns. As stabling was limited we didn't take our own young horse, but were very lucky indeed to be loaned the use of Annie Gravitts lovely black pleasure mare 'Dino' (Pure Dynamic Image). Annie also brought 'Harley' as in Hotrods & Harley's, for the team to use. Trainers this time were Christy Leach (Team Manager), Mary Larcom & Jessie March.

The Team was split into three small groups & each group worked on different exercises with each trainer & then swapped around. Training took place over the Saturday afternoon & all day Sunday & Monday morning. On Sunday the team members swapped their horses to get a feel of how horses respond differently to the cues. Unfortunately one of the horses responded rather adversely & bucked its rider off! It was all rather worrying for a time as we had to send for an ambulance, there was a trip to hospital & a series of X-rays. Thankfully we eventually got the news that there was no serious damage & training continued later that day.

This was a lesson in its self though; rather a harsh one, of the sensitivity of the horse & how it responds to the feel of a new rider & the importance of softness until the new horse is fully assessed. This is something that all the riding team will need to accomplish & understand as all the horses to be used in the World Cup are donated by the host country & are only to be ridden & prepared by the youths themselves. Not all of them will be experienced horses so it is quite a task for them to undertake.

Sophia rode both Annie Gravitts lovely horse, Dino & Christy's horse, Bill, who she really liked. She rode both very nicely & she learnt some new skills like riding with the romel reins & learnt about spur to stop horses as many of the American trained horses only stop when you apply the leg & spur!

Nine members of the team attended the weekend & it was the first time they had all got together. Sophia & Sophie being the newest members to the team. They had a great time together in the Oast House, enjoying meals together, playing games, singing & dancing! It was good fun for them all.

Sophia is the youngest & Chris Dalton is the oldest at 19 yrs. Whilst Sophia is the youngest & probably the least experienced, it is a great learning opportunity for her to ride & train with the older more experienced team members. She really enjoyed herself & is looking forward to returning again this Easter for another clinic, this time with American trainer Patty Campbell from Whiteboro, Texas who will be assessing the riders abilities & deciding on the riding team. Those that do not get to ride this year, which will be half of them as there's only five to the riding team, will accompany the riders & go as supporters. They will learn from watching & helping & will also get to take part in the leadership programme & go on sightseeing & educational trips.

A team photograph & Christy Leach's write up of the weekend can be found in the AQHA UK JOURNAL.

Further reports from Janet to follow in future newsletters.

