

The Intelligent Horsemanship Magazine – Spotlight on an IH RT

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How long have you been involved with horses? And how did you get involved with them? My parents moved to a house with a field where the vendor asked to leave a pony to come with the carpets and curtains! I was 3 years old at the time and the pony was called Chester. He wasn't always the most obliging pony so my interest in positive communication began here!!

Why did you decide to qualify as a Recommended Trainer? In 2012 I purchased a 2-year-old chestnut mare to produce myself. Everything was going ok until we decided to try loading!! I ended up researching the 'dually halter' and watched the enclosed DVD. This led me to contact my local IHRT Sandra Williams for help. Sandra is and was amazing and helped me, not only with loading, but with all groundwork and long-lining. I learnt a huge amount but most importantly LOVED all the guidance and sessions she gave. This led me to purchase 3 more foals to start with Sandra's help, one of which I still own and ride today. Due to purchasing the 3 foals, I asked Sandra if I could attend the 'untouched horse' course which was the most amazing experience and therefore the weekend I decided that I really wanted to continue the journey to learn to be an RT.

What is a typical day for you? I have 3 children aged 16 years, 14 years and 11 years, one of which rides herself and so between us we have 4 horses! Therefore, a large part of my day is looking after the children, 2 family dogs and the horses who live at home with us. In between this, I work part-time as a Chartered Accountant and then also have a small handful of IH clients who I regularly visit.

What's important to you when you see an owner and their horse for the first time? It is important to have as much information and history (separately and together) about the owner, the horse, the yard support and facility set-up and what has led them to ask for help and what they are hoping to achieve.

What are the common challenges you face in your work as an RT? I think there is often a belief you have 'naughty horses or ponies' that are just naughty but often what seems to be overlooked is what behaviour or handling from "us humans" or other external stimuli has led to this point.

If you could change one thing in the world of horses, what would it be, and why? I love the IH approach and the supportive community within IH that promotes working with our horses and understanding them and would love for this approach to have a far wider reach over the horse world.

What would be the first piece of advice you would give someone looking at buying/loaning their first horse? To not enter into a purchase lightly and to think the decision through very carefully, either for the reason of owning the horse for the rest of his/her life and the responsibility that comes with this or alternatively if you have to move the horse on to a new horse than the saleability is very important.

Behavioural traits or physical issues that might be acceptable to one person are not necessarily acceptable to others.

What is the most common issue you have to deal with when working with horses? I think it is the issue of being able to identify and link the cause to the effect of certain issues.

What are your plans for the future? I would like to continue to learn and to help people with their horses as an IH RT. I have also attended my first Ride With Your Mind 4 day riding course and Training Course which I loved and would like to continue this journey to be able to help people when ridden as well as on the ground. I am particularly interested in starting horses so would like to offer this to people but would also like to start more of my own in future also.

What three things should everyone practice with their horses? Horse Agility – I love this for general spook busting and safe ‘rideability’ and also general trust for spooky or scary things – this can lead into areas such as loading.

Groundwork – the basic movements of the ‘dually’ groundwork (as shown on the 5-day course) are the basis of everything from loading to mounting.

Bodywork – to get to know your horse’s body by feel and sight to be able to notice anything different or sore that could be a pre-cursor to a behavioural issue due to pain or discomfort.

Do you have any memorable or funny stories of working with Kelly/Monty? I have too many memorable moments for Kelly as I love watching her work with the horses; how clear her body language is, but how calm she is and to see how she truly enjoys each and every horse. This is one of the reasons I have absolutely loved coaching on the courses; to see her first-hand and sometimes assist her. One of my most memorable stories with Monty was going to help at a Demonstration at Merristwood and seeing Monty work with one horse that genuinely could not be controlled on a lead rope (I think it was the first occasion Monty wore a hard hat) and seeing him work with this horse on the dually and how calm this horse became. It was amazing.

What’s the best bit of advice you’ve ever been given? This was from Sandra. She said if ever I was told I was ‘so lucky to have an easy horse’ then to take it as a compliment as it was due to the hard work put in to get there!

What has been the proudest moment/biggest achievement in your career? Rather than a competitive achievement, I think for me, I am really enjoying the fact I have been inspired to return to Eventing after a 20 year break due to starting my own horse (with Sandra) using IH methods.

Why do you so enjoying teaching on the courses’ and ‘why do you think students love the courses so much?’ I love teaching on the courses because the people that attend have already engaged with the IH methods just in the simple fact of committing to be there. This makes for a really positive learning experience for everyone involved. I love being there as a trainer as I still believe I am learning but I

really enjoy helping people to overcome their fears or achieving their first join-up or long-lining experience.

What would your advice be to someone hoping to become a Recommended Trainer? I think it is really important that you enjoy the journey of becoming an RT rather than just being focussed on the 'end goal'. I think this is important as the journey of learning continues after becoming an RT. I also think it is important that people realise it is not all about helping horses, it is in fact, helping people be able to help their horses. This was an important point I learnt during my case studies in particular.

Please share some of the horses you have worked with that have gone on to competition success in dressage, showing etc:

I am a bit of an RT 'newbie' so at the moment I don't have client success stories of horses that have gone on to compete although I do have a couple of clients who I am helping to start their horses and I really hope they will go on to enjoy competition success – watch this space!!! (pictured).

Two of my current horses are Spaghetti who was started with Sandra and is now competing at eventing and also Ted who I compete show-jumping with and who has fought back to health after colic surgery last year (both pictured).

How you came to be involved with Monty and Kelly? Through my contact with Sandra Williams and her introduction to IH and Kelly.