

The Intelligent Horsemanship Magazine – Spotlight on an IHRT

How long have you been involved with horses? And how did you get involved with them? I have been involved with Horses for 47 years. My sisters begged our Mum and Dad for lessons at the local riding school. I used to tag along wearing my white knitted bobble hat and be lifted on to one of the Shetland ponies (Tweedledum and Tweedledee). Not sure you would call what I did riding or a lesson but I loved following the bigger horses round the arena

Why did you decide to qualify as a Recommended Trainer? I saw it as a way to help more people to help more horses. If I could help at least one person, there was the potential to help an extra horse and have a more positive effect. I had also been carrying a lot of guilt about misunderstanding one of my ponies. He hated going in to the trailer and as a child I couldn't understand why, especially as when we got to an event he jumped to win and win we did. He was a very spiritual soul and supported me through my early years, teenage years and into adulthood. When I work with ponies and horses today worried about loading and travelling a part of him is always with me.

What is a typical day for you? Having thought about this question for sometime. I decided this was a way to answer clearly giving an insight into my day to day routine. Over the last year to 18 months I have attempted to divide my daily time up in to chunks, large medium and small. This means I will have 2-3 large chunks to achieve in a day, 3-4 medium and several smaller ones. A large chunk could be working one to one with clients, teaching on the IH Courses or working on IH Administration. Medium chunks would be, tend to our ponies and dogs, my own business administration and since my Dads diagnoses of Dementia and being appointed his legal power of attorney, many duties for him. Small chunks would include, running our home and all that entails, ensuring our animals husbandry's are organised as well as catching up with friends and family.

What's important to you when you see an owner and their horse for the first time? I listen and hear what they and their horse is saying and then I link the two of them together. If you have worked with me you may have heard me talk about my Olympic Rings or Links analogy. This means working on one thing at a time, working on individual movements and tasks, then linking them together. If you are learning how to play golf, you firstly learn how to hit the ball a long way, then you learn how to hit it with accuracy and then you link the two together. I do exactly the same using groundwork exercises with horses and humans.

What are the common challenges you face in your work as an RT? Quite often there is a lack of confidence on both the part of the handler/rider and horse. I like to start

building things incrementally for both, facilitating a way in which the handler/rider can break things down and start spotting the detail, I find enormously satisfying.

If you could change one thing in the world of horses what would it be, and why?

Bullying. I cannot abide by any living creature, humans included that have a lesser voice than another being ridiculed, teased, tormented, abused or spoken over in any way shape or form.

What would be the first piece of advice you would give someone looking at buying/loaning their first horse? As Cat Stevens would sing, "Take your time, think a lot, there's no hurry". What advice would you give to your best friend, take the emotion out.

What is the most common issue you have to deal with when working with horses? Owners going to fast, which is often a result of feeling low in confidence. The Foundation stones have ever rarely been laid, enabling things to crumble apart too easily.

What are your plans for the future? Having learnt some pretty major life lessons over the last 18 months I am happy taking things a day at a time. I can't do anything about yesterday, I can only influence tomorrow, as for today it's going great.

What three things should everyone practice with their horses? Being still both in body & mind, breathing, exhaling with depth and vocalisation and worthy scratches, maybe on the wither, maybe somewhere else.

What's the best bit of advice you've ever been given? It's not all about you, be present for the horse.

What has been the proudest moment/biggest achievement in your career? I am going to need to list two. I think as it is one of my most recent, a beautiful loading horse, actually it was about so much more. Having been violated and kept in the dark it was about being enclosed within the small space of the lorry and the overwhelming distrust of 'the second person'. He doesn't just load, he wants to load and stand in the space having a sigh with us both next to him. He had to dig deep to reprint his memory and he did.

What would your advice be to someone hoping to become a Recommended Trainer? As IH Student and Trainer Coordinator I am asked this question a lot. I say, get out there, get your hands dirty. Watch at events, volunteer at centres, on courses and at demo's. When I first saw a Monty Demo at Addington Equestrian in Bucks, I saw the then team and said "I'm going to be one of those, part of the team". RT Dido Fisher was on the door, Ian Vandenberghe was at the signing stand and Kelly was introducing Monty. In a bright red outfit she talked so confidently I was in awe of how someone could do that in front of so many people and now a good few years on I can too.

Please share some of the horses you have started that have gone on to competition success in dressage and showing: I worked for many years coaching Claire Gallimore with her ponies and horses. Claire has gone on to become a leading Dressage Rider and Coach herself, now based back here in the UK. More recently I worked with Tamzin Emmett & Rocco who had Qualified for HOYS in Search for a Star. This was a fabulous pairing and I absolutely loved working with them although we didn't have long on the lead up, they came a well deserved 2nd. Tamzin is super fun to work with, we are currently working with her new horse Dot.

How you came to be involved with Kelly? After watching Monty on the 1996 tv show QED I went to a couple of demo's, 96 & 98. I bought horse magazines that she wrote articles for and then signed up for the 5 Day Foundation Course September 1999. Kelly had me show Join-Up with a beautiful mare for a local news channel and the rest as they say is history. Those 5 days changed my life, my view on life. On my Stage 2 Exam week Countryfile came to film so again Kelly put me in front of the camera, well more my bottom actually. We were starting a young horse, first saddle, first rider. Kelly said she would like me to be the rider and she would do the legging up etc Hence why it was more my bottom on CF than my face... It was good fun though and I carried on with the pony (Dennis) and his family at their home.

Where have you travelled in the world through demos with Kelly? Warwickshire 😊 I am always involved with the demo's we take place in at Your Horse Live. Either with Kelly or Kelly & Monty. I have been lucky to work with some incredible horses in both arena's showing Intelligent Horsemanship off to its best. Often Kelly choosing to put me 5.2ft and a half with the 18hh plus horses 😊 They've been memorable if a little thwart on the lead up.

What do you love about teaching on the courses? Oh gosh, this is question and a half. Watching the students on the last day compared to the first day, amazing. The lightbulb moments they have. The team work between us tutors, students, volunteers and of course the horses. The sharing of information. Love it.

Feel free to add any questions you think might be appropriate and also to add/plug anything you have coming up! I hold regular Horse Agility Sessions, anyone can book one to one ground handling, long lining and more with me and their horses or with my ponies. www.hearinghorses.com **Instagram** ihrtsandra
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