

Spotlight on IH Recommended Trainer Kelly Brotherhood

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How long have you been involved with horses? And how did you get involved with them?

My Grandfather worked with horses in the Army and, since I can remember, I had always wanted to do the same. He took me horse riding as soon as I could sit up straight! We could never afford for me to have my own horse so when I was old enough I would cycle miles to the nearest livery yard, muck out all day for the chance to spend just some time with their horses!

Why did you decide to qualify as a Recommended Trainer?

My partner bought me a horse whispering book for Christmas and the stories in there inspired me to become the person who can help owners and offer guidance when perhaps everyone else had given up or mis-understood the horse. That evening, I discovered Monty Roberts and Kelly Marks, signed up for the next 5 Day Foundation Course in Oxfordshire and started my journey into becoming a Recommended Trainer.

What is a typical day for you?

Very busy! I work full time for the RAF Association and so my horse work tends to take place on the weekend and the occasional evenings. My non-equestrian qualifications are in Project Management which I have found very useful in helping me balance and plan my time (it also helps me plan incremental training and goals with the owners I help too!). I also teach on the IH Perfect Manners Course and more recently the IH 5 Day Foundation Course. I feel very lucky to have found jobs I enjoy, supporting people and working in the charitable sector.

What is important to you when you see an owner and their horse for the first time?

To listen and take time with the horse and owner. I want the first session to be a positive step forward on their journey to achieve their goals. Sometimes owners can feel overwhelmed perhaps facing a mountain of unwanted behaviour or their goal seems so far away it's nice to listen to both the horse and owner, help them understand each other and have a positive step forward towards their goals.

What are the common challenges you face in your work as an RT?

Perhaps the facilities on visits; sometimes all you have to work in is a very large grass field and some temporary electrical fencing! Obviously not everyone can have the luxury of a round pen, but it is vital to set yourself up for success and that all parties stay safe. I love the challenge of working with what people have and, in some cases, (for loading or catching for example) we can usually make spaces work in our favour.

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

It would have to be bullying; sadly, it seems to happen far too often in this industry, either online or when sharing facilities. I really wish we could all be more supportive of our differences and unite over our common love of horses. I hope anyone feeling vulnerable discovers IH because it is such an open minded and supportive community.

What would be the first piece of advice you would give someone looking at buying/loaning their first horse?

Once you have carefully considered the cost and time commitment a horse can take, I think it is important to be honest with yourself about what you are looking for and what you intend to do with your new companion. It is very easy to 'over horse' yourself (especially when you see that lovely photo of an award-winning warmblood jumping a 1-meter fence!) So, write a list of what you are looking for (before you start looking) and take your time. Better still select a sensible friend or professional who can question your potential choice against your checklist!

What is the most common issue you have to deal with when working with horses?

The most common issue I tend to come across is owner confidence, especially when dealing with challenging behaviour. It is great to be able to give owners reliable, safe techniques that work. I cannot put into words how rewarding it is to see people grow in confidence and to see their relationship with their horse flourish.

What are your plans for the future?

Myself and my partner are currently looking for a farm to renovate so I am hopeful that soon I will be able to have the option for residential training as well as hosting of clinics and events. (I am also looking forward to getting my first puppy too but do not tell my partner!)

What three things should everyone practice with their horses?

Being present with and for your horse, in today's world we are so often distracted and already thinking of the next task or chore. The more present you are with your horse the more you will observe. Secondly it isn't always about you, take time to be with your horse to do things he/she will enjoy (grooming, scratches or bathing (if it's hot) all will help improve your relationship and thirdly – Breathe!

Do you have any memorable or funny stories of working with Monty?

I remember when I first met Monty, I was so nervous! I asked him where in the world he would want to have a RT. Monty is so considered in his responses, he took a long inhale before he said 'Ahh Spain'. I gasped with excitement, I hoped I did not jump up and down, but I replied excitedly 'Monty, I'm half Spanish, I could be your RT in Spain!'. Monty looked at me with renewed interest and said, 'Do you speak the lingo?' Sadly, I didn't speak any Spanish at the time, and I was only just starting my RT journey, so I was dreaming just a little! Although now having reunited with my Spanish family I could say 'Si un poco mi familia es de Santiago!

I am pleased to say the numerous times I have now worked with Monty and Kelly I am a lot calmer, but I never lost that awe of their knowledge, experience, and work with horses.

What is the best bit of advice you have ever been given?

I think the one I have passed on the most is: 'This too shall pass' meaning good or bad the situation will pass, so if its good enjoy and appreciate the moment. If it is bad, then do not worry because the storm will pass and there will be brighter days ahead. I am certainly a big fan of the Charlie Mackesy drawings and life lessons; they are a delight to read.

What has been the proudest moment/biggest achievement in your career?

Becoming an RT and being selected to teach on the IH horses was a proud moment of my equine career and each time I get a message from successful owners I'm eternally grateful for the opportunity to do the work I do.

What would your advice be to someone hoping to become a Recommended Trainer?

Anyone that has a passion for people and horses I would openly encourage them to start their RT training. I would recommend they take in as much information as they could (from books, online, demos, courses, being a helper etc). I would also tell them to contact fellow RT Sandra Williams because as the IH Coordinator she will set you on the right track!

I remember thinking that a RT had so much knowledge and expertise I wanted to know everything just like them... I soon realised the more I learned the less I knew, but if you love the subject it will just increase your appetite to keep learning and that's what is so inspirational the IH organisation – it's always evolving.

Please share some of the horses you have started that have gone on to competition success in dressage and showing:

I worked with lovely owners Sarah and Rosie with their horse Joey. Sarah and Rosie had dreams of entering Joey into a dressage competition, but unfortunately, he was refusing to load! We worked over several sessions and both Sarah and Rosie were dedicated with their homework and they soon saw results. As loading got better, we worked on other areas such as clipping and last year they proudly entered their first dressage competition! Then in February this year they won their first dressage competition! I am so proud of them; all their hard work and time has led to their success and it is lovely to be part of their journey.

Where have you travelled in the world through demos with Monty and Kelly?

I love supporting the UK demos, but my favourite must be Your Horse Live in Warwickshire. It is a great opportunity to spend some time with fellow RTs and to meet so many supportive members on the stand – it was such a pleasure!

I also love riding around the world and learning how different cultures handle and look after their horses. I had the pleasure of riding with The Wild Coast Horse Riding Adventure in South Africa, their horses were in excellent condition, we had amazing experiences with long beaches, cliffs, grasslands and finished with a horse back safari!

Kelly is based in Nottinghamshire her website is www.truenorthhorse.co.uk