



Newsletter - August 2008

Hi everyone,

Its newsletter time again – well, a bit overdue actually but there have been lots of interesting things happening and I wanted to wait so I could share them with you.

We are about half way through our 1-year part time Diploma course, at the moment and the three day module format has been very successful with serious learning and light-hearted fun in equal doses. Our organic veggie patch and free range chickens supplied most of the produce for delicious home made lunches, prompting calls for a second book....101 Oakwood Recipes !

It has been fascinating and very rewarding to see all the students making such progress and really developing their communication skills, patience, timing and feel with their horses. Video clips will soon be on the website so you can get an idea of what the courses are about.

Talking of video..... Some of you (most dedicated newsletter readers !) may remember that last year I did a Liberty performance with Esteem to live opera. It was very well received and opened the door to an invitation to perform a piece to music in the enormous new indoor arena at Hartpury College for the Gala evening of the Lusitano Breed Society Show this June.

The performance was based on a dream that I had of capturing the heart and acceptance of a wild horse, which then allowed me to ride across the plains connected by a thread of gold.

More than slightly intimidated by the vastness of the arena and feeling a bit conspicuous having the only non-Iberian horse on campus (I even considered hair extensions to give Esteem a Portuguese disguise!) I shouldn't have worried as she rose to the occasion as always and gave a wonderful performance to music that started with Liberty then bareback and bridleless riding and finished with 'dressage' with just a golden thread in her mouth. The whole performance was carefully choreographed to some soul-stirring music expertly arranged by Ken Barnsley who specialises in creating music for Dressage.

The video is available to watch on YouTube www.youtube.com/riatoakwood .

(Due to file size restrictions on YouTube the quality is poor, so we are about to reconfigure the website to enable high quality video streaming – please bear with us !!)

Following the performance I had some very encouraging feed back from some influential trainers one of whom was Sylvia Loch who will be well known to many of you as a trainer and author in the Classical school.

Sylvia has spent her life dedicated to teaching how to work in lightness and harmony with the horse and we discussed many parallels between the worlds of Classical and Natural Horsemanship. In her quest to spread the message of Harmony in Horsemanship, she started the Classical Riding Club 13 years ago, which is dedicated to the horse, to enlightened understanding of him and to the development of real happy and successful partnerships. She is very supportive of Natural Horsemanship so if you have leanings towards the Classical do support her valuable work through the CRC and gain access to a fantastic wealth of knowledge, information, horse friendly competitions and like-minded people. www.classicalriding.co.uk

On the 9th and 10th of August I, and many of you (plus about 6 thousand other horse lovers) attended the 2 day Parelli Show at the NEC near Birmingham. It was great to see sooooo many familiar faces of clients and friends. As always it was an inspiring event, and rather like visiting

Mecca for so many likeminded people who believe in putting the relationship with the horse before everything else.

The message was incredibly powerful.... that with a combined voice and tireless dedication together we can, and will, change the world for the good of the horse.

My life has and always will be dedicated to this cause and I wholeheartedly support what Pat and Linda and the Parelli team are determined to do and I encourage you to join the Savvy Club www.parellisavvyclub.com . For just £10 per month this will not only give you access to exceptional educational materials and support, and to new types of regional and national horse-friendly tournaments, but more than that, your voice will help add to the momentum of this movement.

I first came across Natural Horsemanship 10 years ago when I was 34 and had been involved with horses since I was 7 years old. I can honestly say that that day changed my life and I knew I'd found what I had been looking for. I imagined at the time that everyone would feel the same and that the movement would wash over the equestrian world like a tidal wave, but it didn't seem to be that dramatic and for a while I worried that the message would not be embraced on a large scale and it would remain something only valued by a very small minority.

In fact something much more powerful is happening. Instead of a Tsunami, there has been a slow inexorable rise of the waters as the tide of consciousness across the equestrian world at large is gradually rising.

Equestrian TV and magazines, talks and demonstrations by certain riders and trainers and some of the more enlightened education providers, place more and more emphasis on ethical training based on an understanding and respect for the nature of the horse.

There is a long way to go, but I truly believe it is unstoppable now as people become more and more switched on to considering riding, training and competing from the horses perspective. The fact that you are reading this newsletter means you are probably among those who consider carefully who and what you support, and if you are ever in doubt, feeling confused by methods that appear to contradict each other, ask yourself what your horse would choose !

Remember, whether you aspire to Classical Dressage, want to play at Liberty, would like to feel safer on a hack or be able to resolve issues with your horse like trailer loading or clipping, it all starts at the same place.... *Foundation Training on the Ground and in the Saddle*so, whether you want private lessons or want to study in depth by joining our Applied Equine Behaviour courses please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Dates are up on my website for the next AEB Diploma Courses for 2008/09. Sue is starting one in East Sussex in August and I will be teaching one here at Oakwood beginning in March. We are already taking bookings for these so don't delay getting in touch if you are looking for an empowering and life changing experience to share with your horse.

Livery – we have decided to offer a small number of livery places to like-minded people who are on their horsemanship journey. This will include turn out and stable and use of the arena and all the obstacles and play areas. We have great traffic free hacking on our doorstep and direct access to the South Downs. Please call for further information.

We look forward to seeing you soon,

Best wishes,

Rio

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