

# The Pony Club Annual Conference 2015

The Pony Club's Annual Conference was held on March 4th at its bi-annual venue of Cheltenham Racecourse. The event boasted a jam-packed and varied line up that reflected the feedback from volunteers on what would most help them to run their Pony Club activities, as well as acting as the final official engagement for Chief Executive, Judy Edwards.

The day kicked off with some 'Inspirational Thoughts' courtesy East Cheshire Branch District Commissioner (DC), Geoff Bell, who has held the role of DC for 10 years, as well as Centre Proprietor of Carrington Riding Centre, Sharon Groos.

Sharon, who boasts 125 Pony Club Members at her riding school in Manchester, commented "Pony Club is now a major influence on our riding centre and plays an important role in increasing the participation of young people who have a passion for horses".



Following on was a new addition to the line up, with Volunteers being introduced to the latest developments in the areas of IT, including database integration and the exciting prospect of centralised Membership for The Pony Club in 2016, as well as training initiatives for Members and Health and Safety advice for volunteers; followed on by the opportunity for interaction between delegates and Pony Club representatives from the relevant areas.

Before the break for lunch there was a presentation from Mary Tuckett, Pony Club Chairman, to outgoing Chief Executive, Judy Edwards, to mark her final official engagement for The Pony Club.

Speaking after the presentation Judy commented "To promote the highest ideals of sportsmanship, citizenship and loyalty to create strength of character and self discipline, I believe is even more important today than it was 86 years ago. We are all custodians of this very special ethos and I feel enormously proud and privileged to have been able to serve for this length of time".

After lunch, there was the opportunity to sit back and enjoy a light hearted slot from Pony Club Members John Church and Chris Harris, around their amazing 'Australian Experience' as part of The Pony Club Tetrathlon International Exchange. Including teams from Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, John and Chris shared their memories some of the amazing activities, including sky diving and surfing, along with the friendships they formed whilst on the tour.

This was followed by the rare insight from Terry Pendry, who acts as Stud Groom and Manager to Her Majesty The Queen, at The Royal Mews, Windsor Castle. Terry shared some wonderful memories of his time in the role, which he has held for 20 years, following retirement from The Riding Staff, of the Blues and Royals Regiment, Household Cavalry, having started his career as a professional jockey.

The presentation of 'Pony Club Secretary of the Year' was made by current Pony Club President, the Lady Lloyd Webber, to Iona Griffiths Pierce from the Flint and Denbigh Hunt Branch; which is the 4th largest in the country with a membership of 270. Iona was nominated by the Flint and Denbigh Branch DC, Bethan Jones, who commented "Every Branch needs a special person like Iona! She encourages all children from all backgrounds to make the most of being a Member of the Branch, by giving them opportunities to try all activities connected to The Pony Club".

Those attending also had chance to meet The Pony Club's valued sponsors, browse sponsors trade stands and The Pony Club's wide range of merchandise, as well as being given access to Discipline Chairman and other key members of Pony Club staff to give help and guidance.

Following a final chance to ask any burning questions that officials may have, Mary Tuckett closed the 2015 Conference, commenting "I hope you have all very much enjoyed your day, I know I have. Having listened to all the fantastic input, one of the most important things to remember is that we must continue to do as we have been for so many years, and enthuse young people about riding and horse care, because if we don't I am sure the world will certainly be a poorer place".