

ACT 3: THE JOURNEY OF A PARA RIDER

Lucinda Mitchell riding A Splash of Colour represented Area 14 and along with a commentary by her Trainer Emma Harford gave an excellent display supported by Emma outlining Lucinda's journey as a para rider.

Emma first met Lucinda nearly 4 years ago, when she came to The Talland School of Equitation to have a lesson on a Side Saddle Schoolmistresses. She had never ridden side saddle before, and until Emma met her she had no idea she had any form of disability. Lucinda briefly explained that she had a nerve condition C.R.P.S that meant she was finding it too painful to ride astride, so thought about having a go Side Saddle, to see how she found it. She was down playing her condition seriously, which is not unusual for a really determined person who wants to continue with their riding. Emma later found out CRPS is a severe disorder, which causes extreme pain through the peripheral nerves to a person's limbs, with Lucinda, it initially affected her right lower leg, it now affects much more of her body including her bone density, and general strength among other things.

Riding Side Saddle gave Lucinda, as it does many other disabled riders a new lease of life, whether it be historically, injured soldiers returning from war still wanting to ride, or the modern rider, with an injury or disorder that means they cannot continue as they did before, for Lucinda, she was only able to ride comfortably for about 10 minutes astride, whereas she is now able to ride for up to a couple of hours, and compete.

After the initial sessions, Emma and Lucinda discussed what she could do to compete, what classes and how. They then got on to the subject of Riding for the Disabled, and the world of Para Dressage. Emma had excellent contacts - Talland is the oldest Official RDA centre in the Country (51 years this year) as set up by Molly Sivewright even before the main RDA itself existed. Pammy Hutton and Hilary Hughes have also been involved in the training of Paralympic dressage medal winning riders for as long as Emma can remember. If you are registered disabled and want to enter the world of Para Dressage - the first thing you need to do is contact either the RDA, or the Para representative at British Dressage, you will need to apply to have an assessment with an approved Physiotherapist, in order to be graded. Lucinda is graded as a Grade 4 rider, which for those of you who know her off a horse you may think is a bit odd, the one thing that the officials cannot grade is pain - and Lucinda's condition is, in simple terms largely pain related, it is recognised on the McGill International Pain Index as one of, if not the most painful disorder known, and as her condition isn't well recognised, this does place her at a small disadvantage to others within her grade. Lucinda hasn't let this get to her - everything is a new challenge, she has been very busy teaching Splash the lateral work required for the Grade 4 tests, something that neither of them had approached before she started to ride side saddle - and she does it with very little help - she is the only one who really rides Splash. Continuing to ride has multiple benefits for Lucinda, the way you ride side saddle, helps to maintain your core muscles, retaining excellent posture, and upright position, which is imperative to give the body strength, especially if your bones are not as strong due to the reduced or lack of mobility. In turn it helps with your general fitness and circulation in turn helping bone strength - one big circle.



However the most important thing, is the psychological and emotional benefits it has to give a person the freedom that they don't have with their own body, to carry on with their passion, their love, their 'release' to help make them feel uninhibited for the time they ride. Side saddle riding is an excellent avenue for those with a wide range of disabilities, there are so many options with traditional "near side" saddles and also "off side" saddles, and new saddles being produced, it gives riders so many more opportunities, that need to be seized.

Lucinda is, as are all disabled riders who rode prior to their disability, very, very determined, and all Para riders set an example to all of us who say we can't do things - almost anything is possible if you want it badly enough- or you can at least give it your very best try.

ACT 4: ADVANCED DRESSAGE TO MUSIC

Claire Lewis presented a stunning dressage display at Advanced level.

At the Side Saddle Association's Annual General Meeting last year, Mrs. Jane Holderness-Roddam, the Side Saddle Association Patron, kindly presented the Association with the beautiful Bernard Weatherill habit she had worn in 1976 during a Bernard Weatherill fashion display at Leeds Castle in front of a large audience, including HRH Princess Margaret.

She was taking part in a 'Pas de Deux' with dressage guru, David Hunt. Her sister, Jennie Loriston-Clarke was originally asked to ride, but was unavailable as she was competing in Bromont in the British Olympic Dressage Team. Jane was riding Kadett, a Dutch Warmblood that Jennie had ridden at the 1972 Olympics in Munich.



Jane recalls that the display took place in a tiny arena, but she remembers feeling a million dollars prancing about doing Passage, Piaffe and Flying Changes, but said she was rather glad that Jennie was not there to tell her if she got it wrong!

Apparently it was a very wet day and few photographs were taken. Anyone who has lifted up the habit will be amazed at the weight of it, and it would have been even heavier when wet. The apron, which is actually a skirt, is a full circle of material.

For her display five times Rider of the Year, Claire riding Dragonswick Czardas, a 13 year old Trakehner modelled the habit beautifully.

ACT 5: PAS SEUL - THE AINTREE CLOWN

Beth Robertson riding Copper Mine represented Area 10 giving a thrilling and fun display as The Aintree Clown!

We welcome you all to the Aintree Big Top... to the biggest show in town... Please cheer, please clap & join the fun... we welcome the Aintree Clowns!

Bright bold clothes, noses bright red, silly hats upon their heads.

A big blue flower, a big bow tie, a tear drop falling from an eye.

Balloons galore, party poppers, the horn sounding with a roar!

A chestnut coat, those noisy shoes,

A painted smile to chase the blues.

Making us laugh and banish that frown

The simple duties of a Clown!

