

THE PEMBROKE CENTRE IMPACT REPORT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2024

In 2024 there were:

- **3679 riding sessions** for **243 people**
- **185 volunteers** who provided in excess of **23,000 hours**, which equates to over **£263,000 based on the minimum wage**
- **25 sessions of yoga with horses**
- **13 Tea with a Pony sessions** for over **115** guests





INTRODUCTION

The year 2024 saw continuing development at the Pembroke Centre. The new logo is now widely used and the web site is up and running.

While the "Pembroke Centre" has been adopted as the over-arching banner for all our equine therapy activities it has become very clear that for many of our supporters Wilton RDA remains the cause which they support and promote.

We continue to make it clear that our activities offer help to people not just through riding but through relationships with horses but we have continued to promote the RDA brand in our community based activities.

We were determined that we should continue to raise our profile as a community resource and we have had several opportunities to contribute to wider community activity. As always, this involvement, in addition to our core business, has meant more demands on our volunteers.

The end of 2024 saw a spate of accidents and illness which could have reduced our capacity to provide equine therapy and to care for the horses but our volunteers more than stepped up to ensure business as usual and to offer huge support to poorly colleagues. A testament to the sense of community and family that contribute to making the Pembroke centre very special.



VOLUNTEERS

We have 185 volunteers (as at December 2024) They have given up in excess of 23,000 hours of their time this year. This equates to over £260,000 based on the minimum wage for 2024.

This extraordinary commitment demonstrates the importance of volunteer help. Without our volunteers it would be prohibitively expensive to provide the range of activities we offer and to care properly for our horses and ponies. 24 new volunteers joined us during the year. 21 volunteers moved on for a variety of reasons, health issues, moving house or finding work.

On Saturdays we rely very much on our younger volunteers. They give up their Saturday mornings to help us and they have grown in confidence and expertise throughout the year. This was vividly demonstrated at the opening of our new outdoor school where they not only led riders and ponies in a musical ride but also proved to be charming waiters and tour guides.



All volunteers have an induction training and a regular refresher training at the start of the academic year. This year highlights of the training were a quiz on effective leading and sidewalking and a very moving presentation from Ele Milwright from Warrior Equine.

Some volunteers also took part in safeguarding training and others attended a thought provoking First Aid course.

The Centre has only two paid employees; the Centre Manager and Rider Co-ordinator, both are excellent in their roles but simply could not do everything that needs to be done without the exceptional efforts of our volunteers.

RIDERS

During the year we provided 3679 riding sessions for 243 people. Riders have a six week riding course and progress is logged each week against their original profile.

Riders are very much a mixed ability group. Some riders have severe physical disabilities and may need the hoist to get them mounted. Others have emotional needs or are on the autistic spectrum. Some will just enjoy a walk in the woods while others can submit a video of their dressage test for consideration at RDA national level.



The variety of rider needs means that our Coaches must be both organised and inventive, making riding sessions fun while ensuring steady progress. It is a measure of the quality of our Coaches that two of them were awarded Coach of the Year certificates from RDA UK.



RIDERS

We very much welcome feedback from riders and this year our Rider Ambassador conducted a small survey to find what they thought about riding at the Centre. 100% said that they liked riding at the Centre, liked the volunteers working with them and thought that the charge for riding was good value.

There were also many positive comments from riders and family members.

"It's great fun. Makes me happy"

"The volunteers are always here to talk to and have fun and always here to help/support me if needed"

"I like going up into the woods. It's quite quiet"

"It's my favourite time of the week. Keep doing what you are doing"

"Calms C, after a lesson he will engage with me and others which he doesn't normally. Given C so much confidence"

"All the staff are great. Very understanding with the children"

"Riding keeps me moving. It helps with keeping me healthy and happy"

"Everyone is so friendly. They make me feel very welcome"

"I love everything about Wilton RDA and am very grateful to be able to ride there."

OWN A PONY

There were two Own a Pony days during school holidays this year. Ten young people took part in the sessions and enjoyed them very much. The days provide an opportunity for riders to learn what it means to look after a pony and to understand more about equine behaviour.

YOGA WITH HORSES

There have been 25 sessions this year. These have been much enjoyed by the participants and have also raised £250 for the Centre.

"We are a small dedicated group as we all appreciate the benefits that participating in yoga brings particularly in the calm and peaceful surroundings of the Pembroke Centre"

EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING

Ground based sessions continue to demonstrate the value of a one-to-one relationship with a horse whether it is an opportunity for individual therapy or the chance to care for a pony in the stall. Three regular participants enjoyed 68 hours of Horse Care and a student from Fairfield College has been attending, partly to help with gardening but also to spend time with the horses. She has been very enthusiastic about the experience and hopes to come again next year.



TEA WITH A PONY



This year we had 13 visits for Tea with a Pony and a total of 115 guests. Some of the visits were from groups returning for a second or third time. We welcomed groups from; Whiteparish Surgery, Milford House, Mencap, Avonbourne, MS Support, Camelot, Old Sarum, Moors Manor, Wilton Place, Elizabeth House and the Porton Friday Club.

We also ran a session as part of the Silver Salisbury programme. There were many positive comments about the experience.

"I usually feel uncomfortable going out but I am fine coming here"

"Everyone is so friendly"

"This is such a beautiful place"

The opportunity to socialise with volunteers and with others in the group is becoming more and more a beneficial part of the experience. One very shy and anxious guest started talking to another visitor who had been to the Centre before and spent most of the afternoon deep in conversation.

It was not just the guests who enjoyed the experience. One comment was:

"The carers are having a good time!"

Some visitors to the Silver Salisbury session knew little about the Centre or the ponies and commented:

"I didn't know anything about you and what you do but I am hugely impressed."



A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

We have encouraged other organisations to use the Centre. The Pony Club, Side Saddle Club, Wessex Riding Club, Pinkham Equine and Warrior Equine have all used our facilities.

A representative of the Salisbury Hockey Club visited to talk about their programme for children with disabilities and the RDA UK Head of Fundraising paid a visit. We also had a visit from a local Women's Institute group.

We were out in the community raising our profile.

We gave a presentation at the Wilton Annual Town Meeting

We joined the circus parade at Wilton Carnival.



We had stalls at Salisbury Racecourse, Sherbourne Country Fair, the Summer Fair at Wilton House and at Salisbury Tesco. We visited Salisbury Almshouses to receive a generous donation and to talk about what we do.

We also invited guests to events on site.

The Wilton Walk in April gave people a chance to see the Centre itself and to walk around part of the Wilton Estate. This was a first but we look forward to repeating the event in 2025.

We had the formal opening of our new outdoor school and welcomed over 100 people to see the Earl of Pembroke cut the ribbon to formally open it.



The annual Carol Service was also a chance to welcome people to the Centre, to see our riders take part in the Nativity and to see Father Christmas arrive in style.



All of these events attracted a great deal of positive coverage in the local press and we are very grateful to Spencer Mulholland for all the excellent photographs that he provided.



We have also significantly increased our online profile. The Facebook page attracted 7300 visits, an increase of 172% on last year. There were 77 Facebook posts. Our website had 2426 visitors and over 10000 page views.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is always a significant part of what we do but it has been especially so this year.

As part of the Salisbury Mayor's Appeal we have received £10,000 in total. We are very grateful to Mayor Atiquil Hoque for naming us as a beneficiary.

We have had continuing support from Salisbury Tesco and from the Wilton Rotary Club for which we are extremely grateful.

Our 200 Club now has 93 members and raised a total of £2612.25.

We also raised funds through the Adopt a Pony scheme, our Stash Your Cash tins and from collecting boxes.

This year we also tried Crowdfunding for the first time. This was to match fund a grant from Sport England and was to raise funds for the much needed replacement of the outdoor riding school. We were overwhelmed by the level of support that we received. We raised the required amount very quickly but were also immensely grateful for the many messages of support that accompanied donations.

Some of our supporters used "Just Giving" to raise £3205 for us and we are especially grateful for the £1050 raised by a newly married couple who asked for a donation to us instead of wedding presents!

None of these activities could have taken place without the efforts of our supporters, our committed and enthusiastic Trustees, our Centre Manager and Rider Co-ordinator, our team of hard working volunteers and our horses and ponies who have been, as always, a joy for us all.

