

**Northern Report for the DBS national AGM, November 2016:**

Towards the start of this year, via “Bray Talk” and “The Donkey”, I asked members throughout the DBS to rummage through their tack boxes to see if they had any old or unwanted halters or bits they could send to me for forwarding to The Gambia Horse & Donkey Trust, a small charity registered in both the UK and The Gambia.

The aim of the Trust is to help reduce rural poverty in The Gambia through improving the health, welfare and productivity of working animals, especially horses and donkeys. An immediate way of achieving this is to replace the traditional mouthpiece used by local Gambians, which closely resembles an instrument of medieval torture, with the bits we are used to seeing in our donkeys’ mouths. I am delighted to report that a number of DBS members have been very kind indeed and I have been able to forward several parcels to the Trust. Thank you to all who have been so generous to date – but there is always a need for such items so please do continue to send them to me.

I am pleased to be able to report that most of our Shows in the North this year have enjoyed high numbers of donkeys, much to the delight of the public watching the classes. Glendene Show (superbly organised by Helen Naden) had 19 donkeys forward and The Great Yorkshire Show enjoyed donkey numbers in the high ‘teens and gorgeous weather. Sadly, this year Halifax did not affiliate to the DBS but there were still donkey classes. The Glendale Show, Wooler, Northumberland had 35 donkeys entered with 29 donkeys forward – numbers were boosted as the Show also acted as host for the MMDA Supreme Championship this year. The Sedgefield and District Agricultural & Horticultural Society affiliated to the DBS for the first time this year and 9 donkeys came forward on the day.

There was strong Northern representation at the Supreme Championship Show in August. I am delighted that *Toadflax of Brownroad*, driven by Elizabeth Bool, won Reserve Supreme Driving Champion – Elizabeth was also awarded the Best Rein Rosette, and *Frontier Legends Diplomat* brought the Reserve Supreme In-Hand Champion Rosette to John and me in North Northumberland.

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Away from the Shows, Pam Moon (Lancashire Area Representative) reports that a highly successful evening was held at Oakhill Vets in Preston on 13 October - a good mix of donkey owners, including DBS members, Donkey Sanctuary foster owners, Beach Operators and a new donkey judge, filled the room to capacity to listen to super presentations by Vet from The Donkey Sanctuary, Anna Harrison, "Donkeys are Different", an insight into donkey nutrition by representatives from Top Spec and further food for thought on laminitis and Cushing’s from Oakhill Vet, Leona Bramall. A raffle was held with the top prize of a bag of Top Spec Donkey Forage Balancer……………..and goodies were on sale from The Donkey Sanctuary. Refreshments were supplied by Oakhill Vets and everybody left with more knowledge of donkeys.

Olwen Brown has been a very active Area Representative – because of her farm location she has a very large catchment area covering Cheshire, South Yorkshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire. Olwen usually holds monthly meetings, except for August (Show season) and December (Christmas events) with an average attendance of 12 – 14. In January there was a harnessing and harness fitting demonstration; in February, a demonstration on the first steps in long reining; in April a “putting-to” demonstration; in July members went on a six mile walk, long reining donkeys or with their donkeys wearing lead packs (containing their lunches!) along the Longdendale Trail; in September there was the annual Tatton Park gathering where, after a picnic, members walked, long-reined or drove their donkeys around the lovely wooded park. In October there was a bits and bit-fitting meeting and November saw a “First Aid and when to call the Vet” meeting addressed by Liz Brown BSc Hons, BVSC, MRCVS – this was followed by the pre-Christmas “Bring & Share” Lunch.

The Northern Points Awards were made at the Northern Region AGM, kindly hosted by Bill & Carol Tetlow, earlier this month. The Junior Champion was Imogen Jones-Percival, with the Junior Reserve Champion being Georgia Davey. The In-Hand Championship was won jointly *by Brownwood Desert Cassia* (John & Terri Morris) and *Taka Ra Haka of Todridge* (Geraldine Burton) and the Driving Champion was *Toadflax of Brownload* (Elizabeth Bool).

At the Northern Region AGM, the following were elected for the ensuing year: Chairman: Lorraine Rae; Treasurer: Bill Tetlow; Secretary: Carol Tetlow.

The national DBS AGM takes place on Saturday 19 November 2016 at The Gosforth Park Hotel, Newcastle upon Tyne and a warm welcome awaits all DBS members attending.

With best wishes to all our members – and their donkeys - for a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

**Lorraine Rae, Regional Delegate - North**