**Western Region Report**

for The Donkey Breed Society Annual General Meeting November 2016

2016 has been another busy year for donkeys and their owners, as well as those members who give us support through their interest in donkeys. We have been saddened by the loss of some of our older members who in the past have played an active part in DBS events, contributing invaluably to their organisation. Especially we would like to mention Revd. Ted Fooks and Mr Peter Ansdell , both of whom are much missed. The Western Region were well represented at both their funeral services

A small sub-committee has been formed to carry out the preparations for the Golden Jubilee AGM and dinner in 2017 on behalf of the Society. This is a historic milestone for the DBS as we celebrate with thanks all those people who in one way and another have enabled our Society to grow and flourish. Puckrup Hall Hotel, a member of the Hilton group, have been keen to give us a weekend to remember, and incredibly have held the prices quoted when they were first approached in 2015. We hope that our plans will encourage members to join us for a most enjoyable AGM, dinner and for some a stay in a most pleasant and easily accessible country hotel.

We have represented the DBS at three occasions when our interface with the public has amounted to thousands. Countrytastic at the Three Counties Ground in Malvern in April saw us among crowds of children and parents eager to meet all the domestic animals which form a part of country life. In the Autumn a similar opportunity presents itself when the Plant Show shared with the Royal Horticultural Society arranges Animal World as a diversion. Claire Harper organises both events supported by members’ donkeys and their handlers. We are always worn out by the end of the day but we are constantly amazed at the interest shown. Donkeys certainly seem to stir a lot of memories and the children are so enthusiastic. Last Christmas the ‘Christmas Donkey’ pageant for six Primary Schools in Hereford Cathedral was a triumph once again. The cathedral was brimful of youngsters many ready and dressed appropriately to take part as shepherds or angels. Two new members and their donkeys played starring roles and the Dean was so moved by it all that he wrote a personal letter to each of the donkey owners .

Sheila Bell once again hosted her marvellous July members’ lunch, with more than ever joining us for this very special get-together. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know many in our region. How she manages to organise so calmly the feeding of so many, remains a mystery, even with her well-trained team of helpers.

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Many congratulations to Jean Fooks who triumphed at the Supreme Championships with her lovely mare Gamlingay Fantasy. It was very exciting to find the Supreme Champion coming from the Western Region.

We have struggled a good deal this year to find Area Representatives for all our areas needing replacements. Staffordshire is still without and membership numbers in that area have, not surprisingly, dwindled. We were therefore all the more pleased that John McLaren from Island Farm has agreed to take over the task in Oxfordshire. His many contacts in the area and his wide knowledge of donkeys will stand him in excellent stead. In Shropshire, Bridget Smith has handed over to Deirdre Steele after a long stint, during which she has organised the donkey section at Knighton Show . We are tremendously grateful to Bridget for all that she has done both in her Area and with her Miniature Donkey Lucie. We are lucky to have Deirdre willing and able to step in to her shoes.

Congratulations to Anna Turner who after a good deal of research has developed and designed a Weight Tape for donkeys, to calculate accurately a donkey’s weight prior to worming. We saw it in action at the Three Counties Autumn show where Anna demonstrated to us its correct use. The tape fulfils a longstanding need for more accurate measurement. The tape is in production and obtainable from Anna.

We still lack Junior members, and still fail to find any members at all in the West Midlands Area, but we hope some new ideas will be forthcoming at our next Area Representative’s meeting in January, to address these problems.

Suzanne Farr

Regional Delegate