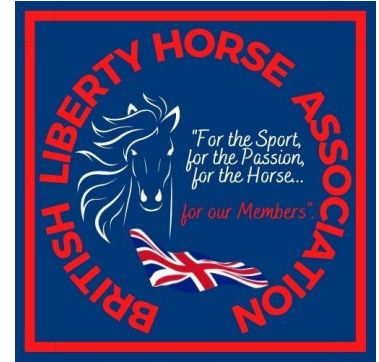


British Liberty Horse Association presents

Member Spotlight on...



Harriet Clarke



Introduction

Harriet, or Hazy as she likes to be known, lives in Leicestershire and joined the BLHA in February 2021. She has since joined the BLHA Sub-Committee, volunteering to be the New Members Buddy.

Here's what we found out about Hazy...

Do you own, loan or borrow a horse and how many do you have or work with?

Shadow is my first horse, my own sweet piebald 15.2 mare. She came into my life in September 2020 and turns 11 this month. I'm learning and developing solely with her. I'm also very grateful to friends who help me learn by sharing how they are training and developing their horses.

How old were you when you started working/training/riding/owning horses?

I'd been on a lovely family donkey as well as on trekking mules as a child, but I hadn't been pony riding or sat on a horse until just before I turned 46 – so that was Summer 2017. I wanted a new area of development in my life and luckily there is a DIY livery behind my suburban Leicester house that showed me there is a horse world to discover! I had anticipated getting to know about equines for years but took my time, in part as I could only see riding as *the* way to learn about horses, and I also was trying to work out how I felt about the ethics of riding (and the very little I knew about horsemanship). I'm very glad I plucked up courage to go for riding lessons in my mid-40s and am also pleased to find out that riding is just one possible element of how we can build and enjoy horse-human relationships.

Why did you decide to learn liberty and how long have you been doing it?

As soon as the BLHA launched, friends told me about it and I signed up quick! I'd not long had Shadow in my life and I have so much to learn I felt a bit like a sponge seeking new experiences to soak up. So I've only been engaged in learning about liberty since the Spring of 2021. I knew very little before this but I'd heard of Mia (Rodley) before the BLHA was formed, and actually before I had Shadow. So I feel that liberty was important in showing me that there are ways of working with horses that can be very relationship based. It's so lovely to be benefiting from BLHA learning with Shadow.

What are your horsey/liberty aspirations?

Liberty is great for me as it isn't about choosing one discipline, it's a discipline or a practice which can support different paths with horses. I definitely have horsemanship skills to develop, which I feel are coming on. I hope Shadow and I can build a relationship together that means we have that mutual language that enables us to enjoy liberty work more and more. I also want us both to keep developing our confidence in ourselves

and one another. My current focus is on groundwork (on-line and at liberty), but I have much development I could do as a rider too. We will enjoy what we do and where we go with it, and whilst objectives can be helpful I am much more focused on the process than the outcome. If we one day ride bridleless, great, but our relationship and connection is the most important thing!

What's the biggest challenge for you/your horse and liberty?

The responsibility we have to make good choices for our horses is new to me. I'm on a yard without a School which is a bit hard (for me, if not Shadow!) at the moment. However, our menage should be back in use eventually, the yard is right by my home and I love Shadow being in a mixed herd. Working out how to support our horses to have the best life we can offer them has to be the biggest challenge and I suppose I'll just have to keep finding my way and doing my best.

What's your greatest horsey achievement to date?

I do love that Shadow and I won a 3rd Place Rosette in the first Intro A BLHA on-line test! We are a long way from fully developed but got the feedback that I can use to help keep us moving forward. That's my first ever test rosette! Yey! Beyond that, it's building the relationship with Shadow. We have come a long way together, she's been very kind to this first-time horse carer!

What do you do when you're not with your horses?

At any time of the year I love jumping in a quarry lake when I get the chance to (I am a wetsuit in Autumn/Winter/Spring kind of a swimmer!). Outdoor swimming and horsemanship both give you a wonderful experience of the seasons and of the natural world. I also work as a university lecturer in Social Policy, and I enjoy working with adult learners and being involved in research work. Plus I'm a trainee psychotherapist which also keeps me quite busy! Some of these interests could marry up in their own way. So I think I might like to train in equine assisted psychotherapy later, and also possibly research the role of animals in health and social care. So there's much fun to be had in thinking about weaving my interests together. Perhaps swimming will just stay as my fun 'away from it all' time!

Who is your horsey hero and why?

Eek! I don't want just one hero because there are lots of great men and women out there. Of people I've met through BLHA, both Mia Rodley and

Emma Tytherleigh have helped me see the possibilities of connection between human and horse. At BLHA demonstrations they have shown their highly advanced work and made the learning fun and accessible to relative newbies like me. Of people I've not met, I have to say Warwick Schiller is a hero as his podcasts are introducing me to many more people, sometimes in ways that marry up some of my learning about psychotherapy with horsemanship and when that happens that's quite a wow for me.

You've recently taken on the role of New Members Buddy for the BLHA - tell me more about that and what you hope to achieve?

I am relatively new to horses, and new to liberty, so I know what being new feels like! I'm also beginning to build my confidence now I have my own mare and am looking forward to developing Shadow and me further. Whether members are really experienced or newish to horses or liberty (or somewhere in the middle!), I hope I can be an approachable contact to help people find their way. We want people to feel able to participate whether that's remotely (in challenges and competitions), or in person (such as at lessons, clinics or demonstrations). For me what I really want to help achieve is for others to gain a sense of community and participation, because this is what has absolutely lifted things for me and for Shadow - and so I hope to be part of supporting that for the membership.

And finally...what would you say to someone who may be thinking about giving liberty and the BLHA a go?

I'd say it's fun and it's friendly, and the support is blooming awesome! Experienced folks, come share your learning and keep developing, new folks, be like me and be part of it too. There is such a clear commitment from those organising the BLHA to ensuring we all enjoy this community. So do give me a shout if you have any questions and I hope to meet you soon.