**October Camp at the Unicorn Trust – Reflections of a Para Driver**

What a buzz of excitement there was on Tuesday 3 Oct at the Unicorn Trust as the drivers, supporters, organisers and trainers started to arrive and settle in ready for two (CDSGdd) exciting full days of driving activities and get ready to use the fabulous facilities.

It is a wonderful occasion to meet up with old friends and make new ones in a really supportive atmosphere, and these clinics bring out the best in all. It's always great to have a mix of RDA drivers and coaches, experienced para drivers and new drivers, with some from riding - all with one thing in common ... the combined enthusiasm to get into, improve and enjoy driving.

On Wednesday Robert and Maria Buck explored (via a fabulous and pertinent cross training demonstration). The benefits of riding and driving was perfectly illustrated, with a fabulous wealth of excellent content, and, delivered in a really fun and informative way. The wonderful Billy ridden by Maria Buck(Julie Camm’s International driving pony who has also competed at 3 day eventing and now in his late 20s!!!) and Flash (Averina Snow’s International pony) driven by Robert Buck.

During the camp we were introduced to putting together a Tandem (one equine in front of each other) as part of our education programme into driving. Averina Snow kindly offered her two established driving ponies (Flash and H) for the first time which resulted in a fascinating demo to watch and much enjoyed by all. Sara Howe and Chris van Reen facilitated this demo and as experienced tandem drivers did not take too much encouragement to take the reins!!! A fab and informative demo.

Welcoming and recognising Drivers, Helpers, Coaches and Newcomers Chris van Reen took delegates under her wing to go through the fundamentals and importance of correct fitting of harness which was very well received – we all need to refresh our knowledge in this important area.

After Wednesday's busy day learning we had another great supper with quizzes organised by Chris. These were such fun - getting a lot of group participation..... especially the singing along to 70 s and 80s hits!

Thursday, another big cooked breakfast set us up for individual sessions with cones and obstacle driving but with a competitive element with each driver timed doing their round. We were then put into four teams each with a cross section of drivers and each keen to come out on top! It was consistent with our training and a lot of fun.

It was a wonderfully happy camp where we all enjoyed ourselves, supported each other, while learning at just the right level for each of us to progress. Using both the indoor and outdoor arenas also allowed us to work on individual things such as practising the indoor dressage test.

A big thank you to Giselle and Julie for organising, Robert and Sara for the firstclass training, Averina, for lending her ponies to drivers and supporting four turnouts each day, Chris for harness instruction and tandem support, Maria for her ridden demo and behind the scenes in getting ponies ready to provide driving experiences, the cooks who kept us well nourished, and Sidney Smith who provides such fabulous (and very much appreciated) support and facilities.

Emily Hamm (Para driver)