

## News from Plumpton College Equine Department



Plumpton College lies within the heart of East Sussex and has a long-standing equine department that has been providing equine courses for over twenty years. Plumpton is one of the few colleges left where you can still see students hard at work on the yard at 6.30am in the morning and 7.00pm in the evening. The early and late duties gear students up for the reality of the equine industry and greatly add to the high employability of the students at the end of the courses. The location of the college allows students to unwind from a day of hard work with a ride up on the South Downs, which lie directly opposite the site and, with views stretching out across the south coast and the Sussex countryside, the picturesque landscape is second to none.

The range of equine courses has greatly expanded over the last few years and Plumpton College now has a range of full and part-time equine courses ranging from provision for 14-16 year old students on day release from school, up to degree level with the BSc (Hons) Equine Sports Performance. Inclusivity is one of the factors that Plumpton College prides itself on and staff will tailor-make an equine programme to suit an individual learner in order to cater for particular practical, academic and social requirements. The department understands the importance of the British Horse Society (BHS) examinations to the industry and so encourages all students to take these exams alongside their main full-time courses. The college is an approved BHS examination centre and holds BHS 'Where to Train' status and so is well-equipped to get students through these exams, as evidenced from our very successful pass rate of FE students in the BHS Stage 2 riding exam this year. Part-time BHS stage courses are also run throughout the year. The Stage 1 course will take place on a Saturday morning from September 2009 to allow those people with full-time jobs the opportunity to study for these world-renowned professional qualifications.

Students on the National Diploma Horse Management course undertake supervisory duties in the second year of their course which teaches them very important management skills which come to great use in their future careers. These students are also responsible for organising a range of horse shows throughout their course which results in a massive leap in the development of their organisational skills and people skills. Graduates from this course are forward-thinking mature young people who have learned to use their initiative, show empathy and patience when teaching younger or inexperienced people and are a credit to the college.



Facilities at Plumpton equine unit include a traditional yard stabling 16 horses and an American barn stable block that caters for up to 40 horses. A mechanical horse, fondly named Hero, was purchased a couple of years ago. The mechanical horse (which responds to leg and rein aids and is able to walk, trot and canter) has proved to be worth its weight in gold in enabling students to work on their positions at all gaits with the help of their instructor alongside and a mirror in front of them and has also done wonders to improve the balance and confidence of novice riders at the start of their courses. The equine unit also benefits from a horse walker, paddocks, show-jump fields and two indoor arenas with viewing galleries. These facilities are being expanded over the summer to include additional storage areas for feed and bedding and a state-of-the-art 30mx65m outdoor arena. The equine unit facilities are hired out most evenings and weekends for shows and clinics, at which students are encouraged to participate in order to get additional experience of the competition environment. Around 40 horses are in residence at Plumpton during term-time for student use. The majority of these horses are loaned to the college by owners wishing their horses to be exercised and cared for free of charge during term-time so that they are fit and ready to compete during the holidays. The college is always on the lookout for additional suitable horses for loan, please contact the yard manager for further details ([kate.fuller@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:kate.fuller@plumpton.ac.uk)).

Two Shire horses are due to arrive shortly as Plumpton College expands into heavy horse work to give equine students a unique opportunity to add an extra string to their bow in their range of equine skills. Heavy horse qualifications and carriage-driving qualifications are currently being written and will soon be added to the range of equine provision. Watch this space!!!

The equine Higher Education provision is also developing in leaps and bounds. Plumpton College now offers a Foundation degree in Equine Studies, BSc (Hons)

Equine Sports Performance and, most recently, the Foundation Diploma in Equine Sports Coaching.

The Foundation Diploma is a part-time course that has been designed for those already working in the equine industry that have an existing strong practical background and are wishing to broaden their scientific and technical knowledge in the field of equine sports coaching.

All the Higher Education courses are able to be taken on a part-time basis or as stand-alone modules. All the Equine Higher Education teaching staff are qualified to Masters level and have been actively engaged in equine research in recent years and so are in a prime position to filter their knowledge down to students. This year, the third year BSc students had the chance in a lifetime opportunity of attending the Veterinary Sport Horse Congress in Amsterdam and visiting the Royal Veterinary College in London to view a range of post-mortems. One student is graduating with the prestigious first class honours degree this year and all final year students are going onto a range of exciting and varied careers in the equine industry and beyond.

A new equine science centre complete with laboratory and treadmill is planned for the future and will complement the existing biomechanical gait analysis equipment and GPS heart-rate monitoring systems currently owned by the college.



