

British Horse Society
Area Newsletter - Spring/Summer 2009

Horses for Courses Training Day
By Sheila Smith

There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man. Winston Churchill.

'Horses for Courses' is a leadership event with a difference. Just as a company can learn much about their employee's management potential, each individual can gain valuable skills from 'horse whispering'.

Did you know that companies such as Carlsberg & BMW are using the approach as a business skill? The premise being that 93% of all communication is non-verbal so working with horses has become an accepted medium to convey the message. It's about creating respect without fear and developing sustainable relationships based on mutual trust. For horses consistency equals integrity, reward is the absence of pressure; the principle translates perfectly to the workplace.

On a cold December morning I attended a training course like no other. I didn't know I was about to deal with long-standing fears and perceptions to do with both people and horses, ditch the negative and alter my outlook in one day, would you believe it? No! You'd probably cross the road next time you saw me, shake your head and stamp 'nut-job' on mine! Well reader, that's exactly what happened to me, let me explain...

Lisa Brice runs 'Horses for Courses' from her home at Bunkers Hill, Pitsford. The day started with breakfast in the kitchen, then an hour's briefing in the classroom before heading out to the paddock to work individually with a loose horse called Zodiac in a round pen, Lisa was right by my side for this exercise explaining the body language of the horse and how I would use my body language to communicate with Zodiac, it was a bit tense to begin with as Zodiac & I sorted ourselves out & all my old insecurities came rushing to the surface as I remembered bad times, when I'd over-horsed myself and felt out of my depth. We worked through that & slowly Zodiac started to respond, he was following me around the pen, I was fully in control, using only my energy (no head collar or lead-ropes here!) and I liked it! I was taught to imagine pushing my belly button towards the horse's hindquarters, to make sure I didn't push my hips towards the horse and he'd follow, he did. However the moment I lost concentration so did he & the connection was lost. With Jo, the next horse I met was Maverick and we fell in love! We were completely tuned in to each other from the start, so much so that as I left the paddock to go to lunch he followed me as far as he could, then 'saw me home' through the gate – what a gent!

After a very good lunch and a catch-up the other seven delegates, it was back out to the paddock to firm up the skills acquired in the morning & to focus on how we can incorporate that skill into everyday situations, the horse I worked with for this exercise was called Fynn. Fynn is a no-nonsense guy, and he expected the same from me, he wasn't disappointed! It was empowering and by now my confidence was soaring. In addition we worked in groups of two to provide honest, practical feedback having observed each other's work with the horse.

It's an unusual approach to say the least, training outside with beautiful horses, trainers with a genuine interest in you & what makes you tick, no boring old lectures to send you to sleep, it's quality learning at it's best. So, if you do nothing else on the road to self-improvement this year, treat yourself to a day at Bunkers Hill & prepare to be amazed!

For more information visit www.horsesforcourses.uk.com or email lisa@horsesforcourses.uk.com