

Riding for the Disabled

Just like in 2023, our Branch Associate Nicola Howes recently volunteered a day with the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA). This year Nicola volunteered at Briden's Camp, Gaddesden Place, which is a dedicated RDA centre offering anyone with additional needs and disabilities the opportunity to participate in a range of equine based activities. Here Nicola, talks about her experience.

"On Friday 17th May I set off to Briden's Camp for a volunteering day at Riding for the Disabled. The weather was glorious and it was great fun. My tasks consisted of stable duties in the morning and then in the afternoon side-walking. This consists of walking at the side of the pony close to the rider or in some cases holding the rider in place depending on the level of disability.

The camp has capacity for 6 horses but presently only has 3 (mainly due to costs and suitability). They have indoor and outdoor arenas with winches and platforms to aid riders on and off the horses. The camp also has a mechanical horse which enables larger riders who can't or won't ride a real horse.

Briden's Camp also offers a therapy called Hippotherapy – the use of horse riding as a therapeutic or rehabilitative treatment to help improve coordination, balance, and strength, especially to those with neurological conditions. This is an exceptional charity that makes you realise the positive influence that animals can have on everyone's wellbeing"

[Click here to find out more about Digswell Place Group Riding for the Disabled](#)



Open Door

Open Door is a community café and arts space in Berkhamsted where locals can be active, creative and social, whatever an individual's circumstances. Last year, we contributed a grant of £7,600 to Open Door which helped towards phase one of their 'Community Garden Project'. The garden is part of a wider community enterprise and is available for local residents to enjoy.

In March, six of our colleagues spent a day volunteering at Open Door to help get the garden ready for the Spring/Summer. Our colleagues spent the day hard at work planting numerous plants, including daffodils, forget-me-nots, lilies, snow drops, tulips, and a few strawberry plants. The General Manager was very grateful for our assistance on the day and also for the donations of clothes which were made by colleagues at HBS.

[Click here to view more about Open Door](#)



Watling view

On Monday 22nd July, eight of our colleagues volunteered a day at Watling View School.

Watling View School is an aged 2-19 maintained special school in St Albans. The school caters for 100 pupils, with a wide range of complex and profound learning difficulties.

Our Savings Operations Association Jane Beddoe explains the activities of the day.

“Our team were told to expect to be doing some painting of classrooms or possibly some outside work, so we were dressed accordingly.

We were met by Mark, the site supervisor, who welcomed us with a broad smile and a knowing look in his eyes – he clearly had a plan for us.

We were shown through the school premises to the upper years area where there was a corridor and a room in need of painting. Mark asked for some volunteers to start painting and so 5 of our group were quickly set underway with paint, brushes and rollers. The remaining 3 of us were allocated the outside task of sanding down some metal scaffold-type pole railings. Armed with sandpaper and scrapers we got started. The weather was a bit overcast with a hint of drizzle in the air but was ideal really for the job in hand.

The “inside” team went great guns and had definitely got more paint on the walls than they had on themselves which is always good. The room was almost finished, and the corridor was looking good. It seemed a good time to stop for lunch, so we congregated in an outside seating area and built our energy levels back up with sausage rolls and some leftover hog roast from our HBS family fun day.”

“The afternoon flew by in a frenzy of more sanding, scraping, and painting before Mark gave us a half hour warning of time up. Spurred on to get as much done as possible the inside team (who had finished their task) came out to assist with the railings. We didn’t quite get them completely finished but Mark, the supervisor, was smiling and seemed pleased with our efforts. Once we had finished, we cleared up and headed to the pub for a well-deserved beer!”

[Find more information about Watling View School](#)

