

Sarah Turnbull (left),  
Andrew Stennett (middle)  
with James Hick (right)

# MOLLICHAFF

#FUELYOURADVENTURE



# Sun's out, smiles out!

**Words:**  
**LAUREN BILTON**

14 BHS Approved Centres came together for a day of competition at our annual Riding School Championships

**F**or over two decades, our Riding School Championships have brought together passionate riders from around the UK. We were thrilled to welcome this year's talented competitors to Pickering Grange Equestrian Centre on Wednesday 8 April for a fun-packed event. It was a beautiful, sunny day, with smiles all round!

### Joining in on the celebration

This fantastic event gives any horse lover who doesn't own their own horse a chance to get involved, compete and enjoy a day dedicated to celebrating all the wonderful riding school horses and ponies. This year, we welcomed

14 BHS Approved Centres to participate in the various classes, with 60 horses and ponies and 124 riders competing. Taking part in this event is a huge achievement, so well done to all for showcasing your incredible talents!

A huge thank you to our event sponsors, Mollichaff and Bunaken Oasis Resort, for their support in sponsoring our in-hand classes. Their contribution made all the difference to our championship.

Elaine Wallace, commissioner of Bunaken Oasis Resort, explained why they supported the championships. "As a 59-year-old who's been riding for 52 years, I've seen the many benefits of developing relationships between horses and people, both young and old, for both horses and humans. It's our pleasure to sponsor these championships, where all



Alice and Billy



riders and their horses or ponies can have fun and achieve.”

Mollichaff, part of HorseHage, kindly gave feed buckets full of goodies to each centre, and their team offered feed advice on the day, along with a chance to weigh each horse on their weighbridge. They also handed out prizes to each winner at the award ceremony.

HorseHage said: “Mollichaff is proud to support riding schools and grassroots competition, as they play a vital role in building confidence, encouraging participation and inspiring the next generation of horse owners and riders.”

### Spotlight on Second Chance

Andrew Stennett, BHS Generalist Trustee for Approved Centres, is a qualified coach with a strong interest in equine intervention and alternative education. He was at our Mollichaff Riding School National Championships with Grove House Stables LLP and I-Pegasus CIC, a leading equestrian centre based between Doncaster and Radford. Andrew was joined by Paisley, who’s been rehomed through our Second Chance project, which gives neglected horses and ponies a bright future at one of our BHS Approved Centres.

“Our two Second Chance ponies that are competing here today came to us as yearlings. We’ve put in the work, and we’re starting to get the results now. They’ve become popular, regular members of the riding centre and Paisley is a distinct character.

“I think the Second Chance ponies have a distinct personality. Paisley may be a small pony, but they both think they’re about

Images: Martin Fox Photography / BHS

16.3hh. This isn’t just BHS’s Riding School Championships for them, this is the Olympics, this is Formula 1, and they’re having a great time.”

Andrew shared just how meaningful the championships are to so many people: “It’s a great, inclusive opportunity. This is why our industry is so great, because it makes us come together. In a very fractious world, we all need to come together a little bit more, [and be] a little bit kinder.”

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### Springing to the top

Alice Easterbrook, a student at Four Winds Equestrian Centre, won the top award in the in-hand fancy dress class, along with Billy (the pony). She told us a little bit about her experience and the fun she had with fancy dress.

“We did a spring theme for our fancy dress with Billy, and it was fun. He did so well. The theme was an idea between me and my coach, Kirsty. It took quite a while to put together because I had to cut out and sew the individual felt pieces.”

Alice went on to say: “I wasn’t expecting to win, so it was quite nice. Horses have changed my life, and I love being around them.”



### Competition and community

The Mollichaff Riding School National Championships wasn’t just about the competition; it was a celebration of the horse-human bond, bringing communities together.

We spoke to riders from Lychgate Farm Equestrian, who shared the impact that horses have on them. “The best thing about riding for me,” one participant said, “is how grounded it makes me feel. Horses have this ability to calm you and make everything else feel like it doesn’t exist, it’s a very fun sport.”

Another rider at the championships shared how supportive her horse-riding community has been. “You make loads of new friends. We’re a big family, it’s a community, so it’s very rewarding, especially for the horses. Everyone at Lychgate, like Laura, Jane, the instructors, they’re so knowledgeable and each lesson you can adapt and learn more.”

### ‘Leaf-ing’ nerves behind

Sometimes it’s worth facing your nerves head on, and your bond with your horse and community can make it that little bit easier. We chatted with a student at New Leaf Triangle, Eliza Clayton, who competed in the introduction to canter equitation on Jack, a very curious pony!

“I was quite nervous, but when I got here, I was completely calm. I never thought I’d make it this far, so a huge thanks to the help of so many wonderful trainers and people supporting me. The best thing about my riding school is the instructors; they’re just incredible.

“The horses here are just remarkable, and they’re truly amazing to be around. If there’s one place I could be, it’d be on top of a horse. It feels so right to be riding, it’s where I can be happy and confident.”

### A round of applause

It was amazing to see all the hard work and dedication from everyone involved, giving both horses and riders the chance to grow their partnership, teamwork and confidence. Well done to all who took part, it’s a wonderful achievement and everyone was incredible!

A huge congratulations to Four Winds Equestrian Centre, who took home the champion award for the second year running.

To find your local BHS Approved Centre, visit [bhs.org.uk/findaplacetoride](http://bhs.org.uk/findaplacetoride).