

PROFILE ON PAST PETERSFIELD PONY CLUB MEMBER

. ALI DANE

I'm not ashamed to admit that when I first became a Pony Club member at the age of 12, I was totally clueless about what it all entailed. And my parents were totally clueless about horses in general.

Like so many Petersfield members, I was introduced to the world of Pony Club by Wendy Lewis through The Horseshoe Centre. I had no idea what it really meant to be a Pony Club member, and boy, did I get a shock!

My first Senior Camp was a massive learning curve – I had absolutely no idea that there was a specific way to tie a haynet, or that your stable banks should be perfectly square, or that your stirrup treads needed scrubbing with a toothbrush

But after that, Pony Club became an integral part of my life. My mother learnt about horses alongside me and so by the time my younger sister (Jesse Dane) was competing for Petersfield Pony Club, mum was a fully-fledged 'Pony Club Parent'. She happily towed a trailer around the country, commented knowledgeably on Jesse's dressage tests ("He looked like he was bending his ankles well") and was suitably irritated when Jesse lost her way in the showjumping at the Pony Club Championships. Not that we bring that little incident up much in our family!

Eighteen years after my first camp, I am still very much involved in the Pony Club and look forward to camp every year, but now as an instructor for the Craven Hunt PC.

I run my own yard in Wantage, Oxfordshire now, and am in charge of up to twelve competition horses. I event and do dressage competitively and teach and ride all day long. It truly is my dream job and I'm extremely lucky to be able to pursue a career in horses.

I teach test preparation rallies for children working towards their 'C' and 'C+' Tests and am currently in training to become a 'B' Test examiner.

I can honestly say that without the Pony Club, I would not be in the position I am in now, which is why I believe it is so important to support the development of young riders, regardless of their background.

So, I would really like to take this opportunity to thank Petersfield Pony Club - all the friends I made (a lot of whom I'm still in touch with), all the mums and volunteers, my mum for throwing herself into a totally alien world, and all the hard working, patient instructors I had over the years.

What you learn at Pony Club sticks with you forever. So I don't scrub my stirrup treads each time I ride nowadays (sorry Penny Briggs!) but literally every time I jump, in my head I hear those resounding words, from probably one of the very best instructors I've encountered, that many of us Petersfield alumni will remember – "EYES UP, BUM BACK!!"

Any ideas who this could be? Answers on a postcard please



Past PPC members: Harry Dzenis, Laura Gordon, Ali Dane



Ali Dane and Morris