

HISTORY

The club was affiliated to the BHS in 1961, having been started a few years earlier by a group of friends in the Broadheath area of Worcester. Early members still fondly remembered include Jean Stevens, who was tragically later killed in a pony and trap accident, Diane Fraser, Jeff Smith, Barbara Shapcott, John and Jill Blackband and Sheila Ganderton. Latterly Janice Gilbert, a stalwart committee member and organiser of our Mercian Teams for many years and Trish Williams, our first Lifetime President.

The Early Days

Most activities took place around Broadheath and members' shows were held at Tomkins Farm, Martley, by kind permission of the Ganderton family. In the early days one of the teachers at schooling sessions was the late Miss Disney, who at the time ran Fairfield Riding School, which had only the second indoor school in the country. Marge Disney was highly regarded in the horse world and went on to run the stables at Hagley Hall. As the club prospered and grew, events were held at a number of county venues, including High Park in Droitwich, owned by Mr Henry Pittaway at the time, attracting good entries from all over the region.

Upton!

The horse which won the open hunter trial shield the first year it was presented was named Upton, and owned by Jo Daniell. She saw him in a field and borrowed the £320 needed to make him hers. The partnership was to do well all round, winning the four-year-old novice and hunter classes at the Three Counties Show the following year, as well as being reserve champion for three years. He was a Grade A show jumper and intermediate eventer by the age of six and his sale to Paddy McMahon enabled the newly-married Jo, now Challen, to buy the bungalow she still lives in at Upton on Severn. Paddy didn't get on with Upton and Jo was at a sale trying to buy him back when she was outbid by Harvey Smith. Ridden by Robert Smith he won the George V Cup and, re-named Sanyo Video with Harvey in the saddle, he won the Hickstead Derby in 1981 as a 17-year-old.

The 80s

Worcester & District Riding Club continued to go from strength to strength and its 25th anniversary in 1986 was celebrated with silver-banded rosettes. The 144 members that year keenly supported even the members' only shows, where entries could top 25 in the showing sections. In the 1980s other riding clubs were formed around Worcestershire, diluting the membership as those from Malvern, Kidderminster, Ludlow, Tewkesbury, Alcester, Bromyard and Birmingham now had their own branches. However, in the late 80s and 90s the club was still attracting a healthy mix of abilities and managed to achieve 3rd, 2nd and 4th team places in successive years at the Riding Club Open Horse Trials Championships. Shirley Heath was an individual winner and Sue Frank placed second in the 80s. In those days it was exceptional to qualify, as the only area competitions were dressage, show-jumping and one-day-eventing and there were no novice sections. With no affiliated riders, it was a feather in the cap of the Worcestershire club to be placed at championship level – let alone three years in a row.

The 90s

In the mid-90s the club was again in the ribbons, Izzy Manning achieving second and third individual placings at the horse trials championships.

2000 – 2010

Winners of the Mercian League for three years in a row, runners up in 2008, 2010 and 2011, fielding the winning national senior equitation jumping team in 2005, 2007 and 2010 and winning the Bleinheim Eventer Challenge for the first time in the club's history in 2010 were the icing on the cake.

Other notable successes were Charlotte Harris coming second at the open horse trials championships in 2006, having led the competition all the way until the last showjump down on the final day moved her down a place, and Sue Frank coming 6th in the dressage to music championships.

2011

This year not only did we win the senior style jumping championships, but also had the second team and individual champion!

The club celebrated its golden jubilee, with open shows held for many years at Park Hall Farm, Hanbury, due to the generosity of the Heath family, and gold-banded rosettes. The gala dinner and 50th AGM enjoyed a celebrity guest speaker and there was birthday cake and a commemorative keyring for everyone.

2012 - 2022

The club has moved with the times and developed hugely, broadening what it offers to members to provide top class training, social activities, non-competitive activities and even online competition where you can film yourself at home and post your test on YouTube!

Despite the challenges of lockdown the club continued its camaraderie with a toilet roll challenge, raising funds for the NHS, the birth of online dressage, and training resumed as soon as the go-ahead was given. The legend that is Geoff Billington was guest speaker at our best-ever attended AGM and Awards Night, presenting trophies for achievement, enthusiasm and commitment.

GOING FORWARD

The club continues to encourage all ages and abilities and provides a mix of training, competitions and social events. We look forward to another first – a Hallowe'en Ball – and our members continuing to forge new friendships through their shared passion for horses and riding.