

Article by Cheryl Johns, ABRS+ Trustee

# GETTING BACK IN THE SADDLE

**F**or many, the arrival of Christmas and the start of a new year heralds the traditional 'New Year Resolutions' of less alcohol, healthier eating and more exercise.

For some, this often includes a resolution to return to former sports or hobbies, and horse riding is a popular form of both sport and fitness that some riders consider returning to at a later stage in life. This can be riders of any age that may have taken time out from riding due to study, to have a family, or due to work commitments, and now want to take up riding again whether to return to competing or just to return to childhood familiarity and a love of horses. Many of these riders will have perhaps had horses or ponies in their younger years, and some may have even competed to a high level or worked in the

industry. However, one piece of advice is that it is often not as easy to return to riding as you may think. Even a short time away from using the muscles you do riding, and even the simple fact of your body being older, can mean even an hours sensible hack can leave you with achy muscles the day after, or even longer!

If you are returning to riding, be it months, years or decades later, it is important to realise that your fitness and ability may not be what it once was and to understand that this may in turn affect your skill and confidence as well as less of an ability to 'bounce'!

In the absence of your own horse, it is advisable, whatever your former level of riding, to take a 'trial ride' at a local riding centre just to give yourself an idea of your current fitness levels and riding ability and to ease

yourself back into the saddle. There is no shame on returning to a 'grassroots' level and this can often be the best way to assess how you should move forwards with your return to riding. This can also be ideal if you've been inspired to return to riding perhaps due to your own children taking it up, meaning you can share in the enjoyment at a venue where they can ride too.

It is also important not to jump back into immediate thoughts of horse ownership if you've had a substantial time away from the sport, because the type of horse you may once have owned, or dreamed of owning, many not be what you need now. For that reason also, a course of lessons or regular rides at a riding centre, or even the possibility to loan or share a horse will ease you gently back into the hobby, as well as giving



SINCE 1954, THE ABRS+ HAS BEEN THE ONLY ASSOCIATION DEDICATED TO REPRESENTING EQUESTRIAN ESTABLISHMENTS. THE ABRS+ CERTIFIED AND APPROVED SCHEMES FOR RIDING ESTABLISHMENTS, LIVERY YARDS AND EQUESTRIAN CENTRES OFFER A HALLMARK OF QUALITY, PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FROM A TRUSTED ASSOCIATION.

realistic goals to decide what sort of pathway you want to follow in your return to the sport.

The ABRS+ has over 140 approved riding centres across the UK with a majority catering to both child and adult riders of all levels ensuring whether you fancy giving it a go on a push-button schoolmaster, a forward going hack or something a bit calmer they can help you safely and confidently get back in the saddle.

You can find your nearest ABRS+ Approved riding centre here:

[www.abrs-info.org/listings](http://www.abrs-info.org/listings)

## BLUE CROSS NEEDS A NEW SCHOOLMASTER

**B**lue Cross is on the hunt for a new schoolmaster to help with training and assessments at its horse rehoming centre in Staffordshire. If you don't want to sell your horse but are struggling to keep him or her this could be the ideal opportunity for you. "We have a skilled team of horse welfare assistants and 65 acres of year-round turnout so your horse couldn't be in better hands," said Horse Rehoming Coordinator Verity Anderton-Johnson. To find out more email [rolleston@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:rolleston@bluecross.org.uk)

