

DOWNSHIRE RIDING CLUB AGM AND PRIZE GIVING

Downshire Riding Club AGM and prize giving was held on Thursday 21st September 2017 at Temple Golf Club. The evening was very well attended by Club members and Chair Zena Martin opened proceedings before handing over to vice chair Kerry Buchanan who proposed an important horse welfare amendment to the Club constitution which was passed unanimously by members. Club membership cost is being kept the same this incoming year at £30 for riding members and £20 for non riding members. Family membership is also available at £75 to include a senior member and up to two juniors. Club Secretary Pam Fox then outlined the activities and many achievements of Downshire members over the past Club year. There were many Downshire successes in all NIRC Championship events held in both dressage and show jumping. Downshire also supported the Inter Clubs Show Jumping team competition being overall champions for the year with the Downshire Divas - Pam and Vicki Fox, Norma Herron and Megan Ferguson bringing home the lovely shield. Over the year the Thursday weekly lessons held at Downshire's "home" of Danescroft Equestrian Centre-by very kind permission of George Stewart and Breda Finn- were extremely well attended with most Club evenings having three one hour lessons. Downshire also held a number of grass roots lessons during the lighter evenings under the tuition of Leah Knight for members to enable them to gain confidence and so be able to join in more Club activities in the future. These were very well received with some of those members going on to enter the Club's Spring into Summer Leagues.

The wonderful facilities at Danescroft enabled Downshire's committee to organise both Spring into Summer dressage and show jumping leagues which were both extremely well attended leading to the presentation of many wonderful rosettes and prizes at the Temple Golf Club. This Club year Downshire availed of the use of the gallops at Danescroft which were used by a large number of would be jockeys! Committee member Eamon Murphy, the Club's health and safety officer, ensured proper practice was observed at all times. Cross country lessons were also offered to members both at Danescroft on many occasions but also at Hazeldene and Eric Pele's. There was a night organised too at Mill Yard Equestrian Centre which also incorporated a BBQ. All in all another very busy and successful year for Downshire.

After the presentation of the annual reports there was time for members to tuck into tea or coffee and sandwiches before the main event of the evening-prize giving ! This year members were entertained by Bree Rutledge's young son Phoenix who strummed his guitar expertly for their enjoyment. League winners in show jumping and dressage were presented with lovely embroidered saddlecloths with the Club's logo on one side and either their name or their horse's name on the other side. There will be many very well attired horses at next year's events! All prize winners received a lovely personalised rosette. Other prizes included feed vouchers courtesy of Blue Grass Horse Feeds and Craig Kileef, Club clothing, horse treats, sweets and rug washes thanks to Fox's Equine Laundry.

There were two very special prizes awarded on the night, the first being the Spirit of Downshire Perpetual Trophy sponsored by Fox's Equine Laundry which this year was presented to joint winners in Bree Rutledge and Norma Herron as both had supported the Club in equal measure over the year. The second being awarded for the first time

this year and donated by Kerry Buchannan. This is the Fir Tree Farm's Perpetual Trophy to be awarded to a worthy junior member. Young Nikki Sloane was the delighted and surprised inaugural winner.

A very successful ballot was held on the night with thanks going to the following for donating some magnificent prizes- Rockvale Equestrian Ballynahinch, Equestrian Store Portadown, Blue Grass Horse Feeds, Leah Knight , Lucy McGuinness of Mill Yard, Fox's Equine Laundry, Gerard O'Neill and of course Downshire members themselves. It would not have been possible without Club members participating throughout the year in all events organised by the hard working committee.

And so was celebrated another great year for Downshire Riding Club with the next Club year beginning this Thursday 28th September with an open night at Danescroft. New and rejoining members are most welcome and members can avail of schooling at a very reasonable £5 per horse from 7 pm onwards. Lessons start the following week with a jumping lesson under the tuition of Jonny Steele. Full details of upcoming events and training can be found on the website at downshireridingclub.com or on Facebook. The NIRC Dressage Championships are to be held at Laurelview on 15th October so members will also be able to enter for these on the Club open night.









