

# Spotlight

## Spotlight on Recommended Associates

The Listening Post meets Carrie Davis



**LP: How long have you been involved with horses?**

**Carrie:** I have always been around horses. My sisters and I started on a little Welsh mountain pony, galloping over the Denbigh moors. When I was eight I had my own pony and I joined the Aberconwy Pony Club. I competed locally: showjumping, dressage and eventing.

**LP: Why did you decide to qualify as a Recommended Associate?**

**Carrie:** For my 18th birthday my dad sent me on Kelly's 5-day foundation course. From then on I knew I wanted to be an RA.

After my A levels, I spent a year in Australia where I worked on a cattle ranch and then had the chance to start horses, using Kelly's methods, on a Quarter horse stud. Monty Roberts was touring so I saw him for the first time in Sydney.

When I returned I began training to become an RA.

**LP: What is a typical day for you?**

**Carrie:** I am also a secondary school teacher so I do not work with horses every day. I generally work at the weekends, summer evenings and holidays. It never seems like work to me this way. It is my hobby and I love it.

**LP: What's important to you when you see an owner and their horse for the first time?**

**Carrie:** It is vital that I assess their relationship with their horse, as this may be the key to the problem; for instance are they nervous of the horse and consequently letting the horse

dominate them? Are they trying to use Kelly's techniques and, if so, are they executing them correctly? These observations will help me determine how I should approach the horse and how I can help the owner transform his/her relationship with the horse.

**LP: What are the common challenges you face in your work as an RA?**

**Carrie:** I think I would say the customer's confidence. As Kelly says the very fact they have approached IH means they are the 'horse owner their horse would choose'. However, there is the issue of training being on-going. I sometimes get the comment 'he works well for you' or 'he obviously likes you'. I want my owners to realize he doesn't know ME he understands the training methods and will respond to anyone using them so they can do it too! I am very conscious of the need to supply the owner with the tools to take training forward, but more importantly a sensitivity to the horse's language so they are interacting.

**LP: If you could change one thing in the world of horses what would it be, and why?**

**Carrie:** This is an easy question for me. How in 2010 is the whip still an accepted part of the horse-riding world. If we saw a dog walker out with a whip and using it on their dog we would be shocked and reaching for the RSPCA number but for a horse rider to use their whip is 'acceptable'. To see a horse being hit you only need to go to a local competition, see people hacking out or even turn on the television to watch horse racing/eventing. The extent of such abuse saddens me. Often as you enter a tack shop the first thing you see is a bin full of whips. What does this say to the young rider? It particularly upsets me to see children who can be such natural horse people being taught to smack their ponies if they refuse the fence or stop to look at something on a hack. It is not their fault. It is the horse world we live in. I hope with the excellent work from organisations such as Intelligent Horsemanship we can all work together to change this.

**LP: What would be the first piece of advice you would give someone looking at buying/loaning their first horse?**

**Carrie:** Don't overhorse yourself. It is a hobby. So make sure you are getting yourself a horse you will enjoy riding rather than reaching for the sedatives just to get on. It is

not necessary to have a 4-year-old, green, thoroughbred if all you want is to enjoy relaxed hacks at the weekend.

**LP: What is the most common issue you have to deal with when working with horses?**

**Carrie:** So many issues can be traced back to halter training. Once the owner has taught their horse the basics of 'ask and release' on the Dually and have their horse leading and backing up well, they have the basis of a sound relationship in which they are dominant. This will facilitate the resolution of most problems that occur later and prevent most of them.



**LP: Has a case ever stumped you?**

**Carrie:** Not quite! I have been very puzzled at times, but that is what makes it so interesting. No two cases are ever exactly the same. Although all horses speak the same language, there is clearly plenty of scope for misunderstandings, just as there is between humans. I want to build a log of the different reactions to techniques to try to help me identify the reasons for these variations and as an aide memoire when future cases exhibit reactions I have not anticipated. Intelligent Horsemanship is a great support with Kelly and the other RAs always happy to discuss cases and offer their advice.

**LP: What are your plans for the future?**

**Carrie:** I want to continue working as an RA for as long as I can, as it really is THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD!!

**Carrie is a Recommended Associate covering Cheshire and North Wales.**

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