

# SPOTLIGHT ON

IH Recommended Associate

# Gillian Bradley

Based in Monmouth, South Wales, IHRA GILLIAN BRADLEY travels around the region offering calm, gentle and non-violent help for owners and their horses. She's also behind the new HayLo forage feeder and is a talented freelance violinist!

## How long have you been involved with horses?

Since I was about 5 years old, horses have been my passion; I was never allowed my own but my best friend had two and we used to spend lots of time playing with them in the fields. It was many years later, after loaning an endurance horse, that I decided I was ready to buy my own youngster – I now have four horses!

## When and why did you decide to qualify as a Recommended Associate?

After reading IHRA Adam Goodfellow and Nicole Golding's book, *Whispering Back*, I was inspired and enrolled on their 5-day clinic. This changed the course of my life; I went on to complete all of the IH courses and then completed my Stage 2 in November 2009.

At that point in my life I was busy as a full-time violinist with the Orchestra of the Welsh National Opera, looking after my own horses and studying for my IH Stage 2. Nonetheless, I thought a mixture of working with horses and going freelance as a violinist could work really well; it took time to fulfil my dream but I am now thoroughly enjoying the sometimes surreal mix of the two!

## What is a typical day for you?

The day always starts and ends with my own horses and I schedule them somewhere in the middle too, for either me or my rider, Alex Austen, to see to. If I am not rehearsing for concerts then I will be

out working with clients and their horses – sometimes, though, I could be training a tricky horse to have its feet handled or loading a horse in the day and then playing a concert in the evening, a switch which takes a bit of getting used to. All the other bits of time in between this are spent working on the HayLo feeder, which I designed.

## What are the common challenges you face in your work as an RA?

Environment and the weather – trying to keep continuity and progress of training with youngsters can be tricky with our climate! Constantly evaluating sessions and trying to keep interest and progress for both the horse and the owner can also be challenging. Working in just a field can be quite restricting and requires imagination. I am lucky that I've always had lovely clients who are happy to work at the horse's pace and don't expect quick fixes, though.

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

For people involved with horses to be required to learn the basics of horse psychology. So many problems could be avoided if more people were to understand how to establish clear, consistent leadership in a way that the horse respects and understands.


I have found that people's attitudes change dramatically when they start to understand the reasons why horses do what they do. Educating the younger generation is the way to make the biggest changes for the future.

## Tell us about your HayLo project

HayLo was an idea inspired by attending (IHRA) Ian Vandenberghe's feeding and nutrition course. I desperately needed to be able to slow down my horse's eating but also wanted him to eat with his head in a natural position to avoid all the problems associated with eating from a high head position. After extensive research I found nothing that met both these requirements available in the UK so set about designing my own. I worked very closely with a designer and along the way acquired a fantastic business partner who is an IH member, a BHS-trained riding instructor in Ireland and has lots of experience in the world of business, too.

## Plans for the future?

To gradually do less violin concerts so I can concentrate on developing my IHRA work and being involved with HayLo. It's all about helping to make a difference to both horses' and people's lives.

• More information about Gillian's work at [www.yourhorseandponymatters.co.uk](http://www.yourhorseandponymatters.co.uk) and details on the HayLo at [www.hay-lo.com](http://www.hay-lo.com) 



Gillian has been involved with horses since she was 5 years old



Gillian demonstrating her HayLo hay feeder