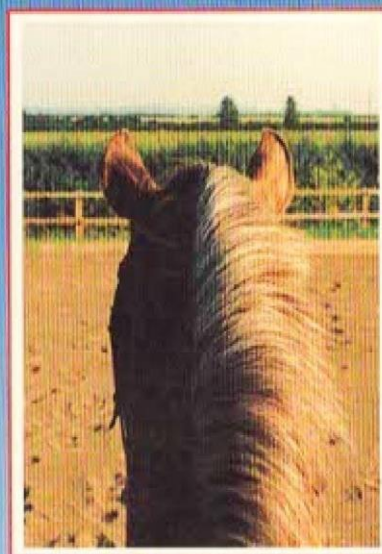


BALANCE...The Way Forward

Straight Forward Riding



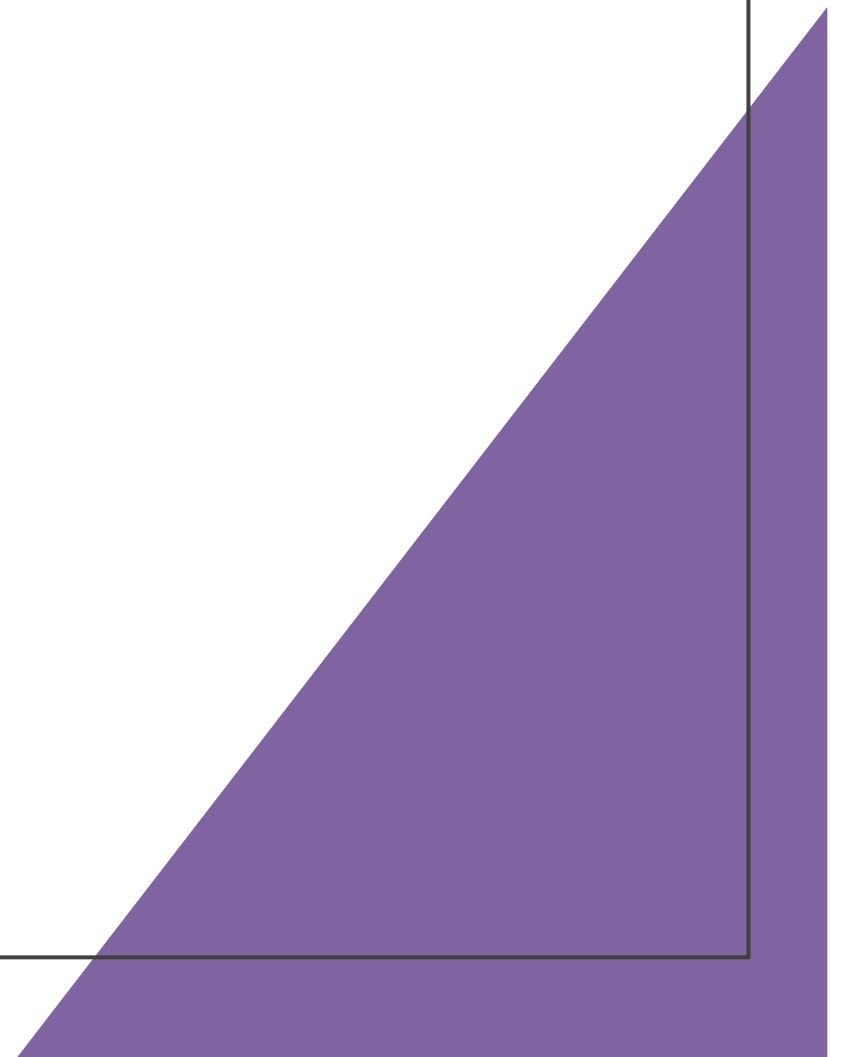
Lesley Ann Taylor
and Carol Brett

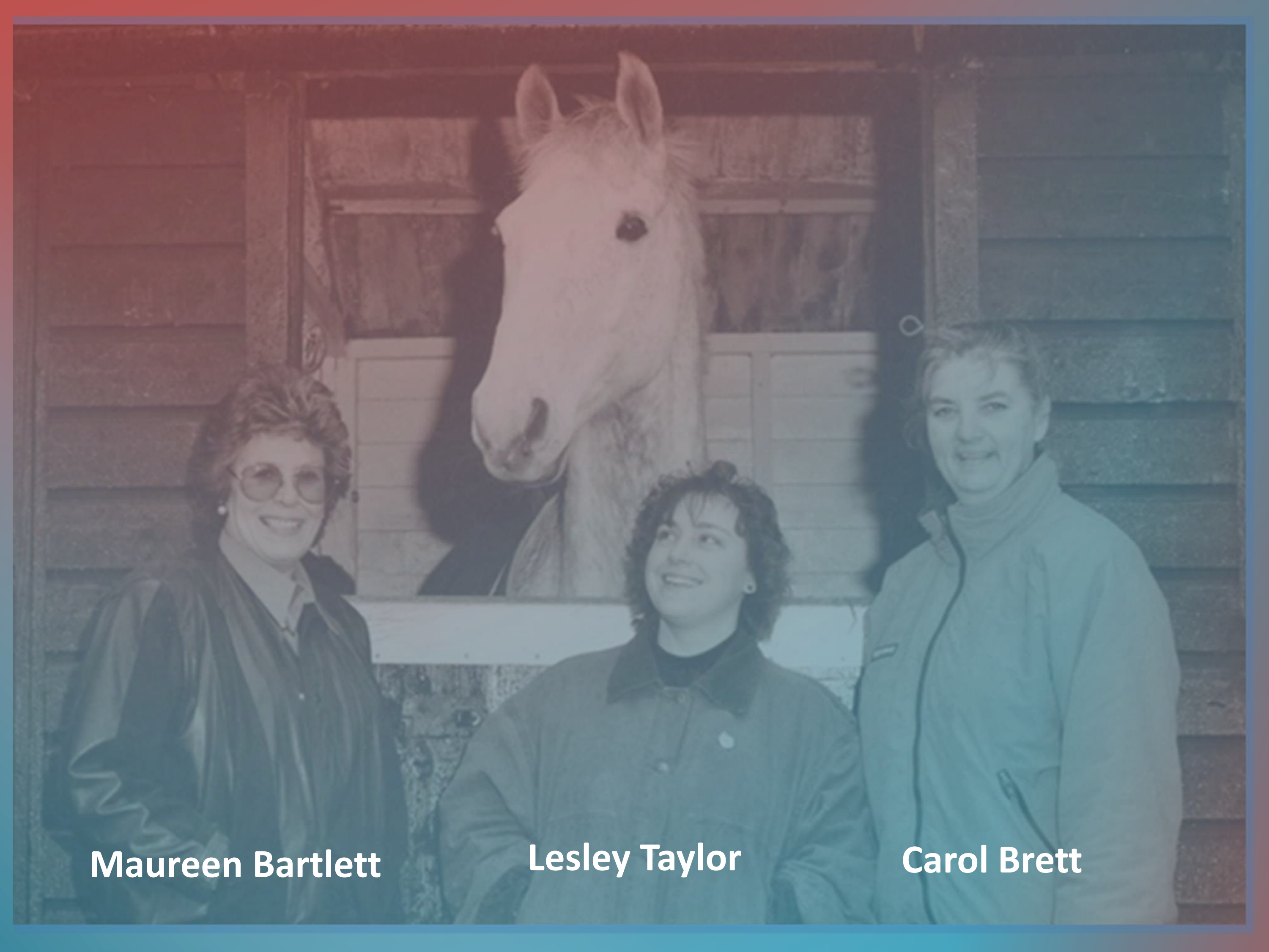


BALANCE...The Way Forward

Straight Forward Riding

Introduction.





Maureen Bartlett

Lesley Taylor

Carol Brett

Three concerned people.....

As a result of meeting up and spending time together back in the 1980s, Carol, Lesley and Maureen discovered that there were many things in the horse world that they were all concerned about.

This included increasingly harsh, demanding and complicated training methods that seemed to have developed from the influence of what was referred to as a 'Germanic approach' at that time.

They started to consider whether there were things that they could do to combine their respective skills and experience in ways that could help to improve standards of riding, training and horse welfare.



Do you see harmony between horse and rider? Do you see beautiful movement and ease? Do you agree that this is not acceptable?



Is this what horse trainers, riders and dressage judges are striving to achieve?! This image was found on a 'royalty free' image source, with the description: Beautiful Horse! No mention of the blood in its mouth, the extreme tension in its body or the fear and pain observed in its eyes. 😞

Maureen and Lesley had already recognised that Carol had developed a unique and kinder way of teaching riders and training horses.

She was able to simplify concepts in ways that helped riders of all ages and levels of experience, to understand what their horses needed and get great results.

Her logical approach helped horses to become better balanced, learn faster, have more confidence and able to reveal movement and talents that had often been hidden by tension and/or confusion.

Maureen had been keen to make use of her contacts and work in media, to promote Carol's teaching skills.

There was talk of producing a series of books and videos, but it was another project that ended up becoming the focus of their attention and then shaped what happened next.

I refer to the research that Carol had already started, and that Lesley had then got involved in, which was to identify what it was about saddles that so often seemed to make horses lose their good, natural movement and cause so much tension and resistance.

In order to continue this important work and to create something that could be used to network with other like-minded professionals in the horse industry, Carol, Lesley and Maureen formed a new organisation. The aim was to promote a more whole-istic approach to the training, riding, management and saddling of horses, that they called **The BALANCE Organisation**.



About this Straight-Forward-Riding book...

It is true that Carol and Lesley had their lives shaped by the important discoveries they made about the limitations and the problems caused by what was, back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, considered to be the correct way to fit saddles and the best way to make saddles.

This work is what BALANCE became best known for and the plans to embark on ways to promote better/kinder ways to ride and train horses slipped into the back-ground. However, it soon became clear that when talking to horse owners and riders about horse-friendly and bio-mechanically correct saddle design and saddle fitting, the way the horse is ridden, is an important element that needs consideration.

There is much more information about this on the BALANCE website www.balanceinternational.com if you are interested.

Often during saddling consultations, it was necessary for Carol or Lesley

to help the rider to allow the horse to express their 'opinion' on different saddles, by allowing a less restrictive rein contact, so that the natural alignment of the horse's neck could be observed when changing saddles.

It was all too common to find that horses were being hurried out of their natural balance by riders who had been told that they need more impulsion and didn't understand the difference between impulsion and speed.

It was very common to see that riders (even very experienced riders) were very crooked and had unknowingly been relying on a very tight fitted saddle, just to avoid sliding off to the side of their horse. Despite the fact that was restricting their horse's movement.

Carol and Lesley frequently had to offer some basic riding instruction during a consultation to make it safe, and when riders felt the benefit of listening to Carol and Lesley teach, they wanted to know where to find those teachings and understand more.

With this in mind, Carol and Lesley set about putting together this little book, which covers some of the most important foundations of what went on to be called BALANCE Straight-Forward-Riding and Functional Riding

They were helped in their mission by their friend Lesley Gowers, who had spent many years working in publishing and managed to publish the book in 1998. All copies were sold many years ago and there was never time to re-publish.

However, the many requests to Lesley to make the books content available again, have finally pushed her into doing just that.

Not in the form of a re-published book, but in the form of these presentations. A chapter at a time. Hopefully they will help more people and more horses to enjoy this thing that we call 'riding'.

The original book was dedicated to three special horses.

In memory of **Christie**



...a seven-eighths
Thoroughbred
who had a passion
for galloping and
chewing ropes.

It was through
Christie that Lesley
and Maureen first
met.

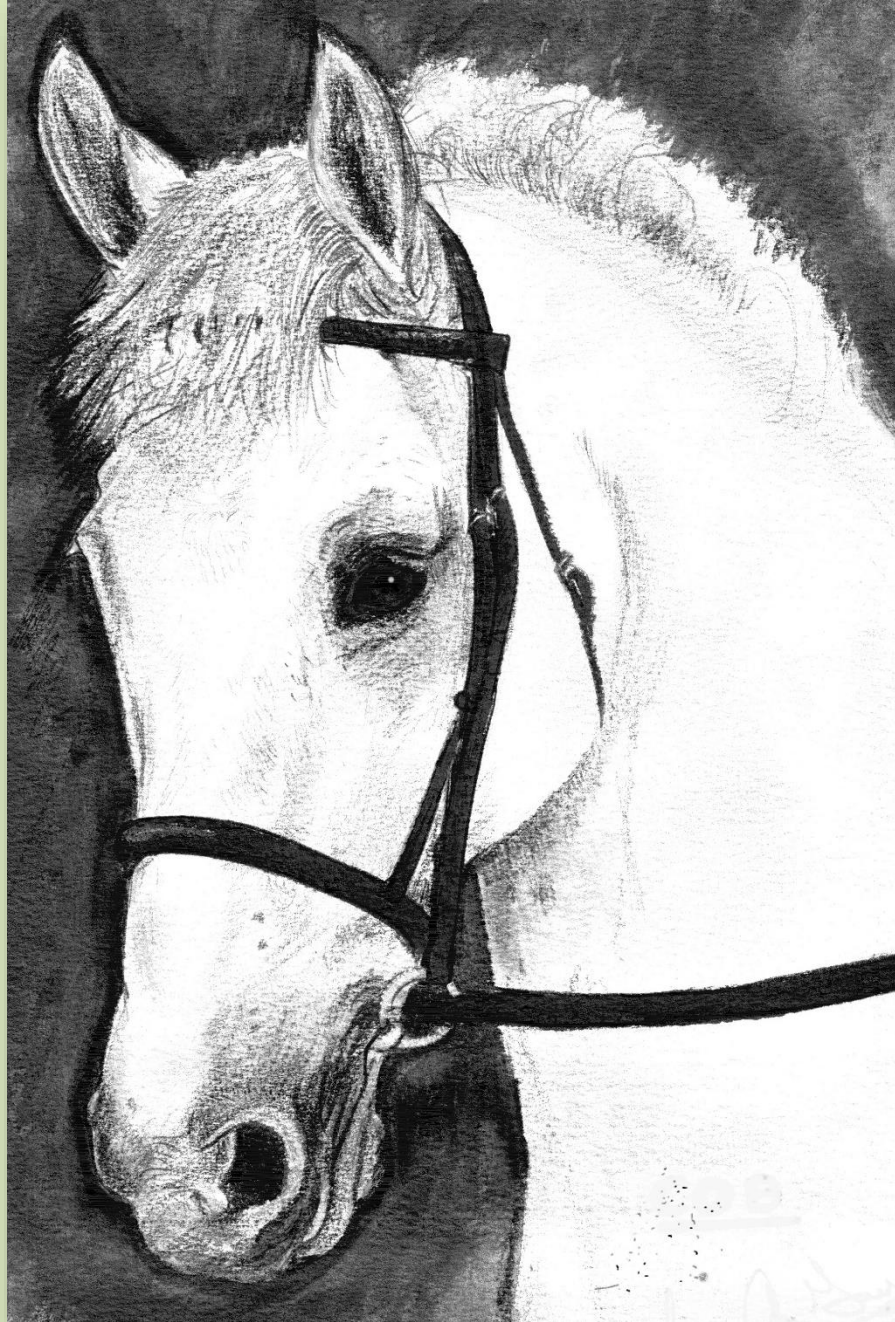
In memory of Rowan



..... a very determined and intelligent Welsh Cob, owned by Carol and who took it upon herself to teach Carol, and to keep her humble for many years!



In memory of **Felix**

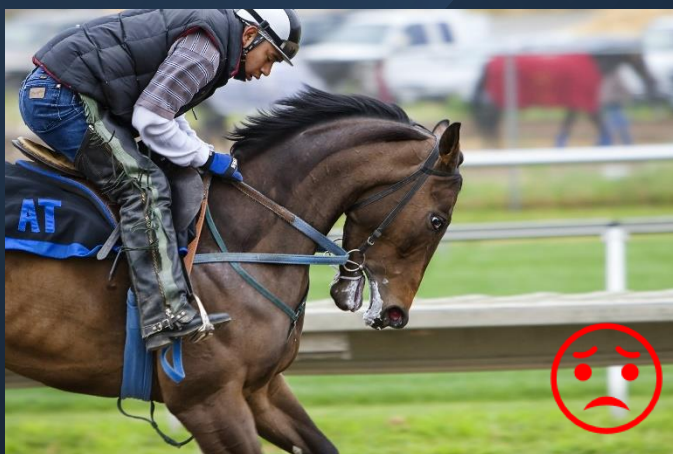


Finally, we need to acknowledge one particular horse without whom BALANCE might never have started.

Felix was a stunning, all white, Welsh Cob/Thoroughbred cross.

Through various twists of fate, Carol ended up owning Felix and he played a key role in the way BALANCE came into existence by bringing Carol, Lesley and Maureen together.

Are you sitting
comfortably?



We have called this little book **Straight Forward Riding** We are going to keep the message simple because simple is what the horse understands.

We are going to be talking about the basics, because the basics is all there is.

Humans love to make things complicated to make themselves look clever. Horses are not impressed by this nonsense, and their lives can be made much harder than it needs to be and too often, training methods are based on dominance over the horse rather than co-operation.

Whatever you do with your horse it is a combination of walk, trot, canter and gallop, turning left and right and stopping. Show jumping and cross-country jumping are no different, save for the jumps in between. If you add up the number of seconds the horse is actually in the air over a fence it is very little in comparison to the amount of time he is doing basic flatwork (cantering, galloping, turning, lengthening and shortening his stride). If the flatwork is not good, the jumping will be a reflection of that.

So, **Straight Forward Riding** applies to all of us.

It is the core of correct, efficient, therapeutic, non-confrontational, emotionally rewarding riding.

Go to any dressage competition and take a good look at what is going on. Ask yourself, how many people are smiling and having a pleasant time? How many horses look as if they are finding the movements easy?

- Good riding is about harmony between horse and rider.
- It is based on a relationship founded on mutual respect and trust.

We have all heard these statements, but how often do we see this in reality?

It is very interesting to take a non-horsey person to a dressage competition and ask for their reactions to what they see. They will often notice things about a horse looking 'unhappy' or that it is 'limping', that go unnoticed by those who consider themselves to be educated about horses.

Why is this?..... Because they are seeing things through 'innocent eyes'. Harsh riding; horses looking stiff and miserable; even lameness (*just a bit stiff*) are so common-place that they become the norm and people stop noticing. Rather like the regular viewing of news programmes featuring violence can cause us to stop being shocked by atrocities. 😞

We all need to look through more innocent eyes at what we are doing with our horses and ask if it is appropriate. Certainly, it is time that some training methods, riding techniques and teaching theories are questioned?

What the founders of BALANCE say about riding and training may challenge some of the things you have been told by instructors, trainers and judges.

However, what we are saying is not new. We have not invented a new training technique.

There are no new training techniques.

What we will be describing to you is effective, sound, non-confrontational, non-destructive, basic riding.

If the basics *are* sound, then all of the movements, including lateral work, flying changes, piaffe, etc. will be easy and look easy.

If the basics are *not* sound then everything the horse is asked to do will be, and look like, an effort, and often the rider/trainer resorts to many tricks, gadgets and complicated techniques, not to improve the horse's ability to perform but to cover up the flaws in their training methods!

Houyhnhnm or Yahoo?

Houyhnhnm is pronounced a bit like 'whinnim'



As a side note.....

Lesley encourages those of you reading this book, to read *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift.

The subtext of the story is a very clever comment on social values, wars, government and man's general behaviour.

Towards the end of Gulliver's travels, he ends up on an island inhabited by two contrasting communities living in close proximity, as if to highlight each other's traits. The first group look like human savages whose lives are dominated by lust, greed and aggression.

The second group is made up of horses, who live in peace and harmony. The horses appear to be the living embodiment of everything the savages are not. They tolerate the savages, but they regard them with distrust and disgust.

Gulliver befriends a mare called Mistress and is amazed to discover that she talks. She tells him that her race call themselves.. **Houyhnhnm** and that they call the human looking savages **Yahoo**.

In fact, everything that the Houyhnhnm find distasteful is called 'Yahoo'

Gulliver and Mistress spend many hours conversing, during which Gulliver realises how honest and loving the Houyhnhnm are in comparison to the Yahoo, who are ever present as a contrast and a reminder of the worst kind of human behaviour.

The more time Gulliver spends with the Houyhnhnm the more ashamed he is by his own Yahoo appearance and tendencies and the more humility he has in their presence.

He decides that he doesn't ever want to leave the Houyhnhnm as he has found a society based on honesty, kindness, peace and simplicity.

All goes well, until one day when Gulliver gets into a fight with some other Yahoos.

When Mistress sees this, she is shocked by his behaviour and pronounces him to be a Yahoo! She sends him away from the Houyhnhnm and banishes him. Gulliver cannot tolerate the idea of living with the Yahoo, so he takes himself away to be alone and decides that if he cannot live with the Houyhnhnm he must build a boat and leave. He is ashamed and heartsick.

However just before he leaves, Mistress comes to him and tells him that she has been watching him and that she sees him as he is '*more Houyhnhnm than Yahoo*'. This simple statement means more to Gulliver than anything else. It is a very moving moment.

Those of you who like the idea of a partner-partner relationship with your horse will probably like the content of this little book. If, on the other hand, you are more interested in the master-servant kind of relationship with the horses in your life, you might find the content irritating or irrelevant. So, whether you get anything from this book will depend on how much Yahoo and how much Houyhnhnm you are!

We all have some of both types in us; however, the more we behave like Houyhnhnm, the more rewarding our relationships can be with the horses and people in our lives.

Just like the Houyhnhnm in Gulliver's Travels, horses will tolerate Yahoos but they have no respect for them; in fact, they treat them with a kind of disgust.

So... here's to us all being or becoming, more Houyhnhnm than Yahoo!

**So what is in this
book?**

- 1. Communication & Harmony.**
- 2. 'P.E.A.C.E-full' Contacts. (*Seat, Legs & Reins*)**
- 3. Speed, Rhythm & Impulsion.**
- 4. Transitions, plus the Mysterious Half-Halt!**
- 5. Bend**
- 6. Use of the seat & the Rider's Position**
- 7. More thoughts on Training Philosophy**