

Madame President, Madame President – Elect, Madame Vice President, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Many of you are aware that at the end of 2021 I retired as your Chairman having served in the posts of Chairman and Vice Chairman for 13 years. Although I remained on the Board as a “Back Bencher”, many Members and Board Members persuaded me to return following a turbulent time in 2022 for the Association.

I had a number of objectives in mind that I felt were essential and from day one a plan was formulated to achieve those goals. I have to say right from the beginning I could not have managed without the incredible help from our General Manager, Lucy Savill and the Office Team of Phillipa and Jess and the support of the majority of Board Members.

Having come late into the discussions regarding the new Rising Star Showing classes at the London International Horse Show the enormous potential of this new venture soon became apparent. The BSHA decided to stay true to the remit explored right from the beginning by the organisers of the London event and ran qualifiers for the Grass Root Competitor. I have to tell you that the entries for the final in December are huge and the Association has gained over 250 new Members as a result. London International Horse and the BSHA will decide the format for 2024 following this year’s Championship event.

By the end of 2022 the Association had secured a new three year contact with Grandstand Media for the Hacks, Cobs, Maxi Cob and Riding Horses and I am delighted to say that our working relationship with the HOYS team has continued to improve throughout the year.

Early in 2023, Board Member Kathy Bowdler took over the role as Treasurer and I would like to thank Kath and her team for bringing everything back on track following the enormous losses in 2022. Her report earlier has given us a lot of confidence given that we are moving in the right direction regarding our finances.

In the spring, Sarah Carey and Stuart Hollings organised an excellent Luncheon for our Northern Members at the Great Yorkshire Showground. This was well supported and guests were treated to a fascinating talk by world renowned Dog Judge and Broadcaster Frank Kane. The date for next year’s Northern Luncheon at the same venue is February 11th.

Throughout the year our Dope Testing Officer has carried out 26 tests and I am delighted to report that all were negative. Furthermore our Head of Stipendiary Stewards, Joanne Pybus, submitted 20 show reports to the Board and action has been taken regarding any negative feedback.

Sadly following this year’s Board election we lose both Nick Thompson and Joanne. On behalf of everyone I would like to thank them both for their hard work and dedication.

However I would like to welcome both Richard Telford and Camilla Neame onto the Council for the next three years. I have known Richard for a long time and have always admired his showing skills in the ring. I am looking forward to working with Camilla and I know her as the owner of some wonderful show Cobs. I am sure both new Board Members will be an asset to the BSHA.

Our President, Sue Rawding is also retiring this year after serving her three year term. Sue has been on the BSHA Board longer than anyone else and it will be sad to lose someone with such a high profile within the Showing World. I can remember the day I was judged by the then Sue Freed in 1975 as a 15 year lad competing in the WHP class at Hertford Show. I did win that day which felt extra special under somebody of Sue's calibre. The Association owes Sue Rawding a huge debt of gratitude and on the behalf of the Members and the Board I cannot thank you enough for the expertise you have brought to the table. On a positive note we are extremely lucky to welcome our new President for the next three years and I am honoured to announce that Lucy Killingbeck will take over from Sue following the AGM. Lucy is not only a well respected judge on a number of main stream society panels but was also a very successful amateur competitor for many years including winning at the HOYS. Her knowledge and expertise across the full spectrum of our Association's interests will be a welcome boost to the Council.

Our Northern and Southern Championship Show were both successful. A special thanks to both Sarah Carey and her helpers for running an enjoyable Northern event and Lucy Savill plus her team for an equally well organised Southern Show. I know only too well the work that goes into running a major event and without our wonderful sponsors, amazing officials and all the back room people none of this would be possible.

After the cancellation of the 2022 National Championships it was imperative that the Association's 2023 showcase was a success and something that our Members would enjoy. There were a few hiccups along the way with Addington Equestrian Centre but I will always remember the words of our General Manager, Lucy Savill, when she said to me "Don't worry Mr Chairman I will make sure it's a success". I've learnt over many years that you never argue with Lucy when she is that determined and to her credit the team put their heart and soul into making sure it was an amazing National Championship Show. I loved every minute of the three and a half days of wonderful competition, fabulous horses, the most glorious weather, scenery that took your breath away and a great end of show party. For me the icing on the cake was on Sunday morning watching the last qualifiers for the Rising Stars LIHS and to watch the camaraderie between the competitors, the help our top professionals offered and the joy on the faces of those qualifying for the London Finals. Never have I seen so many tears of happiness at a show and its times like these that you really feel you are making a difference.

The Judges Assessment day was again a credit to the people in charge and it ran like clockwork. A great advert for the BSHA and a nice note to end the season on.

Finally I would like to announce some very exciting news regarding The Working Show Horse. Over the years this class has grown in popularity and at The Royal Windsor Horse Show it has been the biggest single showing class for a while with over 30 entries each year. In 2024 there will be a final held at the Royal International Horse Show and qualifiers will be held throughout the country.

I would like to finish by thanking Lucy and the Office for their hard work and support and my gratitude goes to the Board for their dedication. Finally to you the Members, our amazing sponsors and to all our fantastic Officials and stewards I cannot thank you enough on behalf of our Association

I am proud that the objectives I had envisaged at the beginning of the year have all been achieved and the BSHA is in a much better position than the one I inherited. Of course there is a lot more to accomplish to safeguard the Association's long term future but I am convinced you the members have elected the team to do it

Therefore as mentioned at the beginning of my address I came in for one year to steady the ship after a disastrous 2022 for the Association. There is still a lot to do but that ship is safely in harbour and getting ready for the next voyage. However maybe she needs a new Captain now and although I have only a year left of my term of office that would be the decision of the present Board. My job is now done but I intend to remain as an active member of the crew for the next three years.

Nigel Hollings