

READYFIELD BLOODHOUNDS - ROWENA WHITEHOUSE

I am 39 years old and have been a bit of a happy hacker from being very young. I now have three children, two of which have special needs and most of my time goes to caring for them and putting all my energies into them and their ponies.

My partner and his eldest daughter have competitions horses and regularly show jump or hunt. A year and a half ago I got my dream horse - a Friesian. What with the kids and their ponies coming first we haven't really done a great deal.

My confidence is not the best and my 10 year old daughter struggles with her's and her special needs, so I promised myself that this year I would go to a hound exercise with my partner and his daughter. The meet was in our village, so there was no excuse.

I had put it off the previous few years due to nerves and letting my partner do it whilst I made the excuse I needed to look after the kids. This year I plucked up the courage to go and a friend offered to have all three kids! She followed the hunt in her 4x4 and as the hunt stopped half way on their farm it was ideal for the children to see me half way.

I was unbelievably calm, collected and excited. New boots, new jods and a new jacket! It all felt surreal, especially when I'm usually buying the kids show gear - I can't even remember buying myself a pair of shoes recently!

Anyway, I digress. As I hacked to the meet with my partner and his daughter I had a feeling of butterflies mixed with dare I say it "pride". I felt so smart and so proud of myself for doing this. Everyone who I am around are experienced and accomplished riders in their own preferred discipline and I always have a feeling of being inadequate and not worthy as I've always been a happy hacker.

I pushed the fleeting thoughts of "I can always hack home if I lose my bottle as I know where I am," to the back of my mind, and thought "get a grip, just go and 'do' something!" When I got there, I potted around to calm the nerves and have honestly never ever felt so welcome. Everyone was so polite and most of all encouraging...a different world from the showing I'm used to with the kids.

I was so eager to see my daughter and to show her that anything is possible while hiding my confidence issues from her as she struggles so much. I was nervous setting off but I have to say that this was one of the most memorable, exhilarating and enjoyable horsey experiences I have ever taken part in. To do this with my partner was even more special. He had been nagging me for years to do this. We very rarely get to even hack out together due to having the children so this was just wonderful.

Going across the stubble fields with the biggest grin on my face with my Friesian's mane blowing in the wind was just amazing to me. My horse was truly amazing and although strong, she behaved impeccably which made my confidence grow as we went along.

Then seeing my daughter in the back of my friend's car with the look of shock and happiness on her face seeing me gallop across was just awesome - she said she was so shocked and so proud to see me do that and that it helped her so much.

I was a mix of emotions this day. Completely on cloud nine for days after and in fact am now still, despite not being able to walk for week afterwards!

It has made me more confident in ways I never thought possible. My time with my horse has changed so much. From hacking round the block in 10 mins in walk and trot to hacking out for a couple of hours and having a good blast where we can.

As cheesy as it sounds it's brought us on together so much. She knows I'm more confident and is going so much better. I truly can't wait to go again and enjoy the company of such friendly and like-minded people in stunning countryside where we are so lucky that land owners let us enjoy.

We have some fab pics from this day of me and my partner together to remember forever – a truly amazing experience that I'm so desperate to repeat.