



Shady Horsemanship UK

By Charley Snowden

Natural Horsemanship has always been one of those categories (and I am going to be very honest here!) that I felt was reserved for hippy types and something for people who lacked general common sense with horses.

I had however, absolutely reached the end of my tether with my horse Guinness who I was now having to have sedated for shoes, clipping and everything else that needed some form of outside interference.

Things had got that bad that Guinness was prescribed twenty-six ACP tablets

If Guinness had not have gone to Shady's I am certain that I would have had to call it a day as he would have been too difficult to treat



Such a handsome boy! Guinness at Shady Horsemanship

(don't even go there with a syringe!) just for the vet to agree to come and try and sedate him by injection.

The whole process would make me ill. I would not sleep the night before the vet was due to sedate him for the farrier and would get those sickly butterflies in my stomach.

Sure enough, the vet would arrive and then the horror of the vet trying to find a vein whilst being thrown up against stable walls and trampled over and avoiding being knocked out.



In the beginning Guinness was dangerous for my poor farrier to even pick up his feet



Guinness a totally different horse for my farrier Chris Pallett

by Guinness's striking head would commence.

My poor farrier, Chris Pallett would inevitably be roped into trying to hold the beast whilst the poor vet would try their best.

More often than not a vein was too much of a safety risk to pursue and the vets would resort to injecting into the muscle.

This was not ideal and the length of time and the effectiveness of the sedation would then be compromised. We would often be left with a horse that was either on the verge of falling over or in need of continual top ups.

For two years, my farrier and vets had persevered but it was nearing the point where enough was enough and I was going to have to make a heart-breaking decision.

As much as Guinness was the most incredible and fun hunting machine, the emotional and financial costs involved were reaching breaking point and it was not fair to keep expecting Chris and my vet to put themselves at risk.

I first heard about Shady Horsemanship UK from my best friend Clairaline, who had taken her horse Calio over to Shenley Stud for loading issues.

Clairaline and I both have 3.5tonne van type horseboxes and rather big passengers to carry so I was not that surprised that her 16.3hh horse was not a fan of loading and neither was my other 17hh horse, Beastie.

Sure enough, Clairaline returned from



Guinness pleased to be out hunting again

her session with Shady and I thought she was joking when she said that Calio now loads himself. I was extremely sceptical but Clairaline offered to come over and share the same training techniques that Shady had taught her on Beastie.

My horse now also loads himself.

This revelation encouraged me and gave me the confidence to give Guinness one last chance and I decided to contact

Shady and see if he would take him on.

I explained how bad he was and that I was not very hopeful and had little expectation but Shady seemed totally cool and calm and almost confident that this was really not a big problem and could be sorted.

I was convinced that Shady would be singing a very different tune once he met Guinness and started working with him.

Shady suggested that Guinness went to stay with him for six to eight weeks at his base at Shenley Stud on full livery.

At this point I had absolutely nothing to lose and I decided to treat this as an investment in my horse.

On arrival I was very impressed with the layout of the yard and the huge school, showjumps and acres of fields to ride around with logs to pop.

Guinness settled into his new routine beautifully and I was able to ride him and use the stud's facilities whenever I liked.

This was fantastic as I did not have to let Guinness's fitness slide and if I'm truthful, it was a lot more luxurious than what I was used to at home!

Shady would send me regular updates and training timetables so I would know exactly what he was working on with Guinness on a weekly basis.

The first two weeks Shady would work one to one with Guinness and he would also work on repetitive exercises such as picking the feet up for longer and in different positions used by a farrier.

Shady would also work on dominance issues with Guinness by teaching him to back



Guinness reformed at home having his dressing changed



My absolute love! Enjoying my Guinness cuddles at Shady Horsemanship

up and understand pressure and release.

After this period of Shady building trust and understanding with Guinness it was then my turn to start to learn how to communicate with my horse.

I was convinced that Guinness would be all sunshine and light for Shady but when it came to the farrier, vet, clipping lady or me it would revert back to hopelessness.

I cried a lot of tears in poor Shady's office on the stud but Shady was kind and understood my fears and the emotional journey I was on.

I found the Natural Horsemanship

techniques hard and alien in the beginning and thought I would never get or understand the process.

I had to be Guinness's leader and it was going to be my responsibility to learn to give the right reaction and learn the right time to put pressure on and when to release it.

I was taught how to tie Guinness up correctly and how to use a Natural Horsemanship stick as an extension of my arm.

The stick was never used as a punishment but as a reward to make Guinness realise that by standing still he was able to relax



Why I never gave up hope, Guinness the hunting machine!!

and this soon became his safe happy place.

I was taught to stroke Guinness all over with the stick and how to get a reaction when I wanted a reaction, such as moving over or being asked to back up.

As soon as I got this reaction I would then release the pressure and stroke him again with the stick.

As the weeks moved by my attitude and hopes began to change. I started to see a difference in my horse and myself. I started to believe that not only would I have a horse that would stand to be sedated for the vet but that I would actually have a horse that would be shod and clipped without even being sedated.

I was lucky that everyone was on board with the hopeful transformation of Guinness and my farrier, vet and clipping

lady would also spend time with Shady learning the training techniques.

On the final week at Shady's what I thought was the impossible in the beginning occurred.

Guinness was shod, clipped and given his annual booster all without sedation.

I was not surprised or shocked by this point as I had been part of the training process and had witnessed the weekly improvements.

What I was, and I forever will be, is extremely grateful to Shady for giving Guinness the opportunity to learn to trust and to be a happy horse.

Since leaving Shady's Guinness had an accident out hunting that resulted in several weeks box rest and having to be sedated for stitches and having to have his leg regularly redressed.

If Guinness had not have gone to Shady's I am certain that I would have had to call it a day as he would have been too difficult to treat.

I owe Shady Horsemanship UK a great deal in terms of my own understanding of communicating with horses but Guinness owes Shady his life and that is the truth.

I can honestly say I have never invested my time or money into something more worthy and would recommend Shady Horsemanship UK to anyone who is struggling with their relationship with their horse.

Thank you Shady from
Charley and Guinness xx