

## Worshipful Company of Farriers Equine Veterinary Studies Award 2020

### Charlotte Miller, University of Edinburgh

I was delighted to be the recipient of the Worshipful Company of Farriers Equine Studies Award 2020. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and university restrictions my placement week was delayed by a year. I finally managed to complete my week with Steve Hewitt in York in August 2021, better late than never!

I feel honoured and privileged to have been offered this opportunity. Even more so to have the opportunity to work alongside such an experienced farrier as Stephen. As an associate of the WCF, an approved training farrier and a lifetime of experience Steve was able to make the week very educational. I also enjoyed all the stories of travelling across the world for farrier competitions and training. I look forward to the future when restrictions ease and I can visit one myself. Stephen and Jill made me feel like part of the family as soon as I arrived and were so considerate. I soon became attached to their wonderful dogs Hugo and the “to-be-named” Spaniel puppies.

I enjoyed every aspect of the week and learnt so much. I have grown up with horses and regularly saw farrier visits, however I don't think I really appreciated how challenging the job is, not just physically but practically as well. This week has made me understand how much effort and skill goes into shoeing a horse. I am grateful and proud of the fact that our veterinary profession gets to work alongside farriers.



Throughout the week Stephen was excellent in explaining the variations in the different feet we saw and how this influenced their shoeing. Most of Stephen's work involves racehorses. I had limited contact with these types of sport horses before, so it was a great opportunity to learn more about the industry and how their shoeing needs differ from other horses. Over the course of the week, we trimmed and reshod many racehorses. I was able to observe the cold shoeing with aluminium plates and appreciate the benefits this method provided as they are shod more frequently than most other horses.

I had the opportunity to removal several shoes throughout the week. I learned how important your own posture was for the horse and ease of shoe removed. I thankfully had very patient animals! Stephen explained to me how I could assess the wear of a shoe and what techniques to use if I ever needed to take a fresh shoe off as a vet.

I was also fortunate enough to participate in Stephen's research project. He is completing his Graduate Diploma in Applied Equine Locomotor Research with the Royal Veterinary College. The project is researching the effectiveness of FormaHoof pads. We applied gait

analysis sensors to the poll, withers and sacroiliac points on the horse. These analysed the gait of the horse in walk and trot in three different shoes: their regular shoes, their shoes with the traditional pads and their shoes with FormaHoof pads. This was a brilliant way for me to see how gait analysis can be used in real life. I'll be very interested in the outcome and to read Stephen's research report.

The week ended with the highlight of making my first ever horseshoe. On Thursday I spent the afternoon in the forge forging and shaping a straight piece of metal into a horseshoe. I also got to reshape an old front shoe into a hind shoe. I don't think my shoes would win any competitions but I'm still proud of them!



The final day on Friday was spent revisiting some of the racing yards to shoe some more horses. On one yard a new horse had arrived. Steve talked me through the conformation and how he would approach shoeing the new horse with a long-term plan in mind to correct its flat feet.

Having completed this placement, I have such admiration for the farriery profession. I hope that when I graduate as a vet, I will be able to develop close working relationships with the farriers in my area and we can help each other to promote the welfare of horses. My first port of call will always be recommending the client works with their farrier and myself to treat the horse's lameness or foot issues. I also promise not to gouge out the entire hoof of a horse in search of an elusive abscess.

I would like to thank Stephen and Jill for being so welcoming and willing to share their expertise and home with me. I have gained so much knowledge and invaluable insight into farriery. Thank you as well to Dr Lydia Brown and The Worshipful Company of Farriers for organising and providing the placement for me. Also thank you to the equine clinicians at the R(D)SVS for awarding me the placement.

Charlotte Miller  
Final year student BVM&S  
Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, University of Edinburgh