

British Riding Clubs Horse Trials Championships
Offchurchbury Estate, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire
8th, 9th & 10th August 2008

It was all planned pretty well this year, the price of diesel meant that people were keener than ever to share lifts and make use of extra space in peoples lorries for extra kit. The junior team, Intermediate Team and myself as an Individual Novice, had decided to make the trip, with just some slight changes to teams from Area. The junior team would be a team of 3 with the Mullins sisters and Alicia Marples, the Intermediate team would almost remain the same (Annabel Sall, Julie Robertson, Jessica Walker) and Susan Callan was taking the 4th spot. Julie had her work cut out as she was taking her own horse, Alicias pony and the biggest tent in history, plus all of her and Alicia's stuff ... in a jeep and trailer! Luckily Susan Callan had some extra space for some of their kit! I had agreed to take Jessica's horse down and Valco and Murphy grew to love each other so much that they had to share each blade of haylage! Lesley Mullins had hired a wee horse shuttle van type of thing for her two ponies and everyone seemed to get to Warwickshire in one piece... although there is always one nutter who comes rolling into the stabling at midnight... at which point we all wonder which club can possibly have someone arriving at this time... then we saw that it was Susan!!

Six of the eight horses arrived on the Wednesday, and, as always, we got a very warm welcome from David Bacon who is the Stabling Manager. For some reason he tells us that Findon have a reputation...LOL... I think that would largely be down to Bob Davidson and his antics from years gone by... However, I am told it is a very good reputation! As usual we get front row stables and are overlooking the SJ and XC which is handy. Julie and Alicias horses arrived on the Thursday but she had driven half way on the Wednesday and stabled in the borders over night. Thursday was a rest day for the horses so Mike and Annabel hired a car and 5 of us (Mike, Annabel, Phil, Jessica and myself) headed to Alton Towers for the day... The weather was fantastic and the rides were awesome... Jessica cried when we got her on 'Rita Queen of Speed' and told her that it went from 0 to 100 mph in 2.5 seconds... She was already strapped in when we told her... LOL! After that all the others seemed tame! We got back in the evening and rode our horses, ate, drank and were merry! That night it rained, and rained... Friday wasn't too bad and although we had the occasional shower it was OK. The Juniors did find that the Cross Country was getting a bit cut up in places though, and that did start us all wondering what it would be like by Sunday if it kept raining....which it did!

The Juniors had a great day on the Friday. For them it is a one day event and all three of them did brilliantly! What with them being a team of three they couldn't afford to have any problems XC for their scores to count. They all went clear and finished in 7th place, great result ☺ Kirsty Mullins was double clear and with a good dressage she ended up in 6th place individually, which really is great. All in all the Juniors were on a high and really looked like they enjoyed themselves.

The Friday also saw the start of the Intermediates competition. They do a three day event with an initial trot up on the Friday morning, followed by their Dressage. Their Speed and Endurance phases and Cross Country were on the Saturday, and finally on Sunday another Vets Inspection (trot-up), followed by the Show Jumping. All four of them looked very smart for their trot-ups, which is more than we could say for some of the others... I think the black and white addidas tracksuit bottoms and pink wellies really wasn't the 'dressed for dinner' look that the organisers were looking for! Susan Callan really made a massive effort and looked amazingly smart in her suit and colour coordinated make up... Really nice to see that we made an effort. They all went on to do nice dressage tests with Annabel scoring a 24, a seasonal best for her... So, their good dressage marks seemed to put them in a strong place going into the Speed and Endurance phase on Saturday. On Friday afternoon the Seniors had to go to a briefing about their Roads and Tracks, Steeplechase and XC, and after the briefing we were then allowed to go out and hack around the roads and tracks. This in itself was more dangerous than any of the cross country due to loose dogs and horses all galloping past each other. I think we were all fairly pleased to get back to the stabling in one piece!

Susan & Max looking smart for the trot up...



The Seniors all do four phases as part of the Cross Country day. They set off on Phase A, which is a 'roads and tracks' phase where you have to do 1 kilometre every 5 minutes, from memory Phase A is almost 4km so it's a good warm up for the Steeplechase (Phase B). Once you finish Phase A you get a compulsory 1 minute rest until you go whizzing around the steeplechase where you have to do two circuits of the steeplechase field in 2 minutes including 6 steeplechase fences to tackle. For the Intermediates the steeplechase fences were all 1.10m so pretty hefty, and you really have to kick on to get round in the 2 minutes and not incur time faults!

Once finished the steeplechase you are straight into Phase C, which again, is 'roads and tracks'. But this is more of a recovery phase getting almost 7minutes to do 1 kilometre, which means you can do lots of walking. This phase is longer at almost 5km, but it was great to see all of our members coming into the 10 minute box after Phases A, B & C looking fit and well. The horses really have to be a bit fitter to compete in this sort of event as when they come into the 10 minute box the vet will check their heart rate, and in some cases if the horses don't recover in the 10 minutes before they go Cross Country, then they will not be allowed to continue. Luckily all of ours came in with no problems and although the rain was bucketing down it didn't seem to dampen their spirits. Those who went early in the day seemed to be lucky with the weather as the rain seemed to hold off until lunchtime.

We are very lucky that Findon Members Phil and Susie McMillan always help at Offchurch and are usually very lucky to get the job as 'refreshments runners'. I'm not sure Phil was so keen on the implication that he may have to 'run' somewhere... but it means that they get a very handy wee buggy which arrived at our lorries to take all our 10 minute boxes and kit down to the start and sit them under the 'Findon' tree... It's the same tree that we have been under every time we have been there! The Intermediate Cross Country track was big and required some bold riding. We were very lucky to have an experienced team though and although they were nervous they all did a brilliant job! The time was tight and most Intermediates were coming in with loads of time faults but after the Cross Country our Team were sitting in a very strong position... so just the Show Jumping to go! Meanwhile on the Saturday I did my Dressage and SJ. My Dressage was vaguely average and I wasn't too impressed that my arena was overlooking the steeplechase which was in full swing... Never mind, I got a 33 which wasn't too bad. My SJ was a different story... the warm up was pretty nasty and muddy and although my horse jumped well he got a bit strong and had two down. I was pleased though and looking forward to my Speed and Endurance phases on the Sunday, although the course was looking very muddy and deep after the Intermediates and Opens had been round it.

Sunday dawned wet... shock... and the Intermediate team had another trot up to endure to make sure that the horses were fit and well after completing their endurance phases the previous day. All of the Seniors had a lot of mud to bear that day!

The rain again seemed to hold off until late morning by which time I had finished and the Intermediates had jumped. The Intermediate Show Jumping warm-up area resembled something close to a ploughed field and the Cross Country wasn't much better for me and Valco. The 'roads and tracks' were very muddy and deep in places and I had visions of coming into the 10 minute box with no energy, or shoes!

Sam and Valco over the last fence



Kirsty and Rocky in the SJ



The Senior Intermediates all Show Jumped well though, which meant that their team also finished 7th. Annabel Sall jumped her usual clear round to earn her the winning rosette and sash for her section which we were all very chuffed about. Susan Callan was 10th too, so a fab result all round. I had a great run cross country and came home clear within the time which I was really pleased with. Due to the questions asked on the track and the tight time I came right up to 7th with my clear so everyone was happy ☺ Although, by this point it was pouring with rain, directing itself straight into the horses stables! We had originally thought we would travel home on the Monday but with the rain starting to flood our stables we decided to pack up and head for home... I got home at 2am on Monday morning, unloaded Jessica and Murphy at their yard and then home. Poor Valco got thrown into a dark field to find his friends, and then I had a very long lie that day! Needless to say we all had a great time and would definitely be keen for a return trip. It's a long drive but its well worth it; the venue is lovely, although better when the sun is shining ☺ but we can't have it all. *Sam*

Findon Results 2008

- 7th **Junior Team** consisting of Alicia Marples (Hugo) Kirsty Mullins (Rock Steady) and Ailsa Mullins (On a Mission)
- 7th **Senior Intermediate Team** consisting of Annabel Sall (Reggie) Julie Robertson (Bolairo) Jessica Walker (IBIS Diamond in the Dark) and Susan Callan (Max the Obscure)
- 1st **Senior Intermediate Individual** - Annabel Sall (Reggie)
- 10th **Senior Intermediate Individual** – Susan Callan (Max the Obscure)
- 7th **Senior Novice Individual** – Samantha Turpitt (Lauristons Valco)

National Championships 2008 – Lincoln Showground

Sadly since returning from Offchurch a decision was made not to travel to Lincoln this year for the Dressage and Show Jumping Championships. Out of all of the people who had qualified there were only a handful keen to travel and sadly it just wasn't worth those people going unless the entire team were committed. I think the price of fuel and credit crunch seems to have hit peoples pockets too much this year. The NERC Dressage team and Novice SJ team did venture south though, and their Open Dressage team was 7th, with their SJ team also coming 7th so well done to them! I guess we will just have to try to return next year to contest our 3 trophies from 2007 ☺