

# Horsham & District Riding Club

## Adult Camp 2009 – by Heather Foss

<b>LOCATION:</b>	Hickstead	<b>DATE:</b>	25 – 27 September 2009
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I arrived at camp just after 10am for my first lesson – a quadrille to music session with Sally Andrews. I quickly tacked up and headed down to the fantastic arena at Hickstead very excited, the others in my group were already warming up but made me feel welcome and we soon got very well acquainted as did our horses riding so close to each other. All the horses really enjoyed working to the music, it was great fun and Sally was very patient with us and when we got in a muddle – the emphasis was very much on fun and I enjoyed it so much I'm going to have a go at the Club's dressage to music competition at Christmas!

After settling my horse Annie into her new stable for a rest and grabbing a quick bite for lunch I headed down for my individual lesson with Duncan Gipson. My friend came on foot for moral support. The lesson was amazing – Duncan taught me how to generate more energy and expression without relentlessly banging on poor Annie's sides. She went beautifully and I felt we had taken a big step forward which was great as I had put my name down for the Novice dressage test on Sunday- our very first Novice.

After I had settled a very tired Annie back into her stable I went to watch my friends lesson with Matt Cox, which again was fab and very interesting to watch Kellie as she has only had her horse for a couple of weeks so they are just getting to know each other. Matt really helped her to iron out some teething problems she had encountered with her lovely young coloured horse Crayon.

That evening we enjoyed a great BBQ at the clubhouse and we all watched each others quadrille attempts which Max had kindly arranged to be recorded for us. It made great viewing and actually looked quite impressive on the big screen with the music even though we had only worked on it for an hour. Next we had a team quiz and a few glasses of wine – a fun night was had by all. We made our way back up to the stables to snuggle our horses down for the night and hit the sack, most of us were staying on site either in tents, trailers or horseboxes.

Bright and early Saturday morning we fed our horses and then a few of us headed over to the Little Chef for a hearty breakfast before getting back to the yard to groom and tack up for grid work session with Duncan. Annie was very keen and it was great fun, we all achieved so much in a such a short space of time.

At lunchtime we had a talk and demonstration from Neue Schule Bit ladies. It was very interesting and informative and we had the chance to try some of their bits. In the afternoon we split into groups for course jumping with Russell Cooper. He had some great tips for all of us. A few people who did not want to jump were able to have an extra flatwork lesson or hack around the showground although the Derby Bank was out of bounds!

Another lovely BBQ followed that evening and more wine was consumed but not before we set out our Eventers Challenge course for the following days competition. We were all able to put our ideas forward and the course looked very impressive when we had finished. Back at the clubhouse the teams were drawn for the competition, followed by more alcohol and plenty of chatting and laughter. Once the horses were tucked up for the night we hit the sack again in our various temporary accommodation.

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Sunday morning dawned another glorious day – we were so lucky with the weather throughout, and again a few of us headed back to the Little Chef for breakfast. Then it was back to groom and tack up for the mornings simulated cross country lesson with Duncan over the eventers challenge course. It was great to have the opportunity to practice over some of the tricky fences – we had included a double of skinnies, a coffin using a bright blue water tray, and a bounce as well as some rustic and traditional show jumps. After a super session we headed back to the stables to get the horses plaited and gleaming for the competition. We all chose which dressage test to ride – Prelim 13, Novice 25 or Elementary 49. It was great to have the opportunity to ride at a higher level than I had previously tried and Annie was fab.

Next onto the jumping which was against the clock and brilliant fun. We all cheered each other on even opposing teams as we had all become friends and it was brilliant to see how much we had all improved over the few days. Team 2 just pipped Team 1 to the post but everyone finished with a smile on their face although both horses and riders were undoubtedly tired from the weekends exertions. After an exhilarating lap of honour to music we retired to the stables to pack up, say good bye to everyone, and head home.

Camp for me was better than I could have ever imagined. I got the opportunity to try new things with my horse, improve our bond, get expert tuition, we had the use of some superb facilities and made new friends. I would recommend to anyone to try camp next year. I can't wait – I never before had so much fun with my horse. Thank you so much to Max, Roz and Niki for all their hard work and roll on HDRC 2010 Camp !

By Heather Foss and “Annie” – camp first timers