

Horsham & District Riding Club

National Indoor Showjumping and Winter Dressage Championships

LOCATION:	Hartpury	DATE:	5th April 2008
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Our Novice Showjumping and Dressage Teams had both qualified to represent Area13 at the National Winter Championships, held annually at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire.

This is 2 separate team competitions where the best 3 out of 4 riders' scores count. Our teams were completely different this year and all our team members were new. They had never been to Hartpury before so it was going to be interesting to see how they coped with the championship courses and atmosphere.

We travelled up together on the Friday and settled the horses into their stables before retiring to the pub for supper. Then most of us went off to get a good night's sleep at the local hotel, leaving a couple to sleep in the lorry on site. Saturday was a lovely bright morning, and there was a buzz about the place with competitors still arriving, and everyone busy plaiting.

Dressage Team

Our first dressage rider – Laura Durkan and Lady A were first on at 9am. They were doing Novice 27 and rode down the centre line to find Jennie Loriston Clark sitting in the judges car ! Despite it being only the mares third Novice test, they did a lovely consistent test for 62.5 %. Then it was Michelle Malinder with Gracious Knight who were doing our first Prelim 12. Despite an unfortunate error of course, “Joey” floated round for 72.6% and a request for “Sat Nav” next year ! Then Liz Pellett and Zak did another very polished performance in Prelim 12 for a score of 70%, and finally Liz Lane did well to keep the exuberant young Catherstone Lochnivar under control for 59.6% in our other Novice test. This was a very strong team competition with some very accomplished horses who could have up to 74 BD pts and still be eligible. So we were delighted to find out Michelle was individual 2nd, Liz P. individual 5th out of 50 prelim riders, and our 2 young novice horses had done enough to secure a fantastic team 4th out of 25 teams !

Show Jumping Team

The show jumpers had to do a 2 round competition at 2'6" then 2'9". It seemed much bigger than this with a very impressive course, flowers everywhere and tight turns to be negotiated. Hayley Dumbrell and her mare Eclipse were our path finders and did a good round for just one down and 4 faults. Then Vicky Allen and Razzle Dazzle had an unlucky 8 faults, only just clipping 2 fences. Jane Silcock then rode her reserve horse Forever Hopeful for a lovely clear, and Laura Durkan did the same as anchor man on Max's horse Rapacity. This meant we could drop the 8 and go forward to round 2 with 4 faults. There were 10 teams out of the 25 with 0 faults at this stage but everything changes in round 2 and all was still to play for after lunch.

With the course changed and the fences having gone up, there was going to be more poles rolling in this round ! There was a very tight dog leg turn off the wall to a set of planks with quite a few riders not making the turn at all and picking up 4 faults as they crossed their tracks doubling back. And the final fence was a treble, with a very long one stride between parts 1 and 2 followed by a short 2 strides to the last upright part. Needless to say this was to be a very influential fence on the final results.

Hayley started us off again with just the first fence down for 4 faults. Vicky then rode a great clear to keep us well in contention. Jane then did a good job with her young horse who found it all a bit spooky until having the last down for 4 faults. Laura then had to go clear if we were to

have any chance of being placed. I had everything crossed and Laura and "Ruffy" did not let us down for a great double clear. This meant we finished on a total of 4 faults for each round, 8 in total for the competition. Unfortunately it was not good enough to get in the jump off – won by Rochdale, and we finished a very creditable 12th.

It was a great team effort and really enjoyable weekend. Many thanks also to our helpers and supporters – Liz' husband and photographer Steve, Libby who was on hand to help out everyone, and Nikki who borrowed my Chef D'Equipe clipboard for the weekend to help the dressage team.

PS. Thank goodness we got back on the Saturday night as the next day there was 3" of snow !

Max Gayler
Chef D'Equipe