

Horsham & District Riding Club

National Riding Club Horse Trials Championships 2008

LOCATION:	Offchurch, Warwickshire	DATE:	8 th to 11 th August 2008
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Horsham & District RC are National Horse Trials Champions !

Horsham Riding Club had qualified to represent Area 13 at the National Horse Trials Championships, in the Novice Team competition, and also had an individual qualified in the Intermediate competition.

The **novice team** of Maggie Whatford, Jo Radford Smith, Liz Pellett and Jane Silcock made their way to the venue on the Friday before the 2-day competition to give the horses a chance to settle in to their temporary stabling. Lorries parked, tents pitched, and the BBQ began – in the rain !

Saturday's weather proved no better and the ground was certainly on the soft side for the dressage and showjumping. With the wind and rain affecting horses concentration, dressage scores were higher than usual. Maggie and "Ross" went early and did a good test for 26.8 pens, Jo and "Henry" had 31.1 pens, Liz and "Zak" didn't produce their best and got 34.2 pens, and Jane and "Tommy" got a very good score of 26.3 pens.

The showjumping is held in a large grass arena in front of Offchurch House – a bit like Badminton ! The jumps weren't big but the course was built to test the riders, and their lines of approach, including an optional gate or spread fence. With the sticky ground, poles were falling frequently. Maggie did a great clear to start us off then Liz also went clear but picked up 5 time penalties. Jo and Jane had just one fence down each for 4 penalties. So at the end of day one, with the best 3 scores to count, Horsham were on a score of 93.2, which meant we were lying 2nd behind Cheltenham who had 89.

Day 2 started with slightly more promising weather but the ground was already well cut up on the cross country course so several fences were removed overnight. The speed and endurance day consists of a 20 minute roads and tracks followed by a 2 minute steeplechase then another 40 minutes roads and tracks, followed by the cross country course itself. Team instructions were to go all the direct routes and just go as fast as possible because the optimum time was going to be very difficult to get in the really heavy going. Maggie and Ross did a brilliant job as pathfinder and came home clear just 2 seconds outside the time – exactly the same as they did last year ! Liz and Zak then benefitted from their experience last year and also went clear, picking up just 7.2 time penalties. Jo and Henry then had to battle in the worst of the driving rain. Henry, bless him, is not built for speed but Jo rode like her life depended on it ! To their credit they also went clear and picked up 4.8 time pens on the steeplechase and 16.6 pens XC – A great improvement on their first effort 2 years ago. Jane and Tommy were last to go. Tommy is built for speed but is inexperienced at this level. But after a hastily refitted shoe in the 10 minute box, they too came home clear and well inside the optimum time to finish on their overnight score.

This meant Horsham had finished on a team score of 101.2, adding just 8 penalties to their first day score. This was also 10.6 pens better than their score last year when they came 2nd. This put them in a very strong position but with everyone working furiously on their calculators to predict the final result, it was eventually confirmed Horsham had won this year by 6.1 penalties from Buckingham RC, with Saffron Waldon in 3rd place. In addition, Maggie and Ross, who is retiring this year, bow out as national individual champions ! Other individual results were Jane and Tommy 4th, Liz and Zak 8th and Jo and Henry 16th.

In the **intermediate competition** Helen Millichamp and "Arkweld " had to do a full 3-day competition. This started on the Friday with a vets inspection followed by dressage. This is one of their strong disciplines and they got a very good score of 31 pens to put them in 2nd place. Saturday was the endurance day and they had to run in the appalling weather which was hampering everyone. Only 6 riders got inside the optimum time all day, and Helen came home with another great clear round but picked up 18.4 time pens. Then onto Sunday for the final vets inspection and showjumping. Arkweld is an economical jumper, just doing enough to clear the fences and never giving them much to spare, and this proved the case right up to the final upright where he unfortunately lowered the top rail for 4 pens. This did not prove to be too costly and they retained a brilliant 3rd place, having been placed 2nd last year in the novice competition.

Well that completed a fantastic weekend for Horsham RC. Congratulations to all the riders and horses - all the months of training and hard work definitely paid off, and a big thank you to their back up crews of Libby, Marilyn and Max.

Max Gayler
Chef D'Equipe