

# Killerton One Day Horse Driving Trials

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2006

Having missed both Fenix and Easter Hall Park due to non-horse commitments we felt we had not competed at many events this year and were looking forward to Killerton immensely. Imagine our dismay when the heavens opened on Saturday, the day prior to the event, and we were sitting amongst cloud and rain for more than 24 hours! Our hearts went out to the organisers, Sue Joll and James Binns, who already had to cancel the event back in the Spring, due to heavy rain in the week preceding the event. We were sure that we would be getting a phone call to tell us it had to be cancelled again and all their hard work would have



been in vain! In a spirit more of hope than expectancy we assembled harness, carriage and pony during Saturday, the day before the event. Geoff cleaned the carriage, but in the rain you couldn't tell if it was clean or not! Washing the (synthetic) harness was out of the question, as it couldn't possibly dry and the rain had done a pretty good job on the pony, so we didn't bother!

Having opted not to stay overnight we rose at some horrible hour to load on Sunday morning, with Geoff prophesying that the event would have to be cancelled to protect the National Trust grounds from the churning effects of many hooves. However, as we approached Exeter we passed through a completely dry area and on arrival found the ground to be very firm. Everyone was rushing about getting ready and it was lovely to see so many old friends. Amazingly we managed to organise ourselves into being at the dressage arena on time, although in marathon kit, as muggings (me) had once again forgotten something – this time our presentation outfits!

We duly completed the cones, although slowly as Geoff's knee was scheduled for an operation the following week and he couldn't walk them properly first. We then (with permission) set off in the Jeep to look at the obstacles, which worked well until obstacle four. Here due to a technical hitch, the key got locked in the Jeep! Imagine the stress which set in – Jeep parked against the flags to the obstacle, about one hour to go until the first competitor and no way to move it!

Sheepishly I set off to confess to Sue and James what we (I) had done; they couldn't have been nicer and thanks to Sue's gift of the Blarney a very nice AA man was quickly there to rescue us. Needless to say in future the key will be removed from the car when we get out! My apologies to various folk who tried to chat to me and found no one in during this slight panic!

Once the vehicle was liberated we just had time to put to and get to the start to go as the last one away. As ever the course was very scenic; this was the first time we had been around in the 'reverse' direction and it certainly seemed easier on the pony, in fact we were a bit too quick through this section. After passing the vet with flying colours we were soon away to the obstacles section. These were quite challenging and had been designed to make the whip really think about where to go, with some having several options on which way to go through a gate. Again, not being able to walk them all thoroughly slowed us down, but we managed not to make any major errors or get eliminated. Dillon is such a good pony and very forgiving; hopefully he enjoyed it as much as we did. It was certainly helpful in topping his fitness up for three days with me on Exmoor the following week!

Our thanks to the whole team for a really enjoyable event and to everyone who helped so that we could enjoy ourselves. A special thank-you to James and Sue for all their many months of hard work and for finally making it happen.

For those who don't know we won't be competing in the Winter Indoor Series this year, as we are taking off, with the horses, on a little adventure of our own in France. Our Best Wishes to you all for a great Winters' carriage driving. If

Jill Etherington

