

# Penny's Young Pair go to Killerton

**William and Freddie**, my new young pair, are now five years old and progressing well in the fine art of Carriage Driving, so I thought that a day out at Killerton competing HC would be perfect 'next stage' in their education.

The weather was perfect as we set off from home. On arriving it was lovely to see so many familiar faces-everyone busy, either unloading, grooming or harnessing up. We unloaded William and Freddie who had travelled beautifully, and tied them up to the side of the lorry whilst we walked the obstacles.

Killerton Park provides such a lovely setting for an event, with the house to one side of the park which contains many majestic old trees. The spectacle was all the more beautiful as, of course, the sun was shining. The obstacles walked well, and I felt confident that William and Freddie would cope well with their straight forward design in what, after all, was their first attempt at a driving trials!

Back at the lorry we found that our boys were totally relaxed in the unfamiliar surroundings-wonderful! We harnessed up, got changed into our 'posh' outfits, put to an set off across the park towards the dressage arena.

William and Freddie had never driven through so many thistles! So during our warm-up I felt more like I had a couple of leaping gazelles, instead of ponies, in front of me. The dressage test went well. There is much to work on to improve and develop for future tests, but I was really pleased with their behaviour, particularly bearing in mind that there were other competitors around the arena, both warming up and driving the adjacent obstacles!

The boys were more than a little surprised when they set eyes on the cones course. I had not been able to practice cones at home due to all the rain we have had. The round started off with the ponies almost stopping at the first pair of cones and then dashing through at break neck speed to the next pair. With much encouragement we got through all the cones with only one down, but with lots of time penalties.

After a brief break back at the lorry and a change of clothes, we were off on the marathon. As usual the marathon at Killerton was beautiful and was run the other way round to previous years. William and Freddie had never trotted so far in 35 minutes. I was so impressed with how they coped with the undulating terrain and natural hazards. We arrived back in the park feeling elated and happy with the boys and their performance.

After a brief rest, we were off towards the first obstacle. The ponies were somewhat confused at being asked to turn back and forth with such regularity, but by obstacle 6 they were clearly learning fast. Apart from an early hiccup when William and Freddie objected to a couple of blue barrels and Ray had to get off to lead and encourage him through the obstacle (an advantage of going HC at this early stage), they took everything in their stride and I was thrilled with their performance.

We got back to the lorry feeling happy that our 'new boys on the block' might have a future in competitive carriage driving.

A big thank you must go to the Killerton organising team for working so hard and giving us a really enjoyable day. Our thanks must also go to the National Trust for allowing us to use Killerton as one of our annual venues.

**Penny Bragg**