

Southern Area Championships - September 2006

Both of us qualified for the Area Finals so I decided, when I filled out the entry form that Elizabeth would drive as she qualified the higher and I am quite happy to groom. We decided that for a treat we would ask for a stable to be told on the telephone that we would be allocated stables as no portable or fenced areas were allowed on the showground. I confirmed we would only need one as our ponies always stabled together, lovely we thought! When the details were forwarded to Elizabeth we discovered that stables were compulsory, the cost £10 per stable and £5 per bag for shaving or bring your own (*shavings only allowed – we don't have shavings*). When we did arrive on Friday evening I mentioned that I thought it would have been nice to have the information on stabling arrangements and a reminder about the toll to get into Wales (£4.90 per car and nearly £10 per lorry), on the entry form as some of us do drive on a shoestring, and the extra costs could have been just too much. As it happened there were old shavings in the stable and we did not need to get more.

Well stabling!! - we counted over 300 boxes and a good majority of them were filled (*many stallions*) by the show which was going on in the next fields. There was every type of turn out you could imagine from the really crème de la crème to what looked like home made vehicles, with people on them from toddlers upwards. Kids racing around in the lorry parks and I mean racing in sulky type vehicles with no head protection at all, we were amazed- different world!

We settled the ponies in the box first as we were parked in a small field with about six feet between each trailer/box. Once we had set up camp, we set off for the clubhouse to get supper, to arrive just as they were closing up, but James Broome said if we could get the fryer lit again they would feed us – our men got the fryer going, only 13 to feed – ham and chips all round with some lovely pudding and custard or a mouse thing for afters, it was great only remembered once we had eaten that this was the first meal we had, had all day. The big marquee in the showing side of things had a party with loud music - believe it finished around 2am but I did not hear much of it fell asleep!

On Saturday the first dressage was at 10am but ours was not until 3.10pm. Dressage and cones walking had to be done before 10. The dressage arena looked enormous, but we think it was a bit of an optical illusion with the white plastic post and rails surrounding the light grey/white sand. *Big shock* three judges for the first few classes, we think they got bored by the time we came on as we only had two. We decided not to walk any of the obstacles as remembering the dressage and cones was enough for the brain in one day but the time did seem to pass very slowly. Elizabeth drove the best dressage ever considering the mare was a proper little!!!!!! warming up. Big thank you to our mentor for the warming up lesson and the support during the whole weekend – *you know who you are!*

On to the cones 20 sets, including slalom, a bridge and a U turn with life size model pigs in it. The bridge was something else, drivers were coming off their seats a good six inches with the bump some of the grooms even higher, it was definitely hold on for dear life. Not bad considering four down. After the prize giving for the dressage and cones we settled the animals and went off quickly round the obstacles before going off to a local pub for supper 13 of us again.

The waitress said she had been hoping for a quiet night until we asked for a table for 15 (couple more joined the party), we had to wait quite a long time for the food to arrive (they obviously worked on it all coming out at the same time) but it was really nice and we had a very pleasant time. Small hiccup on the return journey one of the land rovers had a flat. Fireworks and another party in the marquee but more music we recognised this time. Just settling down for the night when the second lot of fireworks started, ie thunder, lightning and heavy rain, must admit haven't got a clue when the music or the storm ended, fell asleep again.

Sunday morning, great dry and the sun coming up. It was a long way round the obstacles so we unhitched the land rover and drove round, our brains are not as fast as they used to be and we were a bit worried that if we walked we would not get round eight of them a couple of times and we had to be off the course by 10am. Still seems to be a long wait for our time (1125) but once off there was no stopping the ponies. Section A was a bit exciting as the ponies thought it was fun to race off, one bucking, the gelding! Surprised he is usually the quiet one. Found out later Elizabeth had given them extra course mix, which they don't normally have. Elizabeth managed after a fight for a couple of fields to settle them down and we came in bang in the middle of the max and min times. The walk was from the finish of A to the start of E so it felt more like going somewhere (not up and down or round the same field as we usually seem to do) again bang in the middle of the times, wonderful they have found out how to walk on.

The obstacles Elizabeth drove wonderfully and apart from a brain problem we both seemed to have at the water where we had to correct course error (40 faults!). Timings were surprising, at the beginning of the course we seemed to be way up on time but when I checked again we seemed to be down, however we came in half a minute over the minimum time according to my stopwatch, but the steward said we were under, I did argue with him as I was certain my watch was correct, but he still said we were under time – oh well! The ponies bless them came in with just the minimum of dampness breathing steadily – fit little devils! We decided to give them a wash off to get rid of the sandy mud and weed we picked up at the water and when we got to the stable, found that our full hay net had gone and someone had used the stable (I had mucked out when I collected them and left the hay net for their return – was a bit put out by this.

While we were packing up – everyone helping – great speeded things up wonderfully and we found out we were not the only ones who had hay nets missing. I must admit we had all been more careful about locking things away this week end as there were some strange people about. Good news arrived in the form of the Finish Steward of Section E who came to let us know the times he had were the max times and we were in time but a few people would be disappointed as they then ended up over time. At the prize giving most of the GWHC members got placed – cheers from all of us (*nosiest group*) - we got 3rd - fastest time in 6 of the 8 obstacles *whoopie!* Must try harder with the brains though, best keep taking the memory tablets, that's if we can remember to take them in the first place!

All our thanks must go to **Angus & Arran** without who we could not have such fun, they seemed fit as fiddles when we let them out, off down the field like rockets. Our thanks also to the other members of our group who helped us, with working out times, telling us what Marita did wrong (could have been eliminated) in the cones and generally making the weekend great.

Great weekend

Marita Wakeham seconded by Elizabeth McQueen

HELP! I'VE NOW ENTERED THE AGE OF THE THINGY

Plans to make fish oil compulsory for children to boost brainpower and memory are a great idea. Only one problem- who is going to remind mothers to give it to them?

After years of waiting for that post-children brain fog to lift, I have come to a sad conclusion, its not coming back. My memory, that is I used to have a wonderful data- retrieval facility that swooped on a fact instantaneously and brought it back to me. These days I seem to have an elderly librarian in slippers inside my head, I think his name is Roy. When I try to remember something Roy shuffles off to the relevant file, sometimes he's gone for quite a while – pausing for a cup of tea, perhaps or a Twix. I appreciate Roy's efforts but I wish he'd get a move on when I'm trying to drag up the identity of the stranger who is talking to me. Busy friends says they all gets so forgetful and are scared they are getting Alzheimer's.

We agree ruefully that we have entered the Age of The Thingy. You know the Thingy. The Thingy is hiding somewhere in the room you have just entered. If you keep quiet and stand very still there is a possibility you will remember where you put the Thingy.

Of course, one option is to choose a safe place where you keep the Thingies you are afraid of losing. However, it is the First Law Of Thingies that once the Thingy is in its special place, the exact location of the Thingy Place will immediately slip you mind. Thus, you may find yourself tearfully confiding to your life partner, "*I know I put the Thingy in the Thingy, but I can't remember where the Thingy is*"

So me, I'm off to get my fish-oil patches. Apparently, there called!!!!!! Anyway, you can get hem at the chemist called!!!!!! You know, the one next to Marks and Whatnot.

Article found in a Newspaper – sound familiar?