



# Scottish Carriage Driving Association Newsletter - November 2011

Unfortunately I had a prior engagement on November 6th. Geoff didn't tell me just what an obviously lively conference I had missed. Still Simon has written several fulsome reports which we have put together here. This way those of us not able to attend can read about and catch up with all the discussions. This edition of the newsletter is therefore a "Special" to summarise all that went on.

No doubt Simon's email box will now fill up as we add our opinions to those voiced on the 6th.

I would just like to wish everyone an enjoyable festive season and I look forward to meeting you all again at the AGM and in some field somewhere during the wonderful Summer we're promised for 2012.

## Report on the 2011 season for the BHDTA Annual Conference

The 2011 season started as usual with two Indoor events near Aberdeen in March, followed in late April by a new Club event at Biggarshiels, near Biggar, not far south of Edinburgh. This event made an encouraging start with 30 entries, including some well-known names from just south of the border, and looks like being a new permanent Club level fixture. Its appearance in the calendar however came at the expense, for this year only, of the Eglinton event which will return to the schedule in 2012. Unfortunately the poor summer weather forced the cancellation of the Club event at West Newton and the Grassroots event at Lourin Fair in August. In total numbers therefore, 2011 was similar to 2010, with one National event (Hopetoun), five Club events and two Grassroots events (three last year), complemented by four Indoor events (three last year), the two mentioned above in March, and two in October. The calendar for next season will now include a second National event with a return to Drumlanrig, and possibly a new Club event in Angus, but will no longer feature West Newton as a Club event as proprietor Audrey Barron has decided to convert to a Grassroots level one-day event.

Competitor numbers in nearly all events were again down on last year. The introduction of a Leisure Class (dressage, cones and short marathon) to Club events was however a successful innovation – Leisure entries were the largest numbers in three out of the five Club events.

The IB Horseboxes Scottish Points league produced close results, with some different but nevertheless well-known members emerging as winners this year – Jock McFarlane won the Open Horse class and Anna Grace made it two years in a row in Open Pony only one point ahead of Susan Don. Last year's Horse Pairs winner Owen Pilling tied with Diana Lindsay for first place this year, while Diana Ferguson again won the Pony Pairs for the second successive year. Eleanor Bosanquet this year pipped Shirley Macgregor to the post for the Small Pony class, while a notable double was achieved by the Morton family in the Club Novice class. Fiona Morton won this year, taking over the reins to repeat husband Kevin's outstanding performance last year. Young Drivers were largely absent this year, but Amanda Love competed as a Club Novice and will receive the rosette for Best Young Driver by coming third.

Membership numbers are down again in 2011, by 8 per cent on last year. The total is 116, with 96 (108 in 2010) at Full membership level, 12 (12) at Associate level and 8 (6) Young Drivers.

The decline in the number of members, the number of events, and in the number of members who compete in those events, is a cause for concern and a review of the situation will be made at the Club's annual conference in November in the hope of generating creative ideas from the membership about how to increase numbers efficiently by targeting precisely those groups of existing drivers and riders who might be interested in driving trials.

But as this report stated last year, driving trials in Scotland must still be in good health as no fewer than ten drivers from Scotland went down to Windsor to compete in the National Championships last month returning with a Champion (Jock McFarlane) and runner-up (Ian Bertram) in Advanced Horse, Champion (Janet Pilling) in Advanced Pony, and Champion (Carol Boswell) in Horse Tandems. Congratulations to them and the other six!

## SCDA Conference 2011 At the Huntingtower Hotel, Perth, Sunday November 6<sup>th</sup> 2011

Louise McCutcheon started by welcoming the 60 or so SCDA members, and a few non-members (who were equally welcome – see elsewhere in this newsletter!), in attendance this year. She gave a quick review of the season just past, expressing her gratitude in particular this time to all the organisers and landlords who had made our events possible – particular thanks to the team at the new Biggarshiels event, and to the Hopetoun team who had to put up with such terrible weather conditions. She reminded everyone of the successful introduction of the Leisure classes, and finished by congratulating the ten SCDA members who competed at the National championships in Windsor and who came back with no fewer than three Champions and one runner-up!

Ian Bertram then joined Louise to present the IB Horseboxes Scottish Points League rosettes – the details of which all appeared in the last newsletter – followed by Jock McFarlane who, as the recently elected Chairman of BHDTA, was best placed to give a brief review of some of the organisational changes at the governing body.

Colin Smith then spoke on behalf of the event organisers to report on the results of their meeting held just before the conference – your secretary's version of which appears elsewhere in this newsletter – followed by a look forward to the 2012 dates – and they too are included in this newsletter.

News was given of a clinic for aspiring scorers, to be led by Mike McCutcheon and Vic Kusun with the assistance of Zoe Ross, at the Blackford Hotel on December 11th, and of a backsteppers clinic to be led by Anna Grace at Dolphinton, courtesy of Gerald and Margo Smith, on a date early in 2012 still to be confirmed. Jane MacInnes is also keen to re-invigorate the probationary judges programme which started with such promise in 2009. Louise then invited everyone to contribute to an Open Forum discussion in response to the review of the Club circulated a month previously by the Secretary – whose notes on the really interesting debate can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

A brief discussion of the website led to overwhelming approval for the setting up of a Facebook page, and Philip Brown will set to work on that immediately.

Jock then assisted Louise with the presentation of the 2011 SCDA trophies, as follows:  
The Small Bellcrown Shield, awarded to the Best Scottish Intermediate from the combined Scottish Events: Anna Grace who also won -

The Liz Melville Trophy, for the most improved driver in the judgement of the SCDA directors:



The Archie Donald Trophy, awarded by the SCDA directors to someone who has made a particularly influential contribution to the sport in Scotland: Gerald and Margo Smith;



The Buddy Trophy, awarded by the directors, to someone who has done most during the season to help newcomers: Ruth and George Skinner



The Graham Murray Memorial Trophy, awarded by the directors to the best Scottish competitor from the combined Scottish National events in a class nominated by the directors: Jock McFarlane (Advanced Single Horse)



The large Bellcrown Shield, awarded to the best Club Novice: to Fiona Morton

The Braxfield Jack Trophy, donated by Mary Bryson, awarded for the best three dressage scores in the season: to Diana Ferguson (Pony Pairs)

The Fun and Friendship Trophy, given by the Rome family in memory of Vivienne, to someone 'who has made a light-hearted contribution or has lent a helping hand': Bob Binnie

Drawing on her time-management skills on the marathon to great effect, Louise then declared the conference closed at 12.46 precisely, after a full and fascinating morning.

## **Vacancy**

Due to Jock's promotion to Chairman of the BHDTA the SCDA now requires a

## **Treasurer**

Usual financial duties expected, including time and work for Hopetoun.

If you are interested please contact the secretary—Simon Sanders

## **SCDA Conference 2011**

Response of members to the Secretary's review

("the need to find ways of attracting new driving members to SCDA, in time to boost entry numbers at events next season")

Judging by the eagerness of members to air their views at the conference, and by the responses received by e-mail beforehand, the main thrust of the secretary's review had clearly touched a chord. A lot of excellent observations and suggestions were made and duly noted by the secretary – and here is his attempt to put them into some kind of actionable order:

The discussions started with concerns about the very nature of SCDA and whether the club was becoming too competitive for the 'hobby' drivers, then swung into a discussion about how to make entry to driving trials easier, or even less intimidating, and then broadened into the area of how to promote and recruit – three distinct but sequential themes which are laid out below.

Competitive versus hobby – is SCDA becoming "too professional" and running the risk of putting off less competitive drivers?

Judy Stoneley opened the debate with the question: "why was SCDA formed? What were its objectives?" implying the club was perhaps no longer true to its early vision. "Was it to promote competitive driving?" She and others, Barbara-Ann Skett for example, felt that "the bar had been raised too high" for those members who may not have the ambition to progress beyond Club level, or "hobby drivers" who feel that they can't keep up at Club events with members who compete at National events. They felt that the dressage test at some Grassroots events was too challenging for a genuine beginner. (It was later acknowledged that perhaps the Novice test had been used, wrongly, in 2011 in place of the Pre-Novice test). Ewan MacInnes responded that yes, originally SCDA had indeed broken away from BDS precisely in order to run driving trials (by definition, 'competitive') for those drivers who wanted a different experience from show driving. Sheila McNeill then added her view that "there is something for everyone" in that SCDA competitors now have the Leisure class and are able just to do dressage and cones. This view that SCDA had made progress in providing "a ladder" of driving experiences, for the newcomer to the national driver, became a recurring theme against which the "them and us" concerns of some of the hobby drivers seemed to diminish. The point was also made that the ten SCDA drivers who travelled the 500 miles to the National Championships in Windsor in September, and

who did so well, are indicative of the strength of competitive drivers in the Club: ten out of a total of perhaps 80 or 90 driving members is a significant proportion. So the Club does recognise its duty to its members at the highest and lowest levels of competitive ambition, and seems to be moving in a direction which does balance the interests of both. Janet Pilling may have caught the prevailing mood in an earlier e-mail: "I know the SCDA has traditionally been an eventing type club but maybe it's time to try and bring a bit of variety into it."

Make entry to SCDA/the driving trials world easier, less intimidating.

Several people like Ruth Skinner stressed the importance of the personal contact in encouraging new members, endorsed by others like Hamish Reid and Ewan MacInnes who recommended the return of the "buddy" system for experienced members to take new drivers under their wing in the early stages. Dave Skett believed that SCDA even needed to publicise the fact that it does indeed welcome new drivers. Jane MacInnes reflected on the lack of safe, broken ponies for beginners to start on, while Sheila McNeill suggested that members might find a way to lend newcomers a turnout/pony. Indeed the belief that the initial expense for turnout, harness and pony is a major obstacle to new drivers was endorsed by new member Jane Squirrell in her e-mail who, like Diana Lindsay in hers, offered to lend a vehicle and/or harness. Janet Pilling in her e-mail took the idea further – that SCDA might consider investing in and holding a 'bank' of carriages and harness (which tend to hold their value and sell on easily if the project fails) which new members could borrow/hire.

Judy Stoneley, along with Gerald Smith and Susan Clark in her e-mail, suggested that entry costs were too high and could be lowered/waived for new members. Janet Pilling however put the opposite view that entry costs into SCDA trials are cheap relative to other equestrian events.

Somewhere in all this Geoff Atkins spoke to remind the room that the requirement is short-term – to increase competitor numbers next season – so that while strategically new drivers are important, the immediate need leads either to consider existing riders (eventers? but they don't have the kit) or drivers who are already equipped, which boils down inevitably to BDS drivers who can be persuaded to cross over.

The need to market ourselves – promote and recruit – "try the sport"

Ideas flowed thick and fast:

Janet Pilling: put on a showing class at Club events on the Saturday to attract BDS drivers; put a "Getting Started" piece on the website (BHDTA example); use other 'horsey' websites and their discussion forums to promote carriage driving; training weekends in different

parts of the country;

Audrey Barron: putting on a BDS Trec day as a 'fun' bridge between handy pony and basic trials skills;

Hamish Reid: made the point, which may have been misunderstood by some, that all person-to-person recruiting depends on the existing members and a good time to use their available time and expertise is at SCDA events, where they already are – so try and bring recruits to an event so they see how it's done, and can take advantage of the members present; he reminded everyone how much more easy it is to join the sport now than when he started and how much progress has been made in 25 years;

Helen Hunter: stressed the need for members to take this on themselves; negotiate a demo or main ring slot at your local show or countryside day; she clearly wanted action now, preferably the setting up of a sub-committee to devise a strong recruitment programme to be in place for next season;

Anna Grace: how can we attract drivers from the other two Scottish clubs 'up' to our events?

Louise McCutcheon: undertake another 'Try-the-Sport' day along the same lines as the very successful BDS day at Howe of Fife (DABBS) earlier this summer, but ensure more experienced participants and an organised and thorough follow-up of all those taking part; each SCDA member to undertake to contact 2 BDS drivers;

Margo Smith (I think!): produce some simple leaflets/handouts to help with recruitment. Meanwhile Mary Kusin reminded everyone of the need to consider the insurance implications of any recruitment event. Mike Walsh also stressed the need for some longer term strategy to be put in place.

Jane Squirrell by e-mail had recommended a Facebook page for SCDA as another way of spreading the word – a decision to do that was taken at the conference.

Susan Clark by e-mail had also suggested that SCDA underwrite any losses incurred by events due to low entry numbers in bad years.

This is of course not exactly the order in which the discussion went but I am sure I've included all the comments made. I have tried to collect them together according to how they fit into the three central themes of the debate.

Arguably some of this is long rather than short term and perhaps misses the urgency identified in the review. But maybe that urgency was misplaced. The theme of "Competitive versus Hobby" is clearly one which exercises some members, as is the concern about making entry to the sport easier. Equally valid though was the position of SCDA as emphasised by Louise McCutcheon in her very timely closure of the debate – that with the Indoor, Grassroots, and Club events, and the introduction of the Leisure classes, there really is something for everyone in the calendar. All are agreed though that "everyone" needs to be made bigger – just ten more active drivers would make a big difference. At the risk of ending this report on a slightly negative note, the contribution at the very end, of a non-SCDA

member but a carriage driver nonetheless, is perhaps worth recording: she had sat through the whole debate and at the end felt even less likely to go into driving trials than she had before! I am still trying to trace her so as to find out a little more about why she was so put off!

The next step is for these to be circulated, as I am doing now, and then it will be discussed at the next directors' meeting on November 23rd.

To start your new diaries off please note the

## AGM

Saturday February 25th 2012.  
Venue—Blair Drummond Community Centre,  
nr Doune.

More details in the next newsletter.

And the

## Scottish Carriage Driving Dinner Dance

Saturday November 17th 2012  
Venue—Windlestrae Hotel, Kinross.

Take a look at their website [www.windlestrahotel.com](http://www.windlestrahotel.com)  
to see how much the hotel offers.

More details in the next newsletter

## Finally

Simon has promised to attach a list of Event dates to this newsletter.

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## SCDA Information

**Newsletters:-** Advertisements for the newsletters should be sent to the SCDA Secretary, Woodfield, Balmullo, St Andrews, Fife KY16 0AN.

Private Advertisements cost £5 and business advertisements cost £10. Please make cheques payable to Scottish Carriage Driving.

## ANDREW MAY LHHI

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