



Scottish Carriage Driving Association Newsletter - Autumn 2011

Well so to the second half of the 2011 season. Whilst "down South" seems to have had a tremendous Summer, we seem to have suffered with more record breaking poor conditions. The competitive spirit doesn't seem to have been dampened by the weather though and classes have been fiercely – though friendly fought. So we'll pick up with the reports from the beginning of July.

The Thornton Event
July 9th, 2011

The forecasters got it right – a damp but mainly rain-free morning, followed by very heavy rain through lunchtime and most of the afternoon. In driving terms therefore, the dressage and cones were mainly dry – but the marathon was a real soaking! Despite the conditions, and some very wet ground left over from heavy rain earlier in the week, Thornton Castle and the estate were looking well-tended and in beautiful condition to welcome eleven of us to the Grassroots event. The dressage arena was a picture – beautifully mown and flat, and beyond it in the adjacent field an inviting cones course, all part of the preparation work done by Ewan MacInnes and Ian Thornton-Kemsley, with the help of David Russell and Mike (Brechin) Brown. Ewan later praised the cones course but pointed out that in not producing one double-clear, the cones course could not quite be considered perfect! (note for those of us who rarely get near a double-clear – just blame the course in future).

The dressage and cones all went without a hitch, but to the accompaniment of some distant music, bumping and thumping somewhere a few fields away. At first I thought that dressage judge Alison Birkett was simply enjoying some heavy metal in her car in an attempt to improve her concentration on the task in hand, but no. So when I asked Ian T-K whether he knew where the music was coming from, his answer that he was unaware of any party nearby rather shattered my illusion of him both as a party animal and as lord and master of his immediate neighbourhood. A couple of his children who were listening to this conversation however, did not seem unduly surprised!

A wet picnic lunch then led to a very wet marathon: 6km on Section A, a 1km walk, then Section E with five obstacles, plus the option of the Thornton trademark run along the riverbed (yes, we did it, and can now consider our ponies as well and truly water-proof!), with an obstacle to be negotiated if desired on the other bank.

After the send-off at the start of A, there was no further timekeeping until the obstacles in Section E. This was a clever idea, obviating the need for so many stewards and timekeepers but, as Ewan pointed out quite forcefully at the prizegiving later, not removing the obligation from the competitors to work out their times and try to keep to them – as they would of course have to do in a Club event. Conditions however out on the marathon course were pretty bad, and keeping up to time was difficult even for the more experienced drivers – and as this was a Grassroots event designed specially to attract drivers with less experience, it was not unreasonable that some competitors found it slow going. (Indeed the largest class was Club Novice).

Bill Parr used his own spreadsheet to get the scores out very quickly, and our hosts kindly doled out strawberries and cream to us all while we applauded the class winners, and the awards of special rosettes for the best dressage which went to Judy Stoneley (great to see her and Ross back on a carriage), best cones to Mandy Law, and best marathon to Colin Whitear. It remained only for a tractor to appear to extricate a couple of the lorries from the muddy field, and off we all went home – very grateful to Thornton for having us, and to all the organisers and helpers.

Simon Sanders

Barskimming -
16th and 17th July

The kind invitation of the hon Misses Jean and Heather Galbraith to return to Barskimming Estate once again gave us the opportunity to enjoy another weekend at this beautifully maintained estate. Whilst somewhat lacking in sunshine the weather was at least quite dry for most of the weekend.

As always Colin Smith organised a challenging event and Robbie Robertson designed a cones course which had everyone looking over their shoulders for every next pair of cones. Dressage was judged by Ian Bertram and a good weekend was had by all - but sadly "all" was not very many with only eleven entries and just eight on the marathon. How very disappointing it must be for an organiser and his team to work for weeks planning and designing an event and for days beforehand building the course only to find that the competitors number less than a quarter of the number of organiser, helpers, volunteers and officials.

These are difficult and challenging times for everyone and it is understandable that competitors must choose their events carefully if they are to avoid finishing the season with massive overdrafts, but do spare a thought for the organisers. We have already seen national events dwindle to a tiny number in the space of two or three years. If you fail to support the local events the sport is at real risk of complete collapse from lack of venues.

Many thanks to Colin and his team for running with such tiny numbers - hopefully 2012 will see some old faces return to this lovely event.

Geoff Atkins



Jock McFarlane at Dalmeny

Carol Boswell and Eric.

You may remember that at Hopetoun Carol announced that she and Eric would undertake a challenge to compete in both the Hopetoun driven and ridden horse trials. This would be in aid of the Parkinson and Cancer charities. Well Hopetoun HDT went well and the bucket collection was well supported. So a week after competing at Erddig, at the end of July, Carol and Eric won the dressage phase for their class at the Hopetoun International Horse Trials. Eric then jumped a clear round but Carol retired Eric from the cross country. For more details visit Carol's website at seacliffstables.co.uk where under "challenge" you can read Carol's report. You still have time to donate until the end of October.

Holker 5/7 August

The Event might have been in Cumbria but the Organiser—Eileen Cornish and many of the team travelled down from Scotland. Good weather held and the Event was considered a great success by those who attended. Unfortunately the Estate didn't agree and sadly Holker will not run again.

Lourin Fair 14 August and West Newton 27/28 August

Both these events were sadly cancelled because of bad weather, leaving no Scottish events taking place during August. Both were sadly missed and hopefully will take place next season.

International Interest
World Pairs Conty, France
24/28 August

Our Scottish interest at this event was Owen Pilling, who had been told at Holker that he had been chosen to compete as an individual. For most of us we could only follow the event via the blog which can still be found on the horsedrivingtrials.co.uk website. A sizable group went to support Owen and the others and cheered them all on. Unfortunately things did not go well for either Owen or the team of Fred Pendlebury, David Matthews and Geoff Brown.

We're all proud of Owen for being selected and we hope he'll go forward for selection the next time.

National Championships
September 9th—11th

The Scottish contingent made the long journey down to Windsor and their numbers made a sizable proportion of competitors and spectators. The SCDA now have three National Champions in their number. Janet Pilling, Carol Boswell and Jock Macfarlane.

Whilst Carol had a convincing win, Janet beat Nicola Blandin by 1.1 point. Jock beat Ian Bertram by 5.26 points whilst Ian in turn beat Emily Bennett by 0.01 points, I think that could be called a closely contested class!

International
Combined Pony Championships, Lipica, Slovenia.

This time we read the blog and willed on Wilf Bowman Ripley who was driving Faith Szczuka's team of Welsh ponies. Sadly again things didn't go our way and placings slipped away as a result of some unfortunate errors.

You can still read the blog on the BHDTA website at the address mentioned previously.

Dalmeny 24/25 September

So to the final competition of the season. The weather was bright, clear and warm for the time of year. The views splendid with a lot of river activity.

The dressage arena was showing a mark improvement due to Ian's TLC. The cones course was quick and complex with only Janet Pilling achieving a double clear round. 24 competitors had made the effort to come to this last event with the biggest class being the leisure class. The horse singles class was very open Ian, of course was organiser and therefore not competing and Jock appeared with a pair. So our National Champion left the class open for Steven Sloan to win. Andrew May again bought along his team, who looked so good in the

dressage. Unfortunately a malfunction with his marathon carriage meant that he had to withdraw from Sunday's competition.

Saturday evening saw most people appear at the end of season party. This year two tents had been erected so that every one could get in. An assortment of BBQs were collected outside for the meat to be cooked and then salads etc were laid out inside. Hamish gave a short speech of thanks, pointing out that after 11 years competing he was the only one still in the same class. His intention to move on was clear.

Lady Rosebery kindly presented the trophies and rosettes.

See Geoff's photos at:
<http://inchcrui.co.uk/Dalmeny2011/>

Notes from the Secretary's desk - September 2011

Correspondence from members:

Barbara-Anne Skett kindly wrote to pick me up, quite rightly, on a phrase I had carelessly used in the last newsletter when saying that the large number of entries into the Leisure class at Falkland should have reassured those *"who were worried about attracting newcomers looking for an easy way into the sport"*. Again quite rightly, Barbara-Anne countered that *"we should be thinking of more and more ways to attract new competitors"*. She continues her letter as follows: *"I sometimes feel carriage-driving must be the most difficult of all equestrian disciplines to start competing in. Lead-rein jumping and Walk and Trot dressage tests give a low-key entry into show jumping and dressage. Why is the first competition for a carriage-driver a complicated two-day event? The dressage test for Club Novice and Leisure classes at Barskimming requires the horse and driver to show both collected and extended trot. How many riders would like to face that in their first dressage competition? When I have raised this in the past, it has been suggested that experience can be gained at local club events or at Grassroots events. There is no local club in my area and the few SCDA Grassroots events are some distance away from central Scotland. If we do not make an effort to make life easier for those who want to start competing, we risk losing events as there will not be enough competitors to make them viable. We also need to cater for the drivers who want the fun of the occasional competition (weekend drivers?) but have no desire to progress up to nationals.* She goes on to stress that this is very much a personal view, and that *"the people involved in our sport are incredibly helpful and welcoming but the competitive structure is not."*

Barbara-Anne makes a number of interesting points. There's no doubt that it is difficult to start off in

carriage-driving trials – but isn't that just the nature of the sport we choose to follow? And surely the entry Grassroots level is low enough? It is after all a competitive sport. Barbara-Anne made the point to me on the phone that at the Seacliff BDS drive this summer there was a good turnout, but several BDS drivers there will perhaps never have considered entering an SCDA driving trials event. So maybe we need more Grassroots events to attract 'cross-over' drivers, but that's easier said than done. There are only so many dedicated enthusiasts like those who run Lourin, Thornton, Cothal and formerly Lunan Bay, with access to suitable venues and willing volunteers. Are there any more of you out there? The Leisure class at Club events has been a promising addition to what Barbara-Anne describes as the 'competitive structure' this year, and apparently welcomed by those members who have no desire to progress to Nationals – but surely Club Novice and Leisure classes are as far as we need to go in lowering the competitive bar. Let's not forget the need for our top drivers, some now actually competing at international, not just national level, for a solid competitive base at Club level on which to build their performances – and the danger of driving them away from our Club events if the overall competitive element is reduced. So in summary, my personal reaction to Barbara-Anne's letter is: the entry level of competition is surely not too high to deter new competitors from what will always be a demanding sport – but we need more events offering that level of entry which would also attract entries from some of the Leisure class drivers. What do you think? How do we generate more of these one-day events, particularly in Central Scotland? How do we persuade BDS drivers to enter driving trials events?

Following on rather nicely from the above, let me tell you about some interesting correspondence I received from Jane MacInnes with some typically perceptive observations on drivers at the Thornton event this year. Her views were shared of course by Ewan who had organised the event and who voiced some of these opinions there and then. Jane writes: *"there were competitors (on the marathon) who did not seem to be making any effort to maintain the times that were set, and the obstacle stewards had to stand in the pouring rain for at least half an hour waiting for them to come. Ewan had already gone looking for them in case they were in trouble. The problem seemed to be not with their ponies, but with their lack of driver experience in making at least some effort to achieve the set targets."* She goes on to describe the *"lax attitude of some competitors who did not seem to recognise the importance of being at the start 10 minutes in advance for a harness check"*.

These may seem like fairly blunt comments, but I remember getting some pretty 'blunt' criticism from Philippa Gammell when we turned up at the start of the Lunan Bay section E a couple of minutes late, our first

event several years ago. She gave us an earful, and we haven't made that mistake again! There are few more authoritative officials in Scotland than Jane, and none more keen to see the sport prosper, so her views are very important. She goes on to put some constructive suggestions: "I do believe there is very little training taking place on how to compete in SCDA competitions. Perhaps we should have some guidelines on what is required, and the importance of correct presentation, etiquette, timings etc. After all, the grassroots events are not only for the leisure/pleasure drivers, but frequently the breeding grounds for our future serious competitors, so it is good to get it right from the start. For example, I insist on saluting the judge in cones. There were also some there without aprons or gloves, albeit they were in marathon gear."

I hope these two pieces of correspondence will prompt members to send in their own thoughts on the subjects raised – to me the secretary, or to the Newsletter editor Chris Atkins, or at the conference.

Finally many of you will have seen an article in Carriage Driving magazine about Backstepper Assessment, an initiative being started at some clubs in the south and southwest of England. One or two members have already expressed an interest in this, and Gerald and Margo Smith have already and most generously offered their premises at Dolphinton, between Edinburgh and Biggar, as a possible venue for a backstepper clinic for SCDA members next year. We shall get details of what is entailed and it will be discussed by the directors at the next meetings.

Simon Sanders

The Future.

May I remind you of the:-

Annual Dinner and Dance
The Huntingtower Hotel, Perth
November 5th 2011.
Tickets at £35 per person from
Joyce Simpson
Lathro Farm Cottage
Milnathort
Kinross.

Annual Conference
To follow the Dinner Dance on
November 6th 2011
Coffee 10.30am then the meeting from 11am

At the conference the annual IB Horseboxes Scottish points league rosettes will be presented. Please try to come along to collect your rosette or at least arrange for someone to collect it for you. There will also be the annual awards and trophies to be presented.

IB Horseboxes Scottish Points 2011

3 events taken from the 5 events run

Class	Place	Competitor	Points	
Single Horse	1	Jock McFarlane	28	
	2	Margo Smith	26	
	3	Jane Isaac	25	
	4	Ian Bertram	20	
	5	Hamish Reid	16	
	6=	Joyce Simpson	8	
	6=	Helen Hunter	8	
Single Pony	1	Anna Grace	29	
	2	Susan Don	28	
	3	Mike Walsh	16	
	4	Patsy Muir-Simpson	15	
	5	Janet Pilling	10	
	6	Mandy Law	7	
Horse Pairs	1=	Diana Lindsay	20	
	1=	Owen Pilling	20	
	3=	Louise McCutcheon	9	
	3=	Jock McFarlane	9	
Pony Pairs	1	Diana Ferguson	30	
	2	John Farmer	26	
	3	Ian Gilbert	19	
Small Pony	1	Elinor Bosanquet	20	
	2	Shirley Macgregor	18	
	3	Katy Doig	17	
	4	Ruth Martin	10	
	5	Barbara Foti	8	
Club Novice	1	Fiona Morton	30	
	2	Morag Russell	27	
	3	Amanda Love	18	
	(+ Best Young Driver Rosette)			
	4=	Helen Paterson	9	
	4=	Alastair Munro	9	
6	Margo Smith	7		



Clive and Mickey Rushton-Green survey the river from Dalmeny



SCDA Contacts

Chairman

Louise McCutcheon

01899 220140

chairman@scda.co.uk

Vice Chairman

Ian Thornton—
Kemsley

01561 377301

istk@thornton-estates.co.uk

Treasurer

Jock McFarlane

01250 873211

treasurer@scda.co.uk

Secretary

Simon Sanders

07714 143243

secretary@scda.co.uk

Directors

Audrey Barron
email

01241 872579

audrey@wnewton.wanadoo.co.uk

Ian Bertram
email

01506 811626

ibhorseboxes@btinternet.com

Campbell Bosanquet
email

07768 755996

ccbosanquet@yahoo.co.uk

David Brown
email

01382 581419

davidbrown265@btinternet.com

Mike Brown (Brechin)
email

01356625314

mbrown15@nhs.net

Mike Brown (Falkland)
email

01337 857275

mlpkb@hotmail.com

Eileen Cornish
email

01555 870288

ejcornish@btinternet.com

Ian Gilbert
email

01294 832461

tandem@btinternet.com

Mary Kusin
email

01560 482375

mary@eastoverhill.co.uk

Website

07714 143243

website@scda.co.uk

Newsletter

Chris Atkins

01436 676083

chris.atkins@inchcruin.co.uk

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