

INNOCENCE & EXPERIENCE

From opposite ends of a long, muddy field, Kate Waddington (seasoned hunter) gives advice on what to take and do if it's your first time, while Eleanor Ayres (hunting virgin) recounts hers.

Never been hunting before? Don't worry – here's some invaluable advice that's sure to give you the confidence to try it.

The idea of galloping across vast tracts of open country, jumping hedges, ditches and gates is enough to put the fear of God into most people (jump jockeys, Irishmen and very good riders excepted!). But most hunting, particularly here, is not like that.

If you have never been before, it's really not that scary but you do have to be well prepared. The most important bit is your horse: most horses love hunting but a horse that is difficult and unruly at home is going to be worse hunting, and that's no fun for anyone. A horse that goes in a snaffle at home is probably best in a slightly stronger bit. Add in a running martingale as it gives you a neckstrap. I always have one: you never know when the 'Oh s**t strap' may come in handy. If it's good enough for Kieran Fallon, it's good enough for me.

You do not have to have the full hunting kit before coming out. A hacking jacket or black showing jacket is fine, but you may want some extra layers on underneath. A pair of tights worn under your breeches on a cold day makes a big difference and, if your boots are difficult to get on and off, put on a pair of pop socks under your socks and pulled up over your breeches or jods.

Tack up your horse before you leave home, as trying to tack up while he is whirling round at the meet is no fun. When you finish, your horse will be tired, muddy and thirsty, so take a can of water. I always take hot water with me: I wrap the cans up in a couple of rugs and it's amazing how warm the water is when I get back. My horse drinks some of it and is washed off with the rest and put into a warm rug. By the time we get home he is dry and ready to get clean pyjamas on for bed!

Unless you are teetotal, bring a hip flask as you'll appreciate it when you have been out for a while and it's a good way of meeting new people if you're a bit shy. The flasks where the top is permanently attached are easier as you can't drop the top.

If you need someone to 'nanny' you for the day, just ask at the meet. We all help and plenty of people are 'non-jumpers'. Hunting is a very social sport, so don't forget your manners – a smile always helps. Don't tear past people or, worse, run into the back of them as it can cause serious damage and that's not going to help you make new friends! If your horse might kick, tie red tape around its tail and stay at the back of the field. If your horse hasn't been out before or is young, some green tape warns everyone.

At the beginning of last season I took a friend out on one of my horses. She had never hunted before but it had always been a dream. She described it as one of the best days of her life. Give it a go, you can't judge until you have tried!

P.S. For the girls (and some boys, I dare say), make sure it's waterproof mascara!

Kate Waddington

I've ridden at Rose Hall Farm in Sarratt since I was a child so I've always been surrounded by hunting, but had never actually participated. I'm all for equine excitement, but my preconceptions were that the normal rules of engagement were abandoned when hunting, and all kinds of terrain were negotiated at high speed, that sane horses became unstoppable, and that jumping 5ft fences was mandatory. In my discussions with friends who'd been hunting the responses varied from, 'There's really a lot of standing around, you know,' to 'Don't worry, everyone's out of control!' Despite the fact that my horse had never exhibited such a tendency, I had an irrational vision that I



LEFT: Kate Waddington, from the meet at Bower Farm, Aldworth in March 2006

If you are interested in going hunting for the first time, please contact Clive Gough, Secretary, on 01494 758069.

RIGHT: Eleanor Ayres, at the meet at Monkton, Speen, in March 2007



couldn't dispel: that he would transmute into an unstoppable nightmare and would pass the master – the ultimate hunting faux pas.

After much encouragement from Bill Martin and Barbara Dickens, Susie Bell and Sharon Higgs at Rose Hall, my horse Ferdie donned a new Pelham bit and I attended my first meet at Chenies Manor on 17 October, 2006. I chose a local meet for my maiden outing so I'd be able to go home alone if I had to at short notice. It was a lovely morning in the Chess Valley and there was a low mist. The scene at Chenies was magnificent; I've attended meets on foot but now I saw things through the eyes of a bona fide participant. The mustard coats of the hunt staff marked the sense of occasion, the riders laughed and chatted over their port, inquisitive hounds were everywhere, and foot followers were plentiful.

After the master's speech, the huntsman set off at a trot with the hounds and the field followed. The sound of the clattering hooves was exhilarating. This was it, we were off, I was committed! We soon turned into a wood and stopped. And waited. In spite of my anticipation and a hunger to keep moving, Ferdie was happy to stand still, as he had done at the meet – this was very promising behaviour but I couldn't relax yet.

When progress recommenced we moved into some open fields. 'Aha,' I thought, 'This is it; he's going to take off and fly past the master and I'll be sent home ignominiously, my hunting career curtailed!' I stayed with Bill and Barbara, my diligent chaperones. The rest of the field cantered down a hill, but we held our horses until we reached the bottom. Then I let Ferdie have his head and it felt fantastic to be running with so many other horses. I pulled him up easily and then I knew he would be OK: I knew that hunting wasn't going to make him 'lose his mind'.

The day continued with a mixture of woodland and open fields, moving on with intent and standing waiting. There were a couple of small fences but Heather Munn was always there to lead the non-jumpers around. There were certainly no obligatory five footers! Throughout the day I was warmly welcomed. In fact, there was real care taken by the officials to get to know me during the season, and I have found the hunting field a friendly, sociable place. It strikes me that there is a harmonious mixture of traditional and modern in the 21st century hunting field: while the customs preserve this sport (superficially at least) as the epitome of rural Englishness, it feels anything but old fashioned. It is relaxed, welcoming and brings together people of a wide variety of backgrounds and ages.

I hunted six more days that season. The opportunity hunting offers to ride on private land is unparalleled, with longer canters and gallops and better views than most bridleways. I was one of the last in the field that first day at Chenies, I didn't want it to end. 'Goodnight,' we chorused as we left, a charming if inaccurate custom of saying goodbye! I was on such a high as I hacked home and indeed for the rest of the day. The combination of the initial nerves giving way to euphoria rendered me exhausted that evening. And I know that Ferdie thoroughly enjoyed his day but in contrast to me I'm not sure he slept at all that night, he stood with his head held high over his door, alert, staring intently to the horizon, just in case the hunt was still out there and he could go and rejoin it.

Eleanor Ayres

Ashley Wilde

GROUP



Janet Reger

A beautiful private lounge room floor with white damask background and classic english style furniture to give a sophisticated and timeless appeal. The bed took in 12% polyester and 88% cotton with a soft touch for maximum luxury. The inclusion comprises of dark, yellowed, cotton, quilted bedspread and a pair of fully lined curtains with tie backs.

STYLEABBE LTD

Builders

**Southside Farm
London Road
Loudwater
High Wycombe
Bucks, HP10 9RF**

**Contact John Sumner
Tel: 01494 678647
Fax: 01494 670394
E-mail: styleabbe@hotmail.com**

A GUIDE TO WOUNDS

Sally Wise MA Vet MB MRCVS from Baskerville, Horgan and Partners explains which wounds need immediate veterinary attention and which may be dealt with on the yard.

Much of my work involves treating wounds and advising on their management. Horses and ponies are notorious for injuring themselves and any owner should be prepared to deal with a wound on their animal: immediate treatment makes all the difference to quick healing. It is also vital that owners can differentiate between wounds that require veterinary attention and those that will resolve without such intervention.

Initial Management

If the wound is bleeding profusely it is important to stem the blood flow (Fig. 1). This can be achieved by applying pressure directly to the wound. Ideally, use something clean against the cut and bandage tightly over it.

Providing the horse can move relatively comfortably, it should be taken back to the yard or into a clean, dry area with good lighting. The wound can then be cleaned thoroughly, either by cold hosing for 10-15 minutes or by using cotton wool and saltwater or a very dilute (1 in 50) antiseptic solution such as hibiscrub.

Many wounds go unnoticed but these can still allow entrance into the body of the Clostridium tetani bacteria that cause Tetanus. You should know whether the horse has been vaccinated, as otherwise, even the smallest of cuts will need a special visit by the vet to give an anti-toxin to prevent tetanus infection. It is



FIG. 2

FIG. 1

very important that all horses and ponies are vaccinated against tetanus.

Wound Assessment

The type of treatment necessary and whether the vet needs to be called depend on the type of wound and what structures are involved. As an owner, you should be familiar with the emergency signs, such as how lame the horse is or where the wound lies.

Type of Wound

Wounds can roughly be classed as one of three types:

(1) **Abrasion** (graze). Characterised by loss of hair and the superficial layers of the skin.

(2) **Puncture**. Often quite small but may have penetrated much deeper than appears and have damaged underlying structures.

(3) **Laceration**. Full skin thickness exposing deeper tissues.

Grazes need not necessarily require veterinary attention (see below) whilst lacerations require immediate veterinary assessment. The seriousness of puncture wounds often relates to where it is on the horse's body. These are examples of a laceration:

A laceration to the palmar (back) forelimb: The tendons of the back of the leg, the superficial digital flexor tendon (SDFT) and deep digital flexor tendon (DDFT) are just under the skin. They run in their tendon sheath from one third of the way down the cannon to the middle of the pastern. Any wound in this area that goes through the skin risks causing a penetration to the sheath or damaging the tendons. Although such a wound doesn't look too bad, it should be checked by a vet because of its position. It may require stitching for it to heal fastest.

A 'degloving' injury (Fig. 3): A laceration to the forelimb encircling the limb. Often

from getting in caught in wire. This wound requires stitching and prolonged immobilisation. As the blood supply to the lower part of the wound is very limited it may not heal completely following stitching. If this is the case, the leg will have to remain bandaged whilst the wound heals by the second intention process.

Location of the Wound

Any wounds that penetrate the skin in the region of joints and tendon sheaths are potential emergencies. Wounds are doorways for infection into the body. If a synovial structure, i.e. joint capsule or tendon sheath, is penetrated and infection sets in, the horse will rapidly become very lame and often never return sound. To prevent this, the area has to be flushed clean, usually under a general anaesthetic, and the horse given specific antibiotics. Wounds into the chest or abdomen are also emergencies and the vet should be called immediately.

Lameness

How lame the horse is gives an indication as to how much damage has been done. If a horse is very lame it may suggest that bones, tendons, ligaments or synovial structures are involved and that other veterinary treatment is necessary.

Cause

How the wound occurred is also important as it may point to other problems. For



FIG. 3

FIG. 4



example, if a horse was kicked there may be bruising or fractures that complicate the wound healing.

Managing Superficial Wounds

If it has been decided that the wound is simple enough and the horse sound enough not to require veterinary attention, treatment can be administered.

Thoroughly cleaning the wound reduces the chance of infection. Wounds on the lower limbs of horses should be covered to prevent further contamination and to prevent proud flesh forming. Application of a gel such as Intrasil gel™, Vetguard gel™ or Dermagel™ and a clean dressing such as Melolin™ secured with gamgee and a polo bandage is ideal. Over-tight bandaging not only inhibits wound healing but can cause sores and tendon problems. Wound powders and purple spray can dry out, irritate and slow healing of wounds and should generally be avoided.

Wound Management Prior to the Vet's Arrival

The wound should be thoroughly cleaned. This is often best achieved by cold hosing for 10-15mins. If there is a delay before the vet arrives, covering wounds on lower limbs prevents further contamination and limits swelling that may preclude stitching. A clean dressing, dry poultice or even Clingfilm under a soft bandage should be applied. There should be plenty of clean water available for the vet to further wash the wound, plus adequate lighting.

Veterinary Treatment

Your vet will assess whether any other structures have been involved. If they suspect synovial involvement they may take a sample of joint or sheath fluid. They may want to X-ray or ultrasound scan the area if they are suspicious of fractures, bone chips or foreign material in the wound.

Your vet will decide how the wound should be managed. They will take all the factors above into account, along with the temperament of the animal, duration since injury and economical issues.

Lacerations are best treated by stitching or stapling (Figs. 2 & 4). If too much tissue has been lost, the wound is too swollen, stretched too tightly over a joint or is too old, then treatment to allow the

wound to heal by a process called 'second intention' will be started. Healing occurs this way by a clot forming in the wound that is then replaced by fleshy granulation tissue. Epithelialisation is the process during which skin forms over this bed of tissue. Bandaging and immobilisation of even a stitched wound is important to prevent excessive movement pulling the edges apart, to reduce pain and inflammation and to prevent further contamination.

Common Misconceptions of Wound Healing

1. A wound should have air to it.

No. All wounds repair better when covered, although this isn't always possible on the horse. Despite common opinion that the wound should be 'aired' and left to 'dry out', dessication of the wound inhibits the epithelialisation or skin-forming process. In addition, wounds on the lower limbs of horses have the tendency to produce excessive granulation tissue or proud flesh. This can prevent healing as the skin cannot form over the proud tissue. This is much more likely to happen if the wound is left uncovered.

2. Poulticing wounds is useful.

No. Wounds can be cleaned sufficiently through flushing with clean water and

application of a gel as described above. Poulticing the wound causes maceration of the skin often with subsequent dermatitis. It provides an inappropriate environment for adequate wound healing.

3. Wound powder/purple spray should be used on open wounds.

No. Both of these products dry the wound out hindering epithelialisation. The main component of purple spray, gentian violet, has even been shown to cause cancers following use in open wounds. Any antibiotic and antiseptic creams used in the initial stages of wound healing have the potential to irritate the wound and slow the healing process.

The main point to remember is that there can be often more problems than the visible cut. In all wounds, the most likely complication of healing is infection and prompt cleaning and protection from further contamination is vital. If you are in doubt you should always call your vet.

Baskerville Horgan & Partners will be providing further articles in forthcoming issues. If there are any specific areas that you would like us to cover, then please drop us a line 47-49 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1RP, for the attention of the Practice Manager.

Ashworths of Henley Limited
1 Market Place • Henley on Thames • Oxon • RG9 1AA • Tel: 01235 875 430 • Fax: 01235 875 757

Exclusive Mens Clothes

POLO RALPH LAUREN
GANT
Aquascutum
ROY ROBSON
eterna
Altea
Zanella

Summer Collections in Stock

Why not try Hunting... in Saudi Arabia?

A dispatch from our Middle East correspondent, Oliver Cornock

Having been in search of the sand grouse in Iraq a few years ago, I found myself further south down the Arabian peninsula in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. More precisely I was in Riyadh, the capital of this relatively young state, in the central Najd region.

Saudi has grown at an enormous pace in every sense – in terms of its economy it's the largest oil exporter in the world. Given the recent price per barrel it has some very deep pockets. At the same time its population has grown dramatically and within a century the area has altered beyond recognition. Huge social and economic change has undeniably altered traditional patterns of life, but as in all rapidly changing countries, culture and heritage are firmly held onto, a source of comfort and pride.

The majority of the Saudi population trace their ancestry back to the great tribal clans of the peninsular and vast sand-scape of the Rub' Al-Khali – the Empty Quarter. Areas forever solidified in the western mind by the great British 19th- and 20th-century adventurers Wilfred Thesiger, Freya Stark and Gertrude Bell, to name but three. An integral part of desert existence has inevitably been subsistence-hunting. Today, as shopping malls and supermarkets spring up on the outskirts of Saudi's cities and are an increasing focus of leisure time, it is easy to see the enormity of cultural shift that has taken place. I wonder how Thesiger would now view the 'avaricious, petulant and wonderful' people he wrote about in such stilted colonial terms...

Traditions do carry on in some form or another, however, and hunting is no



ABOVE: The saluki is a symbol of wealth and prosperity

exception. So much of what many term the great Arab hospitality is derived from desert dwelling – the need to welcome the weary traveller even if he was an enemy is a very practical premise, based firmly on a 'There by the grace of God' basis! The desert is no comfort zone and has taken many lives. This legacy manifests itself in what, to the western eye, is very lavish entertaining, strict etiquette and strong principals.

As in many cultures hunting is seen as a manly endeavour – the Kings are often photographed with falcons as a symbol of their noble heritage. They are also an extremely prestigious gift for honoured visitors. Lady Cowper-Coles the outgoing



ABOVE: A hunting display at the Janandiryah cultural festival, Riyadh

British Ambassadors wife has been the recipient of two such gifts. Indeed many a 4x4 cruises around Riyadh with a large sticker of King Abdullah with an impressive bird perched on his arm.

Hunting is central to desert culture. Many still have salukis, the elegant Bedouin gazelle hounds. Traditionally a gift and never bought, these are symbols of wealth and prosperity. I have been fortunate to visit Saudis' Istirah, or rest gardens, where they often keep their hunting dogs. In Islam dogs are considered unclean but the saluki is, to a degree, an exception. In a bizarre mix of ancient and modern, today's coursing is a bit different from what went on in the past: wealthier Saudis have great desert camps set up from where they go out in 4x4s specially converted to enable good viewing to hunt their birds and hounds. Some are even reputed to have elevating seats that enable them to get an even better view!

The other tradition is that of the rifle, or bunduqiyya. Both a weapon to settle the innumerable feuds of the last centuries and in certain Arab lands still employed to that end, it is also a hunting tool. These beautifully engraved Enfields (left) and other less well-made local versions can often be seen proudly displayed by their owners. However, shooting is not seen as being as pure as hunting with birds.

For all the negative images in the press and the inescapable problems of the Arab world, the descendants of the indomitable Bedouin proudly carry on their traditions in new and varied forms more suitable to the times they live in, just like, I suppose, the English foxhunter.

EATING AT... THE CROOKED BILLET

Noted food reviewer Chris Barber goes in search of a decent post-hunting meal: first stop, Paul Clerehugh's famous pub in Stoke Row



CHRIS BARBER

Rarely can a local pub have attracted more media attention than The Crooked Billet. Of course, they famously hosted one of Kate Winslett's weddings, and have won many awards. When you go there, though, you could be forgiven for wondering what it's all about, and how it has become so successful – it is so simple. But that's the key: simple – not flash or expensive, no snooty staff, just a warm welcome and good honest food.

Well, that doesn't sound too difficult to replicate, and indeed Chef Proprietor Paul Clerehugh also manages to run the superb London Street Brasserie in Reading – but us old hands in the pub/restaurant game can assure you that the Clerehugh winning formula is very difficult to come by.

I met up with Paul at The Crooked Billet, right in the heart of hunt country and very much my local, to prise from him some of the secrets of his very evident success.

I asked whether he saw any similarities between running a pub in a local community and being a hunt supporter.

'Many, yes indeed, the local pub or restaurant needs the support of the community to survive, as does the hunt,' he said.

'Country life in general needs to be appreciated – whether you hunt, shoot, fish or

just enjoy a walk in the country viewing the change in seasons. And a village pub must embrace the countryside and its community, source local and wild ingredients and use the skills of local people wherever possible to gain that community's respect.'

What does Paul think is the best way of describing how his cooking reflects his life in the country?

'I have a great respect for the country, and it is the source of the food I love – golden butter, full fat milk, beautiful meat and bread that is traditionally baked (not steamed as is now commonplace) – good, nutritious food from British farms. It is vital to make the connection between life, death and the kitchen, and how we acquire food. This is something children should be taught.'

He is right that many people think no further than the plastic wrapper their jointed and boned meat comes in. Its connection with the live animal it once was has been severed in their consciousness.

I asked what a top chef like Paul would cook for hunters if they came to The Crooked Billet for a reviving meal after a day's hunting. His reply had my mouth watering:

'Well, I would be following the hunt, too, so it would need to be something that cooks

slowly, such as a shoulder of mutton. This is a great hearty cut of meat and I would braise it on a bed of onions, garlic and potatoes in a very low oven (140°C) with a splash of white wine and stock. An Aga is perfect for this, and it can cook for three, four or more hours – just put it in the oven before you go out and it simply doesn't matter how long it cooks for: you can be as late as you like or even go to the pub for a drink on the way home!

'When you get back home, take out the lamb and turn the oven up to crisp the potatoes as you decant the port. Serve it with some mashed swede and curly kale, and that's it – even better is the news that it's practically a one pot dish, so there's hardly any washing up.'

For a taste of the real countryside, I can strongly recommend a trip to The Crooked Billet, and with Paul at the helm you can guarantee that the ingredients and cooking are of the highest order.

The Crooked Billet, Newlands Lane, Stoke Row, Oxon, RG9 5PU. Tel: 01491 681048, Fax: 01491 682231 Website: www.thecrookedbillet.co.uk



PAUL CLEREHUGH

Chris Barber is a cook and food writer dedicated to the life and cuisine of the country. Having spent eleven years as personal chef to HRH The Prince of Wales, he knows a fair bit about organic farming, and was heavily involved in the development of Duchy Originals, as well as implementing The Prince's vision of living off the land. Chris moved to Oxfordshire in 1998 and has since owned, cooked in and been involved with a number of country pubs and inns, including The Goose at Britwell Salome, The Lord Nelson in Brightwell Baldwin and The White Hart, Nettlebed. Chris is now a partner in The Castle at Hurst, Berkshire.

Chris contributes regularly to the local and national press with recipes and rural affairs feature writing, most notably with a stint as food writer for Country Life, but also with freelance contributions to The Sunday Times, Olive magazine, and The Observer Food Monthly. He has a regular column in The Reading Post Food Monthly, and now runs his own consultancy, Leith's Food Solutions. Chris is also a founder and director of The Henley Food Festival.

Pony Club Focus

THE SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE (SOUTH) HUNT PONY CLUB

Jo Roadknight profiles the club

The SOH(S) branch nestles in the heart of the southern Chiltern hills and the valley beyond the spectacular ridge towards Oxford, and draws its members from Marlow to Lacy Green along to Marsh, Sydenham and Wallingford. Our club was established in 1930 and now has 127 members, most of whom have their own ponies although some of the clever mums manage to share ponies and rallies! Our youngest members are four years old and we have ten members over 18 and three over 21! About a third of our members are over 15.

School holidays and half terms are packed with events and training for all abilities, from very tiny members and their mostly tolerant tiny ponies and very fit Mums cajoling them on leading reins over small fences, to regular training with Captain Richard Waygood, Gill Watson and Ernest Dillon for the older members. We also have regular rallies and year-round evening training sessions for dressage and show jumping. Friday night is shooting practice for Tetrathlon and we have occasional swimming training, too.

We even have polo taster days at Easter and have the highest proportion of regular pony racers on the circuit of the local point-to-point race days (all four Quesnel girls race as do Gaby and Joe Hill; Claudi Smethurst has

moved onto to a horse that is too tall now but she was a regular at the back of the pack). We also have our own race day in September (9th September, everyone is welcome) and some practice sessions with Alan and Lawney Hill on their farm at Aston Rowant.

Most of our training takes place between Lane End and Fawley with our senior camp held each year at BCA in Burchett's Green and our non-residential junior and mini camps at Fawley as guests of our last DC, Anne Smith. Over 90 per cent of our members attend a camp. We also have regular evenings at members' houses to take our badges and to do some preparation for our PC tests.

To manage all these events, we have the most fantastic team of willing Mums and Dads with the most amazing muscles (for building things), patience and stamina – thank you all so very, very much.

We also host quite a few competitions of our own – the Hambleden Horse Trials in May, our summer show at Tetsworth in June, Hunter Trials in September (this year they are on 30 September at Rose Hill, near Henley-on-Thames) and Indoor Show Jumping at BCA to which everyone is welcomed. We also send teams to the wider PC events and recently came first at Newbury showground competing against other PC teams over show jumping. Not only that, we have three members, Lucy Quesnel, Rachel Kelleher and Camilla Bingham, who have qualified for the Winter Dengie Series National Finals – well done team!

We also get groups together to visit HOYS and Olympia and to other talks and displays.

SOH(S) has extremely strong links to our Hunt as our DC, Helen Jackson is also a master of the VAGSBH and we have a very keen 'brat pack' of our own ('cub hunters' might be a better term!). On Saturdays in our country we can have up to twenty members aged six to 17 out at once. Jane Adderly, our chief instructor is also out hunting most days and is always willing to offer help and advice to members so that they get the best out of their hunting days.

It is not hard to spot an SOH(S) member – our PC shirts are the brightest pink and worn with pride all over the country at events and shows. Watch out, too, for the 2012 Olympics – we might even have an ex-member on the winning rostrum!

BELOW, L-R: Alex Jackson at the Headington & Cotswold Eventer Challenge, Chloe and Emma Jackson and Tommy and Lucy Quesnel – winning show jumping team at the Craven Hunt PC competition, Jess Waddington competing her mother's ex-racehorse at a hunter trials at Rosehill EC.

Photos courtesy of Adrian O'Shaughnessy



To join the South Oxfordshire (South) Hunt Pony Club, call Helen Jackson on 01494 881321

PONY RACING

Claudia Smethurst has the makings of a jockey

Poppy was my Christmas present last Christmas and for her Easter present I took her Pony Racing at Kimble point-to-point. (I had to 'qualify' Poppy for racing by taking her hunting three times). It was my first time and I was so nervous, especially when we had all been called to mount our ponies in the ring and then had to try and walk in a controlled way to the start behind the huntsman. Some of the ponies were really naughty and so Poppy thought she would canter to the start as well – if that had been the race, we would have won easily!

Once we started the real race, it was really exhilarating. I finished eighth out of ten but was still really happy. I have been pony racing three times since then and I still get really nervous and so does my Mum. At my last race at Kingston Blount point-to-point I came last as I was expecting to, but I still had such fun.

Part of the fun (apart from galloping really fast without grown-ups shouting at us to go slower or be more careful) is dressing up in our racing colours like real jockeys. Last year, I wanted the same colours as the jockey who won the Grand National so Mum made them for me using the linings of two cheap skirts from Asda. We have a kit inspection before the race when Jane Adderly checks we have surcingles, safety stirrups, medical armbands, hats and body armour as well as a neck strap (which Mum forgot once and we had to borrow a stirrup leather). I feel very impor-



tant being taken down to the start by the huntsman and it is very funny that the Starter calls you by number and not by name and you have to say, 'Yes, Sir,' like a real jockey. Pony racing is just brilliant fun and I will really miss it as we have now sold Poppy and my new horse is 15hh and too big to race, but I certainly want to ride in a point-to-point when I am older.

Thank you to Jon Quesnel and everybody else who has organised the Pony Racing for all of us. (You do not have to go hunting to qualify now but can attend three pony club rallies if you want to instead, says Mum.)

HORSE TRIALS AT ROSEHILL

Lucy Ogston reports strong results for the Woodland Hunt PC

The Woodland Hunt PC held a successful Horse Trials at Rosehill, Henley-on-Thames, on Sunday 17th June, with 102 competitors taking part in a range of classes. The event was blessed with fine weather and near perfect going as well as grateful organisers! It was an open show, with members from the Woodland Hunt, South Berks, Herts, Vale of Aylesbury, and South Oxfordshire Hunt Central PCs all entering teams. Competitors ranged from eight years old to adult, creating an exciting day of competition in all three disciplines. The show jumping phase caused some fun in Classes 5 & 6 with a number of competitors experiencing trouble at the first fence... was this down to the young rabbit that kept popping out of the bushes to watch?!

The WHPC would like to thank all its sponsors, judges, helpers and, of course, competitors for making it such an enjoyable day. Thanks must also go to Mr & Mrs Walter Gilbey and Richard Stacey for the use and preparation of the excellent facilities at Rosehill. The WHPC had many successes, with members placed in each class (full results are available elsewhere):

Class 1: Suzannah Bodie WHPC (1st); Best Dressage, Suzannah Bodie WHPC; Best Team WHPC

Class 2: Lucy Johnson WHPC (1st); Best Dressage, Sophie Shields

Class 3: Anna O'Donald WHPC (1st); Best Dressage, Anna O'Donald WHPC; Best Team WHPC

Class 4: Axie Finch (1st); Best Dressage, Suzanne Kalderen Anderson; Best Team The Hay Team

Class 5: Alyssa Yallop (1st); Best Dressage, Georgie Bird WHPC; Best Team SBPC

Class 6: Jo O'Mahoney (1st); Best Dressage, Jamie Knapp WHPC; Best Team Herts Hunt PC

Pony Racing dates:

Practice: **Tuesday evenings started in July – all SOH(S) pony club members welcome. Contact Helen Jackson on 01494 881321.**

The real thing: **Woodway Farm, Aston Rowant, Sunday 9th September.**

First Race 1.00pm. There are six races: three for 13.2hh and under, three for 14.2hh and under.

More details are available from Jon Quesnel on 01491 576338

