

Enfield, and loves helping children learn to do what she enjoyed so much. Of course, having raced herself, Hayley knows what it's like to win and lose, and her support for the youngsters is invaluable. This is Hannah's first year in Shetland pony racing; she rode her first race at Badminton Horse Trials and she is extremely excited about it.

If you don't quite fancy a Grand National complete with fences, Nigel also organises a Shetland pony racing open day at Epsom, which was on 15th July this year, where jockeys and their ponies race the final three furlongs on the famous Derby track itself. It's been going for the last seven years and is the only flat race in the series. It's an extra special event because very few people ever get to gallop along the one and only Derby track... unless you're Frankie Dettori, of course, and he raced down it 14 times before he achieved his first ever Derby win at last this year.

Are you interested in racing in the Shetland Pony Grand National? For further information about joining the Shetland pony racing series, please contact Mr Nigel Trott on 01469 540561 or 07831 339121. You can also e-mail him on nigel@shetlandponygrandnational.com or send an SAE to him at Ridge Acre Farm, Broad Green, Broadwas, Worcestershire, WR6 5NW.

The Olympia Horse Show runs from 17th-22nd December at Olympia. For tickets, visit their website, www.olympiahorseshow.com, or call 0870 143 2202.

RIGHT: Hannah, on Lucky, with one of her many red rosettes

BELOW: Hannah on Hewi, her first beloved pony, at a show



Hannah Blaby, aged 10, will be one of ten riders taking part in the world-famous Shetland Pony Grand National this year. She describes what it's been like to qualify for the 2007 race.

My name is Hannah Blaby and I am ten years old. I started riding when I was seven years old at a local riding school. My mum then got me my first pony called Hewi. I loved Hewi so much and took him to lots of local showing shows and won lots and lots of rosettes. I then started to jump on Hewi and did well but then I knew that if I wanted to jump really big that I needed a pony that jumped higher. I was really really sad and cried when Hewi had to be sold but luckily he was sold to a lovely boy called Jake who looks after him really well and is very local so I get to see him all the time.

At the yard that he has gone to there is a lady called Hayley and she was looking for someone to full-loan her pony called Lucky. I have moved Lucky to my yard now. He is 14hh and a skewbald and is the most fantastic pony in the world – apart from Hewi of course. I have taken him to lots of shows and am getting quite good on him now and won two firsts the other day. I also went to RAF Halton where I was a bit scared but I really, really loved it and got a gold award.

Hayley also has Shetland ponies at her yard, called Gillian's Riding School, and for lots of years she has been racing them. She asked me if I would be interested in racing in the Shetland Grand National. I now race a Shetland called Sonny who is a coloured Shetland. He is lovely but really mad and so, so fast! I had my first race at Badminton Horse Trials this year and then I went to Windsor where I came second in the final.

By the time you read this I will have also been to Shropshire and the West Midlands and then to Newbury racecourse. These races are qualifiers for Olympia – it would be the best thing in the world if I got to race there. Sonny is really fast but can be a bit mad, or a lot mad, so I need to keep him under control. Recently I went to a local show on him and got a 5th in the junior jumping class and he was a really good boy. Well, that's all at the moment. I will let you know if I qualify for Olympia!

Hannah's mother recently sent me an update on Hannah's progress:

Hannah qualified for Olympia on Sonny in the first qualifying race. She also had her first flat race on Epsom racecourse, where 30 shetlands set off to race three furlongs. It was really exciting and she came second. For this race, the ponies were all sponsored so Hannah met her sponsors, which was very nice for her. We were able to place bets at Epsom: Hannah was the second favourite so the odds weren't great but it added a bit of fun to the race. She also went to Hickstead with Lucky and won the 10-and-under championships which was wonderful.

A MAN OF MANY TALENTS

Though he no longer rides to hounds, Brian Panter's passion for horses still shines brightly through his art.

Brian Panter, resident of Loosley Row near Princes Risborough and long-time actor, painter, writer and modeller of horses, is the artist behind the painting you see on this issue's front cover. A snowy scene of the then huntsman, Jim Bennett, and his whipper-in, Jim Stevens (better known as Steve), returning to kennels after the Christmas Eve meet in 1968, it captures the moment perfectly. That day hounds met at Dinton, hunted through Standalls Farm amongst other places and finally blew for home, Brian says, near Slurry Banks between Walldridge and Ford.

Hunt supporters with long memories may remember Brian as the chairman of the Vale of Aylesbury Hunt Supporters' Club at the time of the first amalgamation in 1970. It was a time in the Hunt's history not unlike the more recent joining of the Vale of Aylesbury with the Garth and South Berks and, while

he says modestly that he suspects he wasn't a very good chairman, he and the Hunt are still here to tell the tale, so he can't have been all bad.

'We thought hunting was hard done by in those days. We had no idea!' he says, referring to the recent hunting ban.

A friend of Jim Bennett's, Brian has read Jim's recent biography and says it brought back many happy memories. Brian spent his early days with the Navy, as did Jim, and the two men had much in common as well as a love of hunting – though it is unlikely that Jim would ever have been in the first Nescafé advert in 1955, which Brian is proud to have done. Now 83, Brian no longer hunts or acts but he still paints and makes exquisite model statues of horses, so look out for his work locally and snap one up if you can, or ask him if you may commission a model of your favourite hunter... he would do it beautifully.

BELOW: Christmas Eve 1968 (detail) by Brian Panter



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and Commissioner for Oaths

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The Three Pigeons the Meet on this fine hunting day,
To quote the old song, “’Tis as balmy as May”,
Harry Wilkins K.H., with the Packs drawing nigh,
The Hounds are the Pride of our old friend Jim Highe.

The Master and Huntsman ‘Bill’ Brunskill by name,
Has cubbed all the coverts from Nuneham to Thame,
He and Judy, his wife, are welcomed by all
the Old Un’s, the Young Un’s, the great and the small.

They move off to Draw, a sure find, of course,
We would be surprised not to find in Chown’s gorse,
The Lookouts are posted, the Field canters along,
They look to their tackle and right any wrong.

We’ll now take a look and see who is out,
All the Millers are here, of that there’s no doubt,
The Field Master as ever will lead the Brigade
O’er a rail or ‘The Brook’ or a big ‘cut and laid’!

Those who follow the Hunt know the Brigadier well
The fences he’s jumped are too many to tell,
He cuts out his ‘line’ and gives a great lead,
A Foxhunter always, “Just one of the Breed”.

Sir Robert is here on his trusty old grey,
He knows every inch of the country they say;
A hunting man keen and the man for his job
There is none to compare with our Secretary ‘Bob’.

Mrs Miller and Cynthia, their ‘chestnuts’ a pair,
When the work is “cut out” you will find them both there;
Holland Hibbert is here, and so is his wife,
They’ll be there at the Finish, you may bet your sweet life.

There’s a Master of Draghounds, a Guardsman, you’ll note
A Thruster is he with his swallowtailed coat,
His brother is with him, just ripe for the fray
And uphold the good name of a Royal Scots Grey.

‘Tony Muirhead we see on his heavyweight bay,
They have given him leave from the ‘House’ for the day;
He’s as good in the saddle as he is in his ‘Seat’
A Sportsman, a Member, a hard man to beat.

That’s Mrs vere Spencer, with her husband near hand
A Secretary too, by whom wire is banned;
That strong looking cob which is right up to weight
Carries Mr C.Crump, in quite regal state.

Milton Harris is here, and he’s brought out his Son
They are keen hunting men who’ll enjoy a good run;
Charlie Rowles, the ‘Old Gallant’, is up on his grey
It will help you to watch him when hounds get away.

Yonder there are the Barbers, two big un’s, one small un’
They’ve had a long hack, as they came from march Baldon;
That’s Ellis, a new man, an amateur sailor,
On a beautiful bay that must be a ‘nailor’!

Guy Thomson is mounted on what’s “Really the Goods”
He’s not often this side, he is nearer the Woods;
Mrs Gemmal well known for her wonderful Racer
‘Gregalach’, renowned is her national chaser.

That’s Bernard, a soldier, of whom it is said
“He prefers to dismount o’er his good horse’s head”
From Bledlow, Miss Ryland, joins in with the throng
Just keep her in view and you won’t be far wrong.

Miss Macdonald of henley has come from afar
Mounted “The Best” on her chestnut ‘Red Star’,
There’s ‘Josephine’ too, with Tom Bury across,
Who can show ‘im the way on a Point to Point course.

Here’s Graham, a chaser, the owner of Lare,
They are worth ‘looking over’ when you’ve time to spare;
And Wainwright, a gunner, on leave for a spell
Loves a burst with the Hounds, or the burst of a shell.

Major Landsberg’s from Bicester, but he’s also S.O.
A credit to both, as I’m sure you all know;
Mrs Adcock a lightweight, likes ‘em “Little and good”
Fast in the open and the best for the wood.

Then Mrs Hoare-Nairn likes a “young ‘un” to “make”
By kindness she does it, she hates the word “break”,
From Britwell the Whitakers come for a Hunt
When anything’s doing they’ll be well to the front.

From the Heythrop the Beaufoys arrive with their Box,
Their horses ‘good lookers’ from muzzles to hocks;
On that chestnut there, you see Mrs Banks
She’s leaving us soon, a great loss to our ranks.

The Podwells arrive, they are brother and sister
And hunt a great deal with ourselves and the Bicester;
Mrs Batt and her daughter each take their turn
From either of them there is much you may learn.

Ted Brown from Wood Eaton, worthy to his sire,
Dad went with the “best”, he was known as a flyer;
From Tetsworth comes Hutt with a steed to his taste
You should see him “perform” but you’ll have to make haste.

There’s Miss Christie Miller, from Swyncombe she hails,
At “home” in the hills and at “home” in the vales;
The Gollans from Peppard, who go with the best
Have forsaken the “Staghounds” to give us a test

That’s Clinkard nearby, keep him well in your mind,
If you stick to him closely you’ll not be behind
Now Woodcock comes up, he is a bit of a “Bird”
You’ll find him first flight, you may take my word.

Some old Berkeley’s are here, and welcome they are,
Sportsmen they be, for they come from so far,
Let us give them a Hunt that will make them look back
With joy to their day with the South Oxfordshire’s Pack.

You cannot mistake the “Ex Hunstman” George Baker
Who fills in his time as a “hunting jump” maker;
Ted Castle and Cox, who both come from Thame
They’re on opposite sides, but their road is the same.

There are many more here, but my time’s getting short
And some I’ve forgotten, perhaps more than I ought,
To the ones that I’ve missed, and there’re many of these
Will you kindly accept my apologies please?

There’s a stir in the covert, a whimper, and hear
A Fox is on foot, of that there’s no fear;
Keep still now and watch to see where he breaks
A good Hunt depends on the line that he takes.

Hark to music! Stand by for the fun
Cram on your hats and prepare for a run,
Sam Ashton has viewed him, a “dog” by his look
Slipping away with his nose to the “Brook”.

Spartham Bog on his right, for Cornwell he makes
So now for the Brook and the toll that it takes;
Hoare-Nairn has a dart and over he goes
Harvie Shrimpton is in it, right up to his nose.

Jack Castle is over, and so is Joe Hill,
Jane Pauling has taken the deuce of a “spill”,
A Naval Commander who has long left the Sea
takes a dip in the fresh water as neat as can be.

The Soldiers from Cowley get “thinned out” a bit,
Bill Barnard’s horse peeped, a “hard one to sit”,
Jimmy Meade takes it on at the hell of a pace
Showing the way to his good lady “Grace”.

Mrs Elliot on ‘Jim’ “sailed on” at the Brook,
‘Jim’ never gave it much more than a look
But spread himself out and left it behind
then settled him down for a big stake and bind.

The Balfours and Barnards are on the right side,
They make nought of a brook; be it ever so wide,
They’ve South Oxfordshire Hunters that all know their job
From the big “sixteen hander” to the bright chestnut cob.

The Stokenchurch Doctor, Doctor Elliott you know
Had a bit of a scramble, he was going too slow,
His horse is a novice at water as yet
His “Jockey” will teach him in no time, I’ll bet.

With Cornwell right handed for Adwell we steer,
A few empty saddles are left in the rear;
Sam Ashton has taken a look at some kale
His downfall was caused by a very stiff rail.

As ever the Brigadier, well to the front,
Is showing the way that a man ought to hunt;
The Master with Hounds is cheering them on
The pace is a “killer”, it cannot last long.

To the main Oxford road the Hounds run a treat,
They’re full of strong running, the fox must be beat;
A moment’s short check, then on! Forrard On!
The fox has been viewed, he has only just gone.

Bernard Rowles has come up, but he didn’t last,
The next fence but one saw him properly “grassed”
Then judy came down and so did N. Crump,
Judy’s a soft one, but Neville’s a bump.

The Barrys, The Colonel, the Mrs and Jeanne
Kept well to the line on which the Hounds ran,
Till a fence or a rail took its toll of each one
But they mounted and finished, they’re not to be done.

Thro’ Chalford then Sydenham towards Hempton we fly,
Hayes Dashwood has found one a trifle too high,
His breeches are torn and his hat is smashed in
“An expensive game, hunting” he says with a grin.

Mrs Whitehouse, her husband, and Betty Ruck-Keene
All “come to grief” e’er the rushes are seen,
A turn to Penn Farm helps those at the back
It gives them a chance to come up with the Pack.

Weatherby here took a fence by the “roots”
In the ditch you should see him, just breeches and boots,
His chestnut horse waited for him to remount
He’ll be in at the “Death”, on that you may count.

To Coldharbour we speed, the railway is passed,
The pace has decreased, but it’s still very fast;
Ralph Keene said “good-bye” to the hunt about here
We couldn’t all see it, but ‘twas easy to hear.

Ross Cheriton smashed thro’ a new post and rail
Which put an “Amen” to his part in the tale;
A Shrove Furlong the hunted one came into view
He may go one Field but surely not two.

In the field below Foxhills hounds are close to his brush
And now they are into him, in with a rush,
Then over he rolls, with a snarl on his face
He has fought a great fight, he has lost a great race.

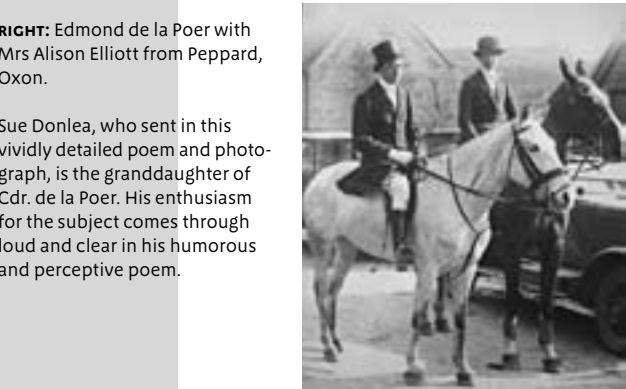
The Master jumps off and he “breaks up” his fox,
The Riders examine their horses for knocks,
With well loosened girths each takes a deep breath
They’ve had a great hunt, they were in at the “Death”.

So here’s to the Fox, to the Hound, to the Horse,
To the Keepers and Breeders and mainly, of course,
To the “Farmers”, great Sportsmen, our thanks know no bounds
You who cherish and love the South Oxfordshire Hounds.

In the passing of years we have all heard the cry
That hunting will cease in the near bye and bye,
When the sun has been darkened and the moon gives no light
At the end of the world, there’ll be hunting alright.

‘Tis the sporting mens’s motto “You must play the game”
It’s the “word” of the Briton, that made for the Fame
Of the country we love, and possessions so great,
We must foster the Breed for the good of the State.

And where do you find the best Sportsmen of all?
In the village, the farmhouse, the cottage, the hall!
In the heart of the country, where one and all strive
To retain our Tradition and keep Hunting alive.



Sue Donlea, who sent in this vividly detailed poem and photograph, is the granddaughter of Cdr. de la Poer. His enthusiasm for the subject comes through loud and clear in his humorous and perceptive poem.

20 Years in a Western Saddle

Bill Martin and Barbara Dickens have been riding at Eatons' Ranch in Wyoming for years.
Bill invites you to look in on their favourite holiday.

When the Editor asked me to write an article about the ranch in Wyoming where Barbara and I have been taking holidays for over 20 years now, I was at a loss to know what to write. I knew that nobody would read a travelogue article about what we did every day and what our horses were called e.g. "Day 1: Got up, had breakfast, got on board Trigger, etc", but what would people want to read?

So, I settled for where the ranch is, why we like it and why we keep going back, together with a few pictures.

First, the ranch. It's called Eatons' and it's in the Big Horn mountains just outside Sheridan, a sleepy western town in the north east corner of Wyoming close to the border with Montana. It has its own website, which gives information on how to get there. We usually drive up from Denver, Colorado a distance of 430 miles. The ranch is the oldest guest ranch in America and was started by the Eaton family, who still own and operate it, back in 1879, moving to its present location in 1904. It has over 7,000 acres of varied terrain and there are about 220 horses in any given year.

Why do we like it? Simple! They match horses to riding ability and you can ride out on your own without an escort. You can have a wrangler to guide you until you know your way around and after you have shown that you are competent on a horse (which could exclude some VAGSBH subscribers, admittedly) they are a happy for you to go solo. You get a trail map (of questionable value) to help you but the horses are the most reliable guides.

They wrangle the horses in from the plains each morning, saddle them up for you and off you go. On return you just hand over the horses, they do all the rest. You can ride two out of

any three sessions a day (morning, afternoon and evening) or all day (morning and afternoon combined). Barbara and I have often gone out and not seen anyone else all day. The scenery is breathtaking, both mountains and open plains and you can often see deer, coyotes, prairie dogs and other critters. Those who are young and keen can also get up early (around 6am and help wrangle in the horses.

Whilst on the ranch we live in comfortable cabins, some of which are designated premium and cost a bit more but are well worth it. Meals are taken at shared tables in the communal dining room, which is dry so you need to stock up in your cabins from the liquor stores in town. The other guests are an eclectic mix of mainly American families with a sprinkling of Europeans. A few people go on their own. Some families have been going to the ranch since the 1920s and 1930s (not the original family members!). The ranch try to sit 'old hands' with newcomers. The food is best described as plain American.

What else happens? There is fishing on the ranch for those who are interested and a golf course some miles away but the ranch is essentially about riding. There are side trips that can be taken, for example to Little Big Horn where Custer made his last stand, and occasionally the rodeo comes to town but that's about it. The website gives all the detail.

So why do we keep going back? Well solo riding, good horses, breathtaking scenery, interesting wildlife and comfortable cabins just about says it all, and it all happens outside our hunting season. So get on a plane and saddle up with confidence if you think this sounds like it's for you.

For more information, go to www.eatonsranch.com



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News from your Hunt Clubs

Social events and fund-raising with your local Hunt Club

The **VAHSC** hosted the perennially popular Quiz Night on 19th October at Haddenham Village Hall: 60 people in teams of four were entertained royally by **Steve Nash**, quiz-master, who kept some very tricky questions coming from 8pm until 9, when the now traditional, top class fish and chip supper was served.

The Haddenham fish and chip shop always does a great job of getting so many diners out and onto tables piping hot in double-quick time – and necessarily so: all those overworked brains clearly needed feeding as the newspaper wrappers were rapidly emptied and binned. There was no let-up in proceedings, though, and Steve had everyone's rapt attention once more with the second half of the quiz. With three separate sections and some very quick-fire interval rounds open to individuals (those came with an instant £1 penalty for a wrong answer), teams had to be good at practically everything to have a chance at the prizes and puzzled faces were evenly spread across the room.

In the end, after a tense scoring session, the South Oxfordshire Hunt Club took the best hunt club score, winning four decent bottles of wine and a very handsome silver cup. The Hertfordshire Hedgehogs emerged as the non-hunt club winners, taking home four decent bottles of wine while, at the other end of the spectrum, the Old Berkeley Beagles received four wooden spoons for being the worst hunt club team and the Tripods received four bottles of water for being the worst non-hunt club team. One can only assume that their collective knowledge was somehow entirely avoided by Steve's questions!

After the team event, **Danny Buckland** auctioned off 20 enormous baskets of top-quality fruit to raise funds: every single basket went to a good home (at the time of writing this, your correspondent was still working her way through the bananas!) and the evening eventually finished at midnight, such was the dedication of several people to ensure that the bar's takings were up to the usual standards. The Quiz Night raised nearly £250 for hunt funds so our thanks go to Ian Parkinson for organising it and making sure it went so well.



Vale of Aylesbury Hunt Supporters' Club:

Come and try your hand at ferret racing on 7th Dec, 7.30pm at Haddenham Village Hall. Contact **Poo Kent** 01844 291276 for details. £10 per person including supper.

The VAHSC has been keeping a high profile presence at local shows this year: Ian and the hunt staff had a stand at Bucks County Show and Thame Show, amongst others. They have been doing a great job raising people's awareness of hunting and selling merchandise, including the 2008 Hunt calendars.

It is time to renew your VAHSC membership if you haven't already: it costs £12 per person, or £25 for family membership, and you get a 10% discount on merchandise and events plus access to the meet cards and, of course, *The SaddleMag*. Please make cheques payable to the 'VAHSC' and send them to **Paul Winterbottom**, Membership Secretary, Westbourne Cottage, 44 Orchard Way, Holmer Green, Bucks, HP15 6QU.

Old Berkeley Hunt Club:

A DVD of the best bits of the last ten years' hunting –
The film they tried to ban...
With more fallen redcoats than The Last of The Mohicans!
The thrills, the beauty, the passion!
All the old stars...
And introducing Alan's Fillies of 2006.
Cert XC

Directed by Malcolm Angell of False Trail Studios
Distributed by the OBHC
Yours to own on DVD in time for Christmas!

Send a cheque for £10 (payable to OBHC)
to **Christian Schwetz**
130 Broad Street, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 3ED

Garth Hunt Club diary dates:

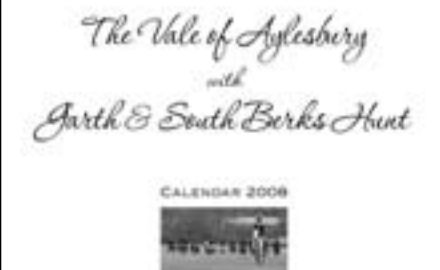
The Snowman's Ball will be held at the prestigious Phyllis Court Club (www.phylliscourt.co.uk) in Henley-on-Thames on Saturday 19 January 2008. Tickets are £65 and the fun runs from 7pm–2am with a champagne reception followed by a four-course dinner. There are rooms available for overnight guests but these are limited so please book early. For more information/tickets/room bookings please call **Amanda Stewart** on 01491 684151 or 07775 754057 or amanda.stewart@btconnect.com, or **Maggie Luck** on 01256 763872. You may arrive by helicopter, boat or car!

Amanda is also organising the increasingly popular Spring Ride on 25th May 2008. The ride has trebled in size since it began four years ago and was featured in *England's Equestrian* magazine and *The SaddleMag's* August issue.

Nolan Best is organising an inter-hunt show jumping competition at the Berkshire College of Agriculture in Burchetts Green on 30th Dec for those of you wishing to work off xmas pud. Contact Nolan on 01189 304101 for details.

Hertfordshire Hunt Club:

The 2008 Hunt Calendar: The new calendar (right) is now on sale and proving very popular. You can buy a copy at any meet or by post for £10 plus £1.70 p&p. To order by post, send a cheque (with your name and address) to **James Dickson**, Grove Farm, Flamstead, St Albans, Herts AL3 8BA. To pay by credit card please call **Emma Pearse** on 01582 873263s. Please remember if ordering by post to include your address. And don't forget the **HHC notecards**: They make really great Christmas cards if you're still looking for inspiration. Available as above.



The South Oxfordshire Hunt Club:

The annual invitation Clay Shoot for Farmers, Earthstoppers and Gamekeepers was held at Peter and Celia Peakes' at Golden Manor, Pyrton on 5 July. There was a good turnout despite the terrible weather. It was more like autumn conditions than summer with heavy downpours, thunder and lightening. However, the shooting continued regardless and the results were:

The Major Mann Cup – (for Farmer entry) to Michael Stevens (junior)
The Greenaway Cup – (for Earthstopper) a tie between T. Gatmell, H. Greenaway and R. Greenaway
The Naylor Cup – (for Keeper) to K. Ayres
The Pool Shoot – also won by K. Ayres
The Team Tropies – a tie between Bud Cole's Team and Mick Stevens's team
Thanks to the Peakes for hosting the shoot, Roger and Sandi Hance for setting the shoot up and Tony and Maggie Naylor for cooking the food which was most welcome and, of course, to everyone who helped make the day go so well.

Diary Dates:

We now have new dates for 'Off the Hoof' and Farmers' Ball. Contact either **Di Wynn** on 01844 212116 or **Jane Stevens** on 01844 216076 for any of our events:

December – Countryside Carol Service – Mulled wine, soup and roll £5, date TBC
March – End of Season Supper with club AGM – date TBC
April to June – Tuesday night Clay Shoots
Saturday, 12 April – 'Farmers Hunt Ball' at Oxfordshire Golf Course, Milton Common, Thame. £40 ticket (and there will be an auction of 6/8 lots)
Sat 31 May – 'Off the Hoof' team challenge at Meadowbrook Farm: £80 per team (Clay Shoot 'Flurry', Quad bike course, Scurry (fun obstacle relay race) and Cast Fishing (into hoops).
Sat 20 September – Thame Show Ball – date TBC

We always welcome new members for £10 per annum.
Please contact **Jane Stevens** on the above telephone number.

SPONSOR A HOUND



Please visit the Sponsor-a-Hound webpage (www.diffident.myzen.co.uk/vah/sah/hounds/index.htm) to see the hound catalogue, or call **Ian Parkinson** on 07850 305565

All proceeds go directly to the welfare of the hounds

FLYING ROUND RAF HALTON

New prizes and incentives to raise more sponsorship at the 2008 Vale of Aylesbury Sponsored Ride

It's that time of year again: while you're wondering whether the extra mince pie you're eating to soak up that seventh glass of port really will count as one of your 'five a day', the Halton Ride* committee will be slaving over a pot of hot creosote-substitute, preparing for the 2008 ride.

We're very lucky that it always sells out early, and from the smiles on people's faces as they collect their rosettes afterwards I'm sure that's because the course is as enjoyable as we think it is, not just because there's precious little else to do with a horse on a Sunday in March.

It's vital that riders do have a good day out, and all our helpers on the day put a lot of time and effort into making sure they do, but at the end of the day we organise the ride to raise money for local charities like the Chiltern Air Ambulance, Wendover Riding for the Disabled and Stocklake Park School for children with learning difficulties (see our website for full details of the charities we support). Again, we're very lucky because many of our riders raise substantial sums of spon-



A GLIDER FLIGHT COULD BE YOURS...

sorship each year, and thanks to them we can be generous in our gifts. But I'm the treasurer, and for treasurers, more money is always better, even though we give it all away after the ride.

So, how are we going to raise more this year? We could just increase the entry fee or the minimum amount of sponsorship we ask people to raise, but we're altruistic – we wouldn't be organising a charity cross-country ride if we weren't – and we didn't want to do that. It doesn't make business sense, but the ride will cost the same to enter in 2008 as it did in 2005.

Instead of charging more, we're taking a chance, and hoping that if we offer a

reward to riders for raising more than the minimum sponsorship, they'll step up to the challenge. For every rider who raises just £10 more than the minimum, there'll be a special rosette, and, thanks to a generous gift from Jane Brogan at Robinsons mail order (www.robinsons-uk.com), we're able to give a £20 Robinsons voucher to every rider who raises £100 in sponsorship. That's just a little something to say thank you for putting in the time and effort it takes to raise that much. We also have six, instead of last year's five, prizes for the riders who raise the most (including an 8GB iPod nano for the top junior rider, exclusive glider flights from



A BONUS FENCE BRAVELY TACKLED



CHAMPAGNE FOR A LUCKY FUNDRAISER

RAF Halton and vouchers for the horsey mecca that is the Bellingdon End Shop – see the schedule or website for the full prize list) which we hope will encourage people to try and knock John Richardson and Bryony Jones off last year's top spots.

So please, if you're entering this year, don't stop asking people to sponsor you when you reach £30. Just ask a couple more people, raise £40 instead, and on behalf of the charities we support we'll say thank you with that new rosette – anyone can take home a silver rosette for completing the course, but the black and gold one says you did something special. And if you can reach £100, you'll be within sight of a prize, Robinsons will have helped to offset your entry fee and our charities will love you. Everybody wins.



THE NEW TOP JUNIOR PRIZE: AN 8GB IPOD NANO

* Officially it's the 'Vale of Aylesbury Sponsored Ride', but after a pint or two of creosote, 'Halton Ride' is a lot more manageable. We were thinking of you when we christened our website just www.haltonride.org.uk.

John Bell, Treasurer



ROSETTES FOR EVERYONE

Date: Sunday, 16th March 2008
Entry forms from: Susie Bell,
Garners, Heath End, Berkhamsted,
Herts HP4 3UE. Tel: 01494 758408
E-mail: info@haltonride.org.uk
Website: www.haltonride.org.uk
See also: entry form enclosed with this magazine

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NICKEL KING was the leading event horse sire between 1990 and 1995. He was a successful racehorse and bred numerous foals, some still competing and hunting successfully today. The two most famous are KING WILLIAM and PRINCE PANACHE – both competed in the Olympics. King William also won Badminton 4* (1992) and Prince Panache Fair Hill USA 4*.

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