

These past two months have seen two major events concerning the Club, and I am going to pander to the romantic in me and write about the first happening, before the latest and, in terms of pure prestige, most important one.

Many of you will know that two of our most enthusiastic members, Tom Olliver and Sandra Knox were married in Penton Mewsey Parish Church on 23rd September. The little church (and I promise I am not trying to outdo the Social Editor of the local rag!) was packed with relations and friends of both bride and groom, the latter consisting almost entirely of Riding Club and Young Farmer members. Sandra looked charming and Tom not at all nervous and the service was most informal and very quick. Tom and Sandra each rode a Knox horse from the Church to the reception chez Knox at the top of the village, and were escorted there by four club members, David Packman, Andrew Misselbrook, Sue Appleton and Lindsay Hart, riding grey horses/ponies. This made a good picture, although Diana, whom Sandra was riding Side Saddle, nearly upset the apple cart several times, obviously thoroughly overwhelmed by the occasion. The reception went with a (liquid!) swing and everyone came away happy. It's nice to know that the young Ollivers will be living around this district and will be supporting the Club for some time to come.

As far as the competitive life of the Club is concerned we go from strength to strength, as our Prix Caprilli team won their area competition at Havant, Hants., on 10th September from seven other teams. Team members were Sam Hart (Touch of the Blarney) 89 (out of a possible 130), Gilly Facer (Florin) 72, Ann Spencer (Silken Courtier) 89 and Cathy Birnie (Fyfield Fluffy) 103, making a total (best 3 scores) of 181. Second were Hampshire Rural 'A' with 269, and these two teams qualified for the Stoneleigh finals. Fluffy was second in the individual dressage contest with 88 (out of 130) beaten by one point by Jane Parry on Lorna Doone, both horses qualifying for the final. Fluffy was top individually in the Prix Caprilli and Ann and Sam 6th.

The Championships weekend at Stoneleigh went with a swing as far as the organisation was concerned, and our club, on its first visit, acquitted itself well, although we didn't manage to come away with any team rosettes. Our highest placed team was our Prix Caprilli team which was 8th out of 30 teams, with 180. Read Horse & Hound to find out all the team winners. Our Show Jumping team, with a total of 8 faults, finished higher than 15th, I think, out of 34 teams, a good effort. Unfortunately our Event Team didn't qualify for a team award as only two members finished. But we had more than our fair share of individual awards, as both Ann Spencer and Cathy Birnie won their sections of the Prix Caprilli (I wonder if any Club has won more than one section in any one year before?), and Cathy, entirely thanks to Fyfield Fluffy's great little heart, won her section of the One Day Event. Roy Southey was 5th in his section riding Queen's Counsel. However, it's best not to mention Fluffy's individual dressage performance on Saturday afternoon. He was much too full of bounce and fed up with all that dressage and no jumping, and he finished bottom.

Results on Saturday:

Prix Caprilli

Sam Hart (Touch of the Blarney)	63
Gilly Facer (Florin)	76
Ann Spencer (Silken Courtier)	100
Cathy Birnie (Fyfield Fluffy)	106

Show Jumping

Lt. Col. Bob Huskisson (George)	0 faults
Mary Brook (Starlight)	4 "
Richard Hale (Romany Johnny)	4 "
Roy Southey (Queen's Counsel)	8 "

The Show Jumping course was generally considered fairly easy, free going and with nothing much at maximum height (3'9"). Roy Southey did very well when you consider he had done the Cross Country part of the Army Horse Trials that very morning at Tweseldown (he'd done the Dressage and Show Jumping on Friday) and driven hell for leather to Stoneleigh, arriving just in time. Unfortunately, in the jump-off for the individual awards, George stopped twice and was retired, which should have warned us all for the next day, as this supremely honest horse never stops.

The Cross Country course for Sunday's One Day Event was fairly large for a Riding Clubs' Championship and required accurate riding and jumping. Most of the falls apparently came from competitors galloping into fences and not giving their horses time to size up how to get over, causing the brakes to go on: owing to the speed of the horse they ended up at the bottom of fences and turned head over heels. Certainly some horses weren't up to such a course, but these usually didn't get beyond fence three, two thirds of a triangle, with only 15 feet in between first and second rails at its widest point, or fence four, 3'6" parallel rails. Fence five, the sunken road, with three different sorts of exits over rails set at different distances from the far bank, a grey wall at the top of a slope into a wood, and the last fence, a hunting gate, with an alternative of lower rails sloping away from the narrow gate, but with a nasty take off in a dip, were the other causes of grief.

Our Dressage as a team was uneventful, except that Fluffy's very good marks surprised his rider. Bob Huskisson was first of our team cross country and we all had an early jolt when they were eliminated finally at the fourth fence, the horse having not gone a yard the whole way. At the end of the day he was lame on the near fore, a result of his Team Show Jumping round the day before. What a thing to happen at such a time! One must mention that several other competitors were eliminated early on.

Lindsay and Blarney went next and did very well for a total of 6 refusals and one time fault. It can't have been easy to ride round after George, who is usually foolproof. Her worst moment was being jolted out of the saddle at fence 13, a large upright two strides before a ditch, and landing between Blarney's ears on the brink of the ditch. Surely a case of mind over matter to climb back into the saddle.

Fluffy was next, and gave his rider no moments of horror, going like a bird over every fence, even over the sunken road and fence 13, which his rider thought might cause trouble. Although he went fairly slowly and only really galloped between the last two fences and through the finish, he had no time faults, thus atoning for the 9 time faults he had in the Area competition.

Roy and Queen's Counsel gave everyone a super exhibition of economical jumping at speed and surely were round in the fastest time of the day. It was a great tonic, as due to the timing throughout the day, by that time Blarney had unfortunately been eliminated in the Show Jumping. The Show Jumping course contained no less than 4 parallel bars with spreads of around 4' and near or at maximum height (3'6"). Coming after the Cross Country, when of course horses have become used to spreading themselves out and are on their fore-hand, it was a large course. Also, due to the large number of eliminations on the Cross Country course, the show jumping arena was running way ahead of time, meaning horses had barely an hours rest in between, instead of over 1½ hours as was scheduled. There were several eliminations and large scores in this part of the event. Fluffy hit two front bars of two parallel fences with his hind feet, suffering perhaps slight strain from his first proper event, and forgetting to try quite hard enough. Roy and Queen's Counsel sailed round, jumping beautifully and just flattened out too much at the last fence for 5 faults.

Reflections on the whole Event seem to suggest that the Riding Clubs movement is at a very transitional stage, to the eternal detriment of the weekend rider, for whom Riding Clubs were formed. Whether this is a mistake or not depends on your point of view, but I do think some sort of decision ought to be taken at this year's conference to steady the performance required for the Championships Cross Country. If riders do a certain amount of BHS eventing, they are used to this standard of course, and it won't worry the horse. But to event successfully takes time, in order to get fit, and also a larger horse than is generally considered an actual Riding Club horse.

Eventing generally takes too large a toll out of a 15 hand job. Anyway, why should every Riding Club member do BHS eventing in order to do Riding Clubs Championships?

<u>Results of One Day Event</u>	<u>Dressage</u>	<u>Cross Country</u>	<u>Show Jumping</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lt. Col. Bob Huskisson (George)	-73	E	-	E
Lindsay Hart (Touch of the Blarney)	-43	161	E	E
Cathy Birnie (Fyfield Fluffy)	-25	0	10	-35
Roy Southey (Queen's Counsel)	-55	0	5	-60

Back to normal now, and a plea from Penny Portman for offers from members and friends to jump judge or help otherwise at our club Hunter Trials on October 29th, at Upton. Other sorts of help - finishing the course - will be needed continuously during the week leading up to the big day. Please let Penny know what you can do and when. Also spread the word around, as a lot of trouble has gone to make a decent course.

Mr. and Mrs. Hart have asked me to apologise to the people who turned up at the Cross Belts on September 23rd looking for our bonfire. Mr. Hart says they thought they had got in touch with everyone who was there last year, but it was decided that with Sandra and Tom's wedding that day no-one would be back early enough to light the fire and organise the food before it got dark. We hope the bonfire will happen next summer.

I am very pleased to be able to tell you that June Bush is our President this year. June was the Secretary for three years until eighteen months ago and is always a great supporter. Mrs. Appleton has been voted Vice Chairman for the year.

Sue Appleton has clippers and will go anywhere to clip horses/ponies for £1 per hour.

Mary Triffit has sent a letter to the club thanking the members for the flowers we sent her in hospital. She is now much better and has been seen at various club events, looking so much fitter. She hopes to be back on a horse this time next year.

Don't forget to buy tickets for the Club Dinner on November 24th at Tidworth Officers Club. See details on Fixture list. We hope to get a really big name as After Dinner Speaker.

Lastly, a very important piece of news. The British Horse Society is forming sub-regional branches, whose members will be called County Members, as well as the regional branches which already exist. Full members of the BHS will automatically become members of these County branches as well as members of affiliated associations. To enable as many people as possible to become members, the old (or present) style Associate Membership will become County Members, at an annual fee of £1. Anyone joining the BHS under County membership who is already a member of a fully paid up affiliated Riding Club will be able to claim a rebate of 50p. You pay your full membership for the Riding Club to the Club and the £1 annual fee to the BHS, who will in turn send 50p rebate to the SECRETARY of the Riding Club concerned, which rebates must be claimed by 30th JUNE each year. Full members of the BHS (£3 next year) are not eligible for a rebate. A new rule starting next year is that all official Riding Club Championships (this means finals) shall only be open to BHS members, as is at present the case for the finals of the Riding Club Team Dressage Competition.