

Peebles & District Riding Club

Novice Horse Trials team success at British Riding Club Championships

On Friday 7th August 2009, the Novice Horse Trials team consisting of Susan Terris-Weir (aka Terri) and Howick So so, Liz Fletcher and Annie, Laurie McGowan and The Registrar (a last minute replacement the Monday before we left) and Kirsten McPhillips and Pure Genius IV trotted off south to Aston le Walls, Northamptonshire for the British Riding Club Horse Trial Championships two day event, which took the longer format including steeple chase and roads and tracks. Our addition travel companions were Terri's black lab Blank and Cookie a miniature Shetland pony, Toms travel companion, our mascot!

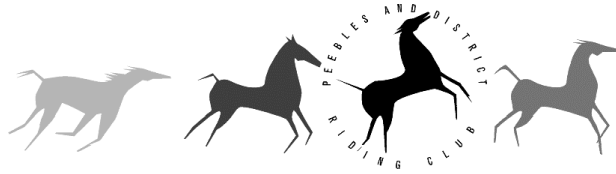
We decided to stay with our horses & pony off site at a local farm and horse stud B&B just 10mins from Aston which was in the county of Warwickshire. After a 7 hour haul south through the Friday and holiday maker traffic we (Laurie, Kirsten & Terri) arrived safely and made the horses at home. To loosen them off we headed out on a hack of the Warwickshire countryside. On return we headed out for some dinner and a toast to our success in the next couple of days. Liz joined us on the Saturday having stayed with family on Friday night.

Saturday morning came all too fast with Laurie and Kirsten heading off to the show field to be briefed on the roads and tracks, steeple chase and cross country phases. As we arrived we drove our 4x4 into the lorry park, which could only be described as a 'mud hole' and suddenly felt rather smug that we had stabled and slept off site in our homely B&B! On arrival at the briefing after negotiating our way through the mud, as we were at that point welly-less, we were advised that due to the rain earlier in the week the steeple chase and second roads and tracks were not going to run due to the ground conditions which was disappointing but couldn't be helped.

Saturday however was a lovely day which resulted in the ground drying up slightly for us. Terri was first to head to the show ground to compete as team rider 1. First to ride her dressage tests or 'look pretty' as she describes dressage to her 4 year old son Tom and did a 35.9 test. Liz was second to go although slightly late due to a misunderstanding with Laurie third and both rode good tests. At this point the show jumping on the artificial surface had started with Terri and Liz both finishing Day 1 on their dressage scores. Kirsten was last in the team to ride her dressage test and rode a good test of 31.8 resulting in her leading her arena but unfortunately the 8 faultitis came back in the show jumping much to her disappointment. Laurie rolled a couple of poles show jumping but was over the moon with her round as she had not jumped competitively since April.

Another briefing took place at 6pm that day and we were advised that certain jumps had been removed from the cross country phase as that part of the course had not dried up enough. We then went on mass to walk the first roads and tracks round the arable fields end rigs which remained in the competition but now ran straight onto the cross country. The cross country course of 21 fences was a well built course but manageable with a few accuracy questions nearer the end. By this time it was 7.30pm, our stomachs were rumbling so we headed back to the B&B fed the horses, then headed out for some dinner to the local pub, where the event seemed to be keeping them in business!

Sunday was another lovely day, with us all waking to the sun beating in the window. Mucked out, horses washed and a cooked breakfast later we headed to the show field. Having figured out how to work the stop watch, Terri was ready and first to go. We had 16min 20sec to ride round a 3.3km roads and tracks



course, to you and I that meant a steady trot with a bit of walk at the wetter bits. Terri returned to the cross country start as we planned a bit under the time to allow the vets to check the horses for soundness and their heart rates before they were permitted to carry on. This also allowed the horses a sufficient rest and wash down if required before going Cross country.

Ten minutes later Terri was called and off she galloped to the first fence. Terri and So so went clear but came back slightly over the time. On walking the course we knew that the cross country time allowed of 4min 31sec at a speed of 450mpm would be tight but we were pleased all the same that they were 'safe out and safe in'.

Liz was next to go. On return from her roads and tracks the vet advised Liz that Annie had the lowest heart rate of the day at that point much to Liz's happiness knowing that her preparation work had paid off. Liz took off at speed to the first and was having a great round until the water, fence 15. At the water there was a log then you ran into the water and came out the side. As they entered the water Annie lost her footing and fell resulting in both Annie and Liz going for a swim. Both returned to their feet but Annie had sustained a few cuts and grazes so the vet checked Annie over and advised she would be fine. Liz was also ok so we were glad nobody was hurt.

Laurie was the third rider and I think I can say enjoyed every minute of the second day. She had a chat with each of the stewards on the way round the roads and tracks in between a few spooks at the wooden bridges we had to cross. They then went on to have a couple of stops cross country but were pleased to complete the course and I think would have liked to have done it again.

Kirsten was last to go. The roads and tracks proved spooky for her 7 year old, gelding who thought the long grass had monsters hiding in it! Returning to the cross country start box they knew the time would be tight as Terri had come back with time penalties so set off at a good speed. With her stop watch beeping at a minute to get home and still being a field away from the finish the foot went to the floor, resulting in her only being 4 seconds over the timing gaining 1.2 time penalties.

We then all congregated at the lorries with our horses afterwards, letting them eat the grass and relax while we enjoyed a cold beer in celebration of finishing. Cookie (the mascot Shetland pony) was a crowd puller all weekend and we met so many people due to her, she was even photographed for the Horse and Hound magazine!

It seemed no time at all and the results of the 130 competitors were up and on checking we found out that Terri was 9th indiv and Kirsten 5th indiv in their arena's and 49th and 24th overall respectively which we were elated at!

Liz then headed back to her family in Shropshire for the night to let Annie out in the field to keep her legs moving.

Overall it was a great weekend, we all had a good time, got a top up on our tan lines and had some success in gaining some rosettes. Although the team was not placed it would not have been the same without us all being there.

Terri even gained an extra black lab from the B&B we stayed in for a month's gun dog training and nearly a naughty child's pony who kept bucking the little boy from the B&B off!