

July 2012

AREA 12 HORSE TRIALS - Amazingly this event went ahead. For weeks, yes weeks, leading up to the horse trials, event after event was being cancelled – washed out - a couple of dry days before the Sunday kept us hopeful that it would go ahead.

The ground at Bicton drains well, but we had heard that a week before our event the course was closed. Why was I so concerned? Well my job was to buy, then make up, 66 packed lunches for the jump judges and various other officials on the day. What was I going to do with 66 packed lunches if it was cancelled – a riding club picnic? Well my dogs and chickens had their beady eyes on the brown bags full of goodies whilst we were making them up, the dogs sneaking a crafty look when they thought we weren't looking, perhaps the lunches wouldn't be too difficult to dispose of.

The two days leading up to the event were total mayhem for those behind the scenes. Email after email was being bounced back and forth between helpers and organisers with an edge of panic embedded in the words. Our club was in charge of the cross country course and poor Trish our leader in this, was out on the wilds of Exmoor with her school children and unable to get a signal. She was blissfully unaware of all the panic going on behind the scenes. It took her ages to go through all her emails when she eventually arrived back in civilization.

Trish had decided to go straight from Exmoor down to Bicton the day before the event, walk the course and put judges to jumps and then stay the night, sleeping in her trailer. It was July after all, the whole idea to have a little BBQ with three of our juniors who had volunteered to help and had erected a super waterproof and cosy tent next to her trailer seemed like a fantastic fun thing to do at a meeting weeks before.

Having had Joy and Deana around the previous day to help me make the rolls and put all the packed lunches together it was then my duty to get the food down to the course before the judges arrived. My son was doing the car parking and so we actually arrived on the grounds at 6.45am. We pulled up next to Trish's trailer to see her emerge clothed in everything she must have possessed and looking decidedly blue.

“Morning Trish, did you have a good evening?”

“No, I 'm freezing and wet”

“Why don't you have a hot shower?”

“Because I'm not prepared to take any item of clothing off and if you ever hear me say that a stay overnight in a trailer would be a good idea, shoot me ”

The girls had a lovely time in their tent!

My son started his duty as car park attendant and I took the packed lunches off to the main tent.

Trish started to thaw out and with Arthur to help her, allotted the judges to jumps. The briefing showed up the lack of helpers and so some people had to double up on jumps whilst some spectators suddenly found themselves out on the course with whistles, flags and stopwatches waiting to mark off the competitors as they attempted the jumps. My son was dragged from the car park and given another job, one which required a car and so Joy and I found ourselves out on the course on top of a windy hill with the threat of rain and no shelter or chairs. After a little persuasion we managed to talk someone into borrowing their car and so we settled ourselves down for a day of jump judging.

We had a great time and met some lovely people. We had quite a few visitors who hung around at our car and kept us amused often helping out with the competitors numbers, some of which we failed to see as the group around the car increased and blocked our view.

We kept an eye out for our own team members and tried to keep up with their progress throughout the day. Every now and then my son would pop up at the car, each time with more and more equipment attached to him. He must have had a walkie talkie for each discipline of the trials and with ear plugs in, was aware of everything that was happening on the ground at any one time and would state

“ Oh I’m needed” and would disappear again. He even managed to stop a runaway horse and get it back to its owner, who exclaimed “B..... horse” put the bridle back on, remounted and went off around the cross country.

Our members had a mixed bag of success. Poor Laura couldn’t get her lorry to start and never got off the drive. Sophie had three stops at the first jump in the show jumping and was eliminated, Emma did a great dressage went clear in show jumping, but had a refusal out on the cross country course sensibly from there on taking it steady and clear the rest of the way round but accumulated a few time faults and Xanthe managed to part company from Lara but got back on and finished the course. I believe that Zoe also had a few faults, Georgina and Fair Sure, our only junior representative, had a few faults in the show jumping and then did the most fantastic clear across country, a pairing to watch out for next year. So it was down to Kathy and Otto – It wasn’t until the event had finished and we found ourselves back in the secretary’s tent that we discovered that Kathy and Otto had managed to come third in their class. Woo hoo!!

I have to put out a huge thanks to all of our members that competed – WELL DONE TO YOU ALL – well done for actually having a go we are proud of you all and will support you all the way. You deserve a huge pat on the back – thank you, from all in the Blackdown Hills Riding Club.

We must also thank everyone that helped out however small. If it wasn’t for our members I don’t think the trials would have gone ahead as we had helpers at practically each discipline. We were only supposed to provide help on part of the cross country, but you all rallied round and we had people, jump judging at most jumps, collecting scores, manning the finish and timing, helping with refreshments, car parking and just being there to support the team. Well done and thanks to you all. If I have missed anyone out I do apologise. There are a few more area 12 team events coming up, we always welcome supporters.