



On the trail of the Southern Pines

Sue Mart from Bennington Carriages reflects on the company's recent visit to the USA

After a long wet winter in England, it was a blissfully warm visit to Southern Pines in North Carolina for their Combined Driving Event earlier this year. Our trip was made possible by the UK Trade and Industry Passport to Export Programme and enabled us to meet existing Bennington customers and our US distributor. One of our aims was to find out how we can improve the system of exporting our carriages from the UK.

Bennington owners in the US have told us that they love the design and workmanship that British manufacturing offers and the bespoke customisation service we provide, so this was a good opportunity for us to meet customers face to face, hear their stories and get their feedback. It was particularly pleasing to see Bennington carriages still going strong that we exported to the US over 20 years ago.

We felt very honoured to see so many Bennington carriages at the Southern Pines Combined Driving Event and, as we do here in the UK, we gave out prizes to the highest placed Bennington owners. We were very impressed by the organisation of the

competition itself and enjoyed watching the stunning horses and immaculate turnouts compete. We've brought back a few ideas to pass on to event organisers here in the UK, including the idea of a sponsor's board which has already been acted on at one of our local events.

Our US distributor is Randy Cadwell. The Cadwell family compete internationally too and they also run a training school at their base, Tremont Farm. It was really interesting to see

their training methods (and compare notes), especially their work with young drivers.

Even though our trip was only five days we managed to squeeze in a bit of fun and pleasure driving too. Southern Pines is horse heaven with such a large community sharing their trails and tracks. We don't have many areas like this in the UK so we thoroughly enjoyed our drive out in the sunshine.

We hope to be making more trips like this to the US. Since our visit we have launched our new carriage – the B1 Classic – for drivers who are just getting into competitive driving, based on the original designs of the Bennington B1 which we have taken out of the archives and updated with the latest technologies.

And we are working on a new top-of-the-range competition vehicle in conjunction with Great British Sports Cars Ltd combining the best of both our technologies and engineering. Perhaps we can find an excuse for a US launch!



*Above: Paul Maye driving a Bennington Horse Pairs Presentation Carriage
Left: Meghan Bengel on the marathon course with Randy Cadwell backstepping, driving a Bennington Pony Pair XL*