

# All round success

Young drivers have experienced a busy few weeks and there is plenty to write home about from first time at camp to keen competition at Keysoe, *Emily Ham* has this report.

## Indoor National Champions

It's been the trend that the Young Drivers are hotly competitive at the Indoor Finals at Keysoe and this year again saw top performances across the classes.

Huge congratulations to all who drove at the Championships which is a fiercely competitive event. Collette Holdsworth is on fire, she had an outstanding dressage score and just a one second time penalty in the cones, followed by four extremely fast smooth obstacles to take the Open Pony class decisively and also the top accolade of Supreme National Indoor Champion.

Caitlin Coles was Intermediate Horse Champion. Caitlin gave her horse Jack a quiet season last year but started the indoor series in style, winning Intermediate Horse each time out in the Wales and Gloucester region, before going on to success at Keysoe.

Olivia Routledge, driving Spike, was top of the large Intermediate Pony class and the National Champion - to the special delight of backstepper, trainer and auntie Anna Grayston. Melita Powell was third. In this huge class of 18 entries Kacie Lawson was 7th, Amelior Waddicor 9th and Nicole Holdsworth 14th.

The Novice Young Drivers class had a good turnout of eleven competitors. Top dressage in this class was Josh Twitchen on 25.50 pens with several drivers going clear in the cones. Jack Kedward clear but six seconds faster was lying in fourth place coming into the obstacles but his speedy times shot him into first place by the end of the first day with fellow Mid Wales junior Rebecca Jones who also drove very fast obstacles also rising to the top, close behind him. Only 1.59 pens separated the top two going into the last two obstacles and made for a nail biting edge of the seat final round! Rebecca tapped a ball but bettered her already fast times to steal the win and become Novice Junior Champion by just 2 penalties from fellow Powys Carriage Driving Group member Jack Kedward who was Reserve Champion.

Amy Stone had a busy and successful Keysoe. She was fourth in Open Pony with her Section A, Bazz in his first indoor driving season and also fifth in the Small Pony class with her coloured Shetland.

Finally, although not a junior but still officially a young driver, Joseph Adams stormed to his sixth consecutive Indoor Championship win with his grey pony pair, a clear twenty-three points ahead of the field!

## Easter Camp is a fantastic experience

The 2018 camp for the British Young Drivers was a great success and many new faces joined in for the first time. We spoke to three of these newcomers who thoroughly enjoyed the activities and also to their adult supporters to find out just what the benefits are.

William Evans, aged 12, is learning to drive Laura's horse Chance. He explained, "It was very much fun and me and my instructor/ friend Laura really enjoyed it. Also the meals were great so, thank you British Young Drivers and all that helped make it happen. It's a really good experience."

Laura agreed wholeheartedly, "William is right. It was fun, but we also learnt a lot. It was my first camp too, so we were both a little nervous but everyone was so friendly. We worked in small groups so it was easy to get to know everyone's names. We learnt about horse anatomy... We painted the insides on the outside. We found out what is in the food we feed to our ponies and assessed their condition. We practised how to put a harness together .... all before getting into our carriages for lessons.





William had individual lessons from his heroine Sara Howe over the next two days. This was only the second time ever he had driven through cones or obstacles so this camp really was for everyone from beginners like Will, with only 6 months driving to those preparing for Keysoe. In between lessons we had other sessions including:

- Talking with a sports psychologist who gave us advice and guidance to write down what we are good at and what we would like to be better at ... and make plans to get where we want to be this year.
- What are backsteppers... Mostly what the mums, dads or grandparents do... Or don't do sometimes to help get the best score.
- Plaiting and presentation skills.

Very important to us was having the opportunity to get the carriage and harness weighed.

This makes sure we are not asking our pony to pull a carriage too heavy for him.

His mum asked me if it was worth the money... I said, "every single penny!"

Will received an award for the most improved, so we are all very proud of him."

Team Bennington also loved their camp experience. Sue Mart took her nephew Charlie with Shetland pony Monty (who stars in our Small Pony feature) and Alice Rutherford with Sue's advanced pony Zac, a hackney x Welsh, which Alice has been driving in lessons at Bennington since October.

Alice, an experienced driver who had been to camp once years ago with a Shetland, found the experience invaluable. "Easter Camp was such a great fun opportunity. I gained so much more confidence driving Zac. All the

instructors were amazing, understanding and really easy to relate to. I found my lessons so useful. Sara Howe was my instructor for flatwork and obstacles, and she was joined by Rosanna Walters-Symons for the cones and psychology sessions. In particular I learnt to remember to turn through my hips not my hands, sitting up and engaging my core and using my outside rein to balance and control my pony.

I enjoyed building on what I had learnt in each lesson, and then pulling it all together. It was great to be with other like-minded enthusiastic juniors. And of course, the Unicorn Trust is such a fab venue with great food!"

Sue Mart feels both youngsters gained hugely from their time at camp, "Alice gained enormous confidence during camp and the coaches worked with her on the horse's suppleness, and way of going, her body position on the box seat and training tips which she could try out at home.

Charlie my nephew showed interest in driving, so we thought it would a fun and safe way for him to take up the reins of carriage driving and drive Monty, kindly loaned by Tiggy. After a few training sessions, Charlie was hooked and thought it would be a great opportunity to attend camp. He didn't stop smiling all weekend, made new friends and developed in confidence around the ponies."

Charlie enjoyed himself so much at his first camp and as someone new to driving, singled out the fun games and cones as special

favourites, along with painting the horses. "We played fun games in the arena like the A + and - game (flatwork grid) and chased Sara (Howe) around the cones course. Monty went very fast and even cantered and we only squashed one cone! I learnt that Monty is very cheeky, and to keep hold of my reins, sit up when stopping and that red cones are always on the right." When asked what was the very best bit of camp he replied, "The best bit was all of it!"

Sue last attended the junior camp some years ago as a coach, but this is the first time she had attended with ponies. She sums up what camp has to offer: "It was extremely well organised, with such a professional outlook, but most importantly it was made fun and a great learning experience. The food and facilities were 5\* too! A big thank you goes to Sydney Smith and her team at the Unicorn for their devotion and dedication to the junior drivers. As drivers and coaches we all need to be ambassadors for the sport, bringing in new people and giving up and coming drivers the opportunity to drive training horses to develop their skills.

The Bennington Team is already signed up for next year!"

*Left: Will with Sara Howe. Previous page from left: Rebecca Jones, Novice Junior Champion and Jack Kedward, Reserve Champion.*

