

# CARRIAGE DRIVING

February 2013 £4.50  
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driving skills at  
Bennington



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# Achieve your driving dreams with Bennington

Bennington Carriages offers you more than just the chance to buy a new carriage. With a top class trainer on hand in the form of Sue Mart, who is a qualified Level 3 UKcc coach, whether your desire is to drive a Shire or a Shetland you will soon find yourself driving the dream

If you were to ask most carriage driving people what they immediately thought of if you said the name Bennington, they would say 'carriages'. But Bennington Carriages is more than just a first class carriage manufacturer. At their base in Long Bennington, Nottinghamshire, they offer a complete all-round service. From teaching you how to drive, schooling your horse to harness, and advancing your carriage driving skills, to providing you with the suitable carriage to take you on your carriage driving journey, Bennington Carriages can help you along the road to achieving your dreams.

At the Bennington Carriage Driving Academy Sue Mart, who is a qualified UKcc Level 3 coach, offers tailor made one-to-one tuition, suitable for all levels and disciplines of driving - from novice to advanced and from

pleasure to competition. Using the extensive range of purpose-built driving facilities that the centre has to offer, Sue will work closely with you to understand your requirements and tailor either individual or a series of sessions to ensure you realise your carriage driving goals.

## Learning for yourself

So what can you expect if you want to learn to drive at Bennington? "We will sit down first and look at your strengths and any prior knowledge you have, identify any weaknesses and look to where you want to be in three months," explains Sue. "Then we will set out a series of structured sessions to help you achieve your long term plans."

Your lessons with Sue will be videoed and downloaded onto a CD which you can keep, so that you can evaluate your progress.

Your video diary will also serve as a record of your journey, allowing you to look back and see how far you've developed. "Self-analysis is a very good tool. I don't try and nanny people, we structure a lesson in such a way that the client learns for themselves. It's the best way to learn," says Sue.

## Get involved

Bennington are always keen for people to be involved and with this in mind they have a series of 'Try Driving' sessions planned for early this year and they have been heavily involved in the BHDTA 'Driving Back to Sport' programme, which aimed to introduce newcomers to the sport of driving. Sue and her team are also keen to introduce other equine bodies to the sport and can be seen giving demonstrations to any groups who might be

interested, including just recently their local BHS group. "It's very much about getting people on the carriage and driving," Sue says. "Getting bums on seats is the one way in which we can introduce the sport and broaden the interest to all people."

As testament to their teaching success, the recent Driving Back to Sport initiative saw 27 prospective carriage drivers undertake a series of lessons at Bennington and of these over half now have their own turnouts and are actively driving. The initiative didn't just involve driving, but covered all aspects of the carriage driving world. "We had the Bennington group stewarding at Sandringham last year," Sue recalls. "The technical director, Philip Bateman, took them around the marathon and gave them a talk to get them all involved. This year some of them are going to Royal Windsor and we're having a group reunion in spring."

"We're going to invite people to bring their own turnouts to have some fun. We'll be able to see how they've all got on and to further develop their skills," she adds.

## Comprehensive approach

New this year to the academy is horse trainer, David Veasey who offers the prospective harness horse owner complete breaking to harness and re-schooling facilities.

*Main image: A drive out from the centre  
Above right: Sue Mart takes a prospective driver through their paces on the dressage field  
Top below: Tackling the water splash with gusto*

## Fact File: Sue Mart

Sue Mart's first foray into the driving world was as a groom for her father, and founder of Bennington Carriages, Michael Mart, in his early days of scurry driving, long distance driving and horse driving trials and it is in horse driving trials that Sue has excelled. Her first pony came at the age of 13 and she has had some 'fabulous ponies' since then who have taken her through the ranks to now compete in

the advanced single pony class.

Her many wins have seen her compete in Team GB in 2009 in the FEI World Combined Pony Championships in Greven-Bockholt, Germany, being the top placed British driver when the results were posted.

Sue's competitive ambition is to be selected for Team GB to compete in the FEI World Pony Championships in Pau, France, in November this year.

## Have a go at carriage driving

The Bennington Carriage Driving Academy will be holding a series of taster sessions that will provide a unique opportunity to experience the equestrian sport of carriage driving.

This new initiative has been designed to provide real, hands-on experience proving how easy it is to get involved and of course, how much fun can be had.

Aimed at the novice, you don't need to have previous carriage driving or riding experience to participate.

Each session will last for two hours and cover a range of carriage driving fundamentals, including long reining, harnessing up, examining different types of carriage and their purpose, and of

course, driving. The centre's extensive facilities and indoor arena also allow them to hold the events even if the weather is inclement. Each session costs only £20 per person.

The dates for these fun filled sessions are:

- Saturday, February 23
  - Saturday, March 30
- Each day will have two sessions:
- Morning session: 10am-12pm
  - Afternoon Session: 1.30p-3.30 pm

To book, please telephone or email, stating which date and whether you would like to take part in the morning or afternoon session.



"David is really good; he builds up a quiet rapport with the horse and is very much into the old style of breaking methods. He helped me re-educate my new Connemara pony which had some 'issues', says Sue. She continues: "He spent three weeks walking behind him with a tyre, taking him back to basics and he's worked wonders; he's very talented."

Sue can offer a one-off lesson or a series of lessons and whether you want to do this over a course of weeks or in a block can be accommodated. "Anything a client wants to do we can arrange", says Sue. "There's a super hotel just down the road, where you can stay if you want or you can bring your own caravan if you'd prefer and we have excellent facilities here for you and your horse."

The academy has their own schoolmaster for you to learn with, or you can bring your own horse and turnout. Sue again: "We have a pool of horses and ponies we can call on if needs be and our own teaching cob, Dillon, who is a Welsh Cross and is now 23 years-old, is super. He has different modes, depending on your

ability, from a gentle amble to competition."

The comprehensive approach is one Bennington prides itself on. Any problems you have, either with your driving or with your harness horse can be solved. Sue has a bevy of contacts to put you on the right road, from a sports psychologist to encourage you or allay any fears, to an equine physiotherapist who can offer your harness horse rehabilitation services – there are ways in which Sue and the team at Bennington can help.

"Although my speciality is horse driving trials I'm keen to encourage any prospective driver," emphasises Sue. "Our door is open to anyone who wants to drive. From newcomers to old hands, from Shetland to Shire, junior to the more mature driver. I enjoy nothing better than seeing someone achieve their goals and driving in harmony together."

She finishes: "We pride ourselves in offering the best carriages and the best service and we want to also offer the best coaching. It doesn't matter what you want to do, so long as you're having fun."

**T**he Bennington Carriage Driving Academy has an extensive range of purpose-built driving facilities to help develop and enhance the skills of any carriage driver. Set in 10 acres of picturesque countryside, the academy is conveniently located and offers:

- Outdoor dressage arena - 100m x 40m
- Obstacle and water splash
- Cones course
- Indoor fibre-sand training area - 47m x 13m
- Grass fitness track

The academy offers ample hard-standing parking, tea, coffee and kitchen facilities, toilets and wash down facilities for both carriages and horses.

- For further information contact Bennington Carriages on 01400 281280, email Sue Mart at sue@bennington.co.uk

## What the clients say

### Totally inspired

"Thank you once again for the amazing time Hannah and I spent with you and Dylan last Saturday. We both enjoyed it so much and are totally inspired to get on and drive our pony, who we are sure will have a great time! Thank you also for recommending the Reindeer pub, we had a lovely lunch there. The people were really welcoming and friendly."

**Jan and Hannah McIlvennie**, June 2011

### I really really enjoyed it

"Thank you very much for my driving lesson yesterday, I really, really enjoyed it! Louise was very good and very patient with my muddled hand. The pony was absolutely wonderful and I've never gone so fast in a carriage before so it really was fun."

P.S. I have to admit that I turn into a pony mad teenager when at Bennington and am quite in awe of all the beautiful carriages so please excuse me for being a bit too excited



and sorry for keeping you in the shop so long."

**Suzanne Blagg**, June 2011

### I had a thoroughly enjoyable time

"This is my second 'Try Driving Day' and each time it has got better. I have had a thoroughly enjoyable time. Everyone is very friendly and one is able to learn new things in a non-threatening environment. I would recommend these days to beginners and experienced drivers alike."

**Anne McDondald**, May 2011

### A fantastic birthday present

"Thank you so much for your time this morning. My father thoroughly enjoyed himself and is already talking about having another go next year. We were both very impressed with the centre and particularly by your teaching skills, care and attention. I don't think dad has ever enjoyed a birthday present as much as this one."

**Bev Sutton**, December 2011

### First lesson

"Thank you for a really enjoyable afternoon, I loved every minute of it, and will definitely be back for more."

**Sue Markin**, May 2012

*Left: Anne Macdonald and Bennington Driving Academy's much loved schoolmaster cob, Dillon. Above right: Sue Markin makes a splash on her first lesson. Below right: Bev Sutton's father gets to grips with putting to with academy coach Sue Mart*

