

# Bennington Carriages

## - Try driving

If you're new to driving or simply want some guidance, why not head over to Bennington for a 'Try Driving' day? Or instead, give someone a unique Christmas gift voucher for a 'Try Driving' day so they can discover how much fun driving is. Sue Mart explains what's involved.

In 2008, Sue Mart from Bennington Carriages had the vision, along with Amanda Saville from Chariots of Fire to run the very popular 'Try Driving' days. Sadly Amanda passed away in February 2016, but her legacy continues and the 'Try Driving' days remain as popular as ever at Bennington, headed by Sue Mart UKCC level 3 coach at the Bennington Carriage Academy.

Sue tells us: "Over the years, we have received many queries regarding the sport of carriage driving. Common questions asked are: "is it difficult?", "what equipment do I need?", "how much does it cost?" or more simply, "where do I begin?"

"Our sessions are currently run according to government guidelines. Please see our website (benningtoncarriages.co.uk) for updated information. (Note these photos were taken pre lockdown). Sessions are tailored to the client's needs, so whether you're a newcomer or experienced driver, 'Try Driving' comprises practical, hands on tuition.

"During each session, attendees are given an overview of carriage driving, including pony, harness



A client getting to grips with the cones

and carriage. Once completed, attendees will then take the reins and drive a Bennington carriage whilst receiving one to one tuition.

"We can package the sessions to suit, and this can be just a one-off experience. However, in our experience, after the first session, we normally find the client is hooked on driving, so we tend then to put together a schedule of five lessons, with a discussion on an achievable goal at the end.

"In conjunction with the sessions, we take videos when possible and forward these to the client as well as having regular Zoom meetings to help and support them on their carriage driving journey. A detailed log is kept on the client's progression and a certificate is issued at the end, giving you a sense of achievement.

"Emphasis is on fun and safety, demonstrating how accessible the sport is to everyone. Suitable for



14hh Dillon put to a Bennington Fun Bug, our teaching turnout



Water obstacle being driven with Dillon in the Fun Bug

all ages and abilities, 'Try Driving' is the ideal introduction to the sport and makes a unique gift with vouchers, presented in a certificate format, which are available for one year, or longer depending on current government Covid restrictions."

I didn't realise my seat and leg position would be so important.

"The feeling of sitting behind the horse rather than on top took some getting used to, but it's beautiful to watch the horse moving in front of you. I found the outline and the way the horse moves are just as important in driving as in ridden dressage and the thrill of driving across country at speed gives as much adrenaline as galloping on horseback. "It seems that whatever your goals are when riding, these are just as achievable driving a horse too."

Megan Wheeldon: "I started driving in 2008 after attending a 'Try Carriage Driving' day at Bennington Carriages. The day consisted of on-foot training, learning about harness and how to safely put the horse in the carriage, followed by a lesson with Amanda Saville. It is safe to say I got the driving bug and

### What our clients have to say

Rachel Key: "Having ridden from an early age, and considering myself open to new adventures, I was thrilled to get a 'Bennington Try Carriage Driving Experience' for Christmas. I had no experience of driving so didn't know what to expect, but assumed I'd need to use my voice and rein aids to control the horse. To my surprise, it was much more like riding than I thought.



Sue Mart is a UKCC Level 3 coach

shortly after I purchased my own pony. I attended lessons with Sue Mart and joined the British Young Drivers (BYD) training programme.

"Over the past 12 years I have competed successfully at indoor, club, national and international level, including 1 ICKD Junior World Trophy and 3 FEI European Youth Championships where I represented Great Britain. I currently hold the title of BYD National Champion (2019) and



Megan Wheeldon, winner of the open pony class at Ashfields 2020

won the intermediate pony class at the 2016 BC National Championships.

"In 2019 I also won the open pony class at the Midlands Carriage Driving Club Championships, a club that has been very supportive, and that I have competed with throughout my driving career.

"Try Carriage Driving day allowed me to learn the basics of carriage driving and how to safely enjoy the sport. I would recommend this taster day to anyone who wants to start driving."

For further information about Try Driving Days at Bennington Carriages or to purchase a voucher, visit the website: [www.benningtoncarriages.co.uk](http://www.benningtoncarriages.co.uk) or call 01400 281280.



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Season's Greetings from Team Bennington

