

# What's happening AT BENNINGTON?

By Sue Mart

It's a new year and most likely many drivers will be making plans and setting goals for the forthcoming season. Here at Bennington we do our best to keep drivers inspired and competing at their best by running training events throughout the year. Or why not make a trip to Bennington for our open day in March?

**O**ur open day takes place on 21st March from 10am-4pm and costs just £5 per person (under 16s go free). Booking in advance is essential which you can easily do via our website.

The open day will be action packed with activities for anyone who is involved in the sport - from carriage drivers to back steppers and supporters. Whatever level you are at, please come along and we promise you a fun and informative day, with practical hands-on sessions and an opportunity to meet fellow drivers. What better way to start the season?

During the open day there will be:

- Informative talks and demonstrations
- Carriage maintenance demonstrations
- A behind the scenes tour of Bennington Carriages
- Q&A sessions
- Special offers on the day
- Refreshments.

Training events start in May and are aimed at like-minded drivers to get together and have fun, while focusing on training. Each turnout will have a morning and an afternoon session, with the chance to run through elements of a mock event or continue from the previous session. The days are not a competition, as the essence is



Brush up on your carriage driving knowledge with Sue Mart at Bennington this year

on progressing with your training and helping you to reach your end goal.

The days include activities such as cones courses and grid training, videoing on your phone, feedback and homework forms, working on the areas of your choice, with the chance to drive a dressage test in the afternoon and have it marked. They cost £80 and run from 9am-5pm and you must book in advance.

### What the attendees say

Jo Hall says: "I got into carriage driving at a BHS riding camp watching a demonstration. The lady competed at indoor driving and two day events and when I went to watch her indoor driving I was hooked. In 2012 I attended the Driving Back to Sport programme at Bennington where I learnt the more technical aspects of driving and got an overview of

the knowledge and skills needed to take part in competitive driving. My pony at that stage was not suitable for competitions but was great for pleasure driving, so we joined the Cambridgeshire & West Suffolk Driving Club and gained valuable driving experience. As part of the Driving Back to Sport initiative, I took my turnout to a BHS riding school during pony club camps so hopefully have inspired some of the 40 plus children who took and passed their carriage driving badge. I now have my pony Madge who has some competition experience, so I am able to expand my driving to include competitions.

"I have been to three actual events at Bennington and there was a mix of different abilities, from people attending as spectators who were just starting driving their ponies, to the drivers who wanted to learn to canter an obstacle. Everybody supported each other and it was a good training experience, not just from driving a dressage test, a cones course or an obstacle but to do these things in front of a group, which can be daunting if you have not done it before. Having Wendy and Sue share their experiences from the backstepper and driver's viewpoint was very informative and Sue's long reining and dressage demonstrations were inspiring. To sum up, I took away increased confidence, knowledge and driving skills reinforced by the comradery of others.



Carriages on display at a Bennington open day

"I am currently participating in indoor driving and intend to continue pleasure driving with my club, which is great for keeping my pony fit, and also do more training with one and two day events in mind.

"My advice to others is to set yourself goals and start working towards them now. Get appropriate training and practise as much as you can."

Emily Gent adds: "I was inspired to get into driving by my grandfather who drove for pleasure, and last year I attended three training days

at Bennington. The days gave us confidence and the foundations to set us up to compete at the 2019/2020 indoor driving season, as well as offering me help and advice on all three disciplines of the sport.

"They were great fun and a nice social event where you meet lots of fellow drivers. Also, Sue helped me create a plan to help me reach my goals.

"I am now looking forward to competing outdoors this season with my local club. However, I will continue to attend the Bennington training

events in 2020, as I love training and you never stop learning.

"I have three top tips to pass onto fellow drivers:

1. Ask for some advice when you're buying your first driving pony, harness and carriage. Safety and the set-up of good quality

equipment is so important.

2. Have regular lessons and training to help set you up to reach your goals.

3. Get involved, because it's a great sport that's fun and enjoyable, and you will meet such great people along the way."



Jo Hall and Madge



Emily Gent and Barry at a Bennington training day



We promise a fun and informative open day



The world's finest carriages, accessories and service.

We are delighted to be holding our Open Day on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March.

Visit our website for further details. Booking essential!

01400 281280  
benningtoncarriages.co.uk



By appointment to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh  
Carriage Builder  
Artistic Iron Products  
Newark

# Open Day



# Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March