



Bug. Appropriately dressed with my jodis, hard hat, boots and gloves, I stepped on board with Amanda seated next to me. Therefore, I felt perfectly safe and in good hands, even though I had to take the reins.

We walked on, into the nicely mown, flat field 'decorated' with cones. Amanda explained how one uses one's body language to steer and control the pony and, when we did our first turn, I leant over like I've seen them do in the scurry driving. Now, Amanda told me straight away you do not need to do that. It is quite similar to riding. Sitting up nice and straight, a slight turn of the head and therefore the upper body, an almost indistinguishable movement, was sufficient for the finely-tuned Tom-Tom to know where I wanted him to go!

You don't need a sat-nav with Tom-Tom!

Wow! This pony is sooooo well-schooled, I was soon trotting through the cones, keeping a light, even contact and just looking where I wanted to go (probably a little sedately for Tom-Tom, who is used to going somewhat faster). Amanda taught me how to accelerate, steady-up and turn the corners around the edge of the big field. Then we had a cross-country-style gallop up the incline to finish on a high.

It was more fun than I ever imagined it would be. It was easier and more natural than I expected too. The next person had arrived for their lesson; they weren't a first-timer like me, they were having more advanced schooling.

Bennington Carriages are holding another Try Driving session. The next one is on Wednesday 16th July.

For details etc phone Sue Mart on 01400 281280 or email carriages@bennington.co.uk www.sportsdriving.co.uk

*Report by Louise Graham
Photos by Zoe Molesworth*

Sit up! Louise, Amanda and Tom-Tom

NEDTL Escrick Park

Gary Brown, winner of the Open Pony class, fastest marathon and lowest overall score



Wendy Peckham



With the carriage driving season in full swing, the North East Driving Trials Group held their third event of the year at Escrick Park on 31st May/1st June. A good entry of 55 competitors saw two dressage arenas kept busy throughout the Saturday. The two National Novice Qualifiers sadly continued the current trend of low numbers in this class, with only three entries forward in the Pony class and four in the Horse, but nonetheless places were hotly fought over. David Wagstaff-Myers took the Novice Pony qualifying ticket and Wendy Peckham the Novice Horse class. Both drivers managed to hold on to an overnight lead after dressage and cones to earn their place at the Windsor National Championships.

Lowest open dressage score of the day went to Penny Wood with 50.8 and in the club novice class Tony Mould scored a creditable 47.8.

The good weather enjoyed on Saturday gave way to persistent rain on Sunday morning, which made the ground conditions extremely greasy. This didn't stop drivers putting up some extremely quick times in the obstacles however. Fastest marathon went to Open Pony competitor Gary Brown from Lancashire, who stormed round the obstacles for a score of 54.4 penalties which also gave him the lowest overall score of the entire competition! Second fastest on the marathon was Alan Wilkinson with 63.4, which enabled him to pull up from fourth place to win the open horse class.

The pairs class was won by Lynn Winder from Tebay in Cumbria, who held off a determined challenge from Scotsman Douglas Strachan. A long-time competitor with the North East Club and a committee member, Douglas maintains he is a contender for being the oldest competitor with the oldest ponies, oldest carriage and oldest horsebox! His obstacle time of 77.8 would belie this fact, finishing only seven penalties behind Lynn who is much, MUCH younger!

Report by: Jane Wilson, Photos by John Hartley

I tried it! I liked it!

Invited by Sue Mart to go along on one of Bennington's 'Try Sports Driving' days, I was looking forward to meeting the instructor, Amanda Saville, again. She lives up North and was stopping at Bennington en route to the East of England Show. Her father and mine are cousins, so being horsey and enjoying shows must run in the family! But I am happier riding and Amanda is a whiz at driving, as anyone who has seen her 'Chariots of Fire' Display Team in action will agree. She is the Scottish Indoor Champion and has written a book, 'Sports Driving'.

I really did not know what to expect the experience to feel like. I have been driven before, gently along the lanes in a gig, which I enjoyed, but not enough to want to take up driving. Amanda started by showing me a few safety-checks to make on the harness. One of her stunt ponies, Tom-Tom, was put to a Bennington Fun

