

## Ashfield's Driving Back To Sport

Cones Driving, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

The third session of the Driving Back to Sport series at Ashfield's which this time covered cone driving was once again a huge success. UKcc coaches Wilf Bowman-Ripley, Minta Winn and Maxine Ingham were on hand throughout the day but this time they were also joined by UKcc Level 1 coach Lyndsay Tyas. The East Anglia Carriage Driving Group steward coordinator Hilary Ray also came along to provide an insight into stewarding and differing ways to be involved within the sport.

The day started with the whole group building a cone course in the indoor school that Wilf had designed earlier. There was great discussion about correct angles and distances between cones and there were many requests to move pairs of cones or alter angles slightly because it looked a little difficult. These requests obviously fell on deaf ears as of course you have to drive the course that is set out by the course designer!

Everyone was then split into three groups. The first group were outside with Lyndsay practicing designing a course and then building it, there was a lot of head scratching about what would work, and of course what wouldn't! The fact that we were again blessed with good weather helped this outdoor session enormously. Having been a little daunted by the course that they had just built in the indoor school, Lyndsay showed everyone that most cone movements were based on different size circles and changes of rein that were movements that they had already practiced in the previous dressage sessions. Suddenly the indoor course didn't seem quite so daunting.

The other groups were in the indoor school with Minta, Wilf and Maxine. The more novice drivers drove Hackney pony Buster and the group that were a little more experienced drove Jake, a very smart moving British riding pony. In between driving everyone helped out by stewarding and timing each round. Each driver had two rounds and it was very interesting how much time was knocked off on the second round, although this was sometimes at the expense of the accuracy!

Some people had asked to drive Jake because he appeared to be more forward going than Buster. The coaches then had to prove to everyone that Buster was just as forward going as Jake if he was driven positively. The challenge was set, Wilf had to halve the quickest time set so far. A fairly big crowd had gathered to watch and the lovely lunch that Jen always provides for us all had to wait. Wilf, with Maxine on the back step, drove the course in a very smooth forward canter and more than halved the previous quickest time. Everyone was very impressed not only by Wilf's driving but by how Buster could canter around with Wilf in one round and then, very happily go back to steady trot with the next group with no fuss at all.

We had a few requests from pupils asking if we could provide a turnout so they could practice the harnessing up and putting to procedure that had been learnt in previous weeks. Ashfield's head groom Megan Carruthers who had taken these workshops previously was on hand with Unique, one of Wilf's team horses. He stood like a rock as he was repeatedly put to and taken out. The up side of this workshop being in the stable block was that all the other horses were spoilt rotten with people bringing them out sugar lumps after each coffee break!

In summary it was a very successful day with lots of happy budding carriage drivers counting down the days until the next session, here are some of this sessions feedback comments-

"I cannot wait until next time!"

"This whole course has been absolutely brilliant, I have learnt so much"

"We are so lucky to have had this opportunity!"

"I am Happy,Happy,Happy!!!"

"This is so well run and everyone is so helpful and encouraging. I have made lots of new friends."

"Everyone is so helpful, I have learnt so much!"

Maxine Ingham

