



Events and club news 2009

Entries have held up well this season – our twenty-fifth! – despite the squeeze on many people's pockets: see Mike Watts' numbers report. We are lucky to have what are probably some of the best carriage-driving venues in the UK in our region – Terry Chambers' Ashfields, the Garget family's Blandings Farm and the brand new Elveden Estate, home of the Earl and Countess of Iveagh, near Thetford. Its reputation as a beautiful site with good going, superb obstacles – designed by Wilf Bowman-Ripley – and convenient facilities is spreading.

Our traditional warm-up was a training day at Blandings followed by a popular one-day event. Louise Garget has been running fun events at Blandings all summer with many members enjoying these, too. Our most traditional venue at Euston was our choice for the National Novice Qualifier classes and Sonny Hillier (horse) and Wendy Wyatt (pony) qualified for Windsor, winner Graham Heath having already qualified his horse. Our club event at Sandringham was a great chance for drivers to match themselves against the national drivers on six of the obstacles with the bonus of watching them perform. Having our own stable field at Sandringham means that we can park with fellow club members with our own facilities: this works better than us being scattered about the less favoured parts of the national stable field. Two two-day events at Ashfields were as popular as ever, in April and early September, the latter being our club championships. The first planned national event at Ashfields in August was well supported by our club members acting as stewards as well as those competing. We also held a three-day "Crinkly Camp", for the over-25s, in May, and a Junior Camp, for those under 26! Elveden completed the season with a perfect weekend of autumn sun for a one-day event, too.

National Championships, 11-13 September: Wendy and Harriet Bradford were fourth and sixth in the tough novice driver single pony class with Sue Hargreaves fourth in novice driver single horse. From our area, Stephanie Byrne, Debbie Norgate, Rita McGregor and Clare Iveagh drove open pony pairs to second, third and fifth places with Clare coming home respectably on an elimination score in her first national championships. Those Windsor obstacles are very similar and are not easy to remember for anyone.



Above, Sue Hargreaves - open driver single horse winner - tackles the water at Elveden, Keith Hargreaves hanging on tight.

Members Frances Collings of Jack-in-a-box, Mike Morris, Chris Smith, Jo Attenborough, Gary Power and Sue Botley also took part. Wilf Bowman-Ripley enjoyed the horse fours class. Mark Bell strolled home

in the pony tandem class with a lead of 38 penalties. Local National Pony Four-in-hand Champion of 2009, Alan Clarke, was just pipped into second place by Sara Howe from Kent in a controversial last-minute cones win.

"Elveden was the best event I've been to all year," Caronne Daft.

EACDG Ltd - Notice of the 25th Annual General Meeting, Saturday, 7 November

Please come and enjoy the AGM followed by a free meal with us at Ashfields Clubhouse to celebrate our club's twenty-fifth successful year. The Club Champions' awards and trophies will be presented. Come and tell us what you want, what you want more of and any ideas you have to improve what we do.

The meal will be served at about 7:30pm and is free to everyone who is a member or who has stewarded or helped us during the season. The bar will be open.

If you want a meal, please call Zoe Morgan, 07770 944868, to let her know you are coming and how many meals are required. There will be a vegetarian option.

Young drivers' success:

Our junior drivers are very keen and successful too. Katie Bell, won the 15-17-year-old class at the Young Drivers Championship at Escrick Park, North Yorkshire, 26-27 September, with Sacha Clarke third and Charlotte Snow fifth. Mark Bell won the multiples class. Up-and-coming indoor drivers Grace Smith and Nadia Hughes also did well alongside the above-mentioned at the

international Young Drivers' Channel Cup event, 1-2 August, an international event held at Ashfields. Harriet Bradford was on the winning team, too, and Colonus Smith made his debut on the international stage.

On the committee: Janet Sycamore was co-opted onto the committee in March. She and husband Nigel are pioneering the small pony class, indoors and out, and want to encourage other drivers of "littlies" to have a go. Janet's other commitments include being involved with the East

Anglian Shetland Pony Group which meant that, sadly, she missed our last event at Elveden because she was promoting driving at the EASPG's show on the same day. Nigel and Janet also joined Mike and Fiona, Brian and Wendy Embleton, Rita and Tom McGregor, Steve and Tabitha King, Dean and Ellis Shelton, Chris Patrick and Jess Hine at the Euston working party, 16 May, when we strimmed and tidied the obstacles and bothered some moles.

Volunteer co-ordinator Hilary Ray has also joined the committee as she's a vital part of the events team.

"Thank you" to Stephanie Richards and husband Nick Westwood who performed Safety Officer duties for us this season and who are standing down from the committee. If you know of someone who could be persuaded to take on this role next year, please get in touch as soon as possible. We can't run events without a Safety Officer these days and it's an important job.

The committee – who are all volunteers – has invested in replacing a few stopwatches, clocks, clipboards and sundry items, plus some smart new letters for the obstacles.

Backoffice: Annette Bond has been gradually taking over the task of scoring for our events, with training from Mike Watts and occasional help from volunteers who like adding up. We like to put the scores on the website within 24 hours – or sooner – and we did this for every event this season.

Thank you all who've enjoyed our events this year, who remembered to leave their stable area and surroundings spic and span, who helped at events in any way, with catering – Ginny White, especially – and many of you who even wore your helmets when you were exercising and on quad bikes!

This year's numbers

This year EACDGD has run three training camps, two one-day events and five two-day events, with 317 entries in all. That was a good number of entries; slightly down on 2008 perhaps because of the credit crunch, but up on 2007. These entries came from our 123 members as well as visitors from other clubs. Just over two-thirds entered online. MW

EACDGD Entries 2009	Event type	Entries
Blandings training 28 March	<i>training</i>	9
Blandings 1 day 29 March	one-day	30
Ashfields 25-6 April	two-day	80
Ashfields Crinkly 22-4 May	<i>training</i>	14
Euston 30-31 May	two-day, NQ	39
Sandringham 27-28 June	two-day	33
Elveden training 17 July	<i>training</i>	6
Elveden 18-19 July	two-day	33
Ashfields 4-5 Sept	two-day	40
Elveden 27 Sept	one-day	33
Total		317

Our volunteers, judges, observers and stewards are a wonderful, friendly, loyal and very hard-working group of people who make our events happen and turn out in all

weathers with the reward of a packed lunch and our appreciation for their many hours of dedicated concentration. Without them we would not be able to run any events. I hope we will see you at the AGM where you can enjoy a free supper as a token of our thanks. FP



Zoe Napier and Cathy Gray always look like they enjoy themselves. Zoe is the Novice Driver Single Horse Points League Champion 2009.

New members: new to outdoor driving trials?

The club is affiliated to the British Horse Driving Trials Association and adopts their rules*.

From 1 January 2009, anyone who has never driven in horse driving trials must have a BHDTA safety assessment before they can enter a competition (although they can come to training events without it – and can be assessed at the training event). We have a responsibility to you, your horse, the rest of us, our horses, to the stewards, spectators, landowner, officials... Please understand that this is a Health and Safety necessity. We are a club, not a business, and we all share responsibility for our safety and welfare.

The assessment is not about testing trials driving skills but about the driver's general competence and knowledge of safe driving techniques and good practices. Indoor and unaffiliated driving trials experience is not taken into account. This is a BHDTA rule and applies to everyone, no matter what your age, level of experience, background, gender, sexual orientation or race. Afterwards you may compete with the pony or horse and turnout you were assessed with: no-one has failed yet!

Among those qualified to do the assessment are LHHIs (qualified instructors) and national open class competitors with three years experience.

If you wish to be assessed, please speak to Fiona to discuss how to go about it and to ensure the forms are completed correctly – and well in advance of when you want to compete, preferably.

*You can buy the latest rulebook from their website or call 0845 643 2116 - £10 + £2.95 p&p + £6 for the binder.

So, if you are new to outdoor driving trials and wish to compete next year, please help us to help you – phone me to discuss your plans and we can plan how to achieve them.

Ours is a sport for the patient: "It takes about three seasons of competing before you really know what you are doing." I quote a well-known local national competitor and, no, I didn't believe it then, but I do now. You will have setbacks as well as, one hopes, triumphs, big and small: it's a fantastic sport, whatever your level, and we really are a very friendly supportive group. Just ask!

Mentors wanted: We'd also be pleased to hear from any more experienced drivers who'd like to mentor newcomers – do get in touch...

“I'd like to - design obstacles/plan a cones course/ mark out the marathon course.” If you would like to learn how to do any of these things – or to help in any other practical way at or before or after events, please contact Fiona to find out more. There are special training courses in the new year and we need more people to join in the fun of organising our events. **This could be you!**

If you wish to progress

from club to national competitions – either to national novice qualifier (for singles) or for multiples, or from single to multiples within the club, please tell us your plans so we can make sure you are qualified correctly. It can take one or two seasons to achieve, it's easy, and just needs planning.

We must have your qualification form before the event starts – this is because you are observed in every phase by the event officials. I usually have spare forms with me and will do everything I can to help you, but please help me by planning ahead and telling us you want it signed on your entry form. Thank you. FP



Some tips about driving cones

We all do this for fun, but it's not so much fun when you don't know the rules and pick up unwanted penalties, so here are a few reminders. n.b. we don't always enforce every rule to the letter but it's useful to know them!

1. Do not take a dog into the cones arena at any time.
2. Only the driver and trainer may walk the cones.
3. The corners of the cones arena are usually marked out by poles (or it is in an enclosed area). Do not drive outside the marked area while competing.
4. Once the cones competition has started you may only walk the course with the permission of the cones arena party – and you should wear your presentation clothes. You do not have to wear gloves or apron.
5. The groom must not speak or communicate with the driver in the cones competition. An exception is when the driver is stopped by the bell (if a cones obstacle has been knocked over and needs rebuilding, for example): the groom can tell the driver that the bell has gone.
6. Halt and salute the arena party before you start.
7. Do not drive through the start flags until you have been given a signal to start.
8. Your carriage will be measured after you have completed the cones course. Stay until the steward tells you it is the correct width. If you are under width, you will be eliminated.*

We have a new handbell for the cones party to use as a signal for you to start (or to stop, if necessary).

*Pre-novice and novice class drivers are usually given 50 penalties instead of being eliminated.

(Reminder to self: red-on-the-right, white-on-the-left... red-on-the-right...)



We present - trace carriers, etc.

Presentation judging strikes dread into the hearts of pre-novice and novice drivers: it serves the important purpose of checking the horse, harness and carriage for cleanliness, safety and correct fit and of encouraging drivers to maintain a high standard of turnout – which they do, generally.

John and Jo Attenborough have enjoyed judging the novice and pre-novice classes presentation and were pleased with the effort made. Trace carriers were particularly ingenious: one person had made theirs out of a pair of spur straps. Other useful comments from presentation judge Sarah-Jane Williams were that while the driver and groom, horse and harness were usually immaculate, a bit more time spent cleaning the carriage would lead to better marks overall. Sarah-Jane also suggests taking a spares kit on the marathon. We thought of a spare trace, hole punch and shoelace – or a rein splice – black sticky tape, such as duct tape – knife, baler twine, hoof pick, multi-tool with a screwdriver, small spanner, pliers, switched-off mobile phone?

Volunteers wanted

Our team of volunteers enjoy our events as well as being darn good at their observing and recording tasks. We always welcome an extra pair of hands and eyes and stewarding is a good way to make new friends and to learn the rules. “It's more fun than I thought”, said Sue Hargreaves, who wrote for the dressage judge at Blandings.

Spectating is the first small step to becoming involved, of course. Do you have interested friends or neighbours who'd like to come and watch us next year? Can you help us to find more people who might help us in the future?

We always need more helpers. Can you help to find more people? Volunteers get a free lunch and refreshments and can be added to the newsletter mailing list, if they wish.

Please call Hilary Ray 01206 251339 and leave your contact number if you'd like to join the volunteers or to put her in touch with new people who are interested for 2010.

p.s. EACDGD events have been reported in Absolute Horse, East Anglia Rider, Carriage Driving magazine and Inharness magazine. If you wish to write a report for the newsletter, please send it to me, Fiona, preferably by email.

Get well soon

The club sends its best wishes to Roy Brittain, who had a fall from his roof in the summer. Roy served on the committee for many years and then became one of our most dedicated stewards, usually accompanied until recently by his wife Joyce.

We wish a full recovery from appendicitis to Rosemary Neale, who had to miss the last Elveden event. Rosemary is out of hospital and recovering at home.

Your committee 2009

President	Guy Stainton 01787 370681 guy@carriages37.fsnet.co.uk
Chairman	David Taylor 07771 902027 carriagehouse@btinternet.com
Treasurer	Jacqui Clarke 01702 510077 jacqui_12@btinternet.com
Secretary, Newsletter	Fiona Powell 01473 735732 fiona@eacdg.co.uk
Website, Entries & Membership	Mike Watts 01473 735050 mikew@eacdg.co.uk Ivy Cottage, Boot Street, Great Bealings, Woodbridge, IP13 6PB
Event Secretary	Zoe Morgan 07770 944868 wbrcarriages@aol.com
Course Builder Small Ponies	Tony Clarke 01702 510077 Janet Sycamore 01284 828828 workshop@npsycamore.co.uk
Volunteer Co-ordinator	Hilary Ray 01206 251339 or 07795 148199 hilary_ray@hotmail.co.uk
Safety Officers 2009	Nick Westwood, Stephanie Richards

If you wish to correspond with the committee, please address your message to the Secretary in the first instance.

If you have not got the 2009 BHDTA rule book, get a new one from their office for £10 plus £2.95 p&p – and read it! www.horsedrivingtrials.co.uk, 0845 643 2116, BHDTA, East Overhill, Stewarton, Kilmarnock, KA3 5JT

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The cones stewards are being conducted by David Taylor, centre. Hilary Ray is on the right with Pat Goodrum, former Hon Sec, next to her. Malcolm Parnell of Bluefoot Donkey, Ashfields' resident photographer, is behind Georgia Ray, Steph Richards and Rosemarie Gant.

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How it all began – 25 years ago...

by EACDG founder member Mike Cooper

"It was on a cold wet April evening in 1983, and I was driving the lorry back from a Windsor Park Equestrian Club one-day event where we had won the single horse class. In my pocket was a bright and shiny one pound coin - they had just replaced the pound note. It was the prize for winning the class and I still have that coin to this day. I was thinking "Cooper, what are you doing driving 175 miles each way to compete in a class that paid £1! With the facilities at home and the number of people taking up the sport, shouldn't we have a club in East Anglia?"

I was the BDS Assistant Commissioner for Suffolk under Sallie Waldron. I put it to her that we should do something about it: she agreed, but it was to be 'my baby' as she did not have the time to be involved but was in full support of the idea. I approached a number of people to see what their feelings where and all said it would be a good idea. I involved Richard Gallyon, whose wife drove, and we compiled a plan of action.

The first thing we did was to put an advertisement in the regional newspapers calling a meeting at the Bell Hotel in Thetford in November. We booked a small room for the meeting expecting 20 or so to turn up: how wrong we were. Seventy-plus people turned up and we had to ask the hotel for a larger room - and so the East Anglian Combined Driving Group was born.

Our first event was held at Euston in the spring of 1984 that is 25 years ago and might make it, apart from Windsor Park, the oldest club still running? Another venue was added the next year at Cockley Cley.

I remained chairman until 1990 when I left for pastures new in the West Country. There is so much more that I could put on paper about those first years... One thing I would say is how good it was to see one of the founder members still competing for the fun of it - John Robertson who, in the old days, went round with a team of Shetlands.

Sadly a large number of the original members have now passed on or given up the sport, but I shall be forever grateful to the Group that helped me go from a single horse to a horse team in very short order and allowed me to represent my country in a World Championship. Without the Group's support and encouragement this would have been harder to have achieved.

I hope that the club will make another 25 years, although sadly it is unlikely I shall be around to see it, but for now I shall raise a glass or two to the East Anglian Carriage Driving Group Ltd and wish all every success for the future."

Mike Cooper is an honorary life member of the EACDG Ltd and lives in Norfolk. He turns out regularly for us, judging dressage with his partner Vivien writing for him and he's frequently the steward at the end of the marathon.