

North Eastern Driving Trials Ltd

Ripley Castle:

Despite a fine and sunny Saturday, recent wet weather spoiled the ground conditions for the Club's annual Ripley Castle event on 3rd/4th May. The dressage arena down by the lake suffered particularly badly and the best that could be said was that it was the same for everyone! Rein back was made especially difficult due to a very boggy patch in just the wrong place, causing the carriage wheels to sink in. Best novice dressage went to Val Whitesmith with a score of 45.5 and best open dressage was Penny Wood with 47.2. In the multiples the dressage rosette went to Pat Cooper's tandem with 52.1. The cones field fared a little better but as usual, this phase was quite decisive with only three double clears out of 49 entries.

As Ripley was playing host to the final selection event for the British Para-equestrian Team all seven contenders had a chance to prove themselves here. Judi Ralls took the lead in the dressage with an excellent 39.5 and added nothing to it with a brilliant double clear in the cones to be the overnight leader.

Sadly, Sunday saw a return of the rain so it was on with wet weather gear again for the marathon. Once again, the extremely holding conditions took their toll, with many very tired and muddy turnouts coming through and in particular it was a very steep learning curve for some of the pre-novices. A grand total of 29 competitors across all classes picked up section penalties and once in the obstacles it was very plain to see the difference between those horses and ponies who's level of fitness this early in the year was better than others.

Overnight leader in the pre-novice, Gemma Smith held onto her lead with a creditable marathon of 86 to finish ahead of Adrienne Reed and Kim Usher. Novice pony winner was Joanne Thomas by a considerable margin from second placed Birgitta Kronqvist and Val Whitesmith in third. Novice Horse winner Jane Smith also recorded her win in this class by a huge margin over Penny Hartley in second.

The open pony was won by Glenys Ellis with a good fast marathon of 60.0 which was beaten only by Alan Wilkinson, winner of the open horse class with a marathon of 57.2

The obstacles stood up very well given the conditions and in the end I think everyone thought that the event had triumphed against nature!