



ROYAL NAVY & ROYAL MARINES EQUESTRIAN ASSOCIATION

ROYAL NAVY SHOW JUMPING AND EVENTING TEAM END OF SEASON REPORT 2009

2008 saw the loss of many key riders due to retirement and deployment which resulted in a disappointing start to the season, with the RN having to withdraw from the first 2 competitions due to lack of riders at the appropriate level. 2008 also saw the demise of the Naval Riding Centre and a loss of a home base for the sport.

This proved to be the catalyst needed to shake up the current system and put in place a robust development programme and initiate a PR campaign. A new committee was set up with representatives across the UK, this coupled with a new internet website to promote the sport resulted in a swathe of new riders coming to the fore, predominantly un-mounted grass root riders. With the selection of Quob Equestrian Centre as the new home for sport and negotiation of use of Quob's horses, the team was able to enact its development initiative immediately and open to the sport to all levels of experience.



The first show the RN was able to make an appearance was Aldershot in early May, in total 6 riders entered, 3 of which were placed, Laura Clark was 5th on her new ex-racehorse Gandy in the 70cm, Emma Phillips was 4th on the RN horse Seamus in the 80cm and Beth Oldfield was 4th on her own Splash in the speed Topscore round. Despite the hard ground, all riders and horses acquitted themselves very well.



Aldershot was the precursor to the Royal Windsor Horse Show where the Navy were the reigning champions. Unforeseen illness prevented the full 'A' Team from entering, but Al Skelley admirably stepped into the breach, riding the RN horse Seamus. Suzanne Clark on Rabbit and Beth Oldfield on Splash completed the team, but despite some competitive rounds, the RN did not make it into the final 12 to jump off.

The show finished on a high with the team participating in the Royal Parade in front of HM Queen Elizabeth II to a stadium packed full of enthusiastic public.

The RMAS Sandhurst show was held on 23 May on a beautiful sunny day. The show is held in front of Old College on hard ground with all jumps up to height. The notable performances were Suzanne Clark who was placed 4th in the 90cm out of a field of 60 starters. In all 5 riders competed, with Seamus,

the RN horse making another appearance, but the ground proved the undoing of many horses and riders for that day.



With the demise of the pageant in London, the Defence Animal Centre in Melton Mowbray have been running the show jumping classes that the Royal Tournament was famed for with the opportunity to qualify for the Services show jumping class at the International Olympia Horse Show. 6 horses in all made the journey, 2 from Scotland which required an overnight stop in York, the remainder from the South; still a whopping 5 hours on the road! With horses or riders not yet at the required level, no RN rider qualified for Olympia this year, however with the establishment of the development programme, we are hopeful for next year.



The Royal Navy Championships, held in late Jul proved a resounding success. Aimed predominantly at novice riders and open to dependants and saddle club members, the training and development work put in place to date came to fruition. Despite the Army and RAF putting in an impressive turn out and performance, the RN was placed in the top 3 in every class with many being their debut round. In total, nearly 100 personnel took part over the 2 days; a figure we hope grows with every iterative season.

Early Oct saw the RAF Championships, held at RAF Cranwell. Only 3 horses travelled the long distance, but there were several helpers on the ground that are part of the grass roots development scheme and came to gain experience including Veryan and Jason Burcham, Jan Price and Ashley Drew. Suzanne Clark and Beth Oldfield were both placed in the dressage on the first day and were placed 2nd and 3rd in the show jumping. On the second day, clever riding saw Suzanne pip 1st place in the 1m class and Beth was placed 2nd. For such a small contingent, a stalwart performance was put in from all riders.



The final competition of the season, the Cotswold Team Chase saw the debut of 2 new riders, Richard Walker and Mark Shaw. Having endured a 7 ½ hour journey from Culdrose they were ready and fit for action alongside Sharon Brown and Jan Price who made up the team of 4 to race across country over 26 solid natural fences. The team set off with the wind in their tails chasing a very fast time set by the RAF. Unfortunately, Sharon's horse slipped and fell and whilst she managed to re-mount and finish the race, valuable time was lost which meant the RN finished in 3rd. Despite the resulting loss of time, all 4 riders made it over the line and still managed to make an excellent account of themselves.

Overall, the season has produced some promising combinations for the future, and the additional funding provided for training has enabled the grass roots development scheme to be firmly cemented into the associations' infrastructure. This year saw the 2 team selection training days as well as 3 training sessions in the South West, 3 training sessions in the South East, 2 XC training sessions mid South and 2 training sessions in the North of England. With the new home for sport now established and ties with saddle clubs strengthening, 2010 promises to yield further successes. To find out more, please visit our website at www.royalnavyequestrian.co.uk

