

## **Residential Camp at Wellington Riding Tues 20-Fri 23 September 2016**

Our sixth camp at Wellington and in spite of being a very select small group of 4 riders in the end, it was one of the best! (Actually so good we want to keep it as a closely guarded secret as being just one group meant we had undivided attention.) We had Ruth Evans on her lovely new horse The Ritz, Jenny Leyton on Ollie, Ony Rogers on Freddie and Caroline Andrews on her husband's Blue as Ollie had a scrape on his side which might have caused problems when ridden. Nicola Golding and Rio should have been with us but typically Rio developed a problem a few days beforehand. I went along as the non rider, there to pick up and sort any problems and generally, hopefully, just be a help! I thoroughly enjoyed the few days.

We arrived midday on Tuesday and got the horses settled into stables on the yard. A spot of lunch and a chance to meet Bronia Hill, an event rider, who turned out to be our inspirational instructor for the duration. She was enthusiastic, a wonderful trainer and was immediately on the same wavelength as all the riders. In true Wellington fashion she made it clear that this was the riders' holiday and they should choose what they wanted to do. There was a game plan but this was certainly not set in stone. The first afternoon was an hour and a half of flatwork and a bit of polework.

After this we settled into the cabin we were allocated – as usual very basic with bunk beds, plastic mattresses but a bit more room than usual being so few of us. Ruth slept in her extremely upmarket Equitreck trailer! Caroline seemed to have an unending supply of gin and tonic in cans and of course there was also lots of vino and snacks.

The only downside was that supper was at the dreadful time of 5.30 so it was a scrabble to finish riding at 3.30, graze horses in hand, feed and be ready. Still we managed and may review how that works next year (YES, WE DO PLAN A NEXT YEAR).

Next day there was more flatwork/jumping in the morning followed by a demo by Bronia on plaiting (at our request). She is a busy event rider with several horses and is a working livery at Wellington, teaching in exchange for stabling. She teaches all levels from beginners to stage 4 riders and helps serious riders with their horses. She was extremely practical in all she did and this all made sense to our lot. Straight after this David Sherrin (who is head of the riding side at Wellington, also now very grand as he is BHS Chairman) gathered us up to watch him give Bronia a jumping lesson to sort out a particular problem. He wanted us by his side so he could talk to us too. Of course we know him (or some of us do) extremely well as in our first holidays at Wellington he was less busy and we often had his undivided attention. Then it was an hour and a half with Bronia on the XC. Nicola was able to escape work and come and watch for the day and managed the same on the next as she found it so interesting watching (as did I).

Thursday was pretty much a repeat of the lessons from the previous day but of course everyone was progressing fast. Caroline's Blue had dropped a shoulder on the XC on Wednesday and she asked if she could ride a Wellington horse (she was missing her lovely Connie Ollie so they set her up with another Connie who though a bit different from her own had much the same temperament. She certainly knows how to ride this breed and soon had the measure of Zola and did the same fences as the rest. Ruth was on her new horse and was getting to grips with him. Cheryl Bezants had started him off but he had been in another home, not really competing, for a couple of years. Bronia knows Cheryl so was soon on the phone to her saying what a lovely horse Ritz was and discussing progress! Our demo this day was a session with Bronia who brought along her selection of cold bandages, etc for use after eventing. She had lots of tips and everyone found the session very helpful and interesting. Ruth left that afternoon as she was competing on Saturday. The rest of us went out to supper at the Leather Bottle in Mattingly and the time flew past (we had wondered if conversation would be hard with so few of us but we never stopped talking and never got round to playing the games Caroline had packed).

Friday was just an hour and a half session in the morning before a debrief, lunch and heading home – Bronia never clock watched and most lessons ran well over the 1.5 hours allocated!

So will we go again? – unanimously the answer was YES if dates work out so I will be booking in 2017 and **you** should watch this space!!! *Penny Briggs*