

## **Regional Dressage Competition at Danescroft**

On the hottest day of the year so far 60 competitors travelled from all over Northern Ireland to take part in the regional Riding for the Disabled dressage competition. Organised by Susie Hamilton Stubber the competition took place on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2009 in the ideal setting of Danescroft, outside Lisburn, by kind permission of Mr George Stewart.

With three dressage arenas in operation and one arena for the “Countryside Challenge” there was always something to look at. The riders were being tested at different levels of competence, some being led while others demonstrated how to walk, trot and canter un-led. Catering for all levels, this competition provides the riders and volunteers with an opportunity to come together and meet with other groups to compare notes and take part in some friendly competition. However, with places at the National competition in Hartbury, Gloucestershire up for grabs the competitors were working hard to show off what they could do inside the arena. By winning a class the riders would not automatically qualify for the nationals, they had to obtain a certain percentage of points to go through, making it that little bit harder.

The atmosphere was one of excitement with all the riders and volunteers helping to ensure that the day passed off smoothly. Starting at 10am it meant a very early morning for those participants travelling from as far away as Enniskillen and Omagh but luckily as with any good horse show there were the obligatory bacon rolls on hand to wake everyone up.

The Omagh group made the journey to Danescroft with 13 riders all ready to take part in the days events. They had the largest group participating in the competition and were pleased to leave with some trophies and rosettes.

Winners from Omagh included Matthew Kilpatrick won Class 2 section D (Very Novice Walk and Trot Led), Rebecca Irwin won Class 3 Section A (Walk and Trot Unled), Ian Ross won Class 4 Section B (Novice Walk and Trot), Andrew Baird won the Junior Countryside Challenge and Jason Kilpatrick won the Best Turned Out prize on Dino.

Riders who will be attending the National competition at Hartbury representing Omagh Rebecca Irwin – Class 3, Ian Ross – Class 4 and Paul Baxter – Class 5.

Minnowburn attended the regional competition with three riders who were all ready to take on the larger groups. Brenda Young, June Close and Donna Higham, adult riders with the RDA, all rode Hector in the competition, taking part in different classes throughout the day. Brenda Young won Class 2 Section B (Very Novice walk and Trot) While June Close won Class 3 Section C (Walk and Trot Unled).

The Enniskillen group had three young riders representing them at this event. All three participated in Class 1 which was a walk and trot only class for first timers. Jamie McDonald is 8 years old, has been riding with the RDA for one year and attends Earn

Integrated Primary School. Ben O'Donnell is 9 years old, has been riding for 3 years and also attends Earn Integrated Primary School. William Graham is 12 years old, has been riding with the RDA for 5 years and attends Devenish College. All three rode Tarzan and Ben O'Donnell won the class, beating 9 other competitors to claim the rosette.

The Coleraine group attended Danescroft with a group of 9 keen riders, all of whom were competing at different levels. Gareth Baird and Laura McCollum were the members of Coleraine to win and gladly receiving the red rosettes for Class 2 section A and C respectively.

Newtownards travelled with a large entourage of horses and riders for the event at Danescroft. With 6 riders in total they managed to have entries into almost all of the classes. Winners on the day from the Newtownards group included Senior Countryside Challenge by Susan Abraham, Best Junior Indoor – Abigayle Gill, Best Senior Indoor – Roma Oakes, Class 5 section B – Roma Oakes, Turnout - Roma Oakes. Class 3 section B was a joint win for Bobby McCallister and Martin Mahood. Both Abigayle Gill and Roma Oakes will be attending the National championships in Hartbury.

Lurgan had two participants this year. Darragh Courtney and Kirsty McCollum both rode Teddy with Darragh participating in both classes one and two and Kirsty riding in class two.

The Downpatrick group may have been small with only three riders but they tackled Class 2 with enthusiasm. All three rode Pickles for the day. Noel Galbraith is an adult rider who has been with the group for 10 years went first into the arena. His team mate Jeremy Kilpatrick followed soon after putting his 30 years of his RDA knowledge to good use and Claire Killen, also an adult rider, followed suit.

The Lisburn group arrived with four riders who were keen to show what they could do. In Class 1 10 year old Ciaran McKee rode Rowan. Catherine McNally followed soon after in Class 2 on Lucy. She is eleven years old and has been with the group for two years. Ellen McMenamy also rode in Class 2 on Rowan. She has been with the RDA for two years and while she is currently 10 years old she will be celebrating her birthday in June. Finally Stuart Abernethy entered the ring on Lucy. At 11 years old he has been with the RDA for the last two years.

The Mid Antrim group attended with only two riders this year however both were eagerly competitive in Class 1 (Walk and Trot). Claire Warnock, who is 15 years old and has been riding for the last two years, tackled the dressage arena first closely followed by team mate Timothy Young who is 17 years old and has been riding for the last 6 years. Both riders attend Loughin School and rode Drifter, a bay pony, for the day.

Finishing up at 4pm, a little behind schedule and after the prize giving had taken place, the competition culminated with Roma Oakes, a rider from the Newtownards group presenting the Riding for the Disabled with a cheque for £2225.00 which she had raised at a dressage competition she organised a few weeks earlier.