

***Fidelity* Blenheim Palace International Horse Trials 2011**

Blenheim Horse Trials 2011 saw Piggy French hold on to win the CCI3*. In the top two spaces after cross country, her leading horse was withdrawn. However, in spite of a show jump down she retained first place with Wally French and Michael Underwood's DHI Topper W (47.1). Second and third places were closely fought over by American rider Tina Coudray (49.4) with Ringwood Magister, and Bettina Hoy with her own Lanfranco TSF (49.7).

The British Championship CIC3* for 8/9 year olds was first and third for the unstoppable William Fox-Pitt riding the Fox-Pitt Eventing Partnership's Oslo (43.5) and Jeremy and Judith Skinner's Lionheart (49.1). Second place was again taken by Sarah Cohen and Preci Spark Ltd's Treason.

This was Eric Winter's fifth year as course designer, and the second time the course was run clockwise. Time proved highly influential in both competitions.

Charlotte Agnew now based near Oxford, rode first her mother's homebred Out of Africa Two (56.3). A lovely moving horse who in spite of being held at fence fourteen, jumped confidently throughout the cross country. Their clear round showjumping moved them up from fifteenth to ninth position.

James Adams (Stockton), rode Claire Lambert's Pricewise (96.5) for the first time at Blenheim. The combination had a positive cross country round, coping well with big questions near the end, in particular, fences 24 and 25 the Ariat Dew Pond, and Townfields Flyer. They finished in fifty sixth place, having scored eleven penalties in the showjumping.

Harrogate school teacher Tabitha Baird rode her own Java Tiger gelding Enoch (132.2). Early refusals on the cross country at Fence 4b, earned them sixty penalties. However, she comments, "I think he will have learned a lot today, which is the main thing. I think he'll be twice the horse next year". With three fences down showjumping they finished in sixth seventh place.

Jamie Atkinson and Cruise Warrior had an uncharacteristic stop at Fence 4, and were eliminated. While Rachel Lupton and The Chenko Artist, jumped positively until tiring at the Dew Pond(24). She was unseated at the next fence (25) a huge ditch and hedge, eliminating them too.

Caroline Powell, with Cameron Crawford's aptly named Onwards and Upwards (54) was fifth, and top placed eight year old in the CIC3*. She was delighted with their cross country round, and comments: "He's just the most lovely horse to work with...just a joy to ride; I've had a lovely season with him".

Swedish rider Ludwig Svennerstall based in North Yorkshire had an excellent cross country round with his eight year old Livingstone II (65.5), with just one fence down showjumping they were seventeenth.

Nicola Wilson was twenty fourth with Inde(70.3), owned by Lady Milne Coates and Penny Marriner. They completed the cross country in fine style, having had just a fence down showjumping the evening before.

Jamie Atkinson also rode Kate Ginks Celtic Fortune (77.9). He had an unlucky fence down showjumping, and Jamie comments, "he's never seen a course that size, but he's lovely jumper. Despite having only one run since May (Jamie having broken his collar bone) they had a smooth cross country round, finishing thirty fifth.

Charlotte Agnew's second ride was Alexandra Agnew's Longwood(102.5). Somewhat distracted by gale force winds during the showjumping, they had three fences down. However they were revitalised by a fine cross country round, finishing fiftieth.

Hilary Legard 13 September 2011

Extra info Blenheim was also a qualifier for London 2012 Event teams, New Zealand, Japan and Australia took part. New Zealand won the competition, but having already qualified at the World Equestrian Games last year, runners up Japan took the coveted place.