

## 'National Riding Club Championships

Finally the big day had come we were off to the National Riding Club Championships at Lincoln. We had hoped to leave at 6.30am on the Thursday morning but were delayed a bit when my husband Davie had to go to the Post Office sorting office at Turriff to collect my new leather riding boots. (It wasn't worth it in the end as they didn't fit). Anyway we got away at 7.30am and headed off to Ellon to fuel up the lorry and set off on our 10 hour journey.



We reached Penrith and stopped for a bite to eat and then set off again, next stop the stables we were staying at on the Thursday night (since we weren't allowed access to the showground until Friday) they were only 12 miles from the showground so wasn't far at all.

Before I knew it I spotted a sign saying Lincoln!! We arrived at the yard and Marble had travelled extremely well – well I think the constant supply of carrots and polos throughout the journey had helped! We got Marble stabled he was really quiet (anyone who knows Marble and the stable doors knows what I mean!!) which isn't like him. I'm sure he thought he had been sold as doesn't often go anywhere on his own.

We headed off to the showground first thing on Friday morning Marble was even more confused! We arrived and I was totally shell shocked with the size of the place as I have never competed at anything of this scale before.

I was determined to just enjoy the whole (one off experience). We got Marble checked in and into his stable and had the rest of the day to check out the place and chill! We had all taken our bikes – an absolute necessity! So had a good look round everything. We finished off the day with a takeaway, drinks and a natter!

Saturday was here! I was remarkably calm as I got dressed into my show gear (including new leather boots which Davie had bought me down there!) to walk the course. The arena was something else what a size!! We had 12 jumps and the



only one that concerned me was the multi coloured treble. There were over 100 competitors in my class too so that was another slight concern!! We got Marble tacked up and went to the collecting ring, it was buzzing! Horses everywhere! Marble was totally chilled which isn't like him at all especially after being stabled for 2 days! I even had to give him a wee slap to wake him up!

He was jumping fab and before long it was our turn!

I took a deep breath and entered the arena and listened carefully to hear MY bell-very confusing given there are lots of bells all going off for other arenas!

We were away. We jumped the first 5 perfectly I was enjoying the whole experience until we got to the double. Marble decided to put in an extra wee stride meaning that I had thought he was jumping when he should have so was in position and half way up his neck! So by the time we jumped the 2<sup>nd</sup> I was off! I did try and hang on for dear life but very difficult with a hogged cob! So unfortunately we were eliminated. Marble's face was a picture, he was looking at me as if to say "what happened mum?" Luckily I wasn't hurt which is the main thing. I was quite upset afterwards but everyone said there was no one to blame, nothing I could have done and just one of those things. Maybe if it had been a single jump then I could have got myself back on board but what with it being a double.

We put Marble back to his stable and had another walk around the shops. I bought a lovely commemorative t shirt where all the horses that were competing were listed on the back- a superb souvenir to have and a lasting memory. I also got 2 rosettes for taking part which is also something great to have a look back on. We also got some great photos-just glad I made it far enough round the course to get!

We had a truly fantastic few days and I don't think anyone should underestimate the quality or quantity of competitors at this event. I don't think me or Marble disgraced ourselves or Ladleys (although I think Marble banging his stable door for two days might have!) as we did the best we could.

The whole experience has given me a real buzz to TRY and qualify again next year but not only in the show jumping in EVERYTHING!!

We ended the weekend by doing a really good deed. There was an announcement to say that a competitor had broken down and had a real traumatic time but was managing to get to the show but could anyone help out. Gordon went and explained we had a tent they could sleep in etc. The family arrived and had managed to take a few bits and pieces with them but not much so we all clubbed together and managed to give her a loan of everything she required. The family from Blackpool were eternally grateful and like me had never competed at anything like this before and without us wouldn't have been able to! So a great ending!



Certainly an experience I'll never forget!

Selena McIntosh