



## **2014 Training Report**

### **Sue Scarrott and Poppy**

When I won the £50 training grant at the Club's AGM last November, I was thrilled. My partnership with my 9 year old mare, Poppy, was in its fourth year but our rather erratic progress was proof that tuition still needed to be a high priority. Although we have had successes (and a few rosettes), there are times when I think we are special needs combination, as I started competing at a late age and Poppy often displays ADHD type symptoms! I have still only just tipped into double figures with rounds of show jumping and when we competed in our first ever round at Wittering, in the spring of 2011, it had been 38 years since I last tried to negotiate a course of show jumps! Needless to say it was not stylish as Poppy did not like the fillers!

A decision had to be made about the trainer to use and the focus of the training. For several years now I have had the good fortune to work with Maureen Chamberlin, based in Seaton, who has been a very positive and patient coach. She helped me get started on dressage in 2007 with my old mare, Beatrice, and more recently she has been training me with Poppy, who was a very green and inexperienced ex racehorse when I bought her. Since plucking up the courage to join the Riding Club three years ago, I have had the benefit of great tuition from Peter Hales and Jane Ellis. Poppy and I are regulars at Peter's monthly show jump trainings at Sue Scott's and we have also found flat work training with Jane very useful.

Initially my plan was to have some private tuition schooling over ditches at JumpCross, Wittering, in the February half term holiday but finding dates proved difficult and before I knew it Easter had been and gone. Although I had continued with the types of training sessions already mentioned, it was hard to pick one out to write about. Eventually, just before the summer holidays, I decided the voucher should be used towards a private session with Maureen at 'Aylesford Equine' (Shoebay).

On an extremely hot July day, we started out with show jumping and worked on improving my balance and maintaining rhythmical progress between jumps. We only jumped small fences because Poppy had over jumped in a recent 90 cm competition and had become unbalanced and then refused at the 5<sup>th</sup> fence during take-off. To begin with, I felt that we were struggling with energy and impulsion and we had a few refusals. I have bad habit of sticking my elbows out which reduces my ability to give with my hands freely. Gradually, we started to make progress and even managed the scary 'pigs' filler, albeit with some initial reluctance on Poppy's part! It became clear that sitting up to control her speed while keeping my leg on, helped me to be in better balance and so helped her on the approach.

After a short break, we moved onto the cross country course and both Poppy and I felt more energised. We had schooled at the Aylesford cross country course previously but it was out first time with Maureen. Our first jump was a ditch and a log, which proved straight forward, and set the scene for a good practice session that included water elements and skinnies. We worked on maintaining impulsion but checking speed as well as preparing for the next fence on landing. The overall message that was reinforced is that it is my job is to be the confident one in the partnership.

So finally, a sincere 'Thank you' to Rutland Riding Club for the generous training grant - I think I used it wisely.