

## **XC Schooling Day - Wednesday 14th April 2010**

### **Three Maids Chasers, Winchester**

We set the sat nav, loaded Harry and off we went to a venue that we had never been to before. We passed another horse trailer close to the venue but it didn't appear to be going the same way as us. We followed the sat nav and ended up on a long country lane with not many signs. Just as we began to question the sat nav we saw a signpost for Three Maids Chasers XC. When we pulled in to the car park we noticed the other trailer that we passed earlier. They were advised not to follow the sat nav and found a quicker route (lesson for next time!). There was plenty of room for parking in the huge field.

The first group were on their way out with their instructor. We completed a form and paid our £12 (very good value). When tacked up we met with Sarah, Jamie, Sophie, Jessica and Sophie. Sarah had very kindly agreed to be leader so we followed on at a slow pace to warm up and then proceeded into the XC practice area. We headed for the water complex and took it in turns to go through at different angles. A few of the horses hesitated but braved it and went through. Jessica and Flash were not keen as neither of them had encountered water before so gave it a miss this time round.

It was then time to lose the walkers (parents, helpers etc) and head off into the distance. Our group was a good mix of ages, levels and abilities but there was no pressure to do anything. They were all very friendly and we all encouraged each other to try things and lots of praise was given. It was a nice relaxed atmosphere and we all chose the jumps we wanted to do and left out the ones that we didn't want to do. The course was very spacious and well laid out with different height options for each jump. We appeared to have the course to ourselves.

It was a lovely dry day and the ground was good. All of the horses behaved brilliantly and enjoyed being out together in the open, soaking up the sun and cooling down in the water.

After completing the course we headed back to the water complex, which all the horses enjoyed. Jessica and Flash were still a bit unsure, so I jumped on Flash and tried to persuade him into the water by getting closer and closer. He put one foot in and then realized that the water wasn't going to swallow him up so went through and out the other side. We went through a few more times before giving Flash back to Jessica. Jessica took great delight in splashing through the water with Flash, which was a huge step forward and confidence boost for both.

By now we had been riding for a few hours so decided to think about heading back. We all raced back to the start and a very surprised Jessica and excited Flash were first one's back. We then split into two groups and one group went back to untack and the other group did a final course of jumps.

The day finished on a real high, with rosie cheeked riders and sweaty horses. Another successful and very enjoyable day with Solent Riding Club. A definite must for next time.

A huge thank you to Sarah for organising and for all her help and support on the day!

Carly Jackson