



FEATURE

Piggy March wins Burghley 2022

A standout on the equestrian calendar, the Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials were held last month, and **TANIA HUPPATZ** was there to cover the event.

The Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials is back better than ever after a two-year COVID hiatus. Set in the stunning parklands of Lincolnshire's Burghley House, it's one of seven major 5* competitions, rivalling Badminton in size with over 173,000 visitors over the four days, and more than 600 trade exhibitors.

The event, this year held from Thursday 1st to Sunday 4th September, usually attracts around 80 of the world's top eventing competitors, with a prize pool of over £320,000 - £100,000 of which, plus a new Land Rover Defender 4WD, is earmarked for the winner. However, with the eventing World Championships to be held in Pratoni, Italy just 11 days

after Burghley, this year's rider numbers were down but the competition certainly did not disappoint.

During Thursday's lunch break spectators were entertained by Yogi Breisner's jumping masterclass – and crowd favourite Carl Hester kept everyone enthralled with his dressage masterclass on Friday. After explaining what to look for in a Grand Prix dressage horse, to the crowd's considerable amusement one of the young horses in the demonstration started anticipating the movements, but Carl was able to make light of the situation.

Leading the charge after the dressage with a terrific score of 21.2 was Kitty King of Great Britain on her gorgeous grey Vendredi Biats. Following just point one of a point behind her was New Zealander Tim Price and Vitali. Both riders performed a 5* personal best, with less than four penalties separating the top six place getters. Australian riders Sarah Clark on LV Balou Jeanz finished thirty-fourth and Sammi Birch riding Finduss BHP was in thirty-seventh position after the dressage.

For the first time, this year Derek di Grazia took over from Captain Mark Phillips as course builder. Di Grazia comes with plenty of experience including the Tokyo Olympics and 10 years of Kentucky CCI5*. Other new staff additions included Martyn Johnson in the role of event director, and show jumping course builder Paul Connor, who has designed courses at Hickstead and last year's 5* at Bicton to name a few.

Cross country day was busy with a swathe of spectators descending on Burghley Parklands with dogs of all shapes and sizes. The British love their dogs, and Burghley provides a dog crèche and plenty of canine watering points dotted around the course.

Burghley is known for its tough cross country and this year's course was enormous. Di Grazia's design was challenging, technical, and tracked over undulating ground.

With 52 starters and only 31 completing the course, the Holland Cooper Leaf Pit with its steep two metre drop fence caused a few hiccups. It was difficult for riders to anticipate how big a jump their horse was going to give, and on landing they needed to be in full control to navigate the next fence, a double brush. The UK's Zara Tindall was one of many riders who had a run out here and sadly decided to call it a day.

Another problem fence was the Fairfax and Favour Boot Racks, a rather large fence with the ground dropping away on landing. Australian rider Sammi Birch fell here and was eliminated, while dressage winner Kitty King had a frangible pin that moved her back to sixth position overall.

World number one Oliver Townend had a disappointing event with two eliminations. He had only two fences to go on the cross country and was heading for home when his horse Tregilder nose-dived after the Parasol Table and Oliver tumbled off. On his second horse Swallow Springs, he came



to grief at the Trout Hatchery and fell in the water. It just goes to show how easily it can happen to the best.

Australian rider Sarah Clark gathered some cross country time faults and was unfortunate in the show jumping, dropping three rails. It was Sarah's first time at Burghley and she finished in twenty-second place, a great effort as she was in the best of company.

The Sunday trot up went smoothly with only two horses pulled in for a second check, but both later passed. The Fell Pony society put on an interesting and

informative demonstration, followed by a Racehorse to Riding Horse HOYS qualifier in the main arena. Katie Jerram won the event with Queen Elizabeth II's ex-racehorse First Receiver, a win made poignant by the sadness that followed just days later.

FACING PAGE: Piggy March and Vanir Kamira on their way to winning the 2022 Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials.

TOP: With magnificent Burghley House in the background, Britain's Tom McEwen and CHF Cooliser negotiate the cross country.

BOTTOM: The Princess Royal, Her Royal Highness Princess Anne presents Piggy with the winner's trophy.

All images by Tania Huppatz



Australia's Sammi Birch riding Finduss BHP was in thirty-seventh position after the dressage.

Each year a special guest is invited to Burghley to present the prizes and after lunch The Princess Royal, Her Royal Highness Princess Anne arrived by helicopter, landing in front of Burghley House. The Princess, who won the European championships here at Burghley some 51 years ago, presented this year's winning combinations. Captain Mark Phillips presented the Avebury trophy for the best cross country round of the day, which went to fourth place getter New Zealander Jonelle Price riding Classic Moet, the only one to achieve a clear round within the optimum time of 11 minutes and 20 seconds. Not a bad effort for a 19-year-old mare who in three appearances at Burghley has never been out of the top five placings.

The Band of the Household Cavalry played during the presentations and the Fitzwilliam Milton Hunt hounds were on display. Although mainly well behaved, event organisers became a little nervous

when, to the crowd's amusement, the hounds strayed to the trophy table. Thankfully, as soon as the Master blew the horn the hounds responded and fell back into line.

Oohs and aahs were heard as rails tumbled in the show jumping. Piggy March had one rail, finishing ahead of fellow Brit Tom Jackson on Capels Hollow Drift who had a clear – and all kudos to Tom who was at his first Burghley. New Zealander Tim Price dropped three rails and one place to finish third on Vitali, with his wife Jonelle Price finishing in fourth place on Classic Moet.

It has been the case on many occasions that the combination topping the leader board after Burghley's cross country phase goes on to win the entire event. And sure enough, with less than a rail between the top two, Piggy March aboard her 17-year-old mare Vanir Kamira became 2022's Burghley Champion: "It is the best feeling in the world, a dream come true," a delighted Piggy said.

It was a well-deserved win for Piggy, who also won Badminton in 2019, has twice been runner up at Burghley, and is a two-time individual European silver medallist. "I think this is probably the hardest cross country event in the world," she commented. "The terrain is so tough, and I think the horses just get an extra gold star for being able to do well here and get around that course fast."

To celebrate, the George Hotel in nearby Stamford baked a special Burghley cake for the winner, and a low fat, sugar-free cake for the winning horse.

The horse trials have a strong antipodean history with Australians winning the event on multiple occasions. Andrew Hoy won in 1979 riding Davey, and again in 2004 on Moon Fleet. Also winners of this prestigious event were Lucinda Fredericks on Headley Britannia in 2006, and in 2016 Christopher Burton on Nobilis 18. 