

# DRESSAGE U21s UK & FLEDGLINGS UK

*Training our young riders for the future*



## \* CARL HESTER YARD VISIT \*



**Oaklebrook Mill, Malswick, Newent, Glos. GL18 1HD  
TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2011.**

We all met up at the Yard between 10.30am - 10.45am. There were 22 U21s UK riders and about 6 other Byrds members from different regions. Carl was in sparkling form and introduced us to **Charlotte Dujardin** who was to ride all the horses and to show us their different stages of training. The most obvious thing was the quiet and positive way every horse was trained. It was a joy and a privilege to watch such professionalism.

The Yard regime is for schooling on Monday and Tuesday - hacking on Wednesday - schooling Thursday and Friday - hacking Saturday and on Sunday a day off. All horses are turned out every day. Carl has 18 horses on the Yard - 8 live out permanently and the other 10 are out during the day and in at night. The yard philosophy is to keep the horses happy and in as natural a manner as possible.

**DRESSAGE** Carl defined this as gymnastics for horses. Stretch to collect.

Members were allowed to ask questions and several members did.

**Lottie Baker** asked Carl how he felt about Young Horse Classes and he replied that he was not really aiming too much in that direction - but training long term for Grand Prix.

**Victoria Russell** asked about riding a less responsive young horse forward and Carl talked about lots of encouragement including hacking - and transitions in and out of paces and within the pace - and this could be up to 250 transitions within one session. Sessions should not be too long - some young horses could only cope with 25 minutes. Warming up before and stretching down afterwards was imperative!

**Tia Quinn** asked if Carl preferred young horses to produce or older more established horses that had been ridden by another rider. Without hesitation Carl said that he would much prefer to produce his own young horses and take them all the way.

### **1/ Chestnut Gelding Valentine 5 years old German bred 17.3hh.**

Very forwards and we were told he never tires and is sensitive to the aids. He was very straight and looked equal in both reins. Carl explained that the horse was bought as a 3 year old broken at 4 and is still quite green. He was very rhythmical in all three paces. Carl said that he preferred quite bright young horses rather than quiet `easy` ones as they usually have more presence and ability even if they take longer.

### **2/ Dark brown Gelding Don Archie. A Champion at Hickstead and in Spain 2010 -**

he hasn't done a lot in 2011 and is consolidating training ready to come out at Advanced Medium and PSG. He has been in training with Carl for 3 years. When he first arrived he bucked everyone off. In fact Carl bought him for £2,000 and agreed to sign a proviso that he would not want to return him - as he had until then proven to be virtually un-rideable. He was to start with, but through patience and understanding is now quite phenomenal! Archie's best pace was canter and he is already doing flying changes very easily. He also shows real promise in the passage. Carl hopes Archie will be doing GP in 2 years.

Carl and Charlotte only carry a whip when they are teaching something new - they say that the horse must be in front of the leg and in self carriage without a huge amount of work by the rider. This has to be taught from the very beginning of their training.

Definition - In front of the leg - wanting to go forward on their own.

Definition - Self Carriage - hocks underneath and carrying weight behind so that the forehead is raised and then more easy to manoeuvre.

Because Archie had such a good canter he was taught changes early and then began working towards passage. Lots of shoulder-in - half pass and travers was used to improve suppleness and engagement. Charlotte showed his wonderful and expressive trot towards the end of the session and it was amazing how his almost plain trot could be improved through correct training to become so really impressive.

### **3/ A 7 year old dark brown gelding now about 17.3hh called NipTuck**

Nip was very nervous at the beginning of his training and it has taken a long time to gain his confidence - at 4 years old he couldn't canter - he got too worried. However he has again under the careful training and confidence of Carl and his rider Katie Bailey, begun to show real promise for Grand Prix. Katie demonstrated on him the importance of teaching a correct halt - totally square - and we lost track of the number of perfect halts! The most important piece of advice was to always step forward into a halt and never back! Carl rode him to demonstrate teaching changes. Although they didn't always work - when he became quite tense and couldn't relax and lower behind - Carl quietly rode through this producing the result wanted. Maybe 60 people watching him was terrifying.

### **4. A huge 18.00hh dark chestnut gelding called Tatler who is 11 years old.**

He has competed up to Grand Prix and this year was at the Nationals with Charlotte in the Inter II. He lives out permanently and only comes in to work. His breeding is similar to Uthopia and Valegro - going back to Ferro. Carl has 5 horses from the same dam. We were shown changes and canter pirouettes. When they became difficult Carl asked Charlotte to ride bigger canter pirouettes until the horse could settle and accept and keep each stride the same size - a very difficult task on such a huge horse.

**Finally** we were given a guided tour of all the horses on the yard - including the now very famous Uthopia and Valegro both such vital members of the GBR European Gold Medal Team in Holland in August. They have been having time off for a while after such a busy season and are just back into work. We have lots of photographs taken with Carl in front of Uthopia's stable with all the U21s UK members. Shelagh Stevens our most northerly U21s UK Organiser who had come from Angus in Dundee, Scotland had her photo taken with Uthopia, Carl the U21s UK members and myself. I also believe someone took a picture of Valegro thinking it was supper time and eating my hair!

**What a truly fantastic opportunity** for everyone to meet the greatest rider and trainer in our country - with the greatest horses. May we wish Carl and Charlotte the very best of luck for 2012 - and hope that all their dreams are fulfilled -they more than deserve it! Carl was the youngest rider ever to ride at the Olympics in 1992 - at the age of 22 years. Let's hope he will win his coveted Team and Individual Gold Medal in 2012!