

NEW FOREST - JESSICA WEIDMANN (aged 11)

Arriving at the meet I had mixed feelings of nerves and excitement. I couldn't wait to get going straight away. My pony walked out of the trailer and instantly knew what was about to happen. I was to be his ninth young rider that he was to introduce to hunting.

Once mounted my pony was keen to get moving which made the butterflies in my stomach fly around even more. The deep noise of the huntsman's horn signalled that the Master had set off and the excitement bubbled as we trotted off down the road. The sight of the hounds running and tracking made the atmosphere even more electric.

We jumped cautiously onto the muddy track and then the pace increased. My pony was pulling at the bit eagerly as we cantered along. Once I released a tiny bit of contact he increased a gear and we galloped along with the Master. By this point all my nerves had disappeared and I was just filled with pure enjoyment.

Initially I held my breath as we leapt the fences, sighing with relief as we landed on the other side. We jumped over logs, gorse bushes, gates and ditches, which my pony flew without hesitation. The going became quite boggy and I had to dodge the mud flying into my face. We also crossed a river and I could feel the current pushing my pony as we walked across.

Heading back to the trailers at the end of the day my pony was covered in sweat but was as eager as when we had set off. I saw my family and felt so proud of my pony and myself. I had had the best day of my life so far and didn't want it to end.

I loved my first experience of hunting, the exhilaration, the sound of the pounding hooves underneath me, and riding my pony with others at great speed.

So would I like to go again? You wouldn't have to ask me twice, my tweed jacket would be on and the pony in the trailer before you could blink.