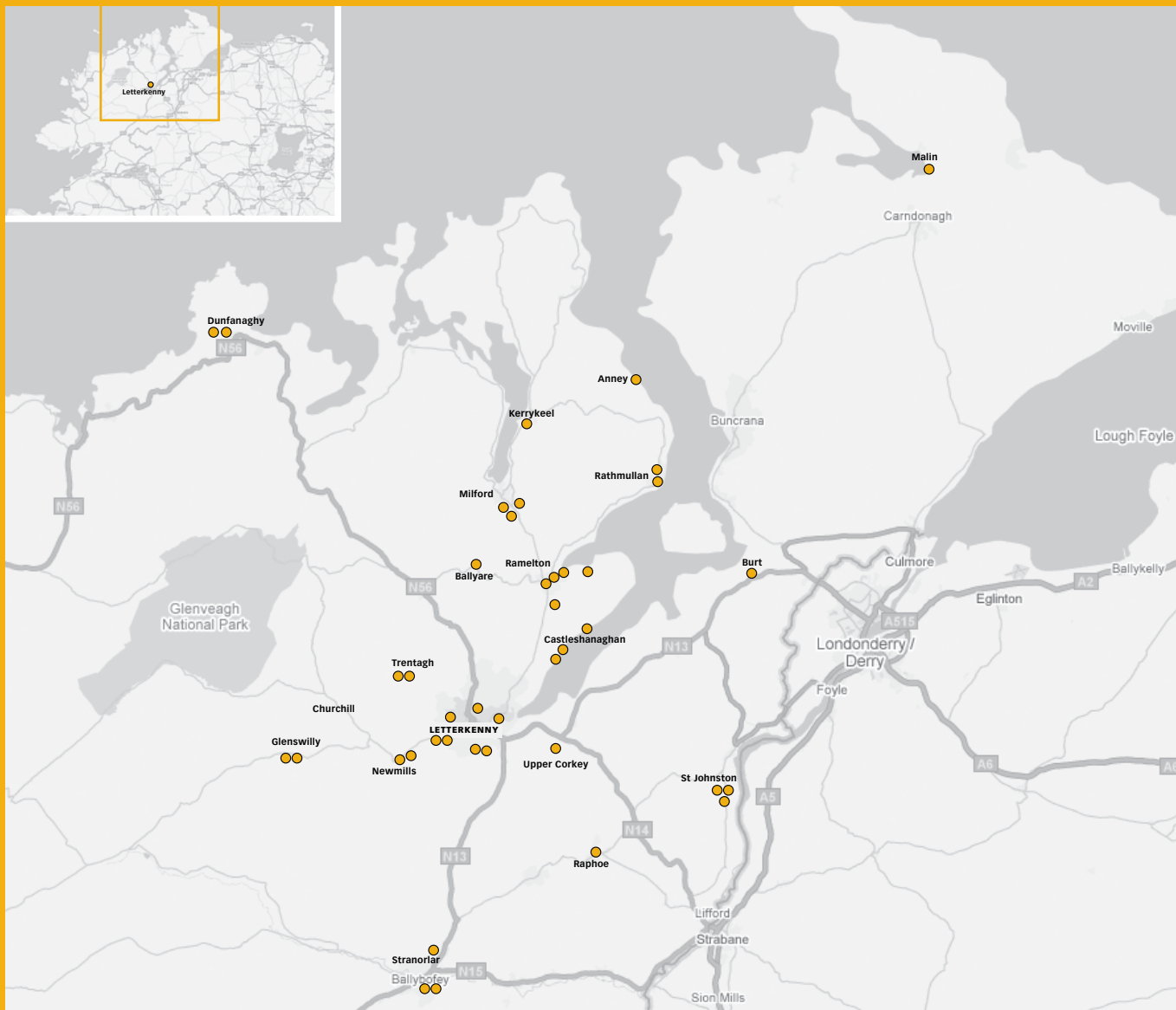




# LETTERKENNY RIDING CLUB 2008







# Membership 2008

**Seamus McCaffrey**

*Upper Corkey, Letterkenny*

**Declan Devine**

*Lismonaghan, Letterkenny*

**Paddy Gallagher**

*Sallaghagraine, Letterkenny*

**Marina Hamilton**

*Maymore, St Johnston*

**Francis McNicholl**

*Anney, Kerrykeel*

**Mary Finneran**

*Ramelton*

**Mary Devine**

*Newmills*

**Audrey Jacob**

*Cashelshanaghan*

**Rachel Carton**

*Rathmullan*

**Drew Blaney**

*Mountain Top, Letterkenny*

**Libby Carton**

*Rathmullan*

**Keaton Ramsay**

*Lismonaghan, Letterkenny*

**Regina Toland**

*St Johnston*

**Suzanne Carroll**

*Glenswilly*

**Cyril Higgins**

*Milford*

**Kerrie Chambers**

*Glebe, Letterkenny*

**Donal Diver**

*Trentagh*

**Mick Carroll**

*Glenswilly*

**James Diver**

*Trentagh*

**Mary Gallagher**

*Sallaghagraine, Letterkenny*

**Jenny Coe**

*Dunfanaghy*

**Peter Mulrine**

*Stranorlar*

**Nadine Burns**

*Milford*

**Hazel Mulgrew**

*Ramelton*

**Tanya Jacob**

*Cashelshanaghan*

**Orla O'Reilly**

*Ramelton*

**Damien Gallagher**

*Milford*

**Leo Porter**

*Burt*

**Enda McClafferty**

*Maymore, St Johnston*

**Selina Callaghan**

*Kerrykeel*

**Samantha McDermott**

*Malin*

**John Friel**

*Raphoe*

**Shaun Doherty**

*Newmills*

**Jenny Wasson**

*Dunfanaghy*

**Anne Chambers**

*Ballybofey*

**Keary Smith**

*Ballybofey*

**Maeve Corcoran**

*Ballyare, Ramelton*

**Liz Cuffe**

*Ramelton*

**Michael Cuffe**

*Ramelton*

**Vera Keatings**

*Cashelshanaghan*

**Aodhan McMenamin**

*Letterkenny*

*...and not forgetting  
our honorary member*

**Harvey**

# About the Club

Established in January 2006, the Letterkenny Riding Club is growing steadily with a membership of 41 as 2008 draws to a close. The club meets weekly, generally on Friday evenings. Activities include instruction in flatwork and jumping, pleasure ride-outs, demonstrations and competitions. The work of organising club events is shared amongst members. Our calendar of activities for each three-month period is agreed at quarterly meetings open to all members.

The Association of Irish Riding Clubs (AIRC), to which we are affiliated, was formed in 1973. Since then, the Association has grown to over 130 clubs and over 3000 members nationally and is truly representative of the amateur side

of our sport. The AIRC's mission is "encouraging riding as a sport and recreation, promoting good fellowship among riders and improving and maintaining the standard of riding and horsemastership in Ireland".

The AIRC hold championships annually for individual and team show jumping, dressage, hunter trials and horse trials as well as the Riding Club Festival. Outside of competition the AIRC organise training events for riders, stewards, officials and course builders. They have also developed a syllabus of riding and horsemanship exams which clubs can choose to take up.

More information on the AIRC is available from their website [www.airc.ie](http://www.airc.ie).

## 2008

### CHAIRMAN

Francis McNicholl

### VICE-CHAIRMAN

Declan Devine

### TREASURER

Audrey Jacob

### ASST. TREASURER

Rachel Carton

### SECRETARY

Libby Carton

### ASST. SECRETARY

Marina Hamilton

### PRO

Orla O'Reilly

### SAFETY OFFICERS

Paddy Gallagher

Seamus McCaffrey

# What a Year !

This past year has been something of a 'coming of age' for Letterkenny Riding Club. In 2008 we continued our wide and varied range of rallies, lessons, ride-outs and competitions. We also hosted our first inter-club events with a dressage friendly in May and a leg of the Regional Cross-Jump and Dressage League in October.

Club members continued to participate in regional and national AIRC events, though in increased numbers and with remarkable success. Of the six national competitions organised by the AIRC, our members participated in four with two national champions in our ranks – Kerrie Chambers, winner of the Intermediate Section of the National Hunter Trials Championships, and Mary Finneran, winner of the Eddie Fowler Memorial Championship for showing at the Riding Club Festival.

Very little of what happened during the year would have been possible without the help of a large number of people: our instructors who kept us on the straight and narrow throughout the year; venues which hosted our training events and competitions; our fellow clubs who hosted us at their highly enjoyable competitions; the companies which sponsored our club events.

We're particularly grateful to Patricia Warren, and Lawrence and Rosaleen Smyth of the Donegal Gaeltacht Riding Club who smoothed our passage into the national and regional world of the AIRC and were always ready and willing to offer advice and support no matter what the subject.

Club events and interclub competitions would not be possible without the hard work of the members and volunteers. Similarly, our members would be unable to compete in the national competitions without the support of volunteers

travelling to these events. To all who helped in any way, be it in planning events, logistical arrangements, score keeping, judging fences, holding horses or anything else unmentionable, your help and support was much appreciated!

As the year draws to a close, we look back over the successes of the past 12 months, steadily practicing (or definitely intending to practice!) the skills learned from the instructors who've worked with the club. We look forward to 2009 hoping for continued success on the competitive front but always with our feet firmly grounded in the camaraderie and friendships which are the backbone of the club.

May 2009 be a safe and fruitful year for the club and all associated with it. The first meeting of the new year shall be on the dance floor at the hunt ball – see you there!



## Thank You

### INSTRUCTORS

Valerie Craig

Jackie McPhearson

Mary Devine

Kate Dawson

Mary Finneran

Tony Ennis

Niall Quirke

### VENUES

Harleys, Trentagh

Templemore EC

Cyril Higgins, Milford

Lenamore Stables

Gabriel McCole

Glenleary Stables

Omagh RDA

Cartons, Rathmullan

Drew Blaney/Bowhill Stables

Tír na nÓg

### SPONSORSHIP

Gain Horse Feeds

Lennon Agricultural Supplies

Gibson Farm Supplies

Highland Equestrian

Stracomer Stables

Mountcashel Stud

O'Donnell's Bakery

Jackie O'Neill Tack Shop

### COMPETITION JUDGES

Allan Dewhurst

Patricia Warren

Jackie McPhearson

### COURSE BUILDER

Seamus McCaffrey

### COMMENTATOR

Billy Roulston

### DIRECTOR OF REFRESHMENTS

Audrey Jacob

### Left

Club chairman Francis McNicholl presents the Laggan Trophy for Club Member of the Year to 2007 winner, Libby Carton.



Three idyllic Friday evenings in June found us at Gabriel McCole's wonderful cross-country course on the hills above Letterkenny overlooking Lough Swilly.

Valerie Craig taught a diverse group of horses and riders, all ready for the challenge of open country and sturdy obstacles.

*Left* Maeve on Flitza

*Right* Keary, Anne, Meave, Mick, Declan and Libby listen to Valerie's instructions.

*Below right* The same suspects, joined by Francis and Paddy, put it all into practice.

# Training



## Show Jumping

In January the riding club year kicked off with a series of jumping lessons with Valerie Craig. Valerie used grid work and exercises over related distances to improve the rhythm of the jumping, a theme which would prove invaluable as the year progressed. A second series of lessons through March built upon these principles and set us up for the Show Jumping Challenge held in Convoy.

In August the task of training our potential showjumping stars passed to Jackie McPhearson. This time the work focused on riding between the fences and riding a course. Again the goal of a competition at the end of the series of lessons was great motivation for horses and riders.

## Cross Country

An inter-club training session in Harley's arena with Tony Ennis, chairman of the AIRC, was highly enjoyable and demonstrated how effectively technique can be improved without setting hoof on a blade of grass.

Some of the better weather this year coincided nicely with a series of cross-country lessons at Gabriel McCole's in Letterkenny. Valerie Craig took riders through the principles of riding across open terrain. Under her tutelage members learned to negotiate a wide range of cross-country challenges including banks, drops and the dreaded water. The lessons proved an excellent introduction for those new to cross-country while the more experienced riders were able to hone their existing skills.

Not surprisingly, the very experience of riding in open country instead of the safety of an

enclosed arena proved an eye-opener for many. The horses certainly thought this particular series of lessons was great fun!

## Flatwork

Following some successful results for our members at Benbulbin's cross-jump and dressage competition, one kind journalist reporting in Farm Week observed that dressage instruction must be good in Letterkenny. How right they were!

Kate Dawson and Jackie McPhearson spent a lot of time on the ground with us, constantly encouraging us to improve our essential skills. They proved expert at identifying the key points on which each individual needed to concentrate, keeping things simple and relevant for every level of rider and horse.

Mary Devine delivered a wonderful lesson on a wet and windy October evening at Harleys. The riders benefited enormously from the instruction but the onlookers were cheated out of a free lesson by the inclement weather.

## Monthly dressage tests

In April the club started a new dressage initiative. Our monthly dressage tests provided a non-competitive environment in which members gained experience planning for and riding tests, getting professional feedback on our efforts. Mary Devine and Audrey Jacob made these events possible. Members with an interest in dressage benefited greatly from these nights, gaining loads of tips from Mary as well as polishing their preparation techniques. The monthly event proved an ideal introduction for those who had never tried the "sissy" horse sport before!







# LRC Crossjump & Dressage Show



Above, top to bottom Marina tells Nadine how excited she was to get an ambulance for her birthday; our three visitors from Clare and Galway; Fiona and James Diver showing Libby how entries should be taken; Damien and Donal counting their loot; Audrey presenting AIRC Regional Treasurer Paul Hughes with his First for AP Crossjump on Paddy's Lizzie; and Maeve gloating over her bucket, glad to be alive after her run on Teldel.

Above right Caitriona Goaley of Springmount RC on Curra Whoopi.

Right Kean O'Hara of Benbulbin RC out on the cross-country course with Ted.

In October we reached a milestone in the history of the club, running a very successful leg of the Western Region's Crossjump and Dressage League on Sunday the 5th of October at Lenamore Stables in Muff. Seven clubs were represented by riders travelling from Donegal, Sligo and even as far away as Galway and Clare.

Despite truly miserable weather during set-up on the day before, competition day itself was sunny and clear. Fortune favours the brave. The first class of the day was the Primary grade show jumping. Neighbouring club, Donegal Gaeltacht were in fine form in this class with their members securing the top three placing. Rachel McCrossan (Jenny's Jigsaw) took first prize, Ruth McCrossan (Cut the Cuteness), second and Lawrence Smyth taking third with Jenny's Jigsaw.

The Advanced Primary riders were next to take to the track, this time for the pairs crossjump competition. Nadine Burns (Letterkenny Riding Club) and Darragh Diver (Benbulbin Riding Club) paired up to take first prize. Second place went to the ladies from Serena Finnerty (Castle Carraig Riding Club) and Catriona Goaley (Springmount Riding Club) who made long journeys from Co. Clare and Co. Galway respectively.

The advanced primary individual title went to Galwayman Paul Hughes (Tonnabrokey Riding Club) following a very smooth clear round on Paddy Gallagher's mare Lizzie. Letterkenny's Nadine Burns in fine form following her success at the AIRC National One Day event where she finished in third place was close on Hughes' heels to take second prize. Nadine went on to take first prize in the Advanced Primary dressage. Second in the dressage went to Serena Finnerty from Castle Carraig Riding Club with Damien Gallagher of the Letterkenny Club taking third.

Back on the cross-country track it was the turn of the Intermediate and above pairs. This competition was won by Packie Ferry (Donegal Gaeltacht RC) and Sharon O'Donnell (Benbulbin RC). Representing the host club, Donal Diver and Damien Gallagher took second place. The



Intermediate Individual Crossjump had the proved popular with 11 horses and riders taking to the track. Sharon O'Donnell was in the honours again following an excellent round on her horse Sky Dancer. Fellow Benbulbin club member Finola Murphy took second prize with Jessie. Letterkenny's Maeve Corcoran made a memorable maiden voyage aboard Marina Hamilton's Teldel to take third prize in a fast time.

Competition was also tight for the riders in the Intermediate section of the dressage. First place went to Sharon O'Donnell with the ever-consistent Sky Dancer. Representing the Tir Conaill Riding Club, Brenda Burke collected second prize with her mare Woodlands Julie. Keaton Ramsay and Harvest Lady took third prize and ensured Letterkenny were also in the ribbons.

The final class of the day was the Advanced Intermediate Individual Crossjump. Kean O'Hara of Benbulbin riding club rode two horses in the class to take first with his horse Seamus and second place with Ted. Donal Diver of the Letterkenny Club riding Millennium Force was placed third.

The event would not have been possible without the hard work of the large team of volunteers including course design crew, fence stewards and judges, scorers, callers, scribes, timing officials and more. Patricia Warren and Jackie McPhearson, jumping and dressage judges, were hugely helpful on the day. We'd like to extend heartfelt thanks to Geraldine Graham of Lenamore Stables for the use of her fine facilities, and we're extremely grateful to our sponsors for their generous support: Lennon Agricultural Supplies, Ramelton; Gibson Supplies, Raphoe; Highland Equestrian, Letterkenny; Stracomers Stables, Bundoran; Mountcashel Stud, Letterkenny; O'Donnells Bakery; and Jackie O'Neill Tack Shop, Inch Island. Most of all, however, we'd like to thank Marina for devoting her birthday to the search for an ambulance. No ambulance, no cross-country!



*Left*  
The victorious team of Nadine and Molly, Mary Devine and Tricks (absent!), Libby and Fenway, and Tanya and Lancelot.

*Above*  
Orla on Miss Molly with her Cavan rivals, Joey and Maeve.

## Inter-club dressage friendly

It was against the backdrop of a sunny Omagh that we hosted our first interclub competition on Saturday 17 May. The dressage friendly included individual competitions for each of the grades as well as a team competition. Under the watchful eye of judge Allan Dewhurst horses and riders were put through their paces in both individual and team competitions.

The competitions began with the Open grades with an impressive test ridden by Mary Devine. The Intermediate class proved to be a close contest with Tanya Jacob taking first place. Second place went to Maeve O'Reilly representing Ross House Riding Club and third to Joey Kowalik of the Lakelands Riding Club.

The most keenly contested class of the day was the Advanced Primary individual competition with Libby Carton and her horse Fenway taking a well deserved first prize. Nadine Burns came second with Molly while Declan Devine and Izzy secured third prize. First prize in the Primary individual section went to Suzanne Carroll. It was great to have Suzanne back in the saddle and competing after a bad fall earlier in the year.

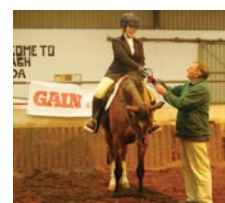


A short break provided an opportunity for the judge and scribes to get a well-deserved cup of tea while competitors prepared for the team competition. During the break the judge, Mr Allan Dewhurst, gave everybody constructive feedback and pointers for the future, possibly the highlight of the whole event.

The team competition opened with some very high scoring for the Letterkenny first team comprising Mary Devine, Nadine Burns, Tanya Jacob and Libby Carton. The bar had been set at a very high level that none of the other teams managed to reach. A tight contest ensued for the runner up position with only two points separating the second and third placed teams.

While there was great disappointment that no neighbouring Donegal clubs participated in the show, the presence of the Ross House and Lakelands clubs from Cavan meant it truly was an interclub event which we hope will grow in the coming years. According to Maeve O'Reilly of the Ross House Riding Club "When the day starts with your horse going into reverse at high speed, things can only get better. I was delighted when we finished second, everyone was really nice and the judge very helpful".

Particular credit and thanks is due to Audrey Jacob, Mary Devine, Orla O'Reilly and Suzanne Carroll for organising the show, and to Marina Hamilton, Regina Toland and Francis McNicholl who officiated on the day. Sincere thanks also to Gain Horse Feeds for their generous sponsorship of the prizes for the event, to Mr Allan Dewhurst who helped many overcome their fear of dressage judges and also to the Riding for the Disabled Association, Omagh, who were excellent hosts.



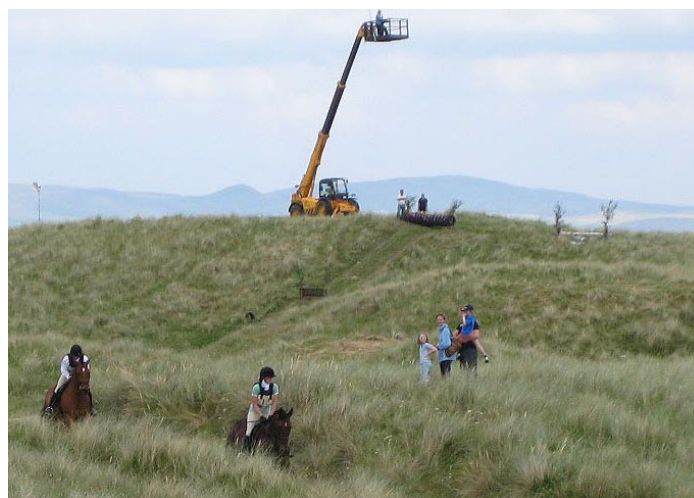
*Above*  
Declan and Izzy receive their third place rosette from Allan Dewhurst

Maeve O'Reilly from Ross House RC

Tanya on Lancelot, winner of the Intermediate class.

*Left*  
Suzanne, bravely back in the saddle after a nasty fall earlier in the year, receives her red rosette for the Primary class.







# Inter-club Competitions

Spiralling diesel costs and shortage of time were the only valid reasons for anybody who likes to compete not to have enjoyed a full schedule in 2008. Between our neighbouring clubs in Donegal and more distant clubs in Sligo, Monaghan, Cavan and Longford, there was no shortage of competitive action and several of our members made the most of it.

## Northwest Show Jumping Challenge

On one of the most memorable and exciting evenings since the club's foundation, our 'Letterkenny Hopefuls' claimed the club's first serious piece of silverware. Greenacres Equestrian Centre was the venue on Tuesday 25 March for the inaugural running of the North West Show jumping Challenge, the brainchild of the Tírconail Riding Club. The event was contested by teams from the four clubs in the North West Region namely Letterkenny Riding Club, Benbulbin Riding Club, Donegal Gaeltacht Riding Club, and Tírconail Riding Club, with a total of seventeen teams taking part. All proceeds for the event went to the Irish Horse Welfare Trust, a Wicklow-based charity which rescues, saves and rehomes horses and ponies from all over Ireland.

The teams were made up of four riders with two riders jumping low (80cm) and two riders jumping high (1 meter) followed by a 'jump-off' against the clock. A total of six teams made it into the 'jump-off' with Letterkenny's Damien Gallagher first to jump. He turned in a clear round in a very fast time of 25.03 seconds, setting a standard which proved unbeatable and clinched the competition for the 'Letterkenny Hopefuls'. The winning team of Damien Gallagher, Nadine Burns, Rachel Carton and Orla O'Reilly were presented with a beautiful silver perpetual cup sponsored by P. Mulrine & Son, Ballybofey.

Over €1,000.00 was raised so congratulations to everyone who took part and especially to Brenda Burke of Frosses who was instrumental in organising the event. She (and all of us!) hopes this will become an annual fun event for a very worthy cause.

While winning the event was a great success, its true legacy was putting Letterkenny Riding Club well and truly on the map, putting paid to our erstwhile nickname "The Walking Club" as we showed our friendly neighbouring clubs that Letterkenny is not to be taken for granted.

## Spring League shows

The beach in Falcarragh was a spectacular venue for the first show of the Western Region's Spring League. Several of our members participated and rosettes and bags of feed travelled in the

Letterkenny direction in both showjumping and dressage. Notable milestones at the show included Mary Finneran's puissance debut on Tom and, on a quieter but equally remarkable front, Paddy Gallagher's dressage debut on Lizzie. It's never too late to teach an old dog new tricks.

The May bank holiday weekend brought the Tírconail RC's show at Deanes. Libby Carton and Tanya Jacob (supported as ever by Audrey) tentatively ran the Letterkenny flag up the mast in this neighbouring territory. Tanya had a great one/two in the Intermediate dressage with Fifi getting the better of Lancelot. Fenway and Libby managed a sixth on their first dressage outing together and had great fun with Paul Hughes of Roscommon in the AP Pairs Show Jumping. Tanya placed fourth in a very competitive Intermediate showjumping class.

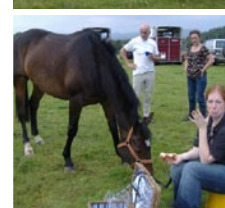
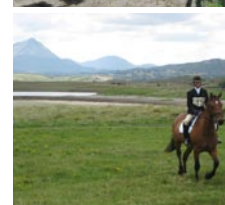
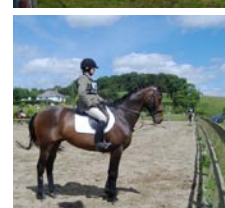
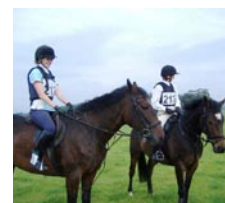
## Bann Valley Riding Club 40th Anniversary Challenge

Bann Valley Riding Club invited our club to send a team to their special anniversary show jumping challenge in the beautiful Bowl in Portrush. Nadine, Damien, Kerrie and Paddy travelled to the event and enjoyed themselves immensely. A few unlucky poles down meant that we missed a place but the welcome the team received together with the experience of competing in such a professional environment made the journey well worthwhile.

## Crossjumps and 1-day events

As the year moved along the emphasis switched to one day eventing and crossjumps. Club members participated very successfully at the Border Counties one day event in Glaslough, Monaghan, and at the Mosstown one day event at Corbeagh House in Longford. Closer to home, we had a great turn-out at the Donegal Gaeltacht's hugely enjoyable crossjump and dressage show on the sandunes in Magheraroarty. If anyone in the world can find a more beautiful setting for equestrian activities, we'll give them a prize. This blisteringly hot sunny day will remain in the memory for quite some time. Last to leave on the day and weighted down with the booty for all our participants, Nadine and Damien practically grounded their jeep on the bumpy road out over the dunes.

Paddy, Mary Gallagher, Nadine, Damien, Libby and Orla travelled to the Benbulbin RC crossjump and dressage show in September. Blessed again with some rare good weather, the day was a great competitive success for the club and will be remembered for its excellent organisation and the welcome presence of our Pony Club friends.



Above, top to bottom  
Nadine and Libby on the two Mollies at Benbulbin's crossjump in September; Damien and Armstrong preparing for action on the same day; Mary Finneran on Tom doing their mental warm-up for the show jumping phase at the Border Counties 1-day event in Glaslough, Monaghan; Libby and Fenway ride their dressage test at Donegal Gaeltacht Riding Club's Magheraroarty show in August; and Paddy and Mary Gallagher look on longingly as Orla and Molly enjoy a picnic at Benbulbin's September event.

Facing page  
Our winning team from the Show Jumping Challenge; Charlie Vial and Apollo of the Tírconail club compete at the DGRC show in Falcarragh; Libby, Nadine (where are you, Nadine?) and Damien jump the Giant's Teeth at Glaslough; Nadine and Libby at the Magheraroarty cross-jump; Mary Finneran show jumps at Glaslough; and Stephen Green of DGRC wins the Puissance on Darcy at Falcarragh.





## Things we can do without being taught...



Top

Paddy and Lizzie negotiate the Le Trek course with (permitted) assistance from Declan.

Above

Keaton takes on the challenge; Rachel and Blaze negotiate the bending boxes; Keaton and Joe observe as Nadine and Molly cool off after a perfect round.

Facing page, above

Paddy and Leo with their grey mares, Lizzie and Grace, back at the boxes after our September ride-out in Glenvar.

Facing page, below

Members return from a ride-out at Cyril's in Milford on a balmy June evening.

### Le Trec

For any of you who have not yet competed in or attended a Francis McNicholl Le Trec competition, you haven't lived. From bows and arrows to lances and cannons, our May event in Rathmullan was the ultimate test of horse and rider. We had a great evening, culminating in a twilight pairs competition ridden with speed and skill by Letterkenny RC's finest.

According to the AIRC rule book, Le Trec is a "combined event that aims to reward horse-rider combinations that successfully manage to tackle a range of obstacles rather than their success at any particular obstacle. This is a competition in which outdoor training and riding school flat-work go hand in hand." How true! As this yearbook goes to print, Francis is already plotting his challenges for the club's Christmas Le Trec at Bob Barron's Templemore Equestrian Centre.

### Pleasure Ride-outs

They say the best things in life are free. When it comes to ride-outs in Donegal, this is certainly true. Although Declan's ride-out at Lismonaghan and Anne and Keary's at Killross both had to be cancelled because of the interminable bad weather, the club enjoyed a few great hacks.

The Fanad peninsula offers an unparalleled network of tiny, seldom-travelled roads, perfect for journeys on horseback. In May, on an idyllic long Irish evening, the club met at Ray, Rathmullan and Libby guided a two-hour trek along roads and tracks with views across Lough Swilly to Inishowen beyond.

In June, meeting at Cyril's farm near Milford, a group of members set forth at a gentle pace along quiet roads, observed only by curious bullocks and some black-faced sheep. It was a peaceful and sociable jaunt, safely removed from the motorised excesses of the rally. Turning for home along the newly rehabilitated St Columille's Way, a canter seemed in order. With Francis and Zak in the lead closely followed by Libby on Matilda, the pace soon picked up. In no time Libby was shouting for mercy, desperately struggling with an over-enthusiastic Matilda whose memories of life as a racehorse lingered beneath a shallow skin of riding horse civility. Further back, Anne on her giant horse performed gymnastic exploits of olympian proportions as she ducked beneath tree branches in a desperate bid for survival. Bringing up the rear, Cyril held on for dear sweet life as Lady gallantly kept up with the crowd. Taken aback by the sudden onset of a canter, it seemed like an eternity before Cyril squeaked out a desperate plea for mercy which slowly made its way, rider by breathless rider, to the front-running Francis. The brakes were applied, the ride halted, and all lived happily ever after. Perhaps it wasn't Letterkenny Riding Club's finest display of responsible riding but happily we all survived to tell the tale and laugh about it.

On a cold September Sunday, a small group of hardy riders met close to Francis's new house on the magnificent Knockalla Coast Road, north of Rathmullan near Glenvar. Francis led the way for a long and diverse ride-out with breathtaking views of Lough Swilly and the Knockalla Hills. A few pops over natural jumps on Francis's land to finish put the icing on the cake.











# National competitions – and two national champions

## AIRC National Hunter Trial Championships

The Connolly's Red Mills Hunter Trial Championships were held in Flowerhill, Co. Galway in April. There was over 400 entries across the pairs and individual competitions on the day. Nine riders along with an impressive team of supporters (doubling as volunteer fence judges) represented Letterkenny at the event. Before the competition started there was a great evening's craic over dinner after the long drive to Portumna in Co. Galway. Marina and Libby were in particular need of a good meal to revive their shattered nerves following an eventful journey with Matilda and Hannibal 'Teldel' Lector!

Nadine Burns and Libby Carton finished just a few seconds away from the optimum time in seventh place in the Advanced Primary Pairs. Nadine claimed sixth in the Advanced Primary Individuals shortly afterwards.

Damien Gallagher with Armstrong just missed a ribbon, taking eighth place in the Intermediate division. The highlight of the event was Kerrie Chambers' monumental win in the Intermediate division on Turn To Stone – better known to club members as The General. Following a difficult round in 2007, Kerrie and The General returned this year determined to improve on their performance. That determination, backed by 12 months of hard work, was evident as the pair made things look effortless, finishing the course with a clear round nearest to the optimum time of 5 minutes 30 seconds. When the results were announced at the end of the evening it was to great applause that Kerrie accepted her prize.

LRC members competing at the event were Keaton Ramsay, Nadine Burns, Mary Finneran, Libby Carton, Kerrie Chambers, Damien Gallagher, Donal Diver, James Diver and Marina Hamilton. Well done to all—everybody who

participated completed their course with no eliminations. All in all, it was a remarkable achievement for such a young club.

## Riding Club Festival

The Riding Club Festival took place at Stradbally Hall Estate, Stradbally, Co Laois on the 7th and 8th of June. Eight members of the club travelled to the Festival and, between camping and competing, it was a truly marvellous experience.

Drew Blaney and her mare Kate took 4th place in the Lightweight section of the Cob Championship and 6th place in the Coloured Horse Class (Under 158cm). Mary Devine and Trix completed an elegant round to take 4th place in the Dressage to Music competition for riders graded Advanced Intermediate and above. Tanya Jacob and Lancelot picked up a rosette for their effortless clear in the clear round jumping. This accompanied good performances in the Intermediate Individual Dressage and Dressage to Music. Tanya's expression at the end of the Dressage to Music competition was a great advertisement for the competition.

Libby Carton and Fenway finished second in their heat of the Advanced Primary Prix Caprilli and placed 6th in the final. They also collected 6th place in the Advanced Primary Riding Club Horse. Following in his mother's footsteps, Fenway made an appearance in the side-saddle class, ridden by Libby's cousin and Moy-Summerhill Riding Club member, Auriel Robinson. He looked very smart and will no doubt have the side-saddle sussed for 2009.

Orla O'Reilly with Omard Miss Molly finished 7th in the Lightweight Hunter class and 8th in the Advanced Primary Riding Club Horse. With over 85 horses competing in this class it was great to see two Letterkenny riders finish in the top ten.

Mary Finneran had an excellent show with Bart (Firmount Cross) sweeping the showing



*Above, top to bottom*  
Our members at Flowerhill: Nadine, Libby, Kerrie, Marina, Damien, James, Donal, and Keaton.

*Left*  
Drew with Kate and Orla with Miss Molly make their first big showing appearances at the Festival in Stradbally.

*Facing page*  
Mary Finneran and Bart (Firmount Cross) surrounded by the judges for the Eddie Fowler Memorial Cup at the Festival in Stradbally; Kerrie and The General (Turn to Stone) with their winner's trophy at Flowerhill; Our two national champions at their respective competition venues.







Above, top to bottom  
At the Festival in Stradbally:  
Shaun chats to one of  
Fenway's entourage; Tanya  
and Lancelot ride their  
dressage test; Mary and Bart  
in the line-up; Fenway makes  
his side-saddle debut; and  
Mary, Drew, Shaun and John  
McConalogue wait in the sun  
while classes run late.

Right  
Tanya on Lancelot ready  
to enter the ring for the  
riding horse class; Libby  
and Fenway concentrate on  
their test.

boards and bringing home several red ribbons and silverware in abundance. Their run of success started off with a win in their section of the Riding Horse (over 158cm) and the subsequent Riding Horse Championships. On day two they won the Thoroughbred showing class. Mary and Bart went on to win the Eddie Fowler Memorial Championship selected from the champion and reserve champion of each of the Irish Draught, Ridden Connemara, Coloured Irish Horse, Thoroughbred and Arab Championships.

Throughout the weekend, Audrey Jacob and Seán Doherty were on hand to keep the competitors calm and make sure we got to the correct ring on time – not always an easy task.

The festival is Ireland's biggest amateur equestrian event with 10 dressage arenas, 5 show jumping rings and 4 showing rings playing host to over 60 competitions. The surroundings, the impeccable organisation, and the good will of everybody concerned made this a memorable event. Several rosettes accompanied the travellers on the long road back to Donegal but they were all outshone by the sheer pleasure of the event itself. Very highly recommended.



## National Dressage Championships

Mary Finneran and Orla O'Reilly made a reconnaissance trip to Naas for the AIRC National Dressage Championships. Both horses found the idea of warming up on the side of the racecourse to be a great adventure but settled well and went on to do good work in the competitions. Unfortunately neither made it into the ribbons but it was a really enjoyable experience and an important maiden dressage championship voyage for the club. Watching the ride-offs for the top placings in the Advanced Primary and Intermediate competitions was a great opportunity to gauge the standard of the competitors – Letterkenny definitely have the potential to collect a few ribbons here next year (fingers and hooves crossed).

By all accounts the greatest challenge of the day was collecting the score sheets. Half an hour and three bruises later, sheets in hand, our Letterkenny duo headed back to Cavan to what's



becoming a regular LRC pitstop: Orla's parents' home. Who'd have thought having a Cavan plant in the club could be so useful? As always, there was much to be learned from the judges' comments – Orla's favourite was "lovely pair, lots of potential... don't forget to breathe".

## National One Day Event Championships

One-day eventing was top of the agenda for four of the club's members in 2008. Mary Finneran, Nadine, Damien and Libby set their sights on the national finals and went about qualifying by competing at two regional events. Libby and Mary fell by the wayside but Nadine and Damien travelled the long, long road to Grove House in Fethard, Co. Tipperary, for the finals on September 28th. The event boasted a record number of competitors yet our pair made their mark like so often during the year.

Nadine finished a fine third in the Advanced Primary competition, a fitting way to end an admirably consistent season. It was a truly remarkable second ribbon at national level for a member who only started riding two years ago. Nadine finally nailed the timing of the cross-country course on the day when it really mattered. Without penalties for covering the ground too fast on Molly's long legs, the pair's excellent dressage score was justifiably allowed to make the difference between a place and an also-ran.

Damien may not quite have made the ribbons but his eighth place performance with Armstrong in the most competitive division of all, Intermediate, was a credit to his all-round horsemanship. The achievement of the day must have been the "9" he scored for one of his dressage movements – not bad for a horse and rider who claim that dressage is their weak point.

A foot perfect performance from Donegal Gaeltacht's Patricia Warren and He's a Dandy in the Open competition was the icing on the cake for the Donegal clubs. It may be a long, long road to Tipperary but the road home is a lot shorter with such achievements under the belt.



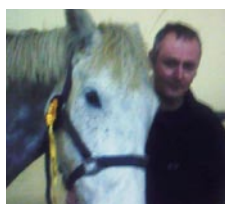
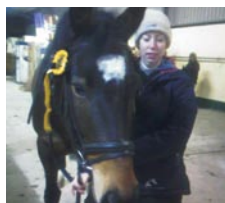
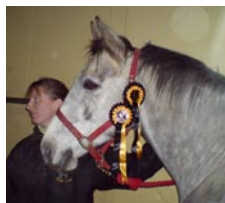


Our two intrepid travellers in action at the AIRC National One Day Event Chamionship at Grove House, Fethard, Co Tipperary in September.

Nadine and Molly (Drumnacart Lass) finished in third place in the Advanced Primary division while Damien and Armstrong finished a whisker outside the ribbons in eighth place in the fiercely competitive Intermediate class.



# Clear round jumping



*Above*  
The last rosettes of 2008 for Rachel and Paddy, Orla and Molly, and YES!!!!!! Mick and Angel, at the clear round jumping on a freezing winter's night at Templemore.

*Right*  
Seamus, our trusty course builder, with Audrey, on the same late November night.



Early in the summer the club introduced a new feature on the calendar, clear round jumping. Most of us are capable of negotiating the obstacles we face during lessons yet navigating a formal course of show jumps seems to test us greatly. Practice makes perfect and clear round jumping seemed the perfect solution.

Organised by Orla O'Reilly, the series found a natural home at Cyril Higgins' arena in Milford. Course builder Seamus McCaffrey certainly tested the sat nav of riders with a formidable 14-fence track. Starting at 60cm, riders were free to jump at whatever level they wished, and as many times as they chose. The bar was raised in 10cm increments with the takers for the

higher obstacles naturally dwindling. A large number of members participated on each of these competition evenings and the progress from round to round and month to month was remarkable.

After two successful sessions at Cyril's, we moved to Harley's in September. Our final clear round jumping evening was held on November 28th on a petrifyingly cold evening at Templemore. Seldom have members been so grateful for Audrey's tea stand.

Clear-Round-King-of-the-Night award undoubtedly went to Paddy who jumped a remarkable series of three foot-perfect rounds, making a severe dent on the club's reserve of special rosettes in the process. We witnessed a historic clear from Mick and Angel whose form improved from round to round. It was lovely to see Paddy-the-Horse happily skipping around the course with Rachel on board in the riding club environment where his grown-up life began as a three-year-old 12 months previously. Orla, chiefly responsible for this highly successful addition to the club calendar, pulled off an impressive clear round on her ever-enthusiastic Miss Molly.

With our tri-club winter show jumping league just weeks away, the benefits of regular practice over complete courses will surely be seen.

# Clinics and demonstrations

## Showing Clinic

With the Bonagee Show and Riding Club Festivals fast approaching it was timely to hold a showing clinic at the end of May. The lesson took the format of a showing class with Mary Devine guiding riders through what the judge is looking for in each class – ring craft, good manners in the show ring, and showing the horse in-hand. Following weeks of dry weather, the sand arena at Bowhirr! Stables resembled the Wild West, lending the evening a character all of its own.

Typical of any Letterkenny Riding Club gathering, there was a mixed bunch present from thoroughbreds to cobs and from hunters to riding horses so it wasn't possible to complete a line up as would happen in a show class – probably just as well from the point of view of Mary's safety. Letterkenny Riding Club certainly put the information gained to good use with our members collecting prizes in the Potential Brood Mare, Ridden Hunter and Riding Horse classes a few days later at the Bonagee Show.



*Above*  
Members did us proud at Bonagee Show in June: Samantha on her mother Kate's favourite coloured cob; and Marina on the all-conquering and ultra-versatile Teldel.

## Dressage Clinic

Brainchild of Mary Devine and Drew Blaney, in November the club held a dressage clinic with Niall Quirke, former National Dressage Champion. Niall is a renowned trainer whose pupils include Eilish Byrne, Ireland's representative in dressage at the 2008 Paralympics. Each lesson had just two horse/rider partnerships participating, guaranteeing plenty of time for individual attention.

Niall commenced each lesson with a brief conversation with riders and an assessment of the horses' way of going. He then gave each rider exercises to work on which could be used to work on a particular point relevant to their horse such as suppleness or forwardness. This was not training in what we might have imagined "dressage" to be, rather it worked on improving each horse's way of going. All who participated said they found it very beneficial. Horses showed a marked improvement as the lessons progressed and riders took away a toolbox of exercises to work on at home.



# The social side of things



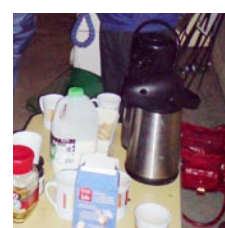
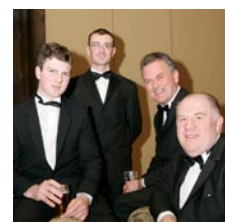
Despite being a hive of cut-throat competition and gruelling training sessions the Riding Club is not all hard work. Many of the riding club members have become firm friends through the club. The social side of the club is very important and valued by all involved. At training nights, competitions, ride outs and fun events the “craic” is always in good supply.

There have been many cold and often wet evenings where Audrey Jacob’s tea table has been the site of club members defrosting with tea and a biscuit. Cyril and Veronica Higgins raised the bar when they served chilled rosé and beer to parched members after a wonderful ride-out from their ever-hospitable yard in June. The Bar B Q at the Riding Club Festival rounded off the al fresco dining experience so often associated with horsey activities.

It was at Jackson’s Hotel in Ballybofey at the Donegal Harriers Hunt Ball that the true depth of talent among club members became apparent. Leo Porter and Mick Carroll could well give the cast of Strictly Come Dancing a run for their money. A great night was had by all who attended the ball with the club filling three tables. We’ll be aiming for at least four in 2009.

As the year went on and summer weather made an occasional appearance, Orla’s picnics became a focal point of shows and events. A few chairs, some good food and fine refreshments made the waiting around at shows an enjoyable social experience instead of a tedious bore.

Not least on the list of social activities is volunteering. It may seem at first like a chore but we’ve discovered that some of the best fun at an event is to be had as a jump steward. At Flowerhill this year Mick and Suzanne’s warm car at Fence 4 became the Operational HQ for Team Letterkenny.



*Above*  
The famous picnic basket; Shaun Doherty recruits new members at the Hunt Ball; Audrey’s famous tea table, the central hub of all our Friday night activities.

*Left*  
Mary Gallagher and Orla enjoy the sun at Benbulbin’s cross-jump in September. Honorary club member Harvey joins the party but wonders why his lead isn’t just a little longer so that he can get a really good look into the famous picnic basket.

*Below*  
Regina and family enjoy the social side of jump stewarding with Rosaleen Smyth of the Donegal Gaeltacht Riding Club at the 2007 Hunter Trials at Flowerhill. In 2008 we were deemed responsible enough to judge a jump all on our own.



# Memories & Highlights

“There were a lot of highlights this year. The charity show jumping challenge in March put the club on the map and set us up for a great year. Watching Maeve’s face during her round on Teldel at the Crossjump was fantastic.”

**Marina Hamilton**

“The night that Cyril learned to canter made quite an impression. Myself and Zak led the charge up Columcille’s Way with Cyril on Lady helplessly bringing up the rear. Cyril swears he had never cantered before and he certainly had a baptism of fire on this riding club ‘pleasure’ ride-out. He’s a survivor – a cold beer afterwards on that beautiful summer’s evening helped – but he hasn’t stopped slugging me since.

Then there was the cross-jump in Magheraroarty. One minute Damien and Armstrong were crashed out on the ground in the Pairs, skidding across half the sandunes, lucky to stand up with all limbs in tact. Half an hour later they faced the course again in the individual class and lifted the red rosette. Some performance.

**Francis McNicholl**

“Winning in Galway was my highlight but all the lessons I attended were great. It’s lovely to be in the company of like-minded people.”

**Kerrie Chambers**

“By far the best aspect of our club is the diversity of people and horses within it. Every level of ability, bravery, professionalism and commitment can be found in the arena on a Friday night. Everyone is accepted for what they are, without preconception or pressure to perform...it’s a bit like a counselling or support group because you do just as much as you feel comfortable with and get applauded for it!! The riding club is a motivation—for those of us with lead in our posterior—to get out and do something with our horses. It’s a gateway to friendship, support, opportunity, fun and enjoyment. I for one am looking forward to the coming years within the LRC.”

**Rachel Carton**

“My highlight had to be winning a bucket after a stomach turning cross country on Teldel.”

**Maeve Corcoran**

“Winning Tom’s first rosette for a One Day Event at the Mosstown Riding Club event in Longford was the highlight of my year on the only green horse with grey hair in the AIRC. For old men, Bart and Tom certainly did themselves and the Thoroughbred proud.”

**Mary Finneran**

“Winning first prize in the primary dressage at our show in Omagh. We need more primary riders to compete next year. It was great to be back in the saddle and taking part in club activities after a fall earlier in the year.”

**Susanne Carroll**

“It had to be the Riding Club Festival when I did the dressage to music (Pirates of the Caribbean) with Lancelot. Nothing went according to plan. I wasn’t in time with the music changes but I managed to fit in two extra movements and a circle (which wasn’t planned) and I nailed the ending as a result of pure luck. I looked at Mum when I was finished and we both burst out laughing and continued until we reached the stables which was quite a walk from the dressage arenas. It was my last competition of the festival and my last one ever with Lancelot as we sold him three days later. It was definitely the highlight of my riding club year and probably the most fun I had with Lancelot in the four years I had him. Its something I’ll always remember.”

**Tanya Jacob**

“I’m still new to the club but thoroughly enjoying the variety and the great company.”

**Liz Cuffe**

“There was a lovely atmosphere at the festival, it was really nice to be there with my sister and friend with all three of us riding horses bred by my parents – they were really proud even though my Molly was having a few anarchistic moments. It was a great learning experience and friendships and confidence definitely grew over the weekend. We had a great time at the Benbulbin Cross Jump as well – watching Libby ride my horse round the cross country was very inspiring, particularly their accomplished style of overcoming impalement on one of the jumps.”

**Orla O’Reilly**

“My highlight was the Riding Club Festival – it was Kate’s first big showing appearance. It was great to have more members there than ever before at it. Everyone did well, helped each other out and supported and encouraged each other. It was a big commitment to get there, but we pulled it off and it was great craic.”

**Drew Blaney**

“I won’t forget the night of the Show Jumping Challenge in March too quickly. It made no difference that night which of our teams any of us was on – everybody was just supporting the club. There was a massive turn-out and the atmosphere was brilliant. Being on the winning team was just a bonus and it was huge relief to go first in the jump-off and manage to hold the lead to the end. Armstrong was the real hero.

The Border Counties 1-day event was the other highlight. Despite the ups and downs of Tom being injured and Nadine jumping her own unique cross-country course, the club went home with two ribbons. Not bad for our first 1-day event. It immediately became an addiction”

**Damien Gallagher**

“30 minutes at Flowerhill captured the spirit of the riding club for me. I was devastated on the morning of the event when Matilda was too sore to compete but within 30 seconds Mary Finneran said ‘You’re riding Tom in the Pairs’. His tack was jaunting around the Galway countryside, safely locked in Joe Ramsay’s van, so we cobbled together a colourful rig using Teldel’s bridle, my saddle, The General’s boots and who knows what else. I hopped on Tom for the first time in my life and despair quickly turned to elation after an exhilarating spin around the course with Nadine. Just brilliant.

My highlight of all highlights was the first cross-country round I rode on Fenway at the Border Counties 1-day event in Glaslough. This is what I bred him to do and he didn’t let me down. At the end of the round, both breathless, we looked each other in the eye and agreed that this is what life’s all about.”

**Libby Carton**



# What we did in 2008

## JANUARY

11	Hunt Ball	
18	Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	X
25	Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	

## FEBRUARY

8	Jumping lesson / VC	
15	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	
22	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	
26	Redmills Equine Info Evening	n/c
29	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	X

## MARCH

7	Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
14	Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
17	Glenveagh Pleasure ride-out	n/c
21	Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
25	Charity Showjumping Team Show Jumping Challenge	
30	DGRC Western Region Spring League Show	

## APRIL

5	Training Session with Tony Ennis	
11	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	
14	Monthly dressage test	
18	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	
19	Ildra Long Distance Ride-out	n/c
20	XC Schooling, Drumsamney	
20	AIRC National Hunter Trials	
25	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	

## MAY

9	Le Trec competition	
4	TCRC Western Region Spring League Show	
2	Declan's Pleasure ride-out	X
10	Bann Valley RC 40th Anniversary Show	
12	Monthly dressage test	
17	LRC Inter-club Dressage Friendly	
23	Pleasure ride-out, Ray, Rathmullan	
30	Showing and ringcraft demonstration	

## JUNE

1/2	Bonagee Show	n/c
7/8	Riding Clubs Festival	
9	Monthly dressage test	
13	Pleasure ride-out, Milford	
20	XC Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
27	XC Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
28	Finn Valley Show	n/c

## JULY

5	XC Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
8	XC Schooling / Mary Finneran	
12	Clear Round Jumping	
13	Border Counties 1-day event	
14	Monthly dressage test	
18	Ride-out at Declan's	X
19	Churchill Hunter Trials	n/c
25	Flatwork lesson/ Jackie McPherson	
27	DGRC Western Region X-Jump League	

## AUGUST

1	Flatwork lesson/ Jackie McPherson	
3	Mosstown 1-day event	
8	Flatwork lesson / Jackie McPherson	
15	Killross Ride-out	X
22	Clear Round Jumping	
24	AIRC Dressage Championships	
29	Jumping lesson / Jackie McPherson	

## SEPTEMBER

5	Jumping lesson / Jackie McPherson	
29	Jumping lesson / Jackie McPherson	
21	Jumping lesson / Jackie McPherson	
21	BRC Western Region X-Jump League	
28	Ride-out, Glenvar	
28	AIRC 1-Day Event Championships	

## OCTOBER

5	LRC X-Jump+Dressage Show	
10	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	
17	Flatwork lesson / Kate Dawson	
19	Le Trek and Barbeque	X
24	Flatwork lesson / Mary Devine	
31	Dressage Competition	

## NOVEMBER

7	Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
9	Flatwork Clinic with Nial Quirke	
14	Jumping lesson / Valerie Craig	
28	Clear Round Jumping	

## DECEMBER

7	AGM	
12	Christmas Le Trek	
14	Going to the Dogs	

X Cancelled  
n/c Non-AIRC club event



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# LETTERKENNY RIDING CLUB 2008

A very big thank you to everybody who contributed photographs for the yearbook, including Nadine Burns, Orla O'Reilly, Audrey Jacob, Libby Carton, Lawrence Smyth, David Abbott, and our professional friends at EPS Equestrian Photographic Services and Clive Wasson Photography. Get the cameras out in 2009 and keep the photos safely!

#### COVER IMAGES

*Above* Our winning team from the Northwest Charity Show Jumping Challenge photographed by Lawrence Smyth at the Donegal Gaeltacht show in Falcarragh, March 2008.

*Below* Cross-country training with Valerie Craig at Gabriel McCole's, photographed by Orla O'Reilly, Letterkenny, June 2008.

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