

Side Saddle Rider of The Year 1981

Mrs Josephine Jefferson (Jo)

Jo took the title almost 40 years ago on Janet Gelder's Charlie Chan at the first ever National Side Saddle Show then held in September at the Royal Three Counties Showground, below the Malvern Hills. She qualified for the equitation championship which involved a preliminary round then a regional final. At the championships the top four in the equitation class had to ride each other's horse to determine the winner. "I was thrilled to claim the title and this was the last time it was judged totally on the flat," said Jo. "All finals since have included an equitation jumping round. Charlie was a lovely lightweight hunter who had originally belonged to the great Vin Toulson, and though he had the most wonderful temperament, despite all best efforts he would not jump."

Charlie lived at the bottom of Janet's garden in Baildon, West Yorkshire and Jo used to exercise him around the local housing estate. She schooled him on the lumpy heather of Baildon Moor, which was also an exercising ground for Harvey Smith and his famous show jumpers.

In the early 1980's, Jo was riding side saddle a great deal supported by John Marsh who taught her and many others the art. She also took part in team chasing for the Rockwood Harriers team alongside John. She also bravely team chased side saddle with Sarah Sherwin, who is now a vice president of the SSA. They were joined by Anne Earle, who like Jo was from Yorkshire and area chairman for several years. The gutsy three-some's team name was the Skew-Whiffs.

Jo took part in many side saddle displays, and was also one of the Bedale ladies' quadrille team along with Becky Duff, Sarah Sherwin and Anne Earle. "We took part in the Chatsworth Country Fair in the early 80's and I also played a part in the hunting scene in the making of the film Brideshead Revisited at Castle Howard, North Yorkshire which was great fun," added Jo.



Quadrille team L-R: Jo Jefferson, Becky Duff, Sarah Sherwin and Anne Earle

Jo competed in many ladies' hunter classes riding Janet Gelder's outstanding horses including the lovely lightweight hunter Purdey which also came from Vin Toulson. "Purdey was not the easiest of horses to ride and gave me some very perilous moments," remembers Jo. "But we made a great pair and enjoyed many wins including The Great Yorkshire in 1986."



Jo and Purdey winning at the Great Yorkshire 1986

Jo remains grateful to John Marsh for teaching her as her ability riding side saddle gave her a big step up into her judging career, which began on the Hunters Improvement Society [now SHB (GB)] ladies' hunter panel many years ago.

Jo was a Physical Education teacher for many years and is now an equestrian commentator at many of the major shows. When not commentating she spends her time at home in her beloved Yorkshire Dales and with her family and grandchildren. Jo has always had a bit of a flair for writing, and having written a few poems about side saddle riding, last year she published her first book called *A Horse's Tale*. The story that describes the remarkable relationship and connection between man and horse. Over the next couple of weeks we will share a couple of her poems with you.

Jo rarely rides now but has kept her saddle and habit just in case.

The runner up to Jo in 1981 was Sue Bland riding Briar Hill rider of the year in 1980 and 1982. The Junior winner in 1981 was Deborah Prentice riding Solway Windfall the pony that took Sue Bland to Junior Rider of the Year in 1978

Jo Team Chasing

Rockwood Harriers in the early 1980's

Negotiating the drop fence
at the Theakston Team Chase



Winning the ladies' hunter on Park Royal at the Royal Show 1984

