

THE SOCIETY OF MASTER SADDLERS

SADDLERS' COMPETITION FEBRUARY 8TH 2016

There is much going on in the side saddle world that you may not be aware of. The Society of Master Saddlers hold an annual competition at Saddlers' Hall in London for all types of saddlery including side saddle. This year I was an honoured judge with Richard Godden who gives the side saddle making classes of which there were 7 last year in Salisbury.

This year there were 4 side saddle entries, quite good when you consider the fact that 1000's ride astride compared to side saddle.

The standard this year was very high, only one mark separating each entry. Each saddle is built on a new tree, there now being only 1 tree maker who will make a small number of trees at a time in the Country.

The **Side Saddle Association Trophy** for the **best side saddle** entry was won by **James Adair** and presented by Liz Turner of the Side-Saddle Association.

The full results were:

- 1st: James Adair
- 2nd: Nicola Watson
- 3rd: Ingrid Sanders
- 4th: Helen Reader

As time moves on, horses and people have evolved into very different shapes and sizes from those made in the last century, therefore judging must be relevant to the modern shape of both horse and rider: It is good to have both a saddler and a rider to judge. Richard Godden noted the leathers used, cut and stitch work, placing of pommels to all fittings. I took note of room allowed for riders' seat, legs and thighs, the position of top and leaping head in relation to flat work or jumping.

Most important is the balance of the panels for remaining secure and comfortable on the horse's back, and all four entries were criticised for this, which leads one on Today's riders must be aware of how important the balance of the panels is and not to just keep stuffing in more wedges. From now on be prepared to pay what it costs to make a new bespoke side saddle, which if looked after, should last 50-80 years or more, as the old ones we are using now may look good, but are fragile.

ELIZABETH TURNER

PHOTOS BY LUCY MERRELL ARE ON THE SOCIETY OF MASTER SADDLERS WEBSITE