

# Coming Up Rosettes!



There's no doubt about it, there's just no reigning in Bill Dempsey!

**C**haseley Trust resident and army veteran, Bill Dempsey, is a true sporting star, having enjoyed a successful year competing in many local and national carriage driving competitions, including the Royal Windsor Horse Show.

Seeing the wall of rosettes in his room in Eastbourne and some impressive trophies, it's hard to believe that Bill never had anything to do with horses before taking up carriage driving as part of Chaseley's programme of optional activities some 13 years ago. Bill quickly discovered that he had an affinity with horses and a talent for carriage driving.

Now, thanks to Riding for the Disabled and the local Heron's Ghyll Carriage Driving group, Bill regularly trains and competes in carriage driving competitions along with his trusty steeds, Jake and Jack, focusing in particular on the open dressage and open cones classes.

The dressage event not only requires the driver, horse and carriage to be immaculately turned out, but also to perform a set routine involving driving at a walking and trotting pace, as well as performing circles and snake-shaped movements, known as serpentines.

These are difficult tasks at the best of times, but when you consider that due to a spinal injury, Bill cannot hold the reins in his hands and has limited upper arm movement, it makes his many achievements all the more impressive. Velcro attached to his wrists and to the reins ensures that Bill drives his carriage with precision and is, according to competition judges, "a pleasure to watch".

The open cones class is equally demanding as Bill steers his large carriage through coned gates with speed and accuracy. Just the slightest touch of a cone can earn penalty points and be the difference between success and failure. It's high pressure, but competing is something that Bill obviously thrives on.

"Competitions can be quite tiring, but also exciting, and if I do well it's a great thrill and, if I don't, I just want to come back again and do better," he says. "Every year I keep saying maybe this should be my last year and I should retire, but every year I carry on! I enjoy the social side too, and the Heron's Ghyll group are all great people and I admire their dedication and hard work in making this possible for me and for so many others." ■



*Pictured: Bill Dempsey proudly sits in front of his wall of rosettes in The Chaseley Trust.*