

PAST WINNERS OF THE TITLE SIDE SADDLE RIDER OF THE YEAR

THE MANY SUCCESSES OF JO BATES (NEE MORGAN)

The first name on the side saddle rider of the year roll of honor is that of Joanna Morgan – now Mrs Joanna Bates – who began her side saddle journey with a three-day course at the NEC Stoneleigh with Jane Holderness-Roddam, as a 10-year-old girl, and has never looked back.



10-year-old Jo on her pony Cusop Petit

Jo won the inaugural title in 1976 aged 14, riding the eight-year-old Scotch Royal, there were around 30 competitors in the final, which was held at the Hickstead Derby Meeting. Jo remembers the day very fondly having beaten the other competitors many of whom were adults. The runner up to Jo that year was Bridget Podmore. The victory lap around the Hickstead International Arena was a great thrill for the young girl.



Mrs Cynthia Saunders presents Jo with the Blue-Ribbon Group trophy in 1976.

Little did Jo know that she would repeat the thrill the following year, retaining the title of Side Saddle Rider of the Year. The runner-up in 1977 was Jo Jefferson who went on to take the title herself in 1981. The story of the trophy can be found on the website under the heading the Age of Elegance. The competition was then split into adults and juniors. Many adults felt the juniors rode so well they should have their own class and then that would give the adults a chance.

As you can see from the photos below Jo still has the two sashes that she won on those occasions. They hang in her tack room in the company of many sashes that Jo has won since, many of which are the coveted Hickstead blue sashes. Jo represented Great Britain in the junior dressage teams in 1977 and 1978 riding Scotch Royal. Jo still remembers those two wins with great pride and they sit high on her achievement list along with winning many titles at both RIHS and HOYS.



Jo then took a job at the world-famous Catherston Stud, where she was jack-of-all-trades. Her job varied from breaking-in horses, to secretarial duties to competing in both dressage and eventing. After Catherston Jo went to work for the legendary show-jumper, the late Iris Kelleway. Jo then took on a position at the Broadstone Stud, where, in addition to winning numerous national dressage titles – Jo went on to win the Royal International Horse Show supreme horse title in 2002 with Broadstone Dee. The pair also won the riding horse of the year title at HOYS in 2002. When the Broadstone Stud was disbanded in 2003, Jo set-up her own yard. Since going out on her own, Jo has enjoyed tremendous success in the showing.



Jo and champion middleweight and ladies' hunter Broadstone Raindance.

Lady Benton-Jones' homebred Daldorn Lara's Theme was reserve champion at the Royal International Horse Show for Jo and Walton Razzmatazz took the reserve champion hack of the year at HOYS. 2016 was a highly successful season for Jo, culminating in Suzannah Welby's Elusive landing the hack of the year championship at HOYS. Jo and Elusive proved to be a formidable pairing and went on to win the hack championship at Royal Windsor in 2017 and Royal International Horse Show in 2018. In 2017 Jo qualified Yvonne Jacques' stunning grey Grandeur for HOYS in the SEIB racehorse to riding horse class and in 2019 they took the title.

As well as producing, Jo does a lot of teaching. Jo is a judge on several panels and has judged both astride and side saddle classes all over the country and abroad as well as officiating at both RIHS and HOYS. She is still riding side saddle and was due to bring out a new ride this year for side saddle classes. They will have to wait until 2021 to make their debut. Jo's daughter Holly helps Jo in the yard and is a successful dressage rider herself. Holly is expecting her first child in a couple of months.



Thank you to Dale Atkinson for compiling this article.