

## Annual Conference 2011

The 2011 Annual Conference was held at Cheltenham Racecourse on Wednesday 9th March.

The full and varied line up for the day, expertly compered by Mike Tucker, began with talks on essential Pony Club topics including the importance of Gift Aid, with Treasurer Robin Danielli, and management of serious incidents with Health and Safety Director Bill Cook and Press Officer Clare Walkeden.

As the foundation of The Pony Club, training was firmly on the agenda with an introduction to the new Training Chairman, William Blane FBHS. William spoke passionately about his experiences as a Member of the Cheshire Hunt South Pony Club, and how he now enjoys watching his young daughters The Pony Club Conference 2011 learning as Pony Club Members. Speaking to delegates about the spectrum of training opportunities in The Pony Club, especially in coaching for both Members and Instructors, William explained how the different levels of courses work from the beginning with the 'Introduction to Coaching' and 'Grass Root for Riders' up to the UKCC Level 2 Courses; and how these are integral in bringing Pony Club Members back into the Branches and Centres to maintain the level of teaching. There was also information on several new initiatives for training in 2011, including the Instructors Database.

The Pony Club's new E Learning site, [www.ponyprep.org](http://www.ponyprep.org) launched at Olympia Horse Show in December, carried on the theme of learning and the team of Ben Betts (HT2), Phil Crabtree and Clare Walkeden who worked on the project, spoke on the use of E Learning, why it works for The Pony Club and how it will be developed, as well as how it can also be used as an important membership recruitment and retention tool for The Pony Club.

With London 2012 now very much of the horizon the audience were treated to an insight into the immense task of planning, the infrastructure and also the excitement that the Olympic Games will bring, by Equestrian Competition Manager Tim Hadaway. The morning session was rounded up with a look back at The Pony Club's achievements during 2010 with a year in pictures.

Following lunch, June Hannatt was awarded the 'Secretary of the Year' trophy by Cherry Michell, following nomination from the North Norfolk Branch of The Pony Club.

Delegates were then able to sit back and enjoy an inspiring and light hearted look at and the career path of former Pony Club Member to Badminton Horse Trials winner, with Paul Tapner. Paul had many anecdotes to share with the audience from his Pony Club days, and when asked what he felt would attract more boys to The Pony Club commented "who wouldn't want to be a boy in The Pony Club, surrounded by all those girls!"

The extended question and answer slot in the afternoon proved to be a melting pot of points of view on all things Pony Club from training to disciplines and branding to health and safety. "I really enjoy question time, as it helps me understand our volunteers concerns" said Cherry Michell, Chairman of The Pony Club. "The session is without doubt one of the most important aspects of our Conference, as we look to keep The Pony Club evolving and moving forwards".

Those attending also had the chance to meet all The Pony Club's valued sponsors and browse both their trade stands as well as The Pony Club's wide range of merchandise.