

HORSE RIDING IN TOFT

Apart from working horses, there seems to have been very little leisure riding in Toft until the early 1960s. Mrs Sue Hall who lived in School Lane was the first that I can recall.

Mr "Tubby" Cousins ran a butcher's shop in Newnham, and his family moved into 54 School Lane in the 1960s. All his family rode, but, tragically, his wife lost her life after a fall from her horse. Mr Cousins stayed in Toft and kept the saddlery shop attached to the house open in her memory. Towards the end, the shop was stocked particularly for western-style riders. Mr Cousins later moved to Australia to join his daughter. Joe and Jackie Hall then moved into the property and continue to keep horses to this day. Their daughters were brought up to ride and competed in good competitions (Hickstead etc.). Joe and his daughter Donna can often be seen driving their horse and rig around the area, a wonderful sight in this day and age of the motor car.

Kathy Batty and her daughter Jane keep horses at their home in Mill Lane. They also have a rig and can be seen driving it around the area.

Nick and Becky Harris and their daughter Jo have a horseyard in the High Street and usually three or four horses can be seen grazing in the fields behind their house next to the playing field.

Alison Balcombe started riding at the age of four in 1976. As a young teenager, before she had her own horses she rode a horse owned by Theresa Ward. Alison kept her horse in the field behind the old "Black Bull " in the High Street and could often be seen riding her mare around the village. She bred her own foal from her mare and she still rides him today, although not in Toft any more since moving to Papworth. He is now nineteen years old and part of the family. Both Jo Harris and Alison Balcombe ride competitively in eventing and show jumping. Daphne Hoskin sometimes rode Alison's horses. Daphne still rides and plays polo, but not in Toft.

There must be some twenty horses, or so, other than previously mentioned, kept for leisure purposes, to be found grazing in the fields in and around the village; a pair with foals in the summer of 2011 in Glebe Meadow, behind the bus shelter, some in Home Meadow behind the Old People's Home, a pair of Irish Greys in Home Close behind Manor Farmhouse and a number of Joe and Jackie Hall's horses in the fields at Bottom End by Brookside. All in all it amounts to a substantial number of villagers keeping and riding horses, even under the current economic constraints, helping to retain livestock and the sense of a rural environment.

For riding of a different type, Oliver Costello, who was brought up in Toft, works in the horse-racing industry and is now Assistant Trainer to Eoin Harty in California, having been with Sheik Mohammed in Newmarket before that.

Compiled from memories of Geoff Balcombe 17.2.12



Alison Balcombe & Sari
Toft Hunt 1985



Eventing with Jo Harris



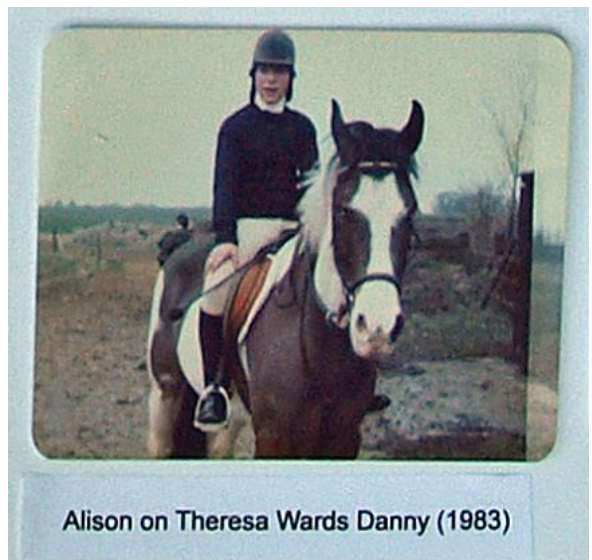
Nick & Jo Harris



Jo & Donna Hall, Hartlepool Drive,
August 2010



Daphne Hoskins on Astra (Alison
Balcombe's mare)



Alison on Theresa Wards Danny (1983)



Alison Balcombe on *Magique*,
Addington, Hunter Wilson competition



Alison Balcombe at the last
fence, Windsor Great Park, 1985



Old village boy Oliver Costello leading in Well Armed, winner of the
Dubai World Cup