

## Tetrathlon

As a Pony Club member who has tasted and enjoyed all the disciplines it offers, I have found myself preparing for and looking forward to the Tetrathlon weekend by perhaps a fraction more than the others. Maybe this is because I found that Tetrathlon provided me with more opportunities for making new friends. Or maybe it's because I think that Tetrathlon is just great craic!



Tetrathlon consists of four disciplines including shooting, swimming, horse riding and running. As it is a Pony Club sport the horse riding phase is more heavily weighed than the other phases with a maximum of fourteen hundred points attainable in it. Before I began competing in Tetrathlon myself I often heard people say that the standard of riding expected in Tetrathlon is less than that of other Pony Club disciplines. Participating however has completely changed my views there, as I have to admit that some of the more difficult cross country courses I've completed have been whilst partaking in Tetrathlon competitions.

Every two years there is an international exchange. This involves squad training from January until the exchange begins during the summer. I have been fortunate enough to be able to partake in squad training in three different years - 2004, 2006 and 2008. In 2006 the exchange was in America and Canada so we spent almost three weeks competing against and touring with other international teams. Last year we travelled to England to compete in Hartpury and the exchange concluded in Ireland with our Nationals. During these exchange trips there is great opportunity to meet with and make new friends from all over the world.

All of these trips have been unforgettable. I have spent many hours listening to and laughing at the stories from these and other trips being retold, often by the infamous Mr. John Flood. However I have to mention that the trips themselves just fill a few pages of the tetrathletes diary. Most of the training is done yourself, at home or hopefully with your fellow Pony Club members so the more you get involved the more fun you have training! The other events offer a bit of diversity, not to mention the fact that my fitness levels benefited hugely from the training!

Tetrathlon is a challenge to everyone because nobody is naturally gifted at all four disciplines. We all have to pick out our weakest discipline and simply work harder at it. It doesn't matter whether you come first or last, you return home with great memories of your weekend at the very least and if you're lucky hopefully a rosette.

*Sarah Gayer*

