

Press Release

24 April 2023

HOYS qualifiers at the Royal Bath & West Show

The highlights of horsemanship will all be in one place at the Royal Bath & West Show, as judges and competitors from across the country are welcomed back to the hallowed fields of the showground.

Across three days of competition, the show will be hosting 23 Horse of the Year Show (HOYS) qualifiers, including Ladies Side Saddle, Mountain & Moorland and Ridden Hunter. And that's something which last year's (2022) winner of the Price Family Supreme In-Hand Championship, Cathy Wood, knows all about after claiming the prestigious award enabled her trip to HOYS.

Cathy has been showing at the Bath & West for 30 years. "I started off with sports horses and hunters, and I had managed to get Champion a few times and reserve in the HOYS class, which was the Cuddy in 2015," she says.

Fast forward a few years and Cathy purchased last year's winner Clover Hill Magic, a Connemara stallion. "I bought him in Ireland with the intention of him being a breeding stallion, and he didn't really get shown because of Covid, so his first real season was as a four-year-old in 2021.

"That year, he was Champion Connemara at the Royal Bath & West Show and he was pulled into the final six for the HOYS in-hand qualifier."

But qualifying in-hand is quite different to qualifying with a ridden horse, says Cathy. "A ridden horse only has to win its class, whereas an in-hand horse has to win its class, then be section champion and then beat every other in-hand champion at the show – so it's a much tougher gig."

And because it's a harder competition, it means even more to win. "There are only 22 qualifiers for in-hand horses and ponies in the whole of the UK – so it's a huge achievement. It's every in-hand exhibitor's dream to qualify," she says.

But 2022 was their lucky year. "We genuinely would have been happy to make the top six, it was such an amazing feeling and such a shock – in a good way. The judge said he was incredibly correct and a good mover without having to be trotted too fast."

And the Royal Bath & West Show is particularly special for Cathy. "We live in Barnstaple, so we treat it as one of our local shows – and it's always much more special to qualify at one of your local shows."

So, how did Magic get on at HOYS? "Magic came fourth in the final. Interestingly, another Connemara won the final, and she had Magic's very first foal at foot," says Cathy.

And what should visitors expect at this year's show? "For the first time ever, we have qualifiers for the ridden Hunter classes, which are in the main ring on the first morning," says Jane Cooper, chairman of the Bath & West Horse Committee. "I'm expecting those to be lovely classes."

The cobs and coloured horses are also qualifier classes, so they will attract very high-class competition. “They will have some lovely animals forward,” adds Miss Cooper.

This year’s equine section has been slightly altered to allow for a larger area, explains Miss Cooper. “We have top judges and stewards, so we’re looking forward to what will be three wonderful days featuring the best of the best from the competition world.”

- The Royal Bath & West Show takes place on 1-3 June 2023 at The Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6QN. Competition entries can be made by visiting <https://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show/competitions>
- Book show tickets here: <https://www.bathandwest.com/tickets>

Editors’ notes.

About the Royal Bath & West of England Society

The Society was founded in 1777 in Bath by a group of philanthropists led by Edmund Rack. We are a registered charity organisation (Registered Charity Number 1039397). The Society was formed with the aim of encouraging agriculture, arts, manufacture, and commerce.

Our charitable activities provide:

- Agriculture, veterinary, educational and art scholarships
- Technical events and seminars
- Practical farming advice and conferences
- Countryside education
- Diversification advice for farmers
- Education for children
- A marketplace for countryside products

The Society continues to deliver a wonderful mix of established traditional exhibits through to the latest energy technology and contemporary entertainment.

The entertainment and features around the 240-acre site ensure enjoyment for every member of the family and include attractions that are spectacular to watch, educational, inspirational, “hands on” or just plain fun.