



# PRIDE AND DRIVE

*Harnesses, carriages, horses, spit and polish – it's all in a day's work for a driving groom. Being a professional groom requires dedication, passion, hard work and a sense of humour but it is a profession to be proud of. "My advice for any person looking at grooming is to choose to be a driving groom," beams Kate West, Gary Docking's Head Girl, "it is a lifestyle though and not just a job!"*



Kate West at work.

**K**ate is one of many grooms who make up the backbone of the equestrian industry and she is proud to do so, "I enjoy the pressure of the show days, and the relaxing days driving horses around the country lanes. I love getting cold, wet, muddy and sunburnt, as daft as it may seem! I love working with the different breeds of horses and learning each of their personalities, bonding with the horses. It gives you great job satisfaction," explains Kate, who has been with Gary for six years.

"I love my job, I get the opportunity to compete and groom, I enjoy the travelling to the shows. The early mornings and the late nights are all part of the lifestyle. I like showing at big events like HOYS and Hickstead, but also enjoy all the county shows

we attend over the country. The best thing of all though is working outdoors with animals."

## A united voice

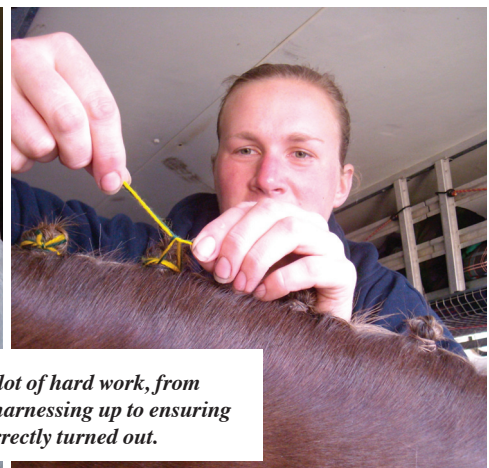
Of course a groom's work is never done, or so it often seems, "There are many unsociable hours, the horses always come first, even on Christmas day. Sometimes the early mornings get to you," says British Grooms Association (BGA) Area Representative Kate.

Like many grooms Kate is a member of the BGA, which was founded in May 2007 to give grooms across all disciplines a united voice and the support and recognition they deserve. "When the BGA was created I immediately signed up, as I was pleased to have a medium from which our voices could be heard as one," says Kate.

Working with both employer and employee is an important part of the BGA, "I am very lucky with my employer, everyone has good and bad days, but generally Gary looks after me well. We have to get on as we spend a lot of time together at shows, in the lorry and on the yard. Gary supports me and has given me many opportunities. Not many grooms get the chance to compete themselves," explains Kate.

## A proud moment

Being at the forefront of the competition circuit Kate has a selection of shows she enjoys the best, "My favourite UK event is our end of year BDS Championship at Towerlands. I also enjoy our annual trip to 'Cutts', to the east of Paris. This is our opportunity to go continental and show them how the British do it! We get to see all our friends, and there is normally a good atmosphere. My proudest moment this season was winning both the classes we entered this year at Horton



Kate's job entails a lot of hard work, from cleaning harness and harnessing up to ensuring the horse is correctly turned out.