

Back to the Future

When H+P met Oliver Townsend for our first ever issue in 2005 he was a top eventing new boy. So, for our fourth birthday, we went back for an Oliver catch up.



Q Since H+P last visited you've moved to a new yard. What's it like?
A "It's great! There's lots of space and the whole set up is really horse friendly. There's a bit more of a commute to some of the events but the space and facilities make up for that."
Q What's the biggest lesson you've learned over the past four years?
A "Not to get too entangled in your own world and become completely engrossed and obsessed. I think I've been guilty of this in the past, but I'm getting better. I used to stress if I hadn't ridden all the horses that I wanted to in a day, but I don't worry as much now."
Q Who do you owe the biggest thanks to over the last four years?
A "There are too many people to thank... my family, everyone at the yard and my owners have all been a massive help."

Q Do you still ride the same number of horses?
A "I've ridden 12 today and that's pretty much average. We've got 36 horses in at the moment but they're not schooled every day as they also go out hacking and do fitness work too."
Q One of your ambitions was to win Badminton. You and Flint Curtis did it this year! Was it everything you thought it would be?
A "It's still sinking in. I'm always surprised when commentators introduce me at events as the 'reigning Badminton champ'. I haven't had much time to enjoy it really as I'm always thinking of the next event."
Q So, are you remembering to dust and polish your Badminton trophy?
A "I haven't got it yet! Err, actually, I must arrange to get it delivered!"
Q What's happened to your first star horse Topping?
A "He's retired from eventing now and moved back to his owners."
 After Topping finished competing with Oliver he went to Martin Johnson, who'd been a working pupil with Oliver, to compete and he's now winding down from competing life altogether.

Chestnut Topping was the first horse Oliver rode at Badminton, way back in 2005.



Oli, Oli, Oli
 Although everyone calls Oliver 'Oli' at events he still prefers to be called Oliver - get it right peeps!

Tech? No!
 Oliver is now the proud owner of an iPod after he used it to learn his dressage to music test for the Express Eventing in Cardiff (it worked as Oliver won!) He confesses though that he's never downloaded anything to it and just listens to the music that a friend put on it for him!

ODT Ghareeb, stable name Byron, is a personal fave of Oliver's. He's only five but he's a star in the making.

Q In 2005 you were a new member of Team GB - is it all it's cracked up to be?
A "It's great to be a member of the team and has its advantages but I still focus on my individual performance."
Q Are you still always on your mobile phone?
A "Not as much as I used to be. I try to stay off it!"
 "Nicole looks after a lot of that kind of stuff now." Nicole helps out in Oliver office and she also does a bit of eventing herself!



The team
 The new stables and even more hooves to care for means that Oliver's behind the scenes team is growing too. He now has six full time and two part time staff helping him on the yard.

Team Townsend, Rebecca, Ruth, Jess, Kath, Steven, Nicole - and Oliver obviously!



Golden Hue is just six in this snap. He's changed a bit since then!

Golden Hue: H+P first met Huey in 05 when he was just six years old and a relative unknown. Now he competes at four-star level - how grown up is that?



Name: ODT Arctic Fox, stable name Ginger.
Age: 7
Height: 17hh
He's... "Ginger's a sensitive soul, he can be nervous but has lots of ability."

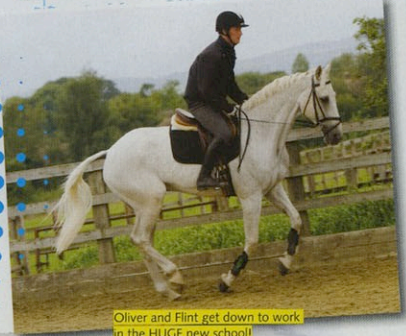
Ginger loves a bit of attention!



Name: ODT Sonas Rovatio, stable name Gold Mine (after his sire Diamond Mine)
Age: 7
Height: 16.1hh
He's... "Always enthusiastic."

Fabulous Flint

When Flint first arrived at Oliver's he reckoned he didn't have much personality. Winning Badminton appears to have changed all that! Flint now knows he's a star and loves it!



Oliver and Flint get down to work in the HUGE new school!

Be in on the action

You can now join Oliver's own members club and find out all about Oliver's horses, plus get access to an exclusive behind the scenes gallery too. Membership is just £15 for the year. Log on to www.olivertownend.com to find out more.

H+P thinks grey might be Oliver's lucky horse colour! He's been selected for the GB squad going to the European Championships in France this month, where he'll ride either Flint or fellow grey Carousel Quest.
 H+P's Laura reckons: "I luv Oliver's new yard, it's absolutely lovely, especially the stone stables where Flint and co live. It was nice to see Ginger again (Arctic Fox). Oliver did his demo at the Oliver Townsend Eventers Challenge Championships at Xmas with him and he's grown-up so much already!"

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Oliver and
 carousel quest