

Oliver Townend emerged victorious at the Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials with the untested Ballaghmor Class, having first won the event in 2009

THREE DAY EVENTS

A KEY THREE FOR GB

Hilary Manners rounds up the action from the key autumn three day events at Burghley, Blair Castle and Blenheim Palace

BRITISH EVENTING ENCOURAGES RIDERS TO WEAR A PROPERLY SECURED HAT AT ALL TIMES WHEN MOUNTED

THE BRITS ARE BACK ON TOP AT LAND ROVER BURGHLEY, 31 AUGUST-3 SEPTEMBER

Led by Oliver Townend, British riders dominated this year's Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials, filling the top four places in a remarkable show of strength from the home nation.

Karyn Shuter, Angela Hislop and Val Ryan's 10 year old four star first-timer Ballaghmor Class belied his inexperience and answered every question so skilfully asked by his jockey.

Oliver Townend first won Burghley in 2009, the same year he lifted the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton trophy. Despite posting regular top 10 placings since then, a third four star win has eluded him and he would not have been the bookies' favourite with the untested Ballaghmor Class.

The pair lay sixth after dressage and, last out across country, Oliver gave the horse a fabulous ride, allowing him time to assess the fences and take in the crowds. Oliver had the advantage of an earlier run on Samuel Thomas II around what he described as "the best course I've seen anywhere in the world in years."

"I took my time going up Winners' Avenue and was down on the clock, but every downhill run I gave [Ballaghmor Class] a squeeze and he opened up. We lost a few seconds in the air over the fences, but he wants to be with you all the way. When one comes along like him it's a different world for me." Coming home one second over the optimum time, having taken a long route at the Trout Hatchery, Oliver moved to the top of the rankings.

As the leading pack had faulted – Sir Mark Todd (NZL) suffered

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Right: Gemma Tattersall and Arctic Soul celebrate achieving third at Land Rover Burghley
Bottom left: Piggy French and Vanir Kamira finished runners-up at Land Rover Burghley

a fall from Leonidas II in Discovery Valley, Lauren Kieffer (USA) clocked up a double handful of time penalties with Veronica, and Michael Jung's (GER) 2015 winner, La Biosthetique Sam FBW, uncharacteristically ran-out at the Trout Hatchery – the door opened for other Brits to move up behind Oliver.

For Great Britain, Gemma Tattersall and The Soul Syndicate's Arctic Soul were one of three combinations to make the optimum time, which pulled them up six places to second going into the final phase. Izzy Taylor and the Patricia Turner-owned Trevidden did likewise, moving from 12th to third, while pathfinders Tina Cook and Star Witness (owned by Jim Chromiak, Bridget Biddlecombe, Shaun Lawson, Nicholas Embiricos and Valda Embiricos) climbed an impressive 30 placings to 10th. A smattering of time penalties for both Piggy French on Trevor Dickens' Vanir Kamira and Tom McEwen with his own, his mother Alison McEwen and Jane Inns' Toledo de Kerser moved them up from ninth to

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Piggy French discusses attaining her best ever result at Land Rover Burghley this year



fifth and 20th to seventh respectively.

There were just five fault-free show jumping rounds on the Sunday. Izzy Taylor was the biggest casualty, dropping to ninth, while Star Witness continued to rise with a clear round, finishing seventh. Toledo de Kerser didn't come close to touching a pole, securing fourth place. Piggy French and Vanir Kamira jumped clear, moving up three places to eventual second. "I came here hoping for a top 10 finish – I've not managed to achieve that here before and have more often eaten the Burghley dirt – so it's great to be back at this level and up the leaderboard," said Piggy. "Burghley is the toughest four star and it's always been a dream to do well."

The pressure was on Gemma Tattersall, who had her hands full with a feisty-looking Arctic Soul. The penultimate fence fell, costing Gemma a potential win as she dropped below Piggy, and Oliver now had a fence in hand. He needed it; Ballaghmor Class clouted the gate at fence five. However, the rest stayed up and, despite a time penalty, the title was back in Oliver's possession.

"We've had Ballaghmor Class from the word go and he's top class. I looked around the collecting ring and I honestly wouldn't swap him for any other horse in there. It's been a long time since I said that," said a visibly emotional Oliver. "Burghley is the most difficult four star to win and this means the world to me."

With six British riders in the top 10, the future for the sport in this country is looking exciting.

