



■ Charlie and Bill Levett take a jump

to England.

Delay

Arriving at Heathrow, there was a delay unloading another horse Will had bought and Charlie found himself alone in a horsebox for a while.

"He nearly went mad," his owner recalled. "He was climbing up the walls of the box, smashing against the sides with his hooves.

"He was in a terrible state."

Fortunately Charlie emerged unscathed and, under Bill's careful guidance, the pair won the British Novice Championships in 2000.

Last year, ninth place in the Blenheim Three Star event qualified them to compete at Badminton this Spring.

True to form there was a last minute scare. Just three weeks before the big day, Charlie came back from routine exercise with a foot injury.

However, sessions of standing with his foot and leg in a bucket of salt water did the trick and now its all systems go again.

"We've followed him all over the place - Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany - to see him compete, but nothing's going to beat this," said Mrs Wootten.

With up to 250,000 spectators expected at Badminton Park on Saturday for cross country day, public stages don't get much bigger. It'll be a long way from a peaceful green field at Porter's Mill.