

BILL LEVETT – LIFE BEGINS AT 50!

Australian rider Bill Levett moved to the UK back in 1994 and is a familiar face on the eventing circuit. He is based at Little Charingworth Stud in Gloucestershire, where he lives with his wife Jenny and twin children, Joshua and Ursula.

Despite being one of the more senior top-level riders his career is still going from strength to strength, with 2013 probably his best season to date.... and it all started at Burnham Market 12 months ago.

Bill celebrated his 50th birthday at Sussex Farm by riding four horses around the CIC*** track. As he sat in his horsebox thinking back over their performances he heard a knock on the door and climbing up the steps were two of his sisters who had flown in, unbeknown to him, from Byron Bay, Australia. Jenny had planned a surprise party at The Ship in Brancaster for family, owners and friends, and Bill admits to shedding a few tears of happiness before the day was done.

A month later Bill rode Shannondale Titan (Alfie to his friends) to victory in Saumur at what was the horse's first CCI***. In the lead going in to the final day, Bill and Alfie kept cool under pressure to jump one of only three clear show jumping rounds. As Bill says: "It was a long road and a huge team effort. I went to France hoping for a top 5 placing but knowing he could do better, so I was over the moon."

Two weeks later there was another big win. This time Silk Stone (Silks) topped the table in the CIC*** at Tattersalls, while *Improvise* (Womble) very nearly emulated Alfie when he finished runner up in the CCI***. "If someone had said at the start of last season that my 3* horses would have two firsts and a second by the end of May I wouldn't have believed them," admits Bill.

While Silks had a fence in hand at Tattersalls, he was pipped at the post at Blair Castle CCI***, finishing a mere 0.2 penalties behind the winner. It was still a great result for Bill, and there was one more great result to come. At the Blenheim Palace 8&9 Year Old Championships Womble jumped a double clear to finish 4th in another high class field.

Bill finished 2013 in 12th place on the British Eventing points table and 16th in the FEI World Eventing Athlete Rankings.

Looking back on 2013 Bill says: "Anyone involved with this sport knows what a team effort it is. Given the roller coaster nature of what we do it's important to take time to celebrate any achievement, albeit not for too long!"

Of course, as with all sports, you are only really as good as your last performance, and 2014 is a World Championship year. Both Alfie and Silks are on the Equestrian Australia WEG 2014 squad, with Womble listed on the 2016 Rio Olympics squad.

"I'm excited about the year ahead, and the potential of all of these horses. It goes without saying that I couldn't do it without my owners, sponsors, support team, staff, family, and of course the horses themselves.

"I've been training hard all winter and the horses feel well and happy. Silks and Alfie are entered for Badminton, so fingers crossed we can put in good performances there and secure a ticket to Normandy and what would be my first World Championship." www.billlevett.com



Photo by: Fiona Scott-Maxwell