



A damsel in distress who was rescued by a chicken farmer, a thoughtful French rider who reveals his soft side and a handful of eventers trying new sports — RACHEL WAKEFIELD digs deep to find out this month's gossip

Snow joke

POOR Merel Blom had a nightmare journey home from Portugal's Barroca d'Alva. The Dutch rider found herself stranded on the A1, a French autoroute close to Compiègne, for more than 30 hours when traffic ground to a halt due to impassable snow. When she ran out of supplies for the four horses on board she was forced to melt snow for them to drink and she took to Twitter to summon help. In the end, though, it was during an emergency search on her moped that she came across a chicken farmer who was kind enough to transport hay and straw to her horsebox on his tractor. When traffic finally started to move again she still had a six-hour journey left. No doubt she was happy to see her bed that night.



Rachel Lupton has tried her hand at point-to-pointing

impromptu fund-raising event in Swalecliffe village hall. That's called turning a negative into a positive.

When the season ground to a halt Nina Barbour took Siro, a new C1 campaigner for Oliver Townsend, to Spain to contest the show jumping sunshine tour. The gelding was so good that Nina is not sure if she will hand back the reins or not.

Rachel Lupton swapped her cross-country colours for racing silks and had a great time at the Bedale Hunt's point-to-point, while Nic Wilson represented the Surrey Union in the Ascot Race for Repeat. She finished third and has entered a racehorse to the top of her birthday list.

Changing places

Craig Barn has relocated to Kate Rocher's Barbury yard where, as well as his usual riding duties, he will be chief tweeter for Dessert Eventing. Aaron Millar has also



Aster Nicolas braves the sleet at Aldon to deliver his roses
LEFT Dutch eventer Merel Blom who became stranded in France due to heavy snow

Of course the hideous 'spring' weather has wreaked havoc on this side of the Channel, too, and Aldon (1) is one of many events to fall by the wayside. They say that French men are romantic and when Aster Nicolas needed a bit of help from the secretary at the Yeovil venue he rewarded her with a bunch of yellow roses. I bet few riders would have made the effort.

upped sticks and recently set up shop in Dorset after many years eventing from Devon.

Horses have also been on the move and Affie Bradstock now has the ride on Viking, a former partner of Charlie Pickman's. Dan Evans has taken on Kai De Cier, as well as the advanced Smart Time, a former ride of Gubby Leach and Polly Williamson.

Jade Lazby is in the driving seat of the advanced Oedrous Light who was produced by Wicky Brake, while Harry Dennis is getting to grips with the advanced Dreaming Blue who was previously in Michael Ryan's yard.

Hattie McCance has a new equine in the shape of Silk Town, while Kari Lucy Jackson is the new pilot of Angus Smales's four-star campaigner It's A Jackpot.

Hary Meade has added Shamondale Santiago to his string and Fred Scala, back from his stint in the USA, is competing O The Bill who was once with Lucinda Green.

A syndicate was put together to purchase Michelle Taylor's Selle Francaise Pancho Villa for America's Boyd Martin. Fellow American Kristin Schmeide is short of a top level campaigner after she retired her four-star partner Cowald at the age of 18.

Birthday boy

Bill Levitt got the surprise of his life while sitting in his lorry after his cross-country round at Burnham Market which coincided



Bill Levitt recently turned 50

with his 50th birthday. It walked two of his sisters who had flown all the way from Australia to celebrate his half century. Apparently Bill was so moved that he shed a few tears. His siblings came equipped with a DVD of messages from his family in the land of Oz — cue more tears — and they joined Bill, his wife Jenny and plenty of friends for a surprise dinner party at The Ship in Brancaster.

Baby boom

Vicky Tufts is expecting her first child. Several of her horses have gone to Selina Miles's West Country yard, while Very Special Z has been sold to Kitty King.

Congratulations to Sarah and Miss Cohen who welcomed a daughter, Charlie Ella, into the world on 18 March. She weighed in at 18lb 6oz and is a sister for Affie. Harriet Herbert, a former working pupil of Sarah's, has also given birth, to a girl, Martha Joanna Jane. No doubt we will see her on many cross-country courses in years to come with her father, course-builder Guy.

Blame the weather

When Swalecliffe Park's organisers were forced to pull the plug due to the appalling spring weather they were faced with a dilemma — what to do with all the pre-made lunches? When they heard about freemans working through the night to contain a raging fire in a nearby thatched cottage they had the answer. I hear that the bacon-rolls and packed lunches went down a treat. The rest of the pre-ordered catering was used for an

BUILDING BRIDGES ONLINE

IN January this year a new group of friends was born through social media. A grassroots eventer on Twitter known as @1000kms started a fun conversation about her dream of going eventing abroad — most likely as a lorry driver. Several riders joined in, including some who will be competing in faraway lands this season, and other eventers offered their services to provide a picnic, be the groom, trainer, vet, and there was even a team doctor. The trip led to around 20 people becoming friends, including Charlotte West (left) and Miranda Gerr (right). Look out for the 100 or so 'Twitter Eventers' in their team kit.

