

Welcome return

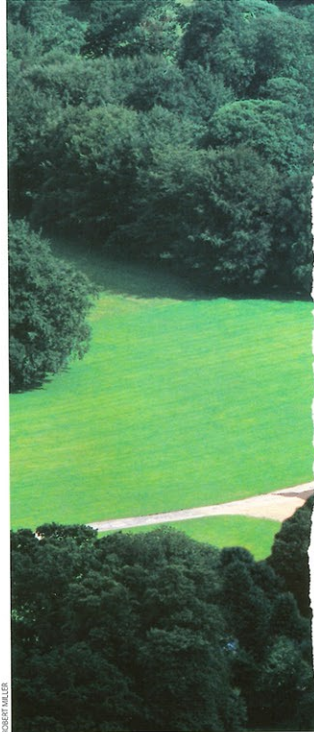
After a 53-year absence, Cholmondeley Castle in Cheshire is making a welcome return to the BE calendar, courtesy of Musketeer Event Management. **Sue Polley** finds out more...

With the demise of Tetton Hall, Henbury Hall and Arley Hall, fixtures in the north-west of England were looking to be very thin on the ground in 2011. However, thanks to Lord Cholmondeley and Alec Lochore, both amateur and professional riders alike will have the opportunity to compete in the beautiful surroundings of Cholmondeley Castle from 30-31 July for the first time in a generation. Horse Trials were last run at the estate way back in 1957 but, largely thanks to the success of The Subaru Houghton International Horse Trials and the effective working relationship that Alec and his team at Musketeer Event Management have built up with the owner of both estates, Lord Cholmondeley, he has kindly agreed to re-open the gates of his stunning 7,500 acre estate to the sport once again.

"2011 is all about working with the estate to get the basics right and building a strong foundation for what we all hope is going to be a long-standing, popular and profitable Event," said Alec. "The estate is a Course Designer's dream as it has a plethora of natural features, lots of water and, of course, the most stunning castle on a hill, which will definitely play a central role in my planning. The grass cover in the park is very good so I'm confident that the going won't be a problem and we're already working hard with Estate Manager, Robert Miller, and his team to ensure it will be at its best come July. The advantage we have is that Robert, Lord Cholmondeley and my team all know each other well having worked with each other

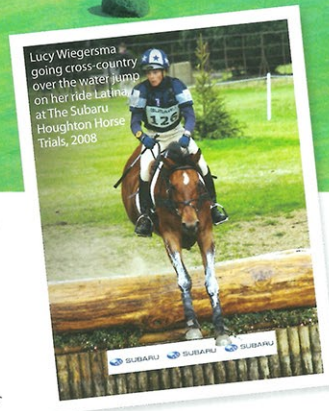
at Houghton for the last five years and, thankfully, we have a formula that works." The Event will host BE100, Novice, Intermediate and Open Intermediate classes this year, but the plan is for the Event to grow and develop significantly in future years: "Our main objective this year is getting the basics right and its inevitable that there will be a few tweaks along the way," said Alec. "But Events have to be big these days in order to be commercially viable. Obviously we're governed by what BE allow us to do but our goal is to develop to CIC3* level and hopefully beyond."

BE's Chief Executive, Mike Etherington-Smith, said of the return of Cholmondeley Castle: "It is such a fantastic opportunity to welcome Cholmondeley Castle Horse Trials back to our sport. We are so lucky in this country to be able to host our sport at such stunning locations; I know that Alec Lochore and his team are looking



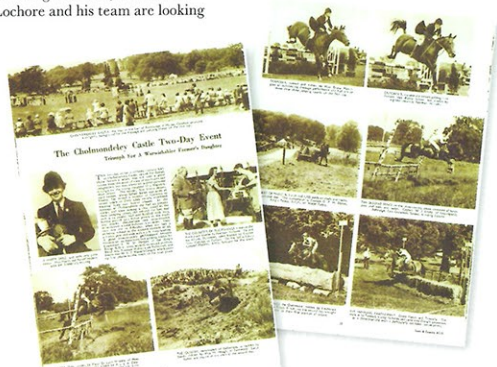
Cholmondeley Castle with its impressive backdrop

A birds eye view of The Subaru Houghton International Horse Trials



Lucy Wiegiersma going cross-country over the water jump on her ride Lakina at The Subaru Houghton Horse Trials, 2008

A report from the Cholmondeley Castle Horse Trials held on 7 August, 1953



forward to making the most of Cholmondeley's return after 53 years!"

Alec and Mike's sentiments were echoed by Houghton and Cholmondeley Estate Manager, Robert Miller: "We're all very excited to be working with Alec and his team again and Lord Cholmondeley is very much involved in the concepts for both Events. His Mother, Lavinia Marchioness of Cholmondeley, is a very keen horsewoman and remembers the original Horse Trials at Cholmondeley so we're all keen to create another fantastic Event for both competitors and spectators. The Estate is absolutely stunning and, given Alec's track record for organising successful and enjoyable Events and building respected and innovative cross country courses, people can rest assured that we'll put on a good show and be making the most of this amazing location. Our aim is to replicate what works at Houghton but to give it a Cholmondeley twist," he added. "Working with Alec is very straightforward and fun, and his attention to detail is meticulous. We're in this for the long term and we

have no doubt that Alec will set courses that are right for both amateurs and professionals, which will effectively promote the sport to a wide audience."

On the subject of the courses, Alec commented that he would be striving to design and build courses that were educational but up to height: "I'm hoping to present an Intermediate course that will give horses and riders a confidence-building round before Blair or another autumn three-day. Unlike Houghton, Cholmondeley has a lot of natural water – there's a large lake and a few ponds so riders can anticipate having to negotiate all of those in some form or another! There are also a lot of hills and other great features that I'll be aiming to incorporate, most of all the castle."

"Our aim really is to build Cholmondeley up into a major International Event," said Robert. "We want to bring top-quality sport back to Cheshire and, with easy road access (the site is just off the M6 north of Whitchurch), a glorious setting and a strong and enthusiastic organising team, we are confident we can do just that." →

"We're well on the way to making Houghton a major social, cultural and sporting event"

As well as combining planning Cholmondeley with his role as Eventing Manager for the 2012 Olympic Games, Alec is certainly not neglecting his duties at Houghton either, an Event that attracted a staggering 350 horse and rider combinations for its CCI1*, 2* and CIC3* sections last year. "We're delighted with the way Houghton has grown over a short period of time," said Alec. "A lot of this is down to the cooperation and enthusiasm of Lord Cholmondeley and his estate team and, of course, the support of Subaru, who will also be extending its generosity to Cholmondeley in its first year. This year will be even better – as well as our International classes, we're hosting a big Riding Club competition, Novice and Open Eventers' Grand Prix and other unaffiliated classes. We really want to make the Event as inclusive as possible and I feel we're well on the way to achieving our goal of making Houghton a major social, cultural and sporting event." In true Lochore style, Alec also said that he had an extra surprise in store for competitors at this year's Event, so watch this space!

"Working with Alec is never a bore," added Robert. "We meet him endlessly, he tells us what he wants and we just do it – I have no idea where he gets

his energy from though! We really see working with him as a win-win situation as Houghton, and hopefully soon Cholmondeley, benefits from the crowds the Horse Trials attracts. To be honest, the ongoing grass management scheme that we've implemented over the last three to four years at Houghton has also resulted in much sweeter grass for the grazing deer too. Moreover, I think the number of entries we attract at Houghton shows that riders like what we're doing and long may that continue. At the end of the day, I think Alec and Lord Cholmondeley share the same ethos, which is to make the sport as much fun for everyone – the riders, spectators, sponsors, owners and helpers – and surely that has to be a winning combination?" ✦

The Subaru Houghton International Horse Trials runs from 26-29 May 2011 and Cholmondeley Castle Horse Trials will run 30-31 July 2011. For further information log onto www.musketeer.co.uk.

