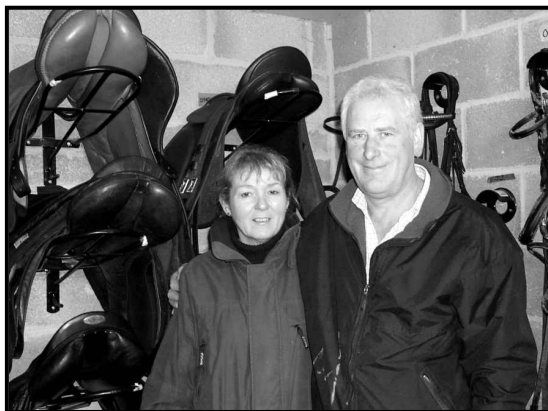

Special Feature

Crown Estates Rural Entrepreneurs Award Winners 2005

The efforts of Chris and Janet Badger over the last few years at Crown Farm, Ascott have been recognised by their landlord, the Crown Estates, with the presentation of the Crown



Estates Rural Entrepreneurs Award 2005 at the Smithfield Show on December 3rd.

Chris and his wife Janet, a hairdresser by trade, started out by building a small cross-country course, but soon realised that they needed to expand into a course designed as a training facility. Thus

Estates Rural Entrepreneurs Award 2005 at the Smithfield Show on December 3rd.

Three Generations of Farmers

Chris Badger modestly describes himself as ‘just a farmer’, but ten years ago he saw that any farm that was going to survive needed to diversify. He tried the usual farm shop but that did not generate enough income to justify the work involved; growing sage came to an end when the company drying it closed down. Chris realised that he had to fill a gap in the market and not just compete with others but become the best.

Chris and his family go back three generations on Crown Farm in Ascott - under - Wychwood. His grandfather took over the farm in 1934 and Chris was born there. As the eldest son he was destined to follow in his father’s footsteps and eventually take over.

As well as Crown Farm he now runs four other farms for their owners, but it is the equestrian business that he has built up over the last ten years that is his main business.

began their involvement with horses. The next step was to convert a barn into DIY livery stables for 12 horses. The stables quickly filled and it was the clients who began to push them into expansion. ‘Horsey’ people are very competitive and wanted more facilities than 10 miles of off-road riding and a cross-country course.

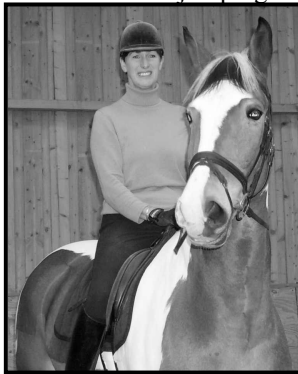
The Equestrian Business Grows

Next came the outdoor riding school and lunging ring, but these added facilities brought the need for more stables. An old stable block was converted to 6 boxes and a tack room, storage loft and drying room were also added. By now they were filling a demand for full and part-time livery and as this continued to grow they converted another barn to 12 stables and a further building to 4 more stables: now 34 in all. Another tack room was needed plus wash bays, hot water and parking for both cars and lorries. Chris says that he never envisaged half the things that would be needed; as the business grew new needs became obvious.

With two or three professionals in the yard the next requirement was for an indoor school – a big financial commitment, which needed funding from the Crown Estate and in February 2003 it was opened. By autumn that year a local racing stable proposed the building of an all-weather gallop. Within two months this had been completed and the equestrian business was complete.

Horses for Courses

Janet and Chris have built almost everything themselves which has helped keep down costs and they have learnt a lot along the way. They now have strict yard rules – dealing with people of all ages means that they need to establish firm boundaries. As Janet says; ‘there are a lot of hormones flying around the yard and things can get tense’. From being ‘just a farmer’ and a hairdresser with little experience, has grown an equestrian centre to be proud of, catering for horses from every discipline from cross-country to dressage, point to point to show-jumping. Unlike many of their rivals they have surfaces to suit every need and are open 365 days a year. Janet with Chris’s daughter, Vicky, runs the office; Janet still manages to fit in three days a week hairdressing. Chris has a full-time yard



manager and one regular farm worker to help run the stables and farms.

Top Riders and Trainers

The provision of such excellent facilities has brought Crown Farm to the attention of many top professional riders and trainers. Kenneth Clawson, show jumping trainer to the Olympic medal-winning British Event Team is giving a Lecture Demonstration on 10th December, from 7 – 9pm. If you are interested in attending, please send a SAE to Crown Farm, Ascott -under -Wychwood, Oxon with a cheque for £12.50 made payable to Crown Farm. Carl Hester, one of Britain’s top dressage riders also teaches at the centre.

Beijing Here We Come!

Chris and Janet have one really top horse of their own, which they bought two years ago. Look out for Crown Farm Consort at the next Olympics in Beijing. Chris is not confident of the future of the farming industry, believing that before too long we will not be producing enough food to feed ourselves and will be reliant on imports. However, with foresight and sheer hard work Chris and Janet have built an equestrian centre of which they are justly proud.

Christine Halliday

January at the New Beaconsfield Hall

‘Freshers Evening’ on **Thursday 20th January**, a chance to find out about all the activities that take place in the hall, and discuss any local concerns with your Parish Councillors. On **Friday 28th January**, there is another Jazz Evening ‘From Swing ’til Now’ with the very talented singer Sheena Davis and her band.
Tickets £7.50 from Jill Drew: 01993 830398 or Alice: 01993 832216