



Sallie Anne  
with husband  
Duane and  
son Terence

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## field of dreams

Sallie Anne Lent created The Sussex Polo Club in an effort to capture the congenial atmosphere of Argentine farm polo

Lying in a hammock, while soaking up the Argentine sunshine and waiting for chukkas to begin – I'm starting to remember why, six years ago, I was seduced into recreating this polo lifestyle in Sussex! Polo is so addictive that you only remember the highs and forget the lows. A key low being that the UK is wet and cold for 150 days of the year, so someone has to trudge through fields in Dubarrys or shovel endless poo to enable you to play once the sun shines again.

But right now I'm in polo paradise in a small town called 25 De Mayo, populated by two 10 goalers and the UK's Tomlinson family. We are taking our annual pilgrimage to the El Casal Polo Estancia, the place where our dream began. Owned by the Raschia Grau family there are ponies, dogs and kids everywhere – a real family atmosphere. Argentine laughter fills the warm air, while our guests play polo in an inclusive and relaxed environment. No pretence, airs or graces. Just pure farm polo at its best.

This inclusive feeling is what I wanted to recreate back home within a club – where the whole family could play in tournaments ranging from -6 to 4 goals, all in the same

weekend. I must have even been harbouring a secret ambition to one day become a pushy pony club mum, provided our young son might get over his fear of horses and be able to join in!

In starting up a club, we were aware we had to make it easy for new players. So with the help of my husband, Duane, we set about providing a full service, including sale and rental ponies, HPA instructors and on-site full livery with Argentine grooms. We organised sponsors, put teams together and even made and laundered the Patrons bespoke team shirts.

Six years and six-figure investments later, we have achieved the polo club that I dreamt of. We have grown from just one pitch to four, and have enough acreage to allow all the ponies to graze as nature intended

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throughout summer. As well as hosting over 70 playing adult members, plus the old Surrey and Burstow Pony Club, we also have many junior members. Thanks to the Pony Club our son, Terence, has also taken up the sport and shows a real talent (thank the Lord because his maths indicates he will not be a rocket scientist.) His team won the UK Jorrock's Championships and led last year's parade at Cartier. How great is that? Plus we all get to play polo together every summer!

Starting a polo club is not for the faint-hearted. You need a network of dedicated staff and the ability to plough through endless paperwork involving work permits, public liability insurance, health and safety and employment law. If you're looking to make a buck then take up lap dancing, as there's absolutely no easy money to be made in polo. Only start a polo club for the sheer love of the sport and the ponies. You have been warned!

Well my name is being called: 'Sallee! Ees time for chukkers' (I have learnt to translate Spanglish) and so I will now step down from hammock onto pony. I cherish these moments, as soon I will be too old and creaky to play polo with my family and friends. But I sleep well, knowing that we have enabled our son – and countless others – to live the dream on an achievable budget for at least a few months each summer. That's what it's all about in the end – living the dream when, where and while you can!

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