Offa's Dyke Group

of Endurance GB

Newsletter - Winter 2007

Chairman's Comment

Well, the Season is struggling to its conclusion as I write this latest Comment.

Luckily, everybody once again got the chance to enjoy Red Dragon, after so many rides were cancelled. Well done to Gill Talbot and Malabar Storm (aka Danny) for winning the 160k there in outstanding style!

As I write this, final preparations are underway for Tintern, the last ride of the season – last chance to compete this year! Unfortunately we lost our Cranham ride in August, under difficult circumstances for the Farmer landowner of the venue. As a keeper of sheep myself, I can fully understand why landowners would not want visitors at this time. However, it was rather surreal to ride around Euston Park, at the height of the outbreak in August, amongst grazing sheep!

Due to both the weather and other issues with the route and venue, it was necessary to move the Plump Hill ride to Staunton this year. The route seemed to ride well – apart from the challenge posed by the marker movers. It was suggested by a couple of riders that we had intentionally marked all four tracks at one junction as "no-go" to test the riders map-reading ability. Sadly, the ingenuity of the persons who put lines across the tracks was well ahead of the Ride Organiser on that one!

On a positive note, congratulations must go to Abigail Tennant on her successful trip to Germany in August with the Young Riders, and to Rachael Rogerson for recently winning the Northern Championship with Gryphon.

Look forward to seeing you all at the AGM in December.

Sharon

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Editor's Comment

For my sins I have now taken over from Dennis Cavill as Newsletter Editor. I am on a very steep learning curve and only coping with the help of Carolyn and Rob Edwards so I crave your indulgence. This newsletter will be kept quite simple!

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank Dennis very much for doing the newsletter for the last few issues. I know it is a lot of work and he did a very good job of it . I will try to keep up the standard! I would also say that the newsletter depends on the input of you, the members, so please think about sending me articles about your horses, your activities, and anything that you feel would interest the other members. As my typing is rather slow, email articles (margaret.mckiddie@btinternet.com) would be best but I am willing to accept typed or hand-written contributions to my postal address, also suggestions of topics you would like to see included.

Have you done a ride a bit further afield that you enjoyed? If so we would be grateful for a brief description of the ride, what the journey was like and, if you stayed overnight, what the stabling and accommodation was like. It is always interesting to find out a bit about different rides and read a first hand account.

If this has been your first season of Endurance Riding perhaps you could write about your experiences, what you enjoyed, what you found hard, what we could have done to make it easier for you. Carolyn did suggest we publish an article on 'hints on getting started' but this would mainly be of interest only to new members and instead I have asked that she produce a separate paper on this and similar subjects which could be forwarded on request to any member who would find it useful.

This year's riding has been rather restricted by the weather and then the Foot and Mouth and I think we were all very pleased that Pat Conn was able to run the Red Dragon Ride where Offa's Dyke riders were very successful .

Congratulations to Gill Talbot who won the Red Dragon, Becky Jones on Belinda Josephi's Peanuts was 5th, and Sue and Louise Rich both finished successfully. Vicky Brown won the Dragon's Tail with Karen Jones Runner up, Jan Rath won the Dragons Days and my young Scotch Mist was runner-up

A report from Gill and Jan follows. Gill vividly describes the thrill of an ER while Jan shows that at the other end 40&50km CRs can also be very satisfying to do.

Committee Comment

Next Committee meeting: 16 January 2008 at Walford Village Hall

With the AGM coming up on 15 December, this is the time to think about whether you would be interested in joining the committee. We usually meet about four times per year and generally organise the rides and events for the group. It would be lovely to have some new committee members.

If you think you may have a bit of time to spare and would like to come and join us, please contact our chairman Sharon Parr before 15 December so you can be nominated and voted in at the AGM!!

Please feel free to contact any member of the committee at any time if there is something you would like us to address. Your views are very important to us and we are always open to new ideas and suggestions for training or social events for the group.

Contact details for the committee are on page 2

Are you new to endurance?

Have you just started out and would like to find out a bit more?

If so, we may have some information of interest to you from some of our previous training days. Please feel free to contact me and give me a brief idea of your experience so that I can judge what to send to you. I will be very happy to send information by email, or by post if you send a stamped addressed envelope.

Carolyn Edwards (contact details on page 2 of the newsletter)

OFFA'S DYKE AGM 2007 –
15th December 2007

The AGM is again being held at Monmouth Golf Club. **Directions** from Ross-on-Wye take the A40 to Monmouth. ****At the first roundabout as you reach Monmouth, go right around the roundabout, back onto the A40 towards Ross. There is a lane approximately 100 metres on the left, and the sign for the Golf Club can be seen. Take this lane, which twists and turns for about 1 kilometer. You will the see the Club on the right.

From the Forest of Dean (A4136) or Monmouth itself. At the traffic lights next to the Haberdasher's Boys school, take A40 towards Ross-on-Wye. Continue to the roundabout, then **** as per above.

The AGM will commence with light refreshments (nibbles) from 6.45pm, with the meeting starting at 7.30pm.

For those who do not wish to take an active part in the meeting, drinks will be available from the Bar.

This year there will be a **"Question of Endurance"** Panel event after the meeting. Please get your Endurance questions ready to ask the Panel, so that this will be a fun and informative event.

There will also be the usual **raffle**, with Margaret McKiddie returning as chief ticket vendor (enforcer) after a two year sabbatical. Don't forget to bring a raffle prize (or several!)

Also if you won a trophy last year remember to bring it back

WELSH INTERGROUP CHALLENGE

Who will win this year?

Offa's Dyke?	We came first last year
Mid Wales?	They won it for the first 3 years
South & West Wales ?	Yet to win it

Come to the AGM to find out - and if you were in the team collect a rosette

Mokkala

Many of you will remember Mokkala(Micky) the lovely chestnut gelding belonging to Lindsay Williams, a committee member for many years. Sadly he died recently aged 22 after a bout of colic.

Lindsay and Micky were regular attendees at Offa's Dyke events and very successful team members. They were part of the Offa's Dyke team who did so well at Team Spirit when it was held at Sherwood, finishing third in 1995 and winning the event in 1996, 1998 and 1999. They were also in the winning team at the Red Dragon in 1998 and 1999 and in 1999 were also part of the silver medal Welsh team

In the last 2 years he was unable to compete because of minor gait problems but he had done 13 years of competion and had his 4000km award. A true Endurance horse.

Lindsay obviously misses him badly but she hopes to find a new horse in the spring and we all look forward to seeing her around again

13 Years of Red Dragon

1993. I attempt the Red Dragon 100 mile 2 day ride for the very first time on my wonderful partbred Arab, Warrens' Hill Rustam. Too little experience, too much speed on day one, too long a route (final measurement around 110 miles I seem to remember), and after riding with Margaret McKiddie and Madoc for more than 95 of those miles and hanging on to 2nd place, I had to retire after the last VG on day 2. No damage done, just not enough horse left at the end of 100 miles to finish the course. We tried to give chase out of that last VG, but Margaret & Madoc were just too good for us. As we strolled home over the hills, sharing his carrot bag, I promised Warren's Hill Rustam that we would be back, and next time we would be successful!

1994 A Bronze Award at Golden Horseshoe, selection to the Intermediate Team, we redress the balance and take the Red Dragon win over the now familiar and tough course, to leave Margaret & Madoc to take 2nd place. This was to be my very first *win* at an ER, and it was one hell of an experience! ''The'' most exciting thing I had ever done! After starting on day two some 21 minutes behind Margaret & Madoc, we cross the finish line just 22 minutes ahead, taking the win by some 1.5 minutes! All those voices saying 'you might as well forget it, you'll never make up the time……' Never say Never is a favourite saying of Rob's.

1995 This year I am lucky to be able to compete again, this time on my Mother-in-Law's beautiful grey, Roseif . Putting into practice all we learned in 1993 & 94, we take 2nd place , losing 1st place by just one minute.

'You don't know what you have until you no longer have it….' How true. You will never hear me say 'there's always next year..' because sometimes, next year just never comes and for me, Warrens' Hill Rustam and Roseif, *next year* at Red Dragon was never to come again. It took until 2006 to have a horse tough enough, sound enough and good enough to attempt this late in the season, tough ride again – 12 long years.

2006 and my precious, home bred Ranazak, cousin to Warren's Hill Rustam ***and*** Roseif, gave me the extreme pleasure of once again competing over the Red Dragon course, taking a very creditable 5th place at his very first completion in a 160km ER. Very satisfying, and a wonderful sense of achievement.

2007 Malabar Storm (aka Danny) has made a bit of a habit of doing *well* in 2 day 160km ER's, twice winning the Berkshire Downs Southern Championship. We have never asked him to try his hooves at hilly rides, believing his forte to be flat and fast…….until this year that is! After his 2nd success over 160km's at Berkshire Downs back in April this year, a failed attempt at Cirencester and many cancellations

due to Floods and Foot & Mouth, for the first time in many years I found myself with two fit and sound horses at the end of the season, and Red Dragon, (confirmed as running), just a month away. Decisions, decisions. Which horse do we take? Danny is entered on the form. When my farrier comes to shoe pre-ride, he is asked to shoe both horses as though they were competing over 100 miles……two full, new sets fitted..... just in case.

The start and the first Vetgate are never good for Danny. If I can get on and then stay on at the start, Rob & I keep our heads and patience in the first vetgate, the rest usually falls nicely into place…….. getting on is fun, bit of a bronco act, and the start behind the pace car is a bit hairy. I think I've got it all under control and we settle well in the middle of the pack, but the mare in front has other ideas and lashes out, catching Dan in the shoulder and me in the shin – great start to the day!

We find ourselves attacking *that hill* behind Nicky Malcolm who has powered to the front. Once on the top Nicky disappears into the mist and Dan settles into his lovely, easy canter. The first vetgate is as difficult as we knew it would be, Dan is hyped up and refuses to settle. The pulse monitor is bouncing as Dan listens to horses in the 80km ER trotting away up the hill…… after several minutes I decide to chance it, Dan often settles once presented to vet, and with the monitor showing a high, but steadier reading, we pull off the saddle and present. The vet places the scope……. 58bpm damn! We are through the VG and Dan surges up the hill after Helen McFarland and Jake who have sneaked ahead of us.

The lollipop, as it is known, rides extremely well this year, there is just the right amount of cut in the turf, the mist is still lying so the views are hidden but Dan is on a mission and we canter round mostly alone. VG2 and we arrive some 4 minutes (this becomes a pattern!) behind Helen & Jake, but present quickly and leave just seconds ahead. We are soon caught by Helen, Charlotte Robinson, Sam Mowatt & Abbigail (nee Lockett). We enter the Showground after completing the first 80km, in 5th place, but present into the overnight hold in 2nd place, 2 minutes and 45 seconds behind Helen and Jake. Phew! Day one over and I think, if we don't start tomorrow, we've had a wonderful ride today!

Day two. Today Danny is less silly about being tacked up and my mounting. There is much confusion at the start as there are two separate clocks and starters in operation. Somehow Helen McFarland is started on the FEI clock and gains an extra 2 minutes as she flies out of the start with Nikki Malcolm and Janice Cockley-Adams, both entered in the FEI 160km class. Dan and I are started at our correct time, and

we are quickly joined by Sam Mowatt & Vavaar, and we ride with this combination until the last VG.

At the 1st VG Dan is much calmer than on day one, presentation is much quicker. As we wait to leave the VG he bounces and paces, waiting for the 'go', and when he gets it he canters to the road and he and Vavaar canter up the hill. There is no mist today on the Lollipop, and the views are spectacular. Back into the last vetgate, (interestingly, we enter at practically the exact same time we entered it on the 1st day), a quick check of the pulse monitor confirms we keep walking and immediately present. We undress Danny as we walk to the vetting area, dropping tack as we go. Sam tries to come with us but fails the first presentation. We claw back 6 minutes on Helen in this Vetgate, and leave just 4 minutes behind her. At this stage I am determined NOT to lose my 2nd place, but I really do not expect to see Helen again until the finish. I leave this VG with Susan McArthur, competing in the FEI 80km ER, and we ride together into Aberedew. Rob crews Dan and shouts that Helen is now just 3 minutes ahead…… Dan attacks the hill out of the village, which takes me a bit by surprise, and I cling to his mane as he canters up the hill.

As we ride the steep climb out of Aberedew and tackle one of the gates, I spot the orange bib at the next gate – Helen and Jake, riding with Nikki Malcolm and Kaisi, are just yards in front of us. Susan McArthur is chatting away at the side of me, and I have to apologise for not responding, saying, 'Sorry, but at this precise moment I am in 2nd place in the 160km Red Dragon, and that orange bib just ahead is in 1st place, so I've got to go'……. Susan shouts 'go get her girl!' as we both canter up the steep field to the gate.

Helen turns just as I reach her shoulder, smiles and says hello. We exchange a knowing look, and Dan canters past, my heart is racing! Is she coming with us?? I daren't look behind, I just keep Dan focussed ahead, sit down and concentrate on balancing us over the ruts…….this is NOT the time to start slipping and tripping!! Susan and Nikki disappear into the distance, the fast speed up the hill has taken the wind out of Dan, so I check him and ask for a steady trot. I look behind, and we are totally alone……. If I can just get to the top of the steep hill before Helen comes into sight, maybe, just maybe…… At the top of the hill I dismount, squirt some of my drinking water into Dan's mouth and we start the steep descent, I run madly down the hill, slipping and sliding, constantly looking over my shoulder…… no one there, no one there…….. at the road, legs weak, and mouth dry, I re-mount and Dan springs forward into canter, I steady him to trot……. Easy does it, nice to feel lots of horse left at the end of 100 miles.

Just before the roundabout, Helen's crew run out with a bucket and slosh…….. their

faces drop when they see me and not Helen……, I'm trying hard to control the big grin starting to appear on my face…… Rob strolls toward me, hesitating…….. yes its me Rob!! 'What the hell are you doing' he beams, 'where's Helen?....' he grins broadly, 'well done'! he shouts He throws a slosh and we trot on…….down the cycle track, through the gates, over the road crossing, over the finish line…….we've won, we've won!!!!....**NO**—still to vet, keep calm! It's a long walk from the finish line to the crewing area, I lead Dan and repeatedly pat and kiss his neck and nose, he crinkles his nose and lips, puts his ears back 'stop it woman' he would say if only he could!

Dan snatches at the grass and then starts to search the buckets for food. I worry he will start to stiffen so after just 10 minutes we check the pulse and take him to vet. I feel light headed, my heart is racing and I try to keep my breathing under control, the last thing I want is to upset Dan at the vetting. Pulse taken, 3 vets line up for the trot up. I run away and back again. I can hear the steady footfalls, I'm sure he's fine…… No one looks at me, the vets start to scribble, hand over their scraps of paper and walk away. Rob tries to smile, then the big Irish vet puts his arm around me and whispers in my ear 'by the way, the trot was fine, he passed', thank god for that. The American vet checks Dan carefully, signs the sheet, turns and smiles at me 'well done' she says, 'it's a pass'. Oh the relief!

Outside we smile and hug, and I spot several anxious faces waiting for news….. I raise my arms and shout *Yay! We did it!* I am immediately surrounded by pleased friends, hugs all round from Mary Stubbs, Steve and the Twins, ...oh what a wonderful day, to complete the course **and** win! - Perfect!

My most sincere thanks to Pat Conn & Roger and all their helpers, they did a grand job taking on the Home International at such short notice, and accommodating over 500 entries, the vetgates appeared to run like clockwork, no easy feat with so many ER entries. Also, sincere thanks to all the sponsors, Dan and I came home with the *cherry and the bun*!! A brand new Free n' Easy saddle, compliments of Les Sparks – fantastic! – plus Thermatex rug & £50 voucher from NAF, £40 voucher from Worship. Co. Saddlers., pair of chaps from Steve at Performance Eq. Rob had a lovely trophy for 'Best Crew' (he has to share this with our two JR's Ted & Ruby of course!) and rosettes from West End Photography, and I have 3 lots of silverware for cleaning!!!

Now, lets just hope it's not another 12 years before we get to compete over this course again… but just in case, we have to ensure we remember and enjoy the good times.

Oh Those Dragon Days

Like everyone else, our season has been well and truly disrupted. I have found it very hard to keep both horse and myself motivated and each time that a ride we had entered or had hoped to enter was cancelled, I felt like giving up for the season. However with the aid of some excellent farm riding on headlands and cornfields courtesy of my neighbour, we just about managed to keep going.

Having ridden for 2 consecutive days for a couple of years at the Red Dragon, I decided this year to attempt all 3 days and do the Dragon Days and was really relieved to hear that this ride was actually going ahead.

Somehow I managed to persuade my crew to go to Builth on the Thursday evening and to set up the coral, organise the stable etc. This meant that I could have a fairly leisurely start on Friday morning and I arrived to find everything nicely organised (notes on OH/crew training available by email!). The sun was shining and it was reasonably warm. Lady was relaxed and vetted out with a pulse of 35, but unfortunately my two potential riding companions were both spun and I felt desperately sorry for them. We started out on our own to do 50km feeling rather down at the loss of our friends, Lady was hard work as she was on her own all the way to cp1 and for a good part of the rest of the ride. But the weather was fantastic, the views were superb and the going about the best I have ever known it to be. We finished day 1 sound and with a pulse of 43 and so gained a grade 3. I was well pleased and after settling Lady in her stable for the night took my crew for a well deserved pub meal (hint for keeping crew happy and content)

The Saturday morning was overcast and the hill shrouded in mist, we vetted successfully and once again set out to climb that hill. Lady was still being hard work and I thought that she wasn't going to make it to the top. Luckily Chris Wray who was also doing 40km soon joined us and we rode together to cp1. We separated somewhere on 'Little Hill' by which time the mist had really closed in and it was very difficult to see either the markers or the track. Chris and I joined up again at cp2

and we completed most of the ride together. Lady once again finished with a pulse of 43 and then spent the afternoon relaxing in her coral.

The evening was spent in the Llanelwedd Arms with a great crowd from Offa's Dyke and reasonable food, but I am reliably informed that the beer wasn't up to much!

I was fairly tense at the pre-ride vetting on Sunday morning, but Lady was relaxed and vetted well with a pulse of 32. She was once again very lethargic going up the hill and at one point I thought she was going to come to a standstill, but she plodded on and once on the top set her sights on some potential companions in front and was like a different horse. Her attitude was completely different to the 2 previous days, on Friday and Saturday I had to really use my legs but now she was pulling and getting quite cross that I has holding her back to a sensible pace.

I can't explain the relief I felt when she passed the final vetting and with a pulse of 40. I was so pleased, we had had a lovely successful weekend and I could not have wished for more.

With Lady safely home and reunited with her companion we went out for a meal to top off the weekend. My phone rang and it was Del to tell me that I had won the Dragon Days award – the whole pub must have heard my delight. I just could not believe it and did not until my box of goodies arrived the following week. I have the most beautiful sculptured horse head trophy, my crew has a best crew trophy and there was a £50 voucher from NAF. I am also the proud owner of a SageWash Sanitizer!

I am so proud of my little horse, she has had a fantastic season and she is now enjoying a well-earned holiday turned out in a couple of acres of lush grass. I'll worry about her waistline in January.

Jan Rath

Group Pleasure Rides

During such a difficult season of cancelled rides, including Cranham ride-due to foot and mouth, we have been very lucky in having three very successful pleasure rides over the summer, two of which were new for this season. We had to change the venue of the Plump Hill social ride on 2 September, due to various problems with damage to the route following the wet weather. Rather than cancel, Sharon Parr managed to use the lovely route of our 'Christmas Cracker Ride' in Staunton. It made a change to ride the route in September & it was well supported & a lovely ride.

We had two new pleasure rides in Wales this summer. Both were almost cancelled, Black Mountains because of the appalling weather and Blaenavon because of Foot and Mouth, but happily they went ahead and were successful.

Black Mountains on 29 July organized by Karen Jones had wonderful weather following weeks of rain and the venue field was amazingly dry. There were about 40 entries, mostly from members, as she had not advertised it widely. Those of us living in the Gloucester area were afraid to go as there was a severe weather warning with risk of flooding recurrence. The route was quite a tough one and muddy in places. Comments varied from fabulous to a real test of endurance. Four non members arrived late and were the only ones to get lost! but did eventually realize their mistake and finished safely. If Karen does this ride again she will try and take out the difficult descent off the mountain and investigate using a slightly different route.

The Blaenavon ride organized by Belinda Stewart was difficult to organize and mark due to the unhelpfulness of Torfaen Borough Council. Belinda should be congratulated for all her efforts

This was a new ride for our Group but I hope Belinda will be willing to run it again in future years when, in the absence of mist, we will be able to enjoy the fantastic views that we could only imagine this year!

The first part of the ride had a number of gates which could not be left open as there were many horses, mainly Welsh cobs in the fields, some with foals at foot. Although they galloped about they did not cause a problem and were lovely to see. We then had some fairly steep climbing to do before reaching good going on the top. Piers Geddes was a perfect gentleman and did all the gates for us We then dropped down to a cycleway on an old railway line where the short loop headed back to the venue. For those of us doing the longer route there was a glorious long canter (about 4km) on the reasonable verge alongside the tarmac cycle track . Then we climbed back up hill into the mist and followed grassy tracks with good going , aware at one point that there was quite a steep drop on one side though we could not see it properly (perhaps just as well!). Our descent back to the venue was gradual and easy.

The venue being in the Whistle Inn car park meant riders could adjourn to the pub for liquid refreshment, crew people who had remained at the venue having depleted the pub of the more substantial sustenance while we were out on the hill ! Many thanks Belinda to you and your team for an excellent event Margaret McKiddie

Tintern Ride 21st October 2007

This ride was a great finish to a season curtailed by floods and Foot & Mouth . The weather was glorious, sunny but with enough breeze that it was not too hot for horses like mine already developing their winter coats. The going was also ideal, neither too wet nor too hard. Mark Holland had kindly agreed to add an 80km class for those of us wishing to upgrade our horses to Advanced (This year's ride programme was drawn up before ROs knew that an 80km CR was going to be required)

It is perhaps not the easiest ride to do for a first 80km, but preferable to having to do that distance early next year

As with many rides this season many entries were received late but finally there were 125 of whom 10 tackled the 84 km class (2x round the 42km route) most of the route is through woodland on good tracks

with not too much roadwork. The last loop does include a long road section, dropping down to the river. Then of course there is an equally long climb back up again, on a hard forest track.

I rode the first loop with Linda Kidd, her horse also doing her first 80km. The marking was good though we still managed to go wrong and went at least 1km straight down the road looking for the right turn we had already passed. I think a parked crew car was obscuring the big orange arrow. It seemed a long way round to CP1 again and I began to wonder if I really wanted to do the whole lot twice! The return loop seemed shorter though I was disappointed having dropped all the way down to the Wye that this year we were not allowed that lovely grassy canter along the river side, probably the ground was too wet. As soon as we turned the corner to go uphill Misty leapt into a fast canter and tore up it.

Soon afterwards Linda pulled up to look at her horse's shoes as she 'felt wrong' There was nothing to see and we continued back to the venue where her suspicions were confirmed and she did not pass the vet. Misty was able to present very quickly and we were off again. I was not too happy at the idea of the second loop without company but luckily soon caught up on Paula Postlethwaite, whom I had not seen for some time. as we caught up on all the gossip the time flew past and soon we were on the return loop. Two riders passed us on the road down to the Wye, saying as they did so 'No doubt you will pass us again on the way up' which we did. Misty again thought the only way to tackle the hill was fast! Paula said she was going to take it steady and we agreed to meet back at the venue.

Misty's heart rate seemed to be stuck at 52 for ages but when we finally went to vet was 44 Grade 1 (what a star) though she was extremely reluctant to trot away from the vet

All the others in the 84km class completed successfully (3xG1,2xG2,1xG3, 3xG4) so not too tough a ride for this distance. Thank you Mark Holland

Margaret McKiddie

New Forest Ride – 2nd Sept 2007

This year was my second visit to the New Forest ride. My first visit was back in 2005, when I completed my first 80k ride, finishing with a grade one pulse. With several of this years rides being cancelled, Mum and I decided to make a repeat trip down to compete in the 50k class.

The New Forest is less than 3 hours away, and access is easy, so it is the perfect destination for a weekend away riding. For those who have never visited the New Forest, you might be surprised to know that this 'new' National Park is predominantly heathland, and those areas of forest are ancient woodland. So eliminate images of endless hard forest tracks through acres of conifers!! The New Forest is completed with picturesque villages, great country pubs, wild ponies and some great tourist attractions. It is a great place to visit even for non-riders.

This years route consisted of 2 different loops from the venue, with the 50k ride doing loop A, loop B and loop A again. Leaving the venue, we rode along soft tracks through heather and gorse until we reached a forest track. I was relieved to reach a hard track as Star was pulling like a train and he tends to relax when the going isn't so good. We followed the track which wound through woodland up to the only stretch of roadwork on the route. We walked down the road, letting the horses catch breath, and under the dual carriageway which divides the New Forest. Up the hill after the underpass, soft grass verges ran alongside the road and then back onto heath land. These open tracks can be grass, sand or the major tracks are hard and pebbly. By now we were heading back to the venue so Star, assuming his work was over for the day, picked up the pace. We recrossed the dual carriageway through a narrow concrete underpass, which allow the wild ponies, cows, sheep and other wild grazing animals to safely cross the road. After a smile for the photographer, we stopped in a large pond where Star had a splash around. We followed the track down across a wide stream, one of many crossings where the horses can drink. I waited for Mum's horse to drink and noticed a horse and trap join the track up ahead. Star was completely bewildered by this sight so we had to stay behind the horse before it branched off our track.

Back to the venue, and Star carried on past with ease, he must have been enjoying it! The second loop was quite different, nearly all within the forest, no road except for 4 crossings and a few easy gates. The whole 13k loop was great going, mostly grass. It was like riding those beautiful grassy tracks that Forest of Dean do not permit us to use. We were also fortunate to be riding ahead of a rider whose crew enjoyed opening gates! Once we reached the bottom end of this loop Star was off again, making great speed all the way back to the venue, bar some water stops in the streams.

On reaching our final loop, there was some disagreement between Star and I until I persuaded him to continue on the first loop again. He did though spend the rest of the loop in a grump and although fit enough, would rarely break out of his trundley trot. So it was unsurprising he completed the final vetting with a pulse of 38bpm.

A great ride and a great weekend away, I definitely recommend this ride.

Rachel Williams

Cotswold Farm Park Ride

13 January 2007

EGB Members have £5.00 discount on ride entry - show your membership card.

Arranged by Heart of England group

The Lion's Tail ride 8/9 September – Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire

I have been asked by a few people about this ride, which I did for the first time this year and thought it might be useful to give a brief description in case anyone might be interested in giving it a try in future. It is further than I would normally think of travelling in a day to do 40km, but having missed so many rides this season due to the weather and foot and mouth, I was desperate to fit in another novice ride with Patches.

The journey from Gloucester was easy for the horse as it was mainly motorway. We went up the M5, M42,M6, M69 and then M1 – one junction and then along A roads to Melton Mowbray. We travelled on Saturday and it took us about 2 ½ hours. The ride organiser made it easy for competitors travelling, by saying that you could vet any time from 11am as long as 40km entrants set off by 12.30. Her only slight hiccup was only having one vet at the start – as the other had got lost!

I travelled in convoy with Margaret McKiddie and Misty and we rode around together. Margaret then camped overnight & corralled Misty at the venue and did another 50km ride on Sunday. We both enjoyed the ride, which was very different terrain to our local Cranham route. The route is of course very flat and one of the main features of the locality is that fields are divided by deep V shaped ditches, which are crossed by wooden bridges. Beware that if your horse refused to go over a wooden bridge – you would not get very far on this ride!! Luckily Misty bravely led the way over the first couple and Patches got used to them until she was happy to lead the way in turn. Having been assured that this ride had very little road work we were at first very disappointed to find that the early part of the route seemed to consist of nearly all road – although quiet roads with some nice verges. However, after the first few miles this changed and the ride more than redeemed itself with some lovely cantering fields with lots of set aside. We only had to open a couple of easy gates and any others were manned. The only delay was in waiting for a train at a level crossing, but we were given time allowance by the stewards. Having gone, I am very glad that we made the effort to do this ride and may again in future.

Carolyn Edwards & Patches

Pub Social Evening

26 January 2008

The Crown Hotel, Whitchurch

Now it is winter with no rides to meet Offa's Dyke friends, we thought it would be a good opportunity to meet in a pub for a chance to catch up & chat without a sweaty horse on tow!

Having struggled with finding enough space with our choice of pubs last winter, we have sent the Offa's Dyke ' rent a crowd' out to the Crown Hotel to test out the food, beer and hospitality and are pleased to report that they had a lovely time. The pub has a function room/skittle alley, which means that we will have plenty of room and it won't be too noisy. If you wanted to eat as well as drink - they do a good range of food, from cheap & cheerful bar snacks (e.g. burger & chips £4.00, jacket potatoes, baguettes & wraps) or a comprehensive restaurant menu with all home cooked food.

To give us a rough idea of numbers so we can warn the pub what to expect, please email or call Debbie Williams before Tuesday 22 January

clinwilcharmaine@hotmail.com Tel: 01600 891029

Please come along for a drink and a gossip any time from 7.30pm. The pub is very easy to find. Just off the A40 at Whitchurch. Grid ref 162/551176. Coming from Monmouth signed left Whitchurch. Coming from Ross also signed left & then over bridge to pub.

The Crown Hotel, Old Ross Road, Whitchurch HR9 6DB

Tel: 01600 890234

New Associate Membership Scheme

During 2007 there has been extensive discussion and consultation with groups and management committee about introducing a new level of membership. For the past few years groups have not meant to have had any form of local membership, but some groups such as Iceni, have been 'doing their own thing' and had an associate membership scheme.

Des Paynton instigated the idea that we should come up with an 'official' EGB associate membership scheme which all groups could use and would be consistent throughout the country. After much debate it has been decided to take the idea forward and begin it in 2008. The management committee have approved it and the groups were thrashing out the detail at the meeting on 3 November so that Jo Claridge can present it at the National AGM in December.

The cost of Associate membership will be £15.00 per year, families £20.00. For this they receive:

- Discounted entry fee at members rates to all group pleasure rides (not in the EGB national schedule). This also includes entry to pleasure rides of other groups.
- Group newsletter
- EGB magazine
- Ride schedule
- Waiver of joining fee if they become a member of EGB this year
- Trophy form to aim for group rosettes. In Offa's dyke this would mean the pleasure ride rosette at our Annual awards

This offers real value for money for non-members and will hopefully prove very attractive. In the case of Offa's Dyke group, they would be getting our newsletter (usual cost £5.00) with information about our rides & training events as well as those in surrounding groups. By entering only two pleasure rides with discounted entry fee the Associate membership of fee of £15.00 will have paid for itself.

If any non-member is interested in joining Offa's Dyke group in 2008, please contact our membership secretary – Carolyn Edwards

(see contact details on page 2)

Report from Groups meeting 3 November 2007

Having just returned from the groups meeting held in Kenilworth, we thought it was a good chance to report back to you about some of the new initiatives announced.

Associate membership scheme (see above).

New national pleasure ride trophy This is for non-members of EGB and will be presented at the end of the year to the horse/rider combination with the highest cumulative mileage in EGB non competitive rides (listed in the national schedule) and also SERC, BHS or Affiliated BHS pleasure rides. To qualify riders must pay £5.00 registration fee to EGB & receive a distance card to log their successful rides. A minimum of 4 EGB rides have to be included.

Performance Equestrian Challenge EGB members will have to register for the challenge & receive a card to record their results in addition to the usual mastercard (no charge for this) There will be 8 possible rides during the season including the Golden Horseshoe ride & Red Dragon with special Challenge classes. Horse/ rider combination must complete a two day ride with 80km on day 1 and a choice between 40 – 80km on day two. Rides will be marked on the 'Performance formula' and a minimum 3 challenge rides will have to be completed. Generous cash prizes have been sponsored by Performance Equestrian (1st £500 2nd £300 3rd £200)

EGB magazine to be sent to all BHS members A special 8 page version of the EGB magazine will be included as an insert in 70,000 BHS magazines shortly. Membership forms & details of local groups have been included, so we may have lots of new enquires about endurance.

Offas' Dyke membership We were advised that our group now has 103 members. We had 8 non-renewals and 18 were new in 2007(including some transferred to us from other groups).

Are you lucky enough to have nice riding?

Are you willing to take other members out for a ride in your area?

If so – we would love to share the information and contact details in the next newsletter.

Please contact either Margaret McKiddie or Carolyn Edwards with a brief description of the riding & any hazards we should be aware of (e.g. do you have to do some roadwork with heavy traffic, cross fields of scary black cows).

Can you let us know how many people you could happily accommodate – you may have parking for only one trailer or be happy only to take out 1 or 2 people.

We will put together a list with contact telephone details in the next newsletter (due out January 2008) and leave you all to get in touch with each other & make your own arrangements.

This could be a great way to ride in another area on bridleways you wouldn't find by yourself and also a chance to ride out with some different people – we all love a gossip out riding!

Other Groups Rides & events

South West Wales - www.endurancegb-south-and-west-wales-group.org.uk

16th 17th February 2008 Valentines pleasure ride, 16km & 22 km Brecfa Forest. Contact: Candy Williams 01994 448623

5th 6th April 2008 Pen ddol y gador

2nd 3rd August 2008 Yet Goch

Cotswold - www.endurancegbcotswold.co.uk

9th December 2007 Christmas pleasure ride, Chiseldon, Swindon. Contact: Jill Kent 01793 740303 - entry form on website above

Heart of England

23 February 2008 Wyre Forest

Contact Camilla Mascall 01299 823806

Offa's Dyke rides 2008

Provisional programme – more rides to be advised later

6 January	**Christmas Cracker** **Staunton, Forest of Dean**	**Pleasure Ride**
10 February	**Maryland** **Trellick, Monmouth**	**Pleasure Ride**
9 March	**March Hares** **Forest of Dean**	**Graded Ride**
19 April	**Bluebell Ride** **Forest of Dean**	**Pleasure Ride**
20 April	**Bluebell Ride** **Forest of Dean**	**Graded Ride**
11-13 July	**Ludlow** **Shropshire**	**Pleasure & Graded rides**
17 August	**Cranham** **Gloucestershire**	**Pleasure & Graded rides**

Offa's Dyke Sweatshirts/ Polo shirts at the AGM

Debbie will bring some examples to the AGM and also the catalogue to show the extensive range of clothing and accessories available to have our logo embroidered on them. A large range of colours is available and the group provide this as a service to members - not to make a profit. For more details. Contact Debbie Williams

CHRISTMAS CRACKER RIDE

Sunday 6 January 2008

STAUNTON, FOREST OF DEAN

A lovely ride on forestry tracks, no gates and minimal roadwork 17km and 22km options.

Mince pies and mulled wine to follow

Come and work off those Christmas calories

Entries to Belinda Josephi, Morgans Cottage,

St Briavels, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6SG

Send a completed Offa's Dyke Social Ride entry form with a cheque payable to Offa's Dyke Group of Endurance

GB - £10 members £15 Temporary Day members

Maryland Pleasure Ride

Sunday 10th February 2008

Monmouthshire - near Trellech - halfway between Chepstow and Monmouth off B4293.

70% in evergreen forests above the lower Wye Valley - some beside the river.

Some gravel, some stone Forestry Commission tracks; remainder minor tarmac roads.

26 km (16 miles) with option to continue after 9 km (6 miles) and 17 km (11 miles).

Facilities: Catering by Lesley's Catering Company. First Aid. Route marking/ checking/ response by motorcycle trail riders from the Trail Riders Fellowship (www.trf.org.uk). Toilet. Photographer. No gates.

Entries to: Heather Evans, Springfield, Walford, Ross-on-Wye. HR9 5RB

Questions? Tel: 01989- 565 249 (speak clearly on answering machine) or

email: heather@mark-holland.info - ***NO*** *ENTRIES BY E-MAIL*

*Entries close: Monday 28*th January 2008 (late entry possible with good reason or add £5).

Send completed national ride entry form (also available from www.endurancegb.co.uk) with £15 if member of Endurance GB, non-members require 'temporary day membership' for £20. Cheques payable to "Endurance GB" and enclose minimum C5-size self-seal SAE for return of ride information.

WANTED….

…..a confident, strong rider to ride Midnight Star. Star is an old characterful 14hh pony who can give a great ride!! I am looking for a rider for him for January to June 2008, when I will be away. He is in great shape at the moment, and I do not want him to lose too much fitness at the great age of 19 years old. I need a rider who would be interested in hacking from my home near Ross-on-Wye, riding him in the Forest of Dean on some weekends, and possibly going to Pleasure Rides. As he doesn't like to be ridden alone, all riding would be accompanied by my mum Debbie, who would help and advise. No other work with him would be required, just riding.

Contact me, Rachel Williams, on 07980013355 or racheljw@hotmail.co.uk

For Sale Navy Blue Biothane Bridle (converts to headcollar) Brass fittings and clips Complete with lovely chunky reins Excellent condition ,used only a couple of times £35

NEW Pathfinder Tan leather saddle Beautiful saddle Medium fit £800

Gill Talbot 01291 689639 Mobile 07876 447098

WANTED empty ink cartridges and mobile phones I have postage-paid bar-coded envelopes which raise money for my Riding for the Disabled Group which I can supply to anyone willing to support this worthy cause

Margaret McKiddie

FREE TO GOOD HOME

Hand reared Jacob sheep, 1 year old neutered male. Tame and used to horses. Would make good companion to horse or other animals.

Pedigree Jacob ewe lambs also available for sale.

Contact Sharon on 07798 950378 or 01594 544559

For Sale

Used Bulldog Titan Wheel Clamp 195/S Will fit an Ifor Williams HB505 trailer etc New cost £100 will accept £50

Contact Ken 07885797072

Specialists in Endurance Riding Equipment

The only UK supplier of activewear

Dress to impress, wear the best Riding Tights, Tops, Jackets and accessories from the USA. The winter 2007/2008 range is now available and guaranteed to keep you toasty warm and dry while riding out or on yard duties.

Plas Bridles; Just Chaps; Woof Wear Boots and much, much more are all available to co-ordinate with you 2008 season competition colours.

Be seen be safe check out our *Airowear Highlight* range of clothing and tack accessories.

Best seller – *Troxel Spirit Plus* the fashion hat of endurance available in 5 colours.

Autumn/Winter 2007-2008 catalogue now available

www.khazanequestrian.co.uk

– 'Pebblecroft,' 62 Pit House Lane,
Leamside, Houghton le Spring, Tyne & Wear DH4 6QQ
Tel: Karen on 0191 5844431 or 07743126542

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION FORM - 2008

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

POST CODE.....

TEL. NO.....EMAIL……..

Are you willing to have your name, address and phone number circulated to ALL members and newsletter subscribers. Yes/No……

Would you like to be contacted by e-mail about Group Events. Yes/No.....

Are you willing for your details to be held on the membership secretary's pc to aid administration within the group. If so, please sign below in order to conform to the requirements of the Data protection Act

Signed……

SUBSCRIPTION £5.00 per annum. **Please send cheque made payable to OFFA'S DYKE BRANCH OF ENDURANCE GB** with form to : Carolyn Edwards, Duart House, Brookfield Road, Churchdown, Gloucestershire, GL3 2PF. Phone 01452 857352

Please note that Membership of the Group is OPEN and FREE to members of EGB who have indicated a wish to be members of Offa's Dyke Group. For non members of Endurance GB, we ask for £5.00 subscription per year for the newsletter