



Offa's Dyke Group Of Endurance GB Newsletter

Summer 2007



Seren's Man versus Horse Marathon

Hi there! Yes it's me again, and yes, I will herein confirm that I am crazy.

The Pleasure Ride I completed on Exmoor this May in the p...ing rain and fog, the most atrocious weather conditions was a snip compared with the Man versus Horse Race in Llanwrtyd Wells on the hottest airless humid day so far this year. This ride in these conditions is a real test of the enduring powers of horse and rider:- and didn't Offa's Dyke competitors do well?! Sue Loveridge on Gallant Cavalier (Dancer) coming in second place, Hilary Cuming on Khan, in hot pursuit, in third place, Sue Rich on her handsome Arab Stallion in fifth place and little old me on Seren receiving a prize for the oldest rider to complete the Race successfully. At this juncture I owe my sincere gratitude to, again, Offa's Dyke members, Gina, Karen and John, without whose help we would not have got through the half way vetting or indeed the finish. They all worked tirelessly with Mervyn, my trusty crew, to cool down my hot little pony. What an effort, but splendid Offa's Dyke did it again!

I have renamed this Ride - The Ride from Hell! You should all try it! The comradeship Between riders and runners, the support of the township of Llanwrtyd Wells, the evening prior and following the event at the Neuadd Arms Hotel with free pasta dishes for all competitors, the fabulous groups playing the music on both nights, all combine to make this one of the most enjoyable fun week ends in the calendar. Long may it continue - but I think next year - without me- unless I lose a few more of my ever depleting brain cells in the meantime, which could happen of course.

Desi D. Rider "sans Everything"!

P.S. No apologies to all you 100 milers!

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It was 20 years ago...

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Offa's dyke embroidered sweatshirts & polo shirts

Tel : Debbie Williams 01600 891029

Sweatshirts come in the usual colours plus some more unusual ones such as – Purple, Khaki, Sunflower and Olive Green.

Polo shirts – ladies fit polo shirts come in the usual colours plus Light Pink, Lilac, Aqua, Apricot and Pistachio !

Men's/Unisex polo shirts also come in a vast array of colours.

Committee Comment

*Next Committee Meeting 3rd October 2007
Walford Village Hall*

You can find details of the committee later in the newsletter. Please contact any member of the committee if you want to raise an issue or include an item on one of the meetings.

The committee are still interested in your views about Endurance GB and what you want to see happening within the sport. We would love to know your feelings about the latest rule changes and also about opening and closing dates for rides. Your views are important and you are free to contact the committee or you can contact the newsletter anonymously if you prefer!!!!

Foot and Mouth has yet again interfered with the season - but hopefully some of you will have enjoyed the Christmas Ride in late Summer which replaced Drybrook. All contributions to the newsletter are welcome from members, subscribers, crew or anyone interested in endurance riding at any level. It would be good to hear from new members about their experiences.

See later in the Newsletter for News of the AGM!

See further in the newsletter for contact details.



AGM 15th December 2007 - Monmouth Golf Club

This is the official notification of the AGM – but there will be more details in the Autumn Newsletter about this excellent Venue and event!

It will be the intention of the committee to organise a Panel to answer Riders queries about Endurance – more details next time!

Contacts

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Newsletter

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Newsletter subscriptions.

The committee have decided that for 2007 the newsletter will be supplied free of charge to EGB members who nominate Offa's Dyke group as their choice. For all other subscribers there will be a £5.00 charge. If you are not a member of EGB and would like to continue receiving the newsletter in 2007, please complete the subscription form on the back page.

We took this decision because the newsletter was only reaching a small proportion of our members and we feel it is important to keep you informed. We will review the costs at the end of the year and see if it has proved viable



**ALL ELECTRONIC ARTICLES AND INFO
FOR THE NEWSLETTER SHOULD BE
SENT TO**

offasdykenews@yahoo.co.uk

[NB : Hand written articles also accepted.]



SAFETY AT EVENTS

Mark Holland has a copy of "The Event Safety Guide - a guide to health, safety and welfare at music and similar events", published by the Health & Safety Executive. This book is recommended to horse event Organisers by Endurance GB. Tel: 01989- 565 249 to arrange to borrow

Notices and Letters to the Editor



Email News!!!

Would you like to be kept up to date with the latest Offa's Dyke news by email?

We sometimes hear of events too late to include in our newsletter – such as pleasure rides & events by other groups.

I will set up an email mailing list to try to keep you up to date with the latest news. If you would like me to add you to the mailing list, please send an email to me. I will try to keep you up to date with any last minute news and send reminders out about events such as the pub night out.

Carolyn Edwards -email: carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk



More Information from other groups

If you are interested in information from other groups- contact Pat Conn or Group reps from EGB Rule Book - some groups provide information or their news letter via e-mail eg Heart of England

Rides and Events Calendar

Offa's Dyke Pleasure Rides 2007

*****Entry fee for these rides £15.00 plus £5.00 Temporary Day Membership - Cheques payable to Endurance GB please*****

Sunday 21st October - Tintern Ride - Trelleck, between Chepstow & Monmouth

Very scenic, views of River Wye, 300m drop(s) and climb(s). Mostly in Forestry Commission evergreen woodland. Made-up limestone forest tracks, and routes of earth, grass, round gravel, earth/fixed rocks or tarmac. 26km(16miles).

Organiser: Mark Holland, tel: 01989 565249, email: horse@mark-holland.info
Entries before 8th October to: Heather Evans, Springfield, Walford, Ross-On-Wye.
HR9 5RB

Group Social Rides for 2007 are listed below

***** **New Ride for 2007** *****

Sunday 23rd September - NEW - Blaenavon

- See flyer later in newsletter



Social Rides other groups

28 October Beach ride – Ynyslas 16km
Pat Conn 01974 298584

PIG ROAST

20TH BIRTHDAY PARTY!!

2ND JUNE

A great time was had by all at our 'birthday party'. Over 60 people turned up at Liz Taylor's yard near Newent to celebrate 20 happy years of endurance riding in Offa's Dyke group. Several founder members were present, including Margaret McKiddie and Delwyn Hall- who incidentally told us she thought up the name! We heard about some of the early days of the group, sang the happy birthday song (led by Gina Harris- of course) & generally ate, drank and were merry!

The venue was absolutely perfect for the occasion. It is hard to describe Liz's yard as a stable block – it is truly palatial! There was plenty of space to sit basking in the sunshine – yes the sun DID shine. We must have been blessed with one of the nicest days of the summer & some of us were still sat out chatting in T-shirts at midnight before camping out for the night in Liz's field. The pig roast was absolutely delicious – thank you to Margaret McKiddie for organising her local butcher. We had vegetarian options & salads & lots of delicious puddings made by the committee. My thanks to everyone who provided food. I think everyone agreed it was a feast! Gina's home made punch also went down very well & certainly got the party going.

Special thanks of course to Liz, Judy and Dick Taylor for allowing us to use their venue and for all their hard work in preparing for the party & helping to clear up next morning.

You Can Help Too !!! And Here's HOW

Heather Evans is trying to compile a 'Helpers List' to reduce the workload on Ride Organisers.

If you have thought of a Ride or two where you could be a helper, please contact Heather asap. This will help enormously! (See contact list)

Also if your Vet or Farrier may be willing to officiate, let Heather know.



Blaenavon Ride Whistle Inn



Sunday September 23rd

Plenty of cantering over open hill with fantastic views

Incorporates part of the National Cycle Network
16 km and 32 km routes

Pub open all day

Non riding family members can visit Big Pit National Coal Museum
with in walking distance of venue (free entry)

www.world-heritage-blaenavon.org.uk

Entries to: **Belinda Stewart**
Ty Jarrett
Brunant Road
Clydach
Abergavenny
Monmouthshire
NP7 0NG

Tel: **01873 832272** email: **Belinda@kolvox.net**

BREAKING NEWS

Tintern 2007 80K CR

For those wishing to upgrade their horse before the end of the season, there will be an 80K CR at Tintern

Please contact ride organisers for details.



Hey, **YOUNG RIDERS**

Well over halfway through the season now! Rosemary Attfield had her first YR camp at her yard on the 28th July to the 3rd August. She had a good turnout of 18 riders and the week was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

The Young Rider Team is back from Germany where all did well and we came home with Team Silver!!

Hope your season is going well and I'll see you at some of the next few rides. Keep your ride reports coming in!

Abbi Tennant

Germany 2007

Many Young Rider's qualified their horses to be able to be selected for the team. The four rider's who qualified were Charlotte Robinson with Puleski (Ozzy), Beth Langley with H.S. Ametista (Tizzy), Carri-Ann Dark with Elmstead Poloistique (Polo) and myself with Chador (Shandy).

The event at Kreuth was for Arabians mainly so there wasn't just the endurance event going on there was also; western riding, show jumping, cross country and dressage. There were about 260 Arabians there and most of those were doing Endurance.

We left for the ferry on 5th August all half asleep at 5am from Rosemary Attfield's only 2 hours from Dover. After a good trip to the ferry all horses were driven on board and were put at the back on deck so they would at least have fresh air. The journey to Aachen from the ferry was uneventful. The horses were stabled at a friend of Rosemary's and we were a short drive away at the Travel Lodge.

The next day (Monday) was another day's travel to a village called Riedan where there was a large equestrian centre called Kreuth. We left at 8am from the stables and got to Kreuth about 7pm. We had stopped on the way at services to let the horses walk and have a drink. Horses always come first so corrals were set up for them, beds put down in stables, feeds prepared etc. Luckily we had apartments to sleep in for the week so no trying to put up a tent. The apartments were brilliant everything you could want from a kitchen to big double beds which did come apart to make single beds. We all ate out in the restaurant that night but the following nights each family cooked a meal and the group sat together and ate.

Travelling to Kreuth it had been very warm the highest temperature was about 30°. I voiced my opinion to everyone that I really hoped it would rain before the ride on Saturday and would be cloudy on the ride. From Tuesday it rained, so the joke flew round that I had been out doing a rain dance all night.

The next few days we got adjusted to our surroundings and were allowed to hack out from Wednesday on short hacks. I was paired with Charlotte while Beth and Carri were paired. On the Wednesday, Charlotte and I headed off towards the village of Riedan and had a lovely wander through. We did however end up coming to the main road which we had gone along when travelling in the car to Kreuth, so we knew where we were. Charlotte later measured the main road and

it was almost 4 miles long although it hadn't felt like that and wasn't busy. After the main road we made our way up through a forest however the track ended in the middle so we made our own way through and found ourselves back at the venue.

The next couple of days we explored the route we would be competing on. It was like the Forest of Dean all hard tracks but a lot stonier. Shandy has never needed pads before as our farrier has said that her feet are good but I asked Chris Pell to put pads on just to be on the safe side, (it definitely paid off).

Each morning we had been made to trot our horses up so that Derek could assess them. It was decided that people from our crews would trot the horses up on race day. Phil Hirst was designated to trot up both mine and Beth's.

Friday (10th) afternoon was vetting. Shandy neighed a lot (as most of you know she does) to the others. The trot up wasn't perfect as she wanted to go back to Ozzy (Charlotte's horse) but Phil handled her well. All the team got the thumbs up!

Saturday the 11th was race day. The 120km was to start at 6am, so everyone was awake at around 4. The senior class and Young Rider class were starting off together. Rosemary gave each pair their orders for the first loop. Charlotte and I held back till the pack had gone out of sight, which worked as I've never known Shandy to be so settled at the start of a race ride.

First loop seemed to fly by despite being the longest loop. The terrain had softened a lot since I had road it on the Thursday, and there was a lot were give in the places where it was stony, (my rain dance had obviously worked). By the end of the first loop I was completely soaked. Charlotte and I walked in from about a mile from the finish line and we both went straight into vetting. Due to our long walk (we thought we were above time and needed to slow down) Shandy's pulse was at 48bpm.

The 2nd loop we switched partners and from there I rode with Carri and Polo. It drizzled this loop but wasn't as wet as the first loop had been. Carri and i walked in as before not as far a distance this time though and Shandy's pulse was 58bpm.

The 3rd loop was the same as the 2nd loop although the terrain was a lot more churned up. The last loop Charlotte and I had already ridden on one of the previous hacks so Shandy new exactly where she was. We were not far from the

venue going through the cross country fences. The cross country event had just started on our last loop and one of the riders galloped past Carri and me making both our horses hyper and galloping forwards. After getting them back under control and feeling very hyper, we made our way back towards the finish line. Polo and Shandy trotted side by side and me and Carri were holding hands to go over the line together but Polo spooked forwards.

The last vetting I felt quite sick but Shandy looked well and neighed to the others all the way through vetting. Both Phil and Rosemary were with me for vetting although after trotting Shandy, Phil had to run off to trot up Polo. The vet held me in suspense by talking to Rosemary until telling me Shandy had passed vetting. I happily jumped about and bounded out of vetting to my crew, where smiles greeted me all round. My crew took Shandy while I waited to find out about Carri. She'd also passed and there were hugs all round as well as tears of joy.

Unfortunately we then found that Beth's horse had been lame at final trot up. She took the news well and was happy that we had got through.

The ride took me 9 hours 17 minutes and 3 seconds. With recovery times totalling up to 13 minutes and 11 seconds.

That night there was a barbecue in the marquee next to the vetting so we all ate there. Needless to say the Young Rider's stayed out late and most didn't go to bed till about 6 in the morning than had to get up at 7. Goodness knows how they did this as I went to bed about midnight I think (Mr. Dark was going back so I grabbed a lift with Louise and Carri).

The Sunday following we had vetting for travel. Shandy was full of energy and just before going to be vetted she rolled. So I had a nicely wet horse (I shouldn't have bothered grooming). At midday was the presentation. We all dressed up in cream jods, boots, shirts and stocks with show jackets and hats. All those who had finished in all classes went into the indoor arena. All class placings were announced and lined up for rosettes. After all the rosettes had been given out the team placings were announced. Italy came in Bronze with only 2 of their riders getting round, than it was us Britain's in Silver and the French in Gold. We all took a lap of honour. As I was on the only chestnut horse in the team (the other 2 being grey) Carri and Charlotte each came along either side of me and we went round as a Team with smiles all round.

It was a brilliant experience and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I think we had great team spirit and all got on so well together as did the horses. Thank you's go all round to everyone! Especially Rosemary for getting us there and being a brilliant chef and Phil for being Chef Assistant and trotting up all our horses. Than there's Chris, Derek, Caroline and Scott. Plus of course a thank you to my grandparents and parents couldn't have completed the ride without their help and support. And a thank you to Louise and Emma for their help in the vet gates.

Abbi Tennant

Young Rider Camp 2007 Abbi Tennant

Rosemary Attfield the Young Rider's new Chef d'equip organised a camp for Juniors and Young Riders at her yard in Sussex. The camp was to last a week from 28th July to 3rd August.

There were a total of 18 Young Rider's in total all ranging from the age of 12 to 19 and different breeds of horse from cob ponies to Arabs. Rosemary had put together 3 groups for riding and 3 teams. Neither team nor group and had the same people in.

On arrival on the 28th July, we all set to work sorting out horse's stables and corrals as well as putting up the tents. In the afternoon once everyone had arrived Rosemary put on a flatwork lesson for each group which lasted an hour. The first day was more of big hugs to each other for us oldies plus meeting the newbies. Dinner as usual was noisy with chatter and eating of curry and rice. By this time the black clouds and rolled in, so many of us cut our meal short to run and put rugs on or bring the horses in out of the wet weather.

Sunday July 29th was more scheduled. Breakfast was at 8 and all corrals and stables needed to be mucked out before this. The points systems for teams had just started up so many people were set to work, however it all seemed to be the younger ones who were on yards first the oldies seemed to be in bed, late nights seems to be the cause. At breakfast Rosemary told us the plan of action for the day. Instead of flatwork lesson we would be doing

gymkhana games. The thought of racing out of control Arabs with riders on top clutching flags and horses necks seemed to go through my mind, luckily it didn't turn out like that. So the first group of riders went into the school where Rosemary had cleverly put a course together of bending poles. There were 3 games; a bending race whilst trying to place a cup on a pole at the other end, the potato in a bucket (which when the bucket was placed at Shandy's feet she thought it meant food and stuck her nose right in only to be disappointed that it was empty) and the flag race. All races were done in walk to begin with so the horses got used to the idea, (all my group were on Arabs) than moved into a slow trot. The most interesting race was the flag race, on several attempts I failed to put the flag in the bucket. The younger ones in their group were all on smaller ponies that could whiz round the posts fast and the riders seemed to have better aim, luckily we only did these races in our riding groups separated into two teams of 3.

That afternoon around about 5pm we all loaded up our horses and headed to the beach. We were all excited at the thought of galloping along the beach flat out with the wind in our hair; Rosemary however was not so amused at the idea and kept us all in order. Once arrived at the beach we all mounted and walked down the beach and along. Tide was nicely out so we had plenty of room and many onlookers stopped to watch as a pack of 21 horses (including Rosemary, Fi and Katie) headed along the beach at a nice trot. Rosemary took us all in the sea and one by one all horses followed. After a short walk through, we all followed Rosemary out and proceeded down the beach. On the way back Kay Counter, Rachel and Sarah Rodgerson, Dean Brown and myself all braced the waves and trotted through the sea. One of the horses broke into canter and they all followed suit. Shandy happily cantered through the sea and whilst doing flying leaps in the air to miss some of the waves. We managed to canter straight past Dean Brown and Chip spraying a load of water at them as we went for pay back of the soaking with sea water early. We than returned to our trailers us 5 wet water but laughing together just in time to have our picnic together with the other YR's.

Monday 30th was another day of early rising and mucking out before breakfast. Group 1 went off for a hack whilst group 2 had a flatwork lesson and group 3 watched, before swapping over. Rosemary had booked Nick Earnshaw a Metropolitan Police Officer to teach us. Instead of nice high marks for tack and turn out we all got low marks a lot of looks of surprise went round the group. Lunch was at 1pm. Gavin Schofield came to do assessments of each horse which all of us found really interesting. Rosemary then sat us all down (parents included) for a talk on vetting and pulses. Afterwards Rosemary told us we would have another lesson in the school but this time jumping! Who says Endurance horses can't jump? We all had an hours jumping lesson with no falling off or injury not that Rosemary would allow this of course! That evening, there was a talk and quiz by Dodson and Horrell, plus free treats for the horses.

Tuesday 31st. the usual stable duties before breakfast. The plan for riding was the same as before. Nick continued to mark us all low, so after lunch we all went in our teams to have discussions on what to do. Our plans were decided for next morning. We overheard what others were doing. Sarah and Rachel team captains for Green and Red had bought green and red ribbon to go in there manes and tails. The Yellow Team (I was team captain of) all wondered what we could do. Luckily mums are always there to help and while Shelby's mum was at the shop she went round looking for yellow ribbon. Typical the shop had sold out of that colour, but we were given yellow polo shirts instead, (big thank you to Michelle France!!). Rosemary had also organised Claire Bruce a human physio to come and teach us. We all went round to the neighbour's house who had kindly lent Rosemary her pool for use. We were taught in our riding groups and had a great laugh together. Luckily the weather had cheered up since Sunday. I stupidly hadn't put enough sun cream on and was a nice red colour for the rest of the day. After dinner that evening we all set off in cars to the Liphook Equine Hospital for a tour round there. This was really interesting and the 2 hours we were there flew by without any of us noticing.

Wednesday 1st, after our yellow teams talk yesterday we had decided that we would make more of an effort to get better presentation marks. I was team captain for the yellows and had most of the younger ones in my team. We had all decided to plait our horses up so I was woken up by Dean and Shelby at 6am to plait there's and other's horses. So we all turned up into Nick's lesson plaited up and wearing our team yellow t-shirts. And YES! Our team marks did go up!! All teams were getting quite competitive with the scoring and I had daily updates from Dean and Shelby on how our team was faring against the other. Before lunch Claire took us for another swimming lesson for about an hour. After lunch all the horses were assess by the Young Rider's Team vet, Derek Grantham and Caroline. The Team Farrier, Chris Pell was also there to look at all horses feet. All horses were individually assessed and reports made about them. After dinner that evening the top farrier from Liphook came to give us a talk on shoeing, the way the foot moves and structure of the hoof.

Thursday 2nd, we were all up early, although not 6am for me, as we were all taking a trip to Imber Court the Metropolitan Police Training Centre. It was about an hours drive and from there Nick (our instructor) took us for a tour round. We were firstly shown one of the schools where 5 young horses were being trained. They ranged from 4-5 years and from 15hh-17hh. It was amazing to see these horses not mind about the different obstacles such as foot-balls being kicked around them, walking over plastic rubbish, flags being draped over them and pretend bodies on the floor, plus the loud noise supplied by us YR's of course. After watching the lesson the 5 horses were than brought out into the court yard and smoke grenades were lit. All horses walked through easily as though the smoke wasn't even there. Nick than took us off to the museum. There was a big piece on one of the police horses called 'Echo' who was one of the horses who had been injured at Hyde Park by an IRA bomb going off, hitting all police horses and officers with shrapnel. We arrived back for lunch and than had a flatwork lesson with Annabel Schofield. Plus another swimming lesson with Claire.

Friday 3rd, our last day at camp. All groups of riders had to be saddled up as we were hacking to a sand school for a jumping lesson with Annabel. It was a brilliant lesson and by the end we were all jumping a course. Then there was the hack home to lunch. After lunch Rosemary gave a presentation and small prizes to the teams that had won as well as individual prizes for each category. Over the week we had been marked on Tack and Grooming, Rider Appearance, Rider Effort and Stable/Corral.

All the teams' marks had been going up as the week progressed and as we had all got up early to make sure our horses were smart. The Red Team won with; Rachel Rodgerson (Captain), Tasha Sainsbury, Carri-Ann Dark, Victoria Green and Amy Theodoru. Green Team were second with; Sarah Rodgerson (Captain), Beth Langley, Laura Brown, Louise Rich and Rosie. Then the Yellow Team; me as captain, Shelby France, Dean Brown, Kay Counter, Dace Sainsbury and Stevie Jones.

Rosemary gave us a brilliant week down there and all of us Young Rider's have enjoyed ourselves. Thanks Rosemary for everything!!!

+++ International News +++

**Congratulations to Abi Tennant
for her success as part of the Young Riders in Germany!**

Well Done!

Ride Reports



Cirencester Report

Endurance for me, all started last year, when I decided that I would see what my little 14.1hh rescue pony, Toby, was capable of. Whilst he jumps more or less everything he is pointed at, I am a very nervous jumper and have always been the one person at our 35 horse yard, riding out in the rain, whilst the others are schooling. I had done a few fun rides and really enjoyed them, so decided that I would leisurely make my way through one season from novice to intermediate, but taking it relatively easily. Well having made a few mistakes, which cut down my options for rides that season, I thought again and instead fast tracked my way through.

So this year I started in the new ‘open’ category and decided to see what we could do. I immediately found the increase in speed a surprise, it now all seemed so much faster and harder, but we did find a rhythm after a while. So after competing at a few lower distances I decided we were ready for our first 65km and entered for my very favourite ride at Cirencester – which is where I really fell in love with the sport in the first place. I had fond memories of hazy summer canters through the course and particularly of the long triumphant canter/gallop at the end, so I was looking forward to this challenge.

My two main concerns were whether Toby was really fit enough for the distance and also what the psychological effects would be on the vet gate in the middle. How would I feel about dismounting, relaxing for 50 or so minutes and then getting back on again and doing it all again? But more worryingly, how would Toby take it – he tends to think that when I get off for any period of time, work has stopped and does not take happily to anyone trying to tell him otherwise.

As it turns out, these were the least of my worries!

Four days before the event, I had Toby newly shod and the following morning he went out to the field as part of his normal routine. When I brought him in that night he had lost a shoe! Then the weather turned and rain set in. Thankfully my farrier is local and therefore came two days later at 8 in the morning to put a new shoe on – unfortunately he could not do anything about the weather.

The day of the ride dawned for me at 4.15am, when the alarm went off and I set off to the yard after managing to force down a cup of tea and a piece of carrot cake – I really struggle to eat that early in the morning. My lovely (but extremely novice) crew, consisting of my sister and friend, arrived at 6am and by 6.20am Toby was on the trailer and we were off. We arrived at Cirencester to a muddy field and it was STILL raining!

Tobys heart rate was 38bpm and he trotted up sound, so he was soon tacked up and we were off. This is the point where I always marvel, as, up until now Toby is extremely laid back and calm, almost ignoring everything going on around him and then it is as if a switch is pressed and he takes off like a rocket with me holding on for dear life!

The course was unbelievably muddy, making it very hard on Toby as he was constantly having to pull his legs clear from the clinging clay. It was also hard on me, as his slipping and sliding jarred my back and the constant rain on my glasses meant my vision wasn't brilliant, causing a persistent dull headache. My crew got lost and missed me at the first crew point, but someone elses lovely crew gave Toby a drink of sugar beet water and sloshed him for me – (whoever you were – thankyou very much!) Luckily my crew met me at the next point and were there ready when we bowled into the venue for the vet gate. We presented and his heart rate was 50bpm which I was happy with at that stage. Being a bit novice at this, we didn't get back to the start for another 35 minutes and a rather surprised time-keeper told us to 'just go'!

It was STILL raining, we were on our own, without another horse in sight and Toby REALLY DID NOT WANT TO DO THIS ANYMORE (surely he had finished hadn't he?!). I struggled to keep him in a regular trot and once he napped right round and I thought we were going to be

back at the start again. Thankfully my crew met me at the next crew point and Toby welcomed the attention – the bad news was that the riders in front were a long way ahead and from talking to other crews, it was likely the riders behind were a long way behind, so we were going to be staying on our own for some time to come.

Things got worse. Toby started to favour his front right leg about eight miles from home. However a horse came up behind us and suddenly Toby remembered that he enjoyed all of this and that his leg didn't hurt after all, pricked up his ears and took off with me. We kept up with the other horse for some time until we had to go across some stony ground and Toby decided that his foot really hurt after all. I shouted for the other rider to go on and got off. Toby had lost a shoe (the other one) and was really feeling sorry for himself. We were now about seven miles from home, it was STILL raining and I was walking in the mud with a lame horse. I rang my crew, but they must have been out of signal range, so I left a 'very sorry for myself' message.

However, every time we came to grass or mud, Toby went sound, it was only stones or concrete/tarmac he was lame on. So I got back on and nursed him over these bits and pushed him where the going was good. Another horse caught up with us and Toby perked up again. All of a sudden, I realised we were nearly home and checked my watch – we could still make it! I had to get in before 4pm and it was ten minutes to 4! As the final field came in sight I asked Toby to speed up, but he had already realised where he was and went into a gallop at the sight of 'home'. The first circuit had involved us turning off the course to go for the vetting and in Tobys head this was where 'home' was and mid gallop veered right and nearly unseated me. My crew rushed forward and I shouted to them to 'leave me alone, I might get eliminated' (not sure about that one, but I was in sight of the finish line and was not taking any chances as I was still in the saddle). Toby and I had a battle about which way to go to the finish line, but thankfully I won in the nick of time – I came through at 3.58pm!

I still thought I might be eliminated due to Tobys lameness, however we all worked on him to get his heart rate down and walked him around to keep him supple. After 20 minutes we presented and waited for the

longest minute in the world to get his heart rate – 64bpm – we were still in the running. Then Karen trotted him up for me (my legs were too jelly-like to be up to the task). Luckily this was on grass and although he was a bit reluctant going away, he trotted up freely and soundly coming back. Now it was down to whether or not we had worked the times out correctly. After half an hour, I couldn't wait any longer and went to get my results – we had done it in 10.18km per hour – just above the slowest for my level!

YIPPEE – despite everything, my tough little pony had done it (and we have the lovely rosette to prove it).

Please, please thank all the people who organise and man the event – they are unsung heroes, but more than anything I thank my lovely sister and friend for getting out of bed at an unearthly time on their Sunday off, to go racing around the countryside getting themselves and their car muddy and wet, in order to support me in this mad sport I follow.

Sue Linney

SIGNS & NOTICES FOR ORGANISERS

Mark Holland can make notices and signs for your event.

He has his own laminator taking sizes up to A3,
so can save money over shop prices.

As seen at Tintern, Maryland, March Hares! and FoD Bluebell Rides.

Telephone Mark on 01989- 565 249 to discuss.

Our First Trip to Horseshoe

It was in 2005 when I saw that there was to be a 2 day 40/40 ride at the Golden Horseshoe I thought that it would be something to aim at for the next season as at this time I did not consider either horse nor I to be ready for it. I then read and listened with envy the ride reports and tales of what a great time was had by both crews and riders.

That this class was not included in 2006 was a great disappointment, however as soon as I saw that it was included in the schedule for 2007 as the Exmoor Experience, I immediately booked accommodation and stabling.

My fitness programme was to start with a 30k at Hopwas Hop – only to be foiled by the only snow of the year! So then 50k at March Hares and 65k at Bluebell and all was going well. My final pre-Horseshoe ride was to be 65k at Berkshire Downs so the week before a few of us went to the gallops but on the first circuit Lady started coughing which I thought was due to the dust coming off the track, but turned out to be an upper respiratory track infection – so no Berkshire Downs. I was then concerned about her fitness but decided to go to Horseshoe anyway and if I had any doubts retire after day 1, assuming I got that far.

We arrived in Exford in the early afternoon on the Saturday and were well pleased with the turnout but slightly alarmed by the stabling, which were open pens in a very large barn together with pigs, bulls, sheep and chickens! We spent the rest of the day setting up and settling in and the evening in the White Horse in Exford.

The rain started on Saturday evening, continued for most of the night and then poured for all of Sunday morning. We drove up to the venue field during the morning to register and see Krissie and Desi off on their ‘pleasure ride’. I think they were soaked before they started.

On our ‘reccy’ round the route we were hardly able to see the pleasure riders through the rain and mist, they all deserved medals for going out there in those conditions. We were due to vet mid afternoon and just before I went to get Lady ready for the 2 mile hack down to the venue –

the rain stopped! I joined up with Del on the way down and we both vetted successfully. By this time parts of the parking and venue fields were like mud baths and vehicles were getting stuck in the gateways.

In spite of an excellent meal and a few drinks, I didn't sleep a wink that night and I don't this Lady rested much either. Del and I once again joined up on the hack to the venue and started within a minute of each other and so were able to ride together. Out on the course there were a few stretches of good cantering but as for the rest it seemed that when we weren't in boggy ground we were on stones and when we weren't going up steep hills we were coming down them and you certainly needed a horse that would go through water. I was so pleased to arrive back at the venue and on silver speed. Lady's pulse dropped quite easily to 50 (which is good for her) but she was so uptight at the vetting because her riding companion was not by her side that it shot up to 60 and we dropped down to bronze.

We spent the evening in Withypool where once again we had good company and an excellent meal. I slept like a log and as I had left Lady in her turnout rather than her stable, she was much more relaxed.

The route for day 2 was the same as day 1, but ridden in the opposite direction and we started in reverse order from the previous day. So it was my turn to wait at the start so we could once again ride together and we all knew what to expect, except that today we had the added hindrance of yet more rain. Lady and I just managed to finish once again within silver speed and with only three shoes – but successfully passed the vetting with much lower heart rates than on the previous day. I think she is much fitter and more capable than I give her credit for. It was a long slow walk back to the stables – I think the horses towed us most of the way. We were on a high, had achieved better results than we had hoped for and had sound horses – both who could have gone on.

At the prize giving in the evening I was thrilled to receive such beautiful rosettes, including one for my crew, a medal and a £25 voucher from Hilton Herbs.

It certainly was the hardest ride that I have ever done but an experience that I would not have missed for the world and it was so satisfying to have

completed. The atmosphere was fantastic as was the camaraderie of competitors, crews and helpers. I was also struck by the welcoming attitude of the local people many of whom asked if we had enjoyed the ride and if we were coming back next year. I said at the time that I would never do it again – but who knows what the future may bring.

My thanks must go to Del, Krissie and Desi and their partners for all their help, company and encouragement, and to my crew as without them we would not have had the fantastic Exmoor Experience.

Jan Rath



Articles

LEOPARDS DON'T CHANGE THEIR SPOTS

And there was me beginning to think that Joe, my 15h2 dark bay hairy cob, had changed his ways. I had watched all the new fancy movements which he has started to perform in the schooling arena. I was using the borrowed Pathfinder saddle which makes me sit deeper and I had put the whip to one side. We had gone up to the Xmas Tree car park in Wentwood where all the Offa's Dyke Endurance Group had parked up. I had paid my respects to the event organisers. Joe was instantly recognised by the two ladies from last year. They didn't remember me, but they remembered Joe. I pointed out that he was a little slimmer last year but, of course, this was because he had now filled out - met the potential of his breeding, shall we say. No doubt he would appear to those ladies as being positively dumpy when compared with all the lean, fit - even skinny, Arabs. Eventually Joe and I moved off and rode up towards the ridge. A short sharp canter took the wind out of Joe's sails but we got to the top quite quickly and dropped down the other side. Going down the steep slope Joe was very positive in his movements - if anything a little too fast even for a sure footed cob but I took no notice at the time. Suddenly we were amongst the pink ribbons, which marked the route for the ODEG. We mosied along - the terrain can be quite uneven along this path and eventually we reached the road at the bottom of the hill. We were motoring at what I felt to be a smart walk but then suddenly I heard : "clip clop". All of a sudden a voice called out: "Is it OK for me to come thru?". Blimey, I thought, she must be fast but I called back : "Of course". I nudged

Joe over to the right to allow her to pass inside and very quickly the pair were in front and moving away. It was a Mature Lady mounted on a smart and lean Arab.

Joe suddenly perked up - "what's this?" His neck came right up. The pair turned off left at the junction to follow the ribboned route, which it so happened, was the quickest way home for us. Joe suddenly went into super hype. Instantly we were on tip toe. It would not have been appropriate to follow the Mature Lady and her steed. If I had allowed Joe to go after her now that she was out of sight, we would have taken off at the gallop and rightfully she would have been miffed to say the least. A heavy horse like Joe galloping up a tarmac lane is not an elegant sight. It is not a true gallop - it is more of a flat charge. He would not have stopped until he was alongside his new equine mate - Sheik Omar - if that is what the Arab is called. If I had actually lost control of Joe, then to stop him would have been tricky - even if a tractor was coming the other way. As it was he still tried all of the evasions - nose up, nose down, sharp turns left, barging backwards bum first. But he needs the use of his neck to move on and I had the neck bent. This display was interspersed with several loud horse calls to the Sheik - which luckily were not replied to. Finally I got him to stand but it was a jittery stand, facing the way we had come but at least we were not going sideways, backwards or to the left or right. However the big risk was that other ODEG riders would soon be coming along this lane.

In truth there was no option for me. I had to turn away from home and head down towards Whitebrook. That route is a long quite steep and very slippery lane with few passing places. The danger is that the horse will lose its footing. With only one full wheelie, I got him pointed him down the lane and we set off. As luck would have it, up behind us came a 4WD with a trailer. I dare not trot on - the driver had to be patient and must follow me slowly until we got to the field entrance. Luckily he was the well mannered sort. When we got to Jan and John's place, Joe knew that if we turned left we might meet up with the ODEG again - so we had another little tussle. I pushed him on and down an even steeper stretch of the road. And so the ride continued. Before we got to Hamilton's place we had met up with five or six cars and one tractor trimming the hedgerows. Getting past that tractor was a game for sure, with my pointing Joe into a field hoping that he did not realize that actually he was facing by compass the direct route for home. One effect of Joe being in this mood is the massive impulsion but actually the rider is sitting on a tinder box. The power expressed by 635 kilos of willful cob between the thighs is enormous. The reins must be held firmly in both

gloved hands keeping the Boy's neck short. If things are getting tricky, then wrap one of the reins around the left hand. He's too strong for any rider to pull round right. What the rider is really trying to do is to relax but as the tension is released, so the Boy takes up the slack. Talk about: back straight, head up, toes up, heels down - all the rider can think about in this scenario is - what is coming round the corner next? Joe had the bit, a Waterford, held firmly in his jaws. The slightest encouragement to him to move up a gear would be the signal for a gallop. To stop him once on the move, the only effective technique is to aim him straight for the bank, the bush or preferably a tree, if one is handy. I was talking to him and slowly giving back the reins, letting Joe have his neck whilst sitting very light and keeping my legs away from the horse's flanks. If we were out in the open, then the thing to do would be to let him go and make him use up his energy - even push him on until he tires. But in a narrow, single track country lane, one's only option is to walk - it is far too dangerous to try trotting, especially on a downwards slope. Every now and again Joe would roar out - hoping his new found mate, the Sheik, would call back. But thankfully he never did. Oh yes, we got home safely eventually. We'd been out just over two hours. I dropped down off his hot, wet, steaming, smelly, sweaty, back and untacked him. By now, butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He had even dawdled into the yard.

As an experienced rider, I know all about apprehension passing down from the rider through the reins or down through the saddle. I understand the theory of pushing a button and the natural response should follow but delicacy doesn't stop Joe when he is having a strop. Incidentally I have never read in any horsey book, how to make a horse roar out. Neither do I know what makes Joe show the signs of hunting fever, when all he has seen are a few pink ribbons and one fancy Arab, ridden by a very polite Mature Lady. A lady, who had absolutely no idea of the impact she had had on both me and Joe. However the really sad thing is that I can't join up either with the ODEG or any other group until My Boy Joe has learned some manners. But the big problem is how do I teach him manners which he will mind when he is in super hype mode?

I suppose we could always start up a milk cart racing group.

Barry (& Joe) Godden

“Where’s Sue ?” or “How to spend a few idle hours at the weekend”

Nothing disturbed the peace and quiet of the Gloucestershire morning except the rustle of a pork pie wrapper, the gentle splash of coffee and the faint tinkle of the flapjack as it emerged from its tin foil. “Here she comes” I shouted excitedly and rush headlong to collect the sloshes, casting Somerfields Best Broccoli Quiche aside and standing ready prepared. “Barbara: it’s a grey” said Angela in a “God she’s useless” tone of voice. Well it could have been Sue on Robbie (a chestnut). She rides a grey now sometimes anyway so I must be a kind of psycho.

Little did I know I would exchange the relaxed and languid days of crewing the Forest of Dean and Bluebell rides for getting up at 4 am, dragging across acres of motorway heading for far flung parts of the EU (Blackburn, Norfolk and France). One of the high spots of the UK trips was a lorry driver at Frankley services: Lorry Driver: “that water looks a bit dirty” . Tone of voice implying the RSPCA were en route. Me:” Ha ha , its got sugar beet in it (muppet)”. Tone of voice implying I am smug endurance nutritional expert guru (which obviously I am). There were several high spots of the Sangatte expedition. Sue did her usual ride tactics of an apparently slow start .. I have decided to go for a gold medal in the “waiting in numerous lay bys like Nobby Nomates whilst everyone else charges past but then she catches up at vetgates and we all cheer like mad when she does really well at the end” event. One high spot was Sue finishing in fine style on the beach: another was my husband locking himself in the only toilet at the venue. On reflection the true high spot was hiding in the bushes watching a succession of other people getting locked in the toilet: pathetic but it kept us amused until the beer arrived. It also meant we were on hand to walk Ryu around after the race to make sure he did not get stiff: he did not and next day looked like he could do the same thing all over again. What a fantastic, lovely horse. He certainly taught Johnny Foreigner a thing or two: “attention les chevaux” indeed . Even if he does sometimes look like he should be wearing a cravat and be called Simon. When he’s a bit fitter I’ll let him go for a ride with my Welsh Cob....

At least on the Development Squad rides you get decent accommodation (well done Des, cheque's in the post, mate). I do believe it was Tony's intention before he left to pass an Act of Parliament decreeing all crews had to stay in luxury 5 star hotels with hot towels, fluffy duvets and hot and cold running butlers: I shall remind Gordon next time I see him. Sue's idea of luxury is to actually have air in the air bed. She does cook a mean curry: hmmm, pilchard madras or eating my own arm, it's a close one...

I have managed to forget the humiliation of the FEI trot up. "she can't run very fast can she?" "she'll have to do better than that, what's the matter with her feet?" If I could have breathed at the end I'd have told them I was very busy and important Monday to Friday, but I can't, am too tired and go and have a lie down ready for another day of crewing for Sue, stopping only to order the "I know Sue Box" tee-shirts that I'll need when she gets his bloomin' heels sorted out...

PS: this is all rot of course, Sue is a very easy person to crew for. Honestly.

Barbara Rees

Email News!!!

Would you like to be kept up to date with the latest **Offa's Dyke news** by **email?**

We sometimes hear of events too late to include in our newsletter – such as pleasure rides & events by other groups.

I will set up an email mailing list to try to keep you up to date with the latest news. If you would like me to add you to the mailing list, please send an email to me. I will try to keep you up to date with any last minute news and send reminders out about events such as the pub night out.

Carolyn Edwards - email: carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk

Golden Horseshoe 2007 2 Day 80 Exmoor Exp.

Dave and myself with Mervyn and Dessie, Krissie and Rob went to Exford last October. We ladies rode the P.R. from Timberscombe. It was at the ride that I and several others 'badgered' Barbara Wrigley about the 2 day 80 Class. Obviously she and the other organisers bowed to pressure and the class at Exford went ahead. Serious weight loss was the next objective, horse and rider suffered hunger pangs!! Serious training was considered but side-lined. However, the day came. ON the Sunday before the G.H. a very well attended P.R. was organised – The weather was dreadful, dreadful, dreadful – Dave and I went out to reccie the course in the sheeting rain. We saw two vehicles parked up – the crews were holding two animals (were they horses?) no riders – they were in the cars changing their clothes. Krissie and Dessie emerged from their cars – dry – Mervyn and Rob went back into their cars – wet. The horses just looked miserable.

Monday arrived. Set off with Jan Rath and Lady Dancer – we wore our coats, about ½ way were both soaked with perspiration. Lost precious time Removing coats and plodded on. Neither horse liked the going and the riders didn't much either. My knee was very painful. I had knocked it on a gate post the previous week and then I had a nasty fall in the stables on Sunday. Finish of day one I was exhausted, had to be helped form saddle, Kirssie trotted up Duette for me. – Silver speed which was what I had hoped for and good heart rate – Duettes not mine.

After hacking back to the stables I felt much better. That evening. Good night at the pub!

Tuesday start out again with Jan and Lady and without coat – Later struggled to put it back on. The mud was really deep now, but I felt better the I did on Monday. Duette seemed in fine form and was trotting out well on the form bits and roads. Just before the finish lady had lost a shoe. Since we were nearly back and she was not alone I left Jan and went 'for it' to try and get in on silver time. We did it and passed the vet (both of us). Jan and Lady cam in also on silver time and Lady was , unfortunately for Jan Lady's heart rate on day one was slightly over 56 so she was placed Bronze.

I was delighted and so was Jan as our horses had gone well together and travelled at the speed that they could cope with. I knew that Gold would be impossible on Duette so I didn't even think about it, Silver was a possible. Both horses and riders recovered well, but daddles and boots suffered. Crews recovered when the wet outside was changed to the "wet inside".

A tough ride and well deserved praise fo all who managed it at all levels and sympathy to all who didn't.

Delwyn



Helpers!

Helpers are always needed and the Group are planning to co-ordinate a list of helpers and officials – please, please let any committee members know if you are able to help out and in what capacity. Also if your vet, farrier or if you know of a paramedic etc. would be willing to “officiate”

It Was 20 Years Ago.....

The notice about the 20th anniversary pig roast took me back to how it began....

In 1986 there were very few distance rides anywhere, almost none under a three hour drive from here. There was no structure to help with the transition from happy hacker to serious endurance competitor. Almost no one had heard of long distance riding as a sport, it was just trekking, wasn't it?

My desire to up my speed and mileage started with an article about the Tevis Cup and a picture of someone tailing up a cliff. More realistically the realization that talented Warrens Hill Shimara could hack to Chepstow Show, successfully compete all day, and hack back (much as I had regularly done as a pony clubber with no family trailer) .25 miles taken steady was thus already my mental starting point, and as the competitive classes started at 25 at a moderate fixed speed it seemed it could be done. Aided and abetted by Lesley Dunn and Freda Waycott who were already at a higher level with their stallions we flogged round the local lanes, went twice round a hunt ride with jumps as a warmup -and then got a lift to the only relatively local CTR just because it was there. (It turned out to be the Red Dragon, on the high mountains and very severe that year, but it was at least local and indeed we flew it!) .

Going it mostly alone on training rides was a hard grind though- if we were to prepare for longer rides and the race classes some company, and some more local milestone competitions to aim for, would not go amiss .

In October 1986 I organized a 20 mile pleasure ride from Trellech to try to judge the interest and find like minds. 80 horses showed up. Thus encouraged, the winter edition of the EHPS newsletter carried my advert for anyone interested in forming a group to contact me. We soon had an informal committee and a top class winter lecture programme,(including Margaret Montgomerie and Rosie Swales) prizes from a feed maker, and on 28th Feb 87 40 people came to the North and voted the formation of a formal

group affiliated to EHPS. (There were also some difficult phone calls from another group fearful that we would steal their entries – the idea of oversubscribed rides was unimaginable to them !!)

The rest, as they say, is history.

The growth of the group in geographical area, number and ability of members , number of rides and support levels has been a constant source of delight and amazement . Our riders have succeeded internationally, nationally, and locally. We have both some of the original horses (Shimmer still cheerful at 29)and their progeny. The band of small children who were our first vet runners on their trikes are international endurance juniors whilst others of them compete at high level in rowing and hockey. Their different success is probably also not surprising as they grew up understanding about fitness and teamwork, shiatsu ,diet and perseverance. Some of us originals are still riding competitively, some have hung up the irons but still look to the hills -and the tracks over the top.

Im tremendously proud of having kicked Offas Dyke off and of what it has done since . I probably wont come to the pig roast but heres a toast to the friends human and equine made and treasured - and heres to the next amazing chapter in the history of this excellent group.

Fiona Wilton

For Sale

Beautiful, Good natured, well handled part bred Exmoor filly yearling. To make around 13hh £300 ono

Sire - Purebred Exmoor, dame Exmoor/thoroughbred

Contact Penny Cavill 01291 621342

Advertisements & Notices

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1 Brown Contour Master Saddle. Adjustable 17 ½ “ good condition
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1 Black Free-n-easy Saddle 17 ½ good condition £400 ono

3 neoprene girths for above £8.00 each

2 pairs fluffy booties for above £15 per pair

1 girth and 1 pr fluffies will go with saddle for £400

1 pr green water disperser numnah cost £100 – really works! For F.n.E.
£50-ono

Contact Delwyn after 14/8/07 Tel. 01432 870348



Lorry with Box for Sale

**(K Reg) Leyland DAF 45/130 with Large Aluminium box.
Easy Drive + PAS**

**Will easily carry 3 horses + water tack etc.
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Contact Penny or Dennis Cavill Mob 07774 255397

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Are you willing to have your name, address and phone number circulated to ALL members and newsletter subscribers. 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

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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 for the newsletter