



Offa's Dyke Group  
Of Endurance GB  
**Newsletter – May 2008**



**Chairman's Comment**

Hello everyone. I hope that you are enjoying the season so far.

The early rides at Maryland and Forest of Dean March Hares were thoroughly enjoyable - Thank you to the organisers and helpers at both rides. In particular, Chris Wray stepped in as a first-time organiser for Forest of Dean, whilst Debbie spent some time in Australasia. It is a shame that by going away she missed the brilliant sunshine at these rides!

On a serious note, there were some problems with rude behaviour at March Hares, the excuse being the difficulty parking at this venue. As we all know, the venue is not ideal in many ways, but that does not mean it is acceptable to be abusive to people who have given up their time to help. We are aware that the main protagonist was not an OD member, but please be aware that entries to future rides may be refused to people who persist with this sort of behaviour. End of lecture!

It was very unfortunate that the Bluebell ride was lost due to military training on the route. As organiser, I take the blame for not working this out better with the Forestry – so that is a lesson for the future. It is unlikely that we will be able to fit the ride into the calendar later this year, but it is still being considered.

However, we do have a very full programme of Group rides through the year, so there should be plenty to keep us occupied. I am hoping to get a new venue for Plump Hill this year, which will be in the Forestry. The access is good, straight off the A4136, so it will allow those with big horseboxes to park too.

We also have an ongoing programme of training events, including the one at Caradoc at the beginning of June. The facilities there are excellent, so hopefully everyone will find it an enjoyable and interesting day.

Sharon

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## Editor's Comment

Time for another news letter. How time does fly. The new season is now well underway. None of the early rides were lost through snow this year, though sadly we lost the Forest of Dean Bluebell Ride due to a clash with Ministry of Defence exercises.

The reports on our local rides are mostly from me, only because no-one else commented on them and I think it is hard on our local Ride Organisers if their rides do not even get a mention Please do send me reports on rides you have done, I am supposed to edit the newsletter not provide all the reports!

We do have exciting accounts of riding abroad from three Offa's Dyke members who have ridden abroad Liz Taylor and Fiona Griffiths who did a great job flying the flag in competitions abroad. Congratulations to both of them, and Rachel Williams who had a good time riding in New Zealand on holiday

There is also a plea from Thay Stephenson for us to enter Team Spirit or the Pair competition at Lindum. There is also a Team Spirit Class at Dukeries. Offa's Dyke has done well at that in the past but last year Roger Brown met no response to his offer to organise such a team If any of you out there would like to do so this year I am sure Roger would still be willing to help but the initiative has to come from you, the members I apologise for mistakenly saying that EGB members would get a £5 discount at all Cotswold Farm Park Rides when in fact it was only for 1 or 2 taster sessions though it is possible that we may be able to do a deal later I have now gone there twice and would say that even at the full price it is very worthwhile I have gone round twice each time but 3 times round could easily be fitted in with an early start There are some good uphill grassy canters, little road work, and of course optional jumps

Finally a plea for helpers both for Cranham on 13<sup>th</sup> July and Ludlow on 1/2/3/August which gives an opportunity to ride on 1 or 2 days and help on the other 2/1. Anyone who helps on 1 day will get free camping for the duration of the Ride

STOP PRESS Congratulations to Rachael Rogerson on Gryphon who won the 160km at Berkshire Downs, thus becoming Southern Champion as well as Northern Champion. Also to Sue Loveridge on Spider who won the Tyro ER in which Jan Rath also came sixth. Full report to follow next time.

# **YOUNG RIDER NEWS!**

## **Report from Abigail Tennant Young Rider Representative**

Hey All,

Hope your competitions so far this season have turned out well and good luck for the rest of the season!

Rosemary is holding two camps this year as her camp last year was such a success. The first is on 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> July and the second is 20<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> July. For those of you who went to camp last year Annabel Schofield will be instructing us on our riding as well as Donald Kear. Dave Nichols will be there again to talk to us on farriery and Rosemary has also booked a saddler to look at our saddles and talk to us. Claire Bruce, the rider physio, will be back again to give us some fab ways to get fit by swimming and teach us in the swimming pool there; hopefully we will have the sun again this year like last. Rosemary is also planning to take us to the gallops to give us some training with our horses. Both weeks are identical so whichever you prefer, well worth going what ever level of young rider or junior you are.

For those of you who have qualified for the Team, Rosemary is planning to run Team Training during the summer half term after Dukeries. This will either be the Monday-Tuesday or the Tuesday-Wednesday at her place in Sussex. If you wish to go please get in touch with her asap so that she can decide which days to do it.

As you know the Young Rider European Championships this year are in Oviedo, Spain. There is to be a dummy ride at Oviedo on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Rosemary is flying over to see the venue and she will also book accommodation etc for September.

Also next year is the Young Rider World Championships this is to be held in Hungary. There is to be a dummy ride at the end of April this year. Rosemary is planning on sending information about the dummy run when she has it.

I am holding a social evening to raise some funds for the Young Rider Team. Should be a good night with rounders of course, details below.

Now some good news to do with one of our Young Riders but isn't to do with Endurance. Natalie Johnson is a Young Leader with the Guiding Association and was selected at a Young Leader selection weekend last year to travel to Sangam in India this summer to teach English to children. She has to raise £1500 for her trip so at the moment is planning some fund raising events.

Hoodies are available to Junior Rider, Young Riders and Young Riders who are on the squad. For details and ordering please contact me by email at [abbi\\_tennant@hotmail.com](mailto:abbi_tennant@hotmail.com)

Abbi

P.S. Don't forget to send some ride reports in.

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**\*\*\*\*\*CHANGE OF DATE\*\*\*\*\***

**Chedworth Ride now 19 October  
due to clash with Arab Marathon**

**June 1 Training Day Caradoc Farm**

**Currently fully booked, but if you want to put your name on a waiting list for cancellations contact Carolyn Edwards**



## **BEAN FEAST** **Saturday 9th August 7pm'ish**



The Young Rider's European Championship is to be held at Oviedo in Northern Spain this September. Offa's Dyke has 3 young rider's who are qualified for selection; Rachael, Sarah and Abbi whilst Louise is working towards qualification. It is quite possible that OD may have a young rider represent their country! Even if none are selected those who do represent their country will have a wonderful experience that will last a life time, and also learn the valuable lessons of working together and caring for their horses whilst traveling and competing in a foreign land.

**All our Teams are self funded and I hope you will support our Young Rider's by attending a Bean Feast (Yes a \*arty Party)!!**

**To be held at Nan Del's and Grandpop Dave's house at Holme Lacy, Hereford.**

**“ Not just any ol' beans but D&D's beans.”**

Various beans cooked/presented in a variety of ways for the meat lovers and veggies. Followed by scrumptious puds cooked by your committee- as sampled at our birthday pig roast last year! Squash and Beverages included - bring your own alcohol.

And by popular request ROUNDERS! (At players own risk on grazing paddock not level sports field).

Tickets = £10 cheques made payable to EGB Offas Dyke

For tickets and directions, SAE to Abbi Tennant, Mitchmore Del, Holme Lacy, Herefordshire, HR2 6LJ

Bring a chair and a bottle. Room for camping if staying over.

## Report on Novice Training seminar 13<sup>th</sup> April 2008

**By Jenny Myerscough**

Sunday afternoon 13th April we all gathered at the home of Belinda Josephi and were both entertained and informed by the joint experiences of Belinda, Carolyn Edwards and Gina Harris.

Peanuts, Belinda's affable little endurance horse put up with being hauled out of his comfortable stable and being poked and prodded by us novices trying to find a heartbeat. We eventually decided that the only way to prove that he actually had a fully operational heart was to trot him up as he would have to for the vet, and Hey Presto!, the stethoscope picked up a nice lubdup for us to hear. However it soon dropped back down to almost undetectable and Peanuts was duly returned to his afternoon doze. Gina gave us some good tips on how to adapt human heart monitors for use on our horses, and the sorts of things we could do to encourage a drop in heart beat rate at an event prior to vetting.

Carolyn had brought her "fully loaded" four x four, kitted out for crewing really efficiently, again with some really useful operational tips. We were also treated to a comprehensive run down on preparedness for an endurance ride, equipment and apparel wise, horse AND rider.

Personally I learnt just as much, and a lot more quickly more from listening to our trio that afternoon than from wading through the various books I have managed to acquire on the sport.

Many, many thanks to Carolyn for organising it all, and to our kind host, Belinda.

## Riding in Dubai By Liz Taylor

On December 8th I was sat quite contently watching some rubbish on TV, quite enjoying my winter break, when the phone rang. There was a 160km race in Dubai in January - would I like to go and would Falaina be fit enough to fly out in 3 weeks? Talk about a surprise, I thought last year was a once in a lifetime experience...was I dreaming?! I said I'd think about it and would call them tomorrow... I slept on it and decided that I had a horse that had completed 6x 160km FEI\*\*\* races, who was experienced and would be ready for the race. By mid day the following day Falaina was booked onto a flight, Marcus and I were booked into Bab Al Shams Desert resort and mum and dad had flights and hotels booked for the week of the race. All of this was done by the UAE - the speed and efficiency is astounding.

Falaina had been in rest when the surprise telephone call had arrived 3 weeks earlier to issue our invitation, however having been 160km race fit we put her back in work with lots of trips to the gallops and long working canters. We were very pleased with her efforts and felt she was more than fit and ready enough to take her place in the starting line up.

On 3rd January 2008 Falaina Bint Chatanz, Marcus and I flew out to Dubai for His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Endurance Cup - the worlds most valuable Endurance Ride with a prize fund of 1.5 million Dirhams (£220,600) and four 4x4 cars up for grabs! This is also the first race of any kind ever that HH Sheikh Mohammad has ever put his name to, and therefore it generated an absolute media storm.

We landed at Dubai Airport, were greeted by police and fast tracked through all of the controls, ushered into this HUGE great 4x4, given refreshments and hot towels then driven to our home for the next 3 weeks - a gorgeous desert hotel.

Out of a starting field of 137 horses, 26 of us had been invited from Europe (based on FEI world rankings) and were therefore out of season, the remainder were UAE based/trained horses in the height of their endurance season.

Falaina flew well and settled in perfectly, our UK horses only had 6 full days to acclimatize before the race. When you fly horses they hit their lowest ebb on the 5th day of arrival and then recover from there, therefore our horses were at a huge disadvantage. Falaina (unusually for her) decided she would stop eating and drinking properly two days before the race...and didn't start until the day later, so I wasn't overly confident.

Mum and dad flew out for the week of the ride and were put up in a gorgeous apartment in the centre of Dubai, the only downside was it was an hours drive out to us in the middle of nowhere in the desert (I was 45km from the nearest fuel station/shop/house).

The organisers looked after us superbly, we were put up in a 5 star luxury hotel for the duration of the event and had top class vet care - everything we might have wanted was sourced and delivered. There was a vast spectacular opening ceremony with food, drink and entertainment and fireworks - we had a full sit down dinner and entertainment on the hold area of the vetgate! We were treated to a private box at Nad Al Sheba racecourse and even my crew were housed in a 5 star hotel in Dubai! In the days prior to the ride, 5 of us riders were whisked off to a beach front hotel to take part in a televised press conference - I felt like a star footballer!

Whilst exercising Falaina on the exercise route one day I was filmed training and then interviewed by a TV crew and then snapped by photographers! Very, very surreal when you think how the media take such little interest in Endurance in the UK.

The day of the race dawned overcast and cooler which was ideal for the horses. Falaina went really well, the aim being to get her around the 160km at a speed fair to the conditions.

After our experience in the desert last year when we came 18th in Abu Dhabi I felt more prepared than I had a year previously... however the course couldn't have been more different with really varied terrain - deep sand, racing over sand dunes and even hard stone type tracks in places.



She was thoroughly enjoying the challenging course, but the long steep and deep sand sections really took their toll on some horses as the day wore on - Falaina as usual just got stronger and keener as the day progressed, although she was extremely unsure of the deep sand and slowed due to lack of confidence in these sections. Mum, Dad and Marcus drove next to me the whole route (except in the deep sand where they got stuck and had to be towed out -- 3 times!!) and crewed us brilliantly, its lovely being crewed so much.

We passed each of the veterinary inspections during the ride within 2 minutes all day with flying colours and we were over the moon with her performance on course and in the vetgates. She was powering across the sand and eating up the km's with ease. The heat and the desert conditions appeared not to bother her - in fact I personally think

she prefers this terrain as she can get into a nice consistent economical canter and go for miles at a good fast pace.

Falaina and I crossed the finish line in 27th position after a total riding time for the entire 160km of 9 hours 40 minutes - an average speed of 16.6kph, which is slower than our time last year but the sand was much deeper.

Unfortunately we were unable to lower her pulse to the required parameter in the time allowed and were therefore technically eliminated. A real shame as she had given me such a fantastic ride over a really tough course. But we were extremely pleased with the ride she gave me and to finish 27th in such amazing company with 3 weeks notice shows what a phenomenal horse she really is. Falaina then settled down in her coral for the next 4 days to relax, mum and dad got a day of sightseeing before flying back to the UK and I thought about sunbathing... in the rain.

Two days after the ride I was lucky enough to receive a telephone call asking if I wanted to extend my stay for a few extra days to ride a horse in a 100km FEI\*\* Ladies race at Al Asayel Endurance Village near Abu Dhabi for the Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad Al Maktoum stable. Of course I accepted and was lucky enough to be given the ride on a wonderful 6 year old Australian bred arab.

I had to go to the stables the day before the ride to ride out, which was great as I got to see the yard and training facilities which are second to none, I also got to ride with Meg Wade who was also riding for this stable. The horse felt like it was going to buck the whole way, but instead it just took a keen hold (ok, pretty much bolted the whole 100km...!)

The race was quite an eye opener; there were police cars lining the route as there were no "local" men allowed as the Sheiks were riding and therefore not in national dress. The horse gave me a wonderful ride and we finished in 11th place. The stables were fantastic to ride for and it was great to be able to experience endurance as it is over in the UAE - a professional and popular sport - it was amazing to be

crewed in the 'UAE way' jumping off the horse in the VG's and watching how the pro's do it! After the ride we were treated to dinner (goat cooked whole - skull and all) by the trainer.

I was very grateful for this opportunity and would very much love to be invited to ride these horses again.

Falaina and I are now home and back to the cold British winter, we had an absolutely wonderful experience and I would urge any one ever given this opportunity to grasp it with both hands, it is an experience you will never, ever, forget.

### **Maryland Pleasure Ride 10th February 2008**

Last years Ride was postponed due to snow. No such problem this year. Though the soft tracks at the beginning were very muddy, the rest of the route road very well and Bonnie thoroughly enjoyed a good canter on the harder tracks especially the long pull up from the river. The marking was excellent and there was a good turn out of group members.

### **Wyre Forest Pleasure Ride 23rd February**

This ride which is on the edge of our patch, is another early ride that can be beset by weather problems I remember one year when it was marked with lime and there were so many patches of snow it was very confusing! No such problem this year It was a very nice day I have never known the tracks less muddy and the usual marker movers were not in evidence. I have to admit I have got lost on this ride in the past but a strategically placed steward where loops interlinked made it very easy (Well done Jane Sparrey standing out there all day!) I rode with Carolyn on Patches and we had a very good day

## A Trip to India    Fiona Griffiths



It all started with an advert on the egb web site asking if anyone wanted to make up a team and fly the British flag. India were putting on an international 50k race ride, to run along side their National Championship Rides of 100k 80k and 60k

Well it sounded like an adventure and as I am of a certain age thought I should go, if it was possible.

Problems first. Time off, horse care, visa, and money.

Sorted Daughter covered work. Friend covered horses, I had a day in Birmingham, interesting and then I saved and borrowed and off I went. On the way to Heathrow my daughter said I was mad, I didn't even know the other three ladies, but that was ok they were just like me, mad.

Long trip, slept and talked, made three great new friends, all total wrapped in their horses.

Anyhow the accommodation was a wonderful ancient fort (dilapidated) the food totally authentic Indian and the service slow. We learnt over the first couple of days that everything is slow.

Eventually we tried our horses, riding them twice for about 30mins each time, they were the horses used for safaris run from Dundlod fort.

They were fit and hard but we had no idea if they would be up to 50k. They were kept tethered by the neck 24/7 in the sand. The tack was something to behold, ex army saddles and bridles that didn't fit, even where they touched; they seldom wore the same stuff twice. We did our best to make them comfortable but you couldn't make too many changes, as this is what they knew. We were getting excited now. On the Saturday there was a grand parade of all the teams, a real spectacle of colours, if we had known, we too would have dressed up, Jim the Scottish rider carried the flag for us, we thought we may lose him at any time, as his was the tent pegging pony, very fast and probably the fittest of our horses.

Sunday was 100k day, went down to see them off Lesley Ann. got involved with her heart rate monitor and was sought by everyone, she worked hard and the rest of us helped out crewing as they had little idea. I also spent some time vet writing. We were pretty much left to our own devices, so had plenty of time to chat with all the officials who were very keen for us to see how well run the event was.

Monday was our day, all very excited, team plan was to ride together for the first loop and then do our own thing on the second, Jim joined us, as did the French lady Carly.

The mass start was a little hairy, but we were lucky to be able to set off in front and lead the way for the first 7k when the Indian ladies team and some individuals passed us. The horses settled well and Lesley and I were able to keep up a good pace, both of us having taken our garmins. Caroline who has ridden in India before on safari, led the way with Lesley stopping her from galloping and burning and I rode with Bryony whose little horse was turning out to be the least fittest but still game.

We covered our first 25k well Lesley vetted first on 1.40.10 with me just after 1.42.20 the others took a little longer.

Lesley set off first flying out of the vet gate, we were on our own now, it seemed for ever before I was allowed to go off, as I went cantering across the polo field, I didn't even know if my horse had ever ridden on her own before, but nothing for it, we just had to kick on, I was hoping to catch Lesley as she had a much better sense of direction than

me. Pushing hard I caught her before the 5k markers, relentless is the only word for it, hot, dusty, sharp right hand corners on narrow cart tracks, and bushes with needles, camels, donkeys, water buffalo, the colours and the smell. I was really here and going for it, very exciting. Just after the 20k mark we heard the Indian ladies team coming up behind, on we went push, canter, push, water at every opportunity ,push, Lesley would not let me stop. I was amazed at my little horse she felt as if there was nothing left, but she still picked up, as we got close to the polo field I said to Lesley should we go in together or race for it but Leslie is a real fighter and wanted to race. So we pushed on the horses holding there own, as we went around the polo field past the grand stand and back to the finish, my little horse managed to find a hidden reserve and we left Lesley behind.

I fell off in my haste, in front of everyone. Forgot to engage legs, now to get her through the final vetting.

30mins later she was fine, all over now just to get the rest of the team home, everyone congratulating me. I hadn't realised Lesley and I were the first back out on to the second leg and I had won!

The other teams and riders were coming in and we helped to crew there horses, all fine and safe, just to wait for the official results. No news over night and the 60k ride on Tuesday, had another good day watching and helping the standard of crewing had gone up 100 %

Then we were told there's a presentation and we had to be mounted. That caused a little concern but all was sorted.

At the presentation we were awarded team gold, Lesley Ann. had individual gold and I had silver much to all our surprises, but we could do nothing in front of everyone. I was very upset, but a week latter I was given my times, to find I was 8 secs slower than Lesley??? We never had vet sheets or any written results.

I'm a big girl, I knew it was a publicity event, but I was still upset. Would I go again, yes like a shot and I would go to win or at the very least try my best.

The horses were all fine the next day, still stood in the sand, no obvious signs of their ordeal. We had a day off to rest and travelled home on the Thursday. Had a brill time, made wonderful new friends.

## NEARLY A DAY IN PARADISE Rachel Williams

For those who don't know I left the UK on 16th January with a round the world ticket. I have definitely missed being around horses during my time away, having grown up around them. Around week 7 of my trip Mum flew into South Island, New Zealand to travel with me for 10 days. We looked for riding trips and booked a "Day in Paradise" ( for experienced riders). Paradise is an area outside Queenstown famous for being the location for films such as Lord of the Rings. We were looking forward to our day out, but the trip was cancelled the night before. We could have changed to another day trip aimed at all experiences and consisted of mainly walking. The thought of spending a day on a horse and being restricted to walk sounded like torture so we opted for a half day trip in the river valley south of Paradise.

On the morning of the ride there were a few spots of rain ( one girl on the tour immediately assumed it would be cancelled) but later it cleared up. The stables kitted us out in childrens' wellies ( we would be getting wet in the river), Drizabone coats and helmets. There were 8 in our group and two guides. I was introduced to Trevor a 15.2 Thoroughbred. He gave me a sour look and I knew we were going to get on well.

We rode mainly on the river flats, a really wide pebble valley through which the icy blue Rees and Dart rivers pick there course, changing route every couple of weeks. From the edge of the wide river flats the mountains rise up, one of the ranges of mountains were the Misty Mountains in Lord of the Rings and at the top of the valley Mount Earnslaw could be seen with its 5 glaciers and we were told is bigger than Ben Nevis!

The ride was mainly walking with lots of river crossings. Trevor was great fun, he was miserable, hated other horses and liked to be in front, all things I am used to with Star at home! Towards the end of the ride on the sandier areas we had the opportunity to canter ( for those

capable). We were told to keep in single file as all the horses were ex racehorses!! The canter was fast and Trevor certainly had more in the tank. Stopping was the hard part as the woman behind could not stop and used Trevor as a brake, making him kick out and run away. All in all it was a great ride, if not slower and more relaxing than I'm used to, which didn't leave me aching in the morning.

If you want to see photos of the area and information on the stables look at [www.dartstables.com](http://www.dartstables.com)

## **Jubilee Trail Ride - Easter Sunday**

### **Report from new member Jenny Myerscough**

Back in 1982 I owned a thoroughbred stallion called Bajan Dancer.

He had been awarded a Hunter Improvement Society Premium at Newmarket to stand in Glamorgan, I hunted him that winter, and decided to try the up and coming sport of endurance riding. We couldn't have had a worse introduction. The weather was appalling, it rained hard all day, until about the last mile, when we were overtaken by lots of very fast arabs which fact greatly offended my rather self important ex-racehorse, who promptly bruised his mouth badly enough to warrant failing the vet.

Until this year this was my one and only exposure to endurance riding.

So, in 2006, twenty four years on, having given up the challenges of thoroughbred rehabilitation, I imported a Lusitano colt from Portugal, just mouthed and backed, and felt as if I had died and gone to heaven!

Born on the bit, foaled with uphill paces and a canter to die for, this horse only needs showing once what will please you, and it is there.

I really bought this horse for dressage, in which department he is progressing nicely, but he jumps well so has done some unaffiliated jumping and eventing and hunter trials too, just to show that he can.

However, now in my sixtieth year, the appeal of a new challenge without the hassle of collecting rings and "sorry, we're running a bit late" tempted me into joining EGB at last autumn's Your Horse Live exhibition at Stoneleigh.

Our debut at the March Hares Ride, this year, went well, we both enjoyed ourselves and were well set up for the Jubilee Trail Ride down in Dorset on Easter Sunday.

The forecast, if not exactly dire, was not too encouraging, with snow forecast in many areas. In fact, we had a brief white-out going over the Mendips, but dropping down towards Dorchester all trace of wintry weather disappeared.

The venue was set in open parkland with a very superior catering company in attendance, 2 portaloos and unlimited space.

The course for the novice 38km that we entered took us through some spectacular countryside. Much of the first loop was through Puddletown Forest and adjacent heathland. We spotted some fallow deer insolently picking their way through some winter wheat, and two gates later forded the Frome River - crystal clear, running off the chalk, with beautiful emerald weed weaving with the current. Towards the end of the first loop the route took us around the edge of a quarry, and as we dropped down for a little bit of road work, the route took us through a huge watercress farm.

Leaving the road and onto a proper green lane, the local authority has attempted to thwart motor access by throwing up an Irish style bank with a narrow chicaned gap for walkers and riders. When we reached this obstacle, a couple of riders in front had just gone out of site, so in a determined effort to catch up, my little Portuguese friend decided to take the short route and jump the bank!

The second loop on our course took us into a quite different landscape,

steep sided chalk down hills, either up or down! The old pasture provided lovely fast going, and the views down over Weymouth bay breathtaking. The earlier rain had cleared the air so the Portland Bill was clear in every detail. What a privilege to be there. The sun came out and we even had a distant rainbow over towards Southampton.

One more dip down to the coastal plain, then back up onto the top and over the escarpment to the gradual drop back down to the venue. Best of all, a red rosette to finish with, despite rushing towards the end to rescue long suffering husband from terrier minding!

The organisers said that there was plenty of water en route, and they were right! Two rivers and on the second loop a water tank in just about every field, however, there were an awful lot of gates, but fortunately most were negotiable without dismounting.

The journey there from the Severn Bridge took exactly two hours. Definitely worth the effort to get there, a happy experience that has whetted our appetite for the sport.

Thanks to all the organisers and helpers! See you next year!

### **Hopwas Hop CR 1<sup>st</sup> March**

This is a very early competitive ride easily accessible to our patch. An easy journey up the motor way took us only an hour and a half. We were the first trailer to arrive! It is another ride that suffers badly from marker movers and Steve Bates was already on his way out to replace some. He obviously did a good job because we had no problem Neil Pickering kindly rode Bonnie and I had misty who was quite determined to show Bonnie that she could easily outrace her! Most of the route is through forestry with one short stretch of busy road which we did not find a problem perhaps because we were early.

## **Forest of Dean March Hares 9<sup>th</sup> March**

I have not done the March Hares for the last two years, Sundays in March having been spent rehearsing with the GODS This year Principals only were needed that Sunday and I was able to fit in the 64km ride with Bonnie. Early in the year when it has been wet the hard tracks in the Forest are very rideable. It does have the downside that the venue is very boggy.( I noticed some kind person doing a fair bit of towing of stuck vehicles )

I think I prefer the route run in that direction as it avoids the almost unending long track back to the venue when I think 'surely the venue is just round this bend' about a hundred times before it actually is .

Bonnie went well and was obviously pleased to be back in action after having the second half of last year off with cracked hooves. We rode much of the time with Chris Rose on Fair Donald, who is Bonnie's grandson. Chris insists that he remembers Bonnie and likes to be with her. She was certainly out to show him that in spite of her age she could easily outpace him!

## **Margam Park 27<sup>th</sup> April**

Last year this ride was the wettest I had done for a long time! This year the forecast in the preceding week suggested we were in for another soaking but on the day we had a little rain at the beginning ,a lot of mist on the higher tracks obscuring the view but otherwise quite a good day There were 11 starters in the 80kmER of whom 5 completed sound . The first loop, as last year was down through the dunes but sadly because of high tide we were unable to have our mad gallop along the beach. As I managed to get in front and set the pace we did a less nerve-racking pace over the dunes and none of us got lost! There is a stretch of road back to the venue and a necessary halt till the road was clear to cross and we were able to present for vetting almost immediately. The second loop took us up into the forest. The marking

was excellent, especially where there were interlinking loops , except for one short section just before CP4 where there were no arrows at all. Luckily the mist lifted at that point and we were able to see the village we were heading for and round the next corner there were again lots of markers. The last section of this loop was straight down an old railway track to VG2. Like all these old railways the surface is designed for politically correct bicycles rather than horses so we did it at a fast trot rather than a canter. While my crew collected the time card I quickly counted Bonnie's heart rate, 64. I was standing beside the vet and rather surprised her by presenting straight away Tristram Bishop presented less than 2 minutes later with Carrie Anne Dark another minute behind him. I knew my only chance of winning the race was to try to hold on to my slender lead all the way back to the finish (17km) unlikely!

Bonnie was certainly game to do her best and we cantered nearly all the way home. We were in sight of the venue and picking our way carefully down the only really boggy part of the route when the other two suddenly came storming past. I made no attempt to go with them especially as a herd of deer led by a magnificent stag chose that moment to gallop towards us. I did not see the finish but Carrie Anne crossed the line first with a slightly greater margin than the nose that Peanuts achieved last year Sadly Tristram's horse was hopping lame at the vetting so Bonnie finished in second place , not bad for an old mare just back from a long lay off!

### **HANDY HINTS & TIPS**

*Any tips you can share with the rest of us?*

*Bought anything you've been really impressed with?*

Please email your tips for the next newsletter to  
[carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk)

## A Word on Failure      Piers Geddes

Endurance, like life, is a game of snakes and ladders. So often we read of success, the rides completed, distances achieved, rosettes won. Failure, though, gets rather less attention, even if most of us meet it and some of us quite often. Anyone else down among the snakes again? This is for you

The first thing to remember is, there's no such thing as failure, only giving up. These splendid words come (I think) from the guitarist Lemmy, of Motorhead, though they're hard to remember when your horse has been vetted out again or you've missed another check point and gone wrong. Lowering your expectations is useful too, even if you believe they're at sea level already. I've often thought you should get a rosette for simply making it to the venue with a horse. And most of us choose graded rides over set speed, but why? All graded rides mean is that you can go home disappointed, even if the route was wonderful, the day sunny, the horse obliging and the rider not a fool

When things aren't going so well it's tempting to look for someone to blame, whose fault it is. Always plenty of candidates for that! The vets of course, and those people riding too fast, the weather, the terrain, the terrible stony surface, your silly horse—oh, it's endless. And pointless. It's down to you, isn't it? You probably got something wrong. Just remember there's such a thing as human error, and don't worry about it.

If you start counting your blessings, that's when you're really in trouble, said someone cruelly. But many of us, particularly the ancient or bulky, should feel quite lucky to be doing this at all. Millions aren't and can't. Yet it seems funny that the more I learn the less I know and the worse I do. Is there certainty in ignorance? 'I succeeded because I didn't know too much'. You can imagine somebody saying it. But that must be set against careful preparation and attention to detail which usually brings results. A difficult one, this. In my case, the

stalwart Thomas the traveling cob did best and we knew nothing. But age always meant his career would be short. Borna, the Arab, knew everything about endurance from birth, and was brilliant and unrideable. Shyama--Jim? it just isn't his line as his card makes plain.

After a few ladders it's hard, back down in the snakepit, to stay ambitious and keep your faith and self belief. But you must. Things will turn, so stick it out. ' There's no such thing as failure, only giving up'

Good old Lemmy. Now where's that list of rides? Oh look, we've never been there before.....

The following wisdom is from a poster in the Toilet at the Stables where I hold my RDA group I thought it fitted in after Piers' piece!

### **God Created the Horse**

On the first day of Creation God created the Horse.

On the second day God created Man to serve the Horse.

On the third day God created all the animals of the earth to spook the Horse when Man was upon his back.

On the fourth day God created Honest Toil so that Man could work to provide for the Horse,

On the fifth day God created the grasses in the field so that the Horse could eat and Man could toil to clean up after the Horse.

On the sixth day God created Veterinary Science to keep the Horse healthy and Man broke.

On the seventh day God rested and said, this is good. This will teach Man humility, it will tire him out, and keep him striving ever forward to meet the needs of the horse

# TEAM SPIRIT TEAM SPIRIT

*Dear Offa's Dyke Group .....*

*We are really excited about this year's Team Spirit and Pleasure Pairs events. We will be dedicating this day to fundraising for the Air Ambulance. Every kilometre ridden throughout the day will have been 'sold' to a sponsor to raise funds for this valuable resource...so vital and relevant to every rider. We truly appreciate how important the Air Ambulance is, having called on this service on more than one occasion.*

*The entry fee remains unaltered for 2008 at £105 per team...however we hope your group will consider a donation above and beyond this amount for our fund raising efforts.*

*With Team Spirit sponsors Burstall's family solicitors of Hull, we hope that your group will be sending a team (or two) to take part in this exciting event. We can promise a fun day over a flat, fast course, a great atmosphere and excellent prizes extending right down the line. We had an excellent entry last year and the competition had a great feel with excitement all the way to the finish, so we do hope you will join us this time.*

*You may wish to notify your members of our pleasure pairs class sponsored by Goldfinch, which will run in conjunction with Team Spirit This is also an excellent day out and a great way to sample to Lindum atmosphere*

*See enclosed a brief summary of the rules for your information and enclosed entry form for your use(available from MTM if interested)*

*Hoping to see you at the event.*

*Thay and Alan Stephenson*

## **Offas' Dyke Social Rides 2008**

**Discounted entry for Members & Associate Members**

### **Blaenavon Ride, Whistle Inn, Wales Sunday 15 June.**

Plenty of cantering over open hills with fantastic views. An alteration has been made this year to the beginning of the route to avoid the 5 gates and initial short climb. Incorporates part of the National Cycle Network. (16km & 32km routes). Pub open all day. Non riding members can visit Big Pit National Coal Museum within walking distance of the venue.

Entries: Belinda Stewart, Ty Jarrett, Brunant Rd, Clydach, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 0NG. Tel: 01873 832272 Email: [Belinda@kolvox.net](mailto:Belinda@kolvox.net)

### **Black Mountains, Wales, nr Abergavenny**

#### **Sunday 17 August**

Mixture of quiet country lanes, forest tracks and spectacular open mountain. (approx 18 or 25km). Karen has improved the route by making it easier to come off the first hill into the forestry thereby avoiding steep, muddy downhill track that some people found difficult last year. The longer route will also incorporate more forestry tracks and avoid the long, straight road section up to the reservoir car park. Entries: Karen Jones, Red House Farm Cottage, Govilon, Abergavenny NP7 9RT. Tel: 01873 830215 or email:

[karen@pentre.fslife.co.uk](mailto:karen@pentre.fslife.co.uk)

### **Plump Hill, Drybrook, Forest of Dean. Sunday 7 September**

A ride through Northern Forest of Dean with minimal roadwork(10, 15 or 20 mile routes)

Entries: Sharon Parr, The Granary, Silverstone Farm, Drybrook, Gloucester, GL17 9BP. Tel: 01594 544559. Email:

[silverstonefarm1@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:silverstonefarm1@tiscali.co.uk)

## Other groups Social/Training Rides

**Mid Wales Group** [www.midwalesendurance.moonfruit.com](http://www.midwalesendurance.moonfruit.com)

### **Brynfo Ride on Sunday 18th May**

(In aid of the Welsh Endurance Travel Fund)

The venue for this ride is the Brynfo entrance to Crychan Forest, just off the A483 in Cynghordy, Llandovery. There will be a long and a short ride, taking in some of the excellent riding trails in the Crychan Forest including the newly opened Cwar Cerrig track with its breathtaking views over the Bran and Towy Valleys (weather permitting!!!).

Entry Fees: £10.00 members, £15.00 non-members

Entries to Mandy Jones, 8 Bronhaul, Cynghordy, Llandovery, Carmarthen, SA20 0LT. For further information, please ring 01550 750288 or e-mail [mjherbie@aol.com](mailto:mjherbie@aol.com)

### **L Plate ride - Trawscoed forest & old railway Sunday 8 June**

Mock vetting for those who would like a practice, particularly useful for any pony club members planning to ride in regional competition. Venue Trawscoed Farm (landranger map 135 74/67.5) 16k and 26k First horse out 11am last out 12.30.

Contact Jane Fazakerley : 01974 261538

### **Talsarn Bridleways, fields Sunday 27 July 2008**

Contact Heather Davies on 01974 821436

### **The NEW Longwood ride Sunday 24 August 2008**

Fields & Forestry. Contact Chris Jones Tel: 01570 493498

**Cotswold Group** [www.endurancegbcotswold.co.uk](http://www.endurancegbcotswold.co.uk)

### **Cleeve Hill Ride Sunday 18 May 2008**

New barn, Charlton Abbots Glos 8km.19km or 27km.

A pleasure ride over delightful countryside with minimal roadwork

Organiser Margaret Barry

Greenacres Gate, Oaksey, Malmesbury SN16 9TL Tel: 01666 577633

### **South West Wales Group**

[www.endurancegb-south-and-west-wales-group.org.uk](http://www.endurancegb-south-and-west-wales-group.org.uk)

### **Llwynon Saddlery ride (Brecon) Sunday 8th June 2008**

*A fantastic ride not to be missed.*

Directions to Venue: Take the A40 from Llandovery, just before Trecastle take a left turn sign posted Llywel and Llwynon saddlery. Follow the road up a steep hill until a sign to the

saddlery on the right. Continue to follow this track to the end. You can also visit [www.llwynonsaddlery.co.uk](http://www.llwynonsaddlery.co.uk) for a map.

Routes: Optional distances of 17km, 23km and 32km.

Going: Open common land, soft tracks with some roadwork.

Start: Between 10am and 12.00pm. Last Horse out at 12.00pm. Catering in attendance.

Entries to: Marie Mead Oaklands Lodge, Llanddew, Brecon, Powys, LD3 9TD.

Closing Date: All entries to be received by Wednesday 28th May 2008. Please include SAE for map and details.

Enquiries: Hannah Bettiss 01269 593468. Marie Mead 01874 622880.

### **Wanted**

#### **Caravan for Offa's Dyke group**

For taking ride equipment to rides and for Technical Stewards to do their paperwork in comfort (we need to keep them happy). Chassis in good condition, good visual exterior and watertight, interior need not be brilliant. May pay small amount but prefer free!

Will collect within Offa's Dyke area.

Contact Mark Holland on 01989 565249

### **For Sale**

#### **Carousel Riding Tights**

Black with stripe of 'Gallop Horses' in purple & pink colours, as shown in Performance Equestrian catalogue

Size Medium

Excellent condition – hardly worn, as too long in the leg for me & now the wrong colour for my orange horse

Price £15.00

Carolyn Edwards tel: 01452 857352 Email [Carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:Carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk)

### **Offa's Dyke Sweatshirts/ Polo shirts**

Those of you who were at the AGM will have seen Debbie with examples of the sweatshirts and polo shirts with our logo embroidered on them. She also had the catalogue to show the extensive range of clothing and accessories available, any of which could 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.

Polo Shirts £16 Sweat Shirts £17 Fleece Jackets £20 Bumbags and Baseball Caps £8 each

For more details contact Debbie Williams – Tel: 01600 891029

**NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION FORM - 2008**

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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 receive up to date news about the group by Email? 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**