



Offa's Dyke Group of
Endurance GB

Newsletter- October 2016

www.offasydykeegb.co.uk

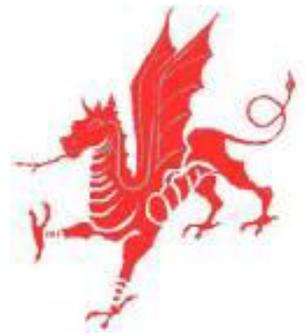


Photo courtesy of Kerry Dawson

**Rachael Rogerson riding Open T' Offers in the
Red Dragon 160km**

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Chairman's Comments

Well, we are at the end of yet another competitive season – I hope it has ended better for you than it has for I, and I hope your aspirations have all been achieved and you are inspired to start planning your 2017 season! I know I am!

There is plenty to keep you busy in the Offa's Dyke Group – and Nationally - in the mean time! Nicola is organising as always a series of group schooling lessons with Carole Broad, there are some evening talks being planned, but most importantly we have our Branch Annual Meeting and Trophy Night coming up on December 3rd. Please don't forget to let me know if you wish to be considered for the OD trophies – I have had some cards already from hopeful riders! And nationally, there is EGB's 'Potential for Greatness' Seminar on 5th November, and the EGB AGM and Gala Dinner on 19th November. For those interested, please note that the Welsh Endurance Team AGM will be on 4th December. Our first ride in preparation for the new season will be our ever-popular Christmas Ride – with mince pies and mulled wine - in the Staunton area on bank holiday Tuesday 27th December. There will be details of all of these events – and more! – on the Events page of this newsletter.

I would like to congratulate Fiona Griffiths, Rachael Cratchley and Sarah Rogerson for a successful first run of the Bwlch Raid ride as a 2 day GER !! The run up was fraught with issues as Fiona (selected to Team GB to go to Samorin for the World Endurance Championships on the same date) had to hand over organisation of the ride to first-time organisers Rachael and Sarah! Well done Fiona on all your advanced planning and organising, and well done Rachael and Sarah for volunteering to take it on (and prevent ride cancellation) and making the ride a great success on the day! There were 86 riders by my reckoning, and I have seen some great feedback – the competitors even included the combination which was 2nd at WEG 2014 and 2nd at last year's Europeans (Marijke Visser riding Laiza de Jalima)!!

The Group has continued to have many great successes during the latter part of the season – too many to mention here, but foremost must be the Red Dragon top successes: Rachael Rogerson's 3rd place in the 160km, and mum Mary Stubbs' win in the Dragon's Tail (11th in the Little Dragon), with Fiona Griffiths' 3rd place in the Dragon's Tail (5th in the Little Dragon). It was also great to see Barik and Abbi Tennant back to top form together, winning the Boyton Hall 80CER at 20.2kph!!

Looking forward to 2017, we will elect the Group committee at the BAM – anybody wishing to join the committee should let myself or Kerri (secretary) know of your interest. We are currently working on retaining the Forest of Dean rides – it looks much more positive than a couple of months ago following a meeting between the EGB Chair and Director of Operations and senior management at the Forestry Commission. In any case, we have an alternative in the Trelleck area that we will run in case of the FoD not coming about. I hope to be able to say more at the BAM.

Enjoy your time off competing for a bit of socialising – and I hope to see you as we all prepare for next season!

Chris

Editor's Comments

Another season over already! Where has the year gone? I hope you have all had a good season and achieved your goal however big or small.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at our BAM and awards evening on Saturday 3rd December at The Fountain Inn, Trellech Grange. Please remember to get your trophy cards sent to Chris to be in with a chance of winning some of the beautiful rosettes and trophies up for grabs by 18th November.

We have a varied 2017 scheduled with lots planned including; Forest of Dean National (fingers crossed), Winter talk, schooling sessions and various fun rides. Our next fun ride is the Christmas Cracker on the 27th December.

Later on in this newsletter you will read the goodbye from Carolyn and Rob who are sadly giving up their tremendous work for the group. I would like to thank Carolyn and Rob Edwards for their endless work for the Offa's Dyke Group over the years. They have been a major part of the smooth running of the group, from organising Cranham to doing the newsletter and website. Carolyn was one of the first people I remember from when I joined the group back in 2008 and provided endless help and advice. You will both be sorely missed by the committee and members. We hope to see you at some events in the future. Due to this I have taken over the newsletter (what big shoes I have to fill!) so if you have anything to include in forthcoming newsletters please send them to me (contact details on page 2).

Nicola

Please apply for the 2016 Trophies!

A list of the trophies is available from: <http://www.offasdykeegb.co.uk/forms/pdf-forms/Trophy%20form%202016.pdf> and the Trophy Card can be found on the last page of the newsletter. Trophy cards can be mailed, or scanned and emailed !! It is really easy to do!

You only need to fill in the trophy card if you are claiming for Group rides or for helping (note, helping is necessary for several trophies) - both of which need to be confirmed by Ride Organiser signature on the trophy card.

If you are not claiming for helping or Group rides, all you need to do is email me your horse(s)'s EGB registration number - but I will only consider people from whom I get an email or a completed trophy card. You have to be in it to win it!!

Those who apply I will consider for all trophies except a few for which you **MUST** confirm eligibility (I don't have the life history of your horses!) - these are listed in the top right corner of the trophy card - e.g. the breed trophies/rosettes, and others.

Good luck, you may get a big surprise at the BAM !!



PLEASE JOIN US *for*

Offa's Dyke Group of EGB

BAM

Hot Buffet & AWARDS

Sat 3rd December at 7pm

The Fountain



Inn

Trellech Grange, Tintern

NP16 6QW

Free for EGB members
£5 for non-members

Contact kemi.costello@yahoo.co.uk
07900 926811 before 18 Nov to book your place.

Please bring a raffle prize!

Return Trophy Cards before 18 Nov to:

Chris Wray,

Pentrewheeler Farm, Cwmcarnan, Monmouth NP25 4PL

Goodbye from Carolyn and Robin Edwards

After long deliberation we have decided that 2016 will be the last year we will be involved in helping with Offa's Dyke Group as we are both stepping down from our many roles.

You may be aware that we lost our lovely 6 year old endurance horse Harry 2 years ago. With Prophet already retired from endurance due to wear in his fetlock joints, this left me without a horse to compete and I decided not to buy another horse. I kept up my membership of EGB in order to continue to organise Cranham ride in 2015, however during the last 2 years we have taken part in only 2 rides. I don't think I will re-join EGB in 2017.

Our interests now lie with other hobbies (Carolyn with her Patchwork and Quilting Group and Robin with his Model Railway club). This seems the appropriate time to take a step back from our involvement with Offa's Dyke Group.

I can't remember when I joined the OD committee, but it was probably at least 15 years ago, when I was riding for Margaret McKiddie and she persuaded me to come along. Some time afterwards I took over the role of membership secretary from the lovely Les Riley. Margaret took over editing the newsletter at the end of 2007 with our help. I persuaded the committee to send the newsletter free of charge to all members, as up to then it cost £5 and was only sent to about 15% of the membership. I felt that the cost of the newsletter would be more than offset by the publicity of our events (which we feel was a success).

Robin looked at the cost of getting the newsletter printed. He realised that, with the advent of cheap laser printers, we could print this ourselves in colour for the same price as a black & white version from the print shop. The first newsletter was a bit of a learning curve for both Margaret and us but we soon settled into a routine of printing about 130 copies, collating, stapling, folding and stuffing them into envelopes. It used to take the three of us all evening to do this around our dining room table. Rob sourced paper, envelope, printer and toner offers to keep costs to a minimum and we have got through 4 printers over the years (around 120000 pages!) doing the newsletter, fun ride maps, posters, ride details, ride labels and signs.

By 2008/09 we were one of only two EGB groups without a web site. While EGB could have provided one for us, it would have cost a fair amount and not really provided us with the flexibility that Robin though was possible. He decided that it couldn't be that hard to produce one up (could it?) and offered to set one up for the group. He spent some time learning how to do this and produced a site based on the thoughts of Carolyn and Gina (who was Chairman at that time). The site went live around March 2009 and allowed us to put the newsletter on line, offering membership an opportunity to download it - saving both printing and postage costs. The web site also allowed us to publish more ride details including photographs and videos. Rob started using some OS map software to produce colour maps for our rides (thanks to advice from Gina's husband, Paul).

In July 2012 we took on the newsletter completely from Margaret. In 2013 the group celebrated 25 years from its foundation. To celebrate we had a special Silver Jubilee newsletter with articles from some of the founding members of the group. This is one of the

newsletters we are most proud of and we have put a link on the Offa's Dyke Website 'news' page for those of you who didn't see it – or would like to have another look!

The same year (2012) we took over organising Cranham ride from Margaret McKiddie. We had helped her with the ride ever since Carolyn started riding for Margaret in 1997, which involved marking and de-marking the route on horseback. The year we took over completely however the weather was so appalling that the farmer pulled the ride on closing date and we had to undo all the organising we had made! The following year Carolyn was still out on the route marking on horseback with spray-paint in the pouring rain at 9pm (missing the wedding we had been invited to with our daughter as bridesmaid). Unfortunately by the next morning all the spray-paint had been washed away overnight!

We continued to organise Cranham ride until 2015. It was very time consuming and given the large number of (sometimes very tricky) land owners to negotiate with, made us appreciate just how hard it had been for Margaret to organise this single handed for so many years. It was a great relief this year not to have the burden of organising the ride.

We'd like to thank to thank all the people who've helped us over the years, by contributing to the newsletter (especially Piers Geddes), helping at Cranham ride and organising all the events for Offa's Dyke Group, which made it one of the most active and enjoyable of all the EGB groups!

Carolyn and Robin Edwards

The Highs & Lows of 2016

After a superb season in 2015 when my youngster Terenz Ibn Chatanz successfully completed his Novice season and Sa'da Sekora took the National Championship title at the 160km class Golden Horseshoe, won her first ER at Barbury in the 80km class and then helped Wales to win the Celtic Challenge at the Home International with our 4th place in the 160km Red Dragon, we had high hopes of a similar 2016 season....it did not start well.

After tearing my hamstring and glut muscle in August 2015 when Sekora performed one of her better 'mega' spooks whilst canter training, I then made my injury worse when I attempted to do the splits in the mud in early December.....and again in early January Teren decided to try and perfect his 'Texan bronco' act during a schooling session – neither good for the healing process.

After enjoying the Christmas Fun Ride with Sekora, by the time the Endurance season started she had managed to puncture her fetlock joint, have 3 weeks of coughing and then developed a foot abscess.... so the 7yo Teren carried me round the first Forest of Dean ride. At his second ride of the season Mynydd y Cragg Challenge we were chased by a dog and managed to drive a stone deep into the side of his frog in his right hind which came to rest a fraction of a mm from his pedal bone. Meanwhile, Sekora had managed to add another injury to her ever increasing 2016 list and so our season came to an abrupt halt!

After recuperation for both, a welcome rest for my right buttock and a couple of good Fun Rides for all, Cirencester arrived – we appeared to have 2 sound and fit horses so I entered

both, one on the Friday one on the Sunday and managed to successfully pilot both sound horses round the 40km route – the season had re-started!

Both attended Wentwood and Sekora was feeling so fit and well Rob and I decided to have some fun and enter her in the 80km ER at Barbury, a ride that she won well in 2015. She did not disappoint and led the small pack around the first loop only to find ourselves late presenting into the vetgate as one of our fellow competitors fell from her horse. Rob ran to catch the loose horse and I flustered and fussed until someone rushed out to pick the rider up from the floor! Eventually into the vetgate, saddle off and straight into vet we were soon back out on course. We quickly caught and passed the two leaders and were joined by Carina Kane and the gorgeous 'Evermore Artistic'. He and Sekora were beautifully matched stride for stride at our good cross country canter pace and we thoroughly enjoyed their company round that second loop, entering the 2nd and final vetgate together.

Sekora presented immediately so we left the last vetgate some 10 minutes in the lead. It was an amazing feeling riding Sekora back round that Pink loop to the finish - she never broke her stride except to drink from the first crew point out on route. At the last crew spot Andrew Knight could see she had no intention of stopping, she knew exactly where she was and that home was very close, so holding the slosh bottle high I grabbed it at canter, sloshed and headed for home (Thank you Andrew!). I smiled all the way back into the vetgate, so enjoyed competing my lovely mare again - 20km's in exactly an hour and Sekora feeling amazingly powerful all the way. Her pulse in the low 50's as we returned to our crew car we made our way to the vet - she passed the final vetting with straight 'A's' to win her ride and take home another lovely bridle from Performance Equestrian.

Our next outing was Bonham with Teren. I had been having difficulty getting my 7yo to hold and maintain canter, something I was finding very frustrating, especially as Danny & Sekora found it so incredibly easy. Any canter more than 5 strides would find him plummeting onto his forehand, head between his knees until he could maintain it no longer and had to break back to trot....but not at Bonham. Canter definitely 'clicked' with Teren at Bonham! Uphill, off his forehand canter, head up, shoulders elevated in front of us and it felt wonderful. A start pulse of 40 and a finishing pulse of 39 – his best recovery to date in warm, humid conditions and after his first ride with prolonged canter sessions – extremely pleased with that one!

It was decided after Bonham that I would continue with Teren's season and let Sekora rest on her laurels so he was entered for his first attempt at a 65km GR at Red Dragon and took Sekora's 40km entry at Bwlch Raid.

Bwlch Raid was a tough ride (not made any easier by me trying to remove my nose and teeth at the start on a low branch!) slow, steep uphill pull onto the top of the mountain for some fantastic views, lots of canter (and one session of gallop with some interesting flying bucks!) round the various check points before a steep and stony descent back to the venue field. Teren had his very first taste of extended canter periods in company at this ride with Belinda Stewart and Helen Barratt. He learnt to take the lead, ride in the middle and bring up the rear.....again putting into practice all that he'd learnt at Bonham but unfortunately at the final trot up he threw in a couple of odd strides. We were asked to trot again and it was decided

he was slightly lame... further inspection found a small, fresh cut to the bulb of his left hind heel that did not like the trot up on the stubble field! He was given a week off before my farrier came to shoe and check his feet thoroughly. After lots of prodding and poking it was decided the heel was no longer an issue and he was OK for Dragon.

October the 1st was definitely a day of firsts for Teren. First time loaded into the trailer in the dark, first time in the trailer in monsoon rain with cars behind with lights on(!!) first trip to Red Dragon, first time vetted in a huge barn that echoed, first competitive ride in heavy rain, first ride in deep mud(!), first attempt at 65km so first vetgate – oh and first vetting in a cow shed with cows still in it! (my first also!). So many firsts in one day – and he did us proud. His training in company at Bwlch Raid really came in useful at Dragon on the first loop where he happily took the lead, trotted and cantered in the middle and at the rear of a group of 8 horses without any issues - his canter was positive and balanced over the rough and muddy tracks – success!

A bit confused by the whole vetgate scenario, especially when I replaced the saddle - (huge “thank you Karen & John Jones” for the extra crewing help! I would NEVER have got that girth clean enough to go back on!), he seemed slightly shell shocked that he was being asked to ‘go out again’. Luckily for me we caught up with Piers Geddes just around the corner in Painscastle and we enjoyed the company as we rode together to the 65km cut off. By this time Teren was resigned to the fact his ride was not yet over. The mud and deep ruts were such hard work as we made our way alone over the top of the mountain before dropping down into Aberedew and he started to feel weary. I jumped off and ran beside him down the steep track to the road.

Teren had decided to stop drinking so Rob & John managed to syringe some fluid into him before we attempted the last steep climb up Aberedew Hill from CP4 toward home. Three of the 160km leaders joined us at the mid way water trough on the hill where Teren watched them all drink but refused to join in – we chatted for a moment before they cantered off into the distance and we continued our way slowly to the top.

Once on the top Teren was again encouraged to drink allowed a few mouthfuls of grass and then asked to trot home. We made our way over the last mountain, collecting Katie Bedwin and her pony on our way before dropping down the steep hill to the road. Once on the road Teren really perked up, he remembered this bit from the morning and we were soon trotting smartly back into the venue.

The big barn was no longer scary as we entered for our final vetting, a good 48 pulse, sound trot up and a G3 completion – excellent result in very difficult conditions.

Thank you to everyone who was involved in ‘our 2016 season’ – my crew & Husband, Ride Organisers, fellow competitors, helpers and friends - it may have started badly but ended exceptionally well!!

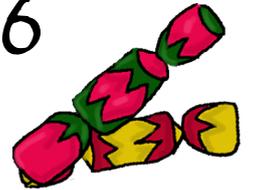
Gill, Teren & Sekora

Christmas Cracker Ride



Tuesday 27th December 2016

Staunton, Forest of Dean



A lovely social ride on forestry tracks, no gates and no road work. Route options of approximately 12km and 25km.

Mince pie and mulled wine at the finish.

Come and work off those Christmas calories!

Entries to:

Nicola Davies
Pentre Hendy,
Twyn Allwys road,
Govilon,
Abergavenny,
Monmouthshire,
NP7 9RT

Email: n.davies91@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 07968 928870

Closing date: 22nd December, entries limited to 70, so late entries may only be accepted by checking with Nicola about available space

Cheques payable to Offa's Dyke Group of Endurance GB. £10.00 members and associate members, £15.00 Temporary day members. Enclose an SAE if you want information posted to you. Otherwise download from Website.

If you don't intend to ride and can spare a few hours, please consider being a helper!

Winter Schooling Sessions

Our usual winter schooling sessions have been scheduled with Carole Broad FBHS at Usk College, NP15 1XJ. Usk has a fabulous spacious indoor school, ideal for the cold winter months. These sessions are very friendly and cater for all abilities.

Sessions will be in groups of 4 and cost £21.50 for an hour.

Dates are-

Sunday 20th November

Sunday 11th December

Sunday 15th January 2017

Sunday 5th February 2017

First group will start at 10:00 and run at hourly intervals.

Please send the completed booking form along with either a single cheque or multiple cheques for the sessions. Separate cheques will not be cashed until the week of the session.

Full refunds will be given if cancellation is before the publication of the times (a week before session) and any time after that I will do her best to sort something out. This may seem a little early but Usk College have introduced a non-refundable deposit which has to be paid upfront for ALL our sessions. Therefore it is essential I have an idea of demand so that I can cancel any unnecessary hours before paying the deposit.

For more information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Nicola-

07968 928870

n.davies91@yahoo.co.uk

Red Dragon

After a bit of a mixed season for Tarkah we decided to tackle the Welsh mountains, I first attempted Red Dragon 14 years ago on Cariad and was hoping it might be 4th time lucky.

Tarkah had some non-specific lameness problems which I think had been getting gradually worse but it finally came to a head when she was lame after a 20k training ride in February. It felt like we had tried everything; scans, x-rays and we could never find anything to treat, maybe she just had a low pain tolerance and she just wasn't cut out to be an endurance horse. Mum went to the Offa's Dyke dissection/talk and a lot of things Nigel said rang true so we asked his advice made some fairly major changes, which seemed to help a lot, and she gradually improved. We have failed a couple of rides this season but not front leg issues so I was still slightly hopeful she might be ok. Lame at Three Rivers after she panicked going through a narrow barrier, hurting her shoulder and a failure for metabolics at Keysoe in the heat.

To cut a long story short, I had absolutely no idea what outcome to expect! It was Tarkah's first attempt at a 160, the weather forecast for Saturday was atrocious, Sarah who was supposed to be my sole crew got concussion the week before and couldn't drive, mum was doing the Dragon's Tail on Sachiya so we had potential separation issues.

The weather... It was forecast to be heavy rain from 9am to 6pm on the Saturday. It wasn't quite that bad, it did let up after the first loop but it was more than enough to make the tracks muddy and slippery.

Saturday morning finally came, Mum's race started 30 minutes before us so we tacked up together and then separated the horses, both of them settled down fine after 5 minutes. Tarkah started keenly but sensibly, I got off up the hill so Tarkah didn't have to work too hard... shame she didn't have the decency to stand nicely for me to get back on at the top, she might have to carry me up another time! We had caught up some time on Mum and Sachiya by the vetgate but managed to avoid them seeing each other. We caught them up and attempted to go past on the second loop but Tarkah must have spotted Sachiya just at the last moment and neighed to her, which scuppered the plan of keeping them separate. After a lot of neighing and prating about we ended up riding back to the vetgate and vetted together. Mum then gave us a 5 minute head start out the vetgate, they both accepted that they were separate again and all was well. I got off to go down the final hill and as we jogged down Tarkah tripped and scraped her left knee, when I got back on she felt fine. She trotted-up really well but we found that she had a sore girth on the right.

She ate and drank well but her girth had puffed up overnight, we lengthened the breastplate off so the girth would sit further back and put lots of cream on. She was asked to trot twice on the Sunday morning trot up, the first trot she did a couple of odd head movements but the second trot she was absolutely fine and after a discussion with the vets we wondered if it might have been her trying to try to look for Sachiya who was waiting at the entrance to the barn. We decided to start and see how it went.

I was a bit worried we might end up on our own on the second day, we were in 5th place about 15 minutes behind Charis Denham and about 20 minutes ahead of Alex Tennant and Abi Locket. Tarkah is much happier with friends, fortunately some 80k graded riders left the venue at the same time and we had really good company all day. The views on Sunday were breath-taking, rising up above the mist. Any worries about her soundness soon disappeared, she was keen and responsive, she often gets a bit despondent towards the end of a ride but she seemed to really be enjoying herself. Tarkah is never the quickest to vet and we were a few minutes behind the graded riders going out the last vetgate, she was determined to catch them up and left the vetgate full of beans, we soon caught them up and took turns in the front all the way home. On the last bit after you have climbed out of Aberedw you can see the show ground in the distance, I was busy looking at the view and thinking how amazing my pony was when she took off with me in full extended trot, I couldn't help but spill a few tears.

She finished full of running and did her best ever final trot, her metabolics were good, we passed! And in third! I can't put in words how proud I am of her, she exceeded all my expectations and more, apparently she is a 160 horse after all!

The icing on the cake came at the prize giving, we knew I had finished third but we had no idea how mum had done in the Dragon's Tail, she was 11th in Little Dragon so when they announced placings from third (Fiona Griffiths) I thought how mean it was that mum didn't get a mention. When she was announced as the winner we were completely blown away.

Thank you so much to Sarah, Lesley, Heather and Charlie for your fantastic crewing and Dad for helping every second he wasn't working out results, Ivor of course tried his best to help as always.

Rachael Cratchley



Photos courtesy of Kerry Dawson

Bwlch Raid; an Organiser's Perspective, the Good the Bad and the Ugly

The Good

The views, there can't be many rides with better views, 360 views and Llangors Lake as the backdrop for the venue... and the sun shone! Happy riders (mostly) with lots of nice comments, particularly about the marking, nightmares over riders getting lost in fog and horizontal rain didn't come true. All the helpers and officials were fantastic, happy, relaxed and effective. The venue was great, the staff on-site could not have been more helpful. The whole experience was made a lot more fun and achievable having a twin sister who works in the same way, also google docs so that we barely had to communicate, just added jobs on to each other's to do lists.

The Bad

Late entries – serious squeaky bum situation, over 50% of people entered on the closing date!!! We cancelled vets, had many sleepless night and spent time we didn't have debating whether to cancel one or both days of the ride and then had backlash from people for considering cancelling. It makes a rider organiser's life so much easier to enter in advance, thanks to those that did!

Last minute changes, naively we were comfortable thinking everything was booked and final confirmations were made. That was until... the photographer sadly had to pull out (thankfully Allen from AGC Photography could make it), then our TS was re-assigned (thanks so much to Sue Lees and Gill for stepping in last minute) and on the Sunday night before the ride, when we had bummer all entries, our First Aid and Radio cover for Saturday pulled out! We definitely couldn't go ahead without good first aid or radio. Sending out ride info on Sunday evening was a little bleak (but we had wine ☺). Anyway 6 first aid companies later we found someone that was available, Raynet rallied around and found enough people to cover the event at very little notice and were very comforting.

Thank you to a few people who made more critical comments about the route. There were some sections we weren't sure how would ride, so it was useful to hear which sections could be improved.

The Ugly

Two members of Offa's Dyke group were selected to represent Great Britain at the World Endurance Championships, including Fiona! Fiona has nurtured her lovely Bwlch Raid ride for the past few years as a group fun ride, but due to the date change, and therefore clash with WEC she was able to run the ride... Rachael and I took over the final organisation, ride secretary and the organiser role on the day so that the ride could still run in her absence. Sadly those of you who know her or attended the ride know that she didn't make it to Slovakia.



Instead she soldiered on in her normal cheery way, without hesitation to help in any way she could. Even with all the prep involved for something like WEC she continued to help with route checking, booking officials speaking to landowners in the preceding months. I am also personally extremely grateful for her help on the weekend, in particular smoothing some ruffled feathers so that our Raynet guys could get up on to the hill.

Conclusion

It may look like the BAD outweighs the GOOD... but I guess a good is normal so doesn't stick in the mind. Organising a ride something Rachael and I have both wanted to do for a long time and it was more doable and more stressful than we imagined but incredibly satisfying.

Sarah Rogerson

Winter Talk

Thursday 19th January 2017

Arrive at 7:00 for a 7:30 start

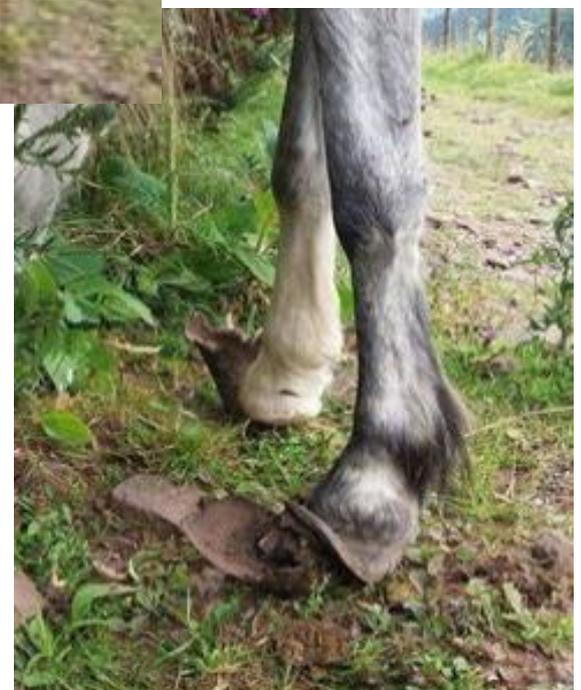
Venue: The Old Court Hotel, Symonds Yat West, Whitchurch, HR9 6DA

A talk from Sarah Price a chartered veterinary physiotherapist.

Sarah is fully qualified to treat both human and animal clients and specialises in the treatment and rehabilitation of equine, canine, and human musculoskeletal problems. Sarah is based in the Wye Valley and treats a number of our members' horses.

Thank you to all those who attended the Black Mountains fun ride on Sunday 21st August and either made a donation or bought refreshments in aid of the Society for the Welfare of Horses and Ponies (SWHP) based in Monmouth. Altogether £58.69 was collected which was greatly appreciated by the SWHP. We decided to raise money for the SWHP as 'Curly' a 4 year old Grey mare was rescued a few weeks before the ride very near part of the route. We have received a lovely 'Thank you' letter from the SWHP for the money raised.

If anyone is interested in finding out about the work they do visit: www.swhp.co.uk



Photos show Curly the day she was found with maggots in the gapping holes in her hooves, dehydrated, malnourished and was lice infested.

It's 1902, and we're going on a motor tour. The world is still horse-drawn; there are over three million horses in the country, perhaps the largest number there will ever be. Wherever we go there are saddlers, farriers, stables attached to inns, but few garages, so we pack tools and tyres, spare parts and cans of fuel. The roads are not made for the motor car, and those that travel them, man or beast, are unlikely ever to have seen one. To tour with a horse today, when motor transport rules, is no easier. Places to put up horse and rider are few, and of course they don't organise themselves in a neat line about twenty miles apart, so any route is a balance between where you want to go and where you can go, and if it wasn't for the informal network of horse owners you'd be pressed to go anywhere at all. For a horse is not like a bicycle or a car, you can't simply leave it in a lay-by or put it behind a hedge. It's with you all the time, you're responsible for it, and it too gets tired and hungry and cross.

But the difficulties are easily outweighed by the pleasures, and the first thing is, you don't have to ride. At least not the whole time; as you know, all day in the saddle can be hard, you get stiff and sore and irritable, and the benefits of walking are well known. So enjoy them to the full, and then be carried along when tired or wanting a change. This has practical results, for your horse stays fresher (don't forget, it's carrying the luggage too), and you remain aware of both distance and the steepness of any hills to be climbed. And of course you become good pals with your mount; you're in this adventure together, and you help one another out as travelling companions do.

A particular pleasure is the easy speed of travel: the landscape unfolds at just the right pace, slowly revealing its secrets as you go. Much of Wales is lightly populated and undeveloped, so its beautiful scenery appears like the gentle unrolling of a map — the mountains and lakes, the woods and silver streams, the marvelous views. And you're not just crossing the landscape, you are part of it, and travelling on bridleways, drovers' tracks and Roman roads, past Norman castles and scenes of Celtic myth, you become part of history too as hooves and boots tread in footprints thousands of years old. And a horse dissolves distrust, a wonderful benefit in this suspicious era. People often trust you, a stranger, straight away: children come up and chat, old ladies offer cups of tea and buckets of water. It's puzzling. Perhaps they think you can't be all bad if you have an animal, or there's a perceived romance in such a trip. Or maybe there is a rapid and unconscious calculation that a person with a horse is no danger, easily recognised and ill-equipped for wrong-doing. No matter; the breaking down of barriers is always welcome, especially when help might be needed at any time.

Roaring traffic, treacherous bogs, getting lost or soaked — you may meet them all. To set against that, the sheer joy of slow travel in beautiful and unfamiliar country. For despite today's difficulties, a horse is still a magnificent way to get about — to experience history, uncover the kindness of strangers, for the comradeship with your horse. You may even make discoveries about yourself. So, the first thing is a pair of boots suitable for walking and riding; the second, a strong and compatible horse. And then, as King Alfred exhorted his knights, Ride forth, singing.

Piers

Pembrey Fun Ride- a dream come true!

On Sunday 25th September one of my life long dreams came true, my horse Dolly and I went to Pembrey to do the South and West Wales Endurance group fun ride. We had the most amazing day, the route was very well marked and was a lovely combination of forestry, forestry road and the beach (which was the best bit!). The sun was shining but the beach was very windy but that made the day.

To get to the beach we had to go down a very steep slope which had loose sand, it looked scarier than it was. The beach was miles and miles long, it was so lovely to trot and canter along the beach. On the way we had to keep our eyes open not to stand on the electric blue jellyfish that were lay on the beach. There were small ones and some very big jellyfish all along the beach and even a dead seal which Dolly didn't like the look of. We didn't go in the sea as there were so many jellyfish on the sand I didn't want to risk one being in the sea that I couldn't see. The photographer was on the beach which was great as I now have an amazing reminder of our day on the beach at a fantastic ride to finish our fun rides off for this year.

Everyone we seen on route was nice and polite, the venue was perfect and my lovely husband who had to sit and wait for me to do the ride enjoyed seeing the steam engines drive by him all day as there was a steam rally on in the country park too. All the organisers were lovely and helpful, can't wait to go again, thank you so much everyone involved that day to the organisers, route markers, check point people and the photographer, we have the most amazing day.

Donna & Dolly

First Experience of Endurance

As a non-member and new to endurance it's fair to say I have enjoyed all the rides I have done. Altogether I have done Blaenavon, Maryland, Black Mounatins, Bwlch Raid, Pen Ddol Y Gader and finally the Red Dragon two weeks ago. One thing that has been the same at all the rides is the friendliness and support from other riders and I have always been made to feel very welcome. Nicola has asked me to say something about my favourite ride this year, I could honestly give something positive from all the rides I've done and found it hard to pick just one, so I've settled on two.

For me I really enjoyed the Black mountains ride, mainly as it was my second endurance ride on my own mare. The weather was good, company was excellent, a very well marked route and I really liked the combination of roadwork , forestry and open hills.

Pen Ddol Y Gader was my first competitive ride on Stella and was on one of the wettest weekends in May. Luckily we were only doing 32km as the mountain was extremely wet after all the rain in the previous days. I was initially overwhelmed about the vetting and all the times but soon realised there's no need to be as although professional it's a very relaxed atmosphere. Vetting all went smoothly and we were soon off; the going on the hill was very wet and slippery so we took it sensibly and were soon finished. Final vetting done and a grade 2 😊. It was the combination of terrain again that made this ride another favourite.

I look forward to next season, becoming a member and trying more rides. Thank you to all organisers and members involved in making these rides so enjoyable.

Kelly

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 5 th November	EGB's 'Potential for Greatness' Seminar
Saturday 19 th November	EGB AGM Gala Dinner
Sunday 20 th November	Winter Schooling @ Usk College
Saturday 3 rd December	BAM @ The Fountain, Trelleck Grange
Sunday 4 th December	Welsh Endurance Team AGM
Sunday 11 th December	Winter Schooling @ Usk College
Tuesday 27 th December	Christmas Cracker Fun Ride
Sunday 15 th January 2017	Winter Schooling @ Usk College
Thursday 19 th January	Winter Talk@ The Old Court, Whitchurch
Sunday 5 th February	Winter Schooling @ Usk College
Sunday 26 th Feb (Provisional)	Forest of Dean March Hares National
Sunday 19 th March (Provisional)	Maryland Fun Ride
Sunday 23 rd April (Provisional)	Forest of Dean Bluebell National
Sat/Sun 9/10 th Sept (Provisional)	Bwlch Raid National
Date TBA	Govilon Fun Ride
Date TBA	Blaenavon Fun Ride

More info on the Offa's Dyke website under 'Rides and Events'

www.offasdykeegb.co.uk

HELP!

With the rising cost of printing and postage it would be a great saving for the group if more people could receive the newsletter by email PDF or download it from the Website. If you'd like to try, please email me. If you try and don't like it you can always change back to a paper copy at any time.

