



Offa's Dyke Group
Of Endurance GB
Newsletter – July 2012
www.offasdykeegb.co.uk



Chairman's Comment

Hello members,

I, for one, have found it very difficult to summon any enthusiasm this year, given the weather conditions & endless cancellations of Rides. At least now it looks like some hay has been made within a short 'summer' a few weeks back, so horses can be fed!.....Fingers crossed for a 'second haymaking' period, & harvesting in general. After the monsoon summer we have experienced for such an extended period, I hope you are all coping OK.

So far this year, as a group, we have lost 5 Rides (I won't list them!) for 5 different reasons - only one of which was specifically due to the weather! Really bad luck in a really depressing year. However, on a positive note, we are now slotting in an additional Competitive Ride on 2nd September. This is 'FOD Autumn Belle', being organised by Sharon Parr in place of Plump Hill SR, on the now vacant Tintern date. It will be run over the FOD Bluebell route as far as possible.

We are also planning a busy 'winter season' this year, with our now regular training sessions at Huntley, plus various talks. Please continue to check the website regularly for information in addition to that in this newsletter.

Despite the weather we had a Group summer BBQ in the Forest a couple of weeks ago, which was well attended & a good opportunity to catch up (under waterproof cover) & now the weather appears to be improving, many members will be heading off to watch the international line-up at Euston Park in August.....Onwards & Upwards, as they say.....

....and finally - last but not least - a HUGE thank you to Margaret McKiddie for editing the newsletter in recent years. Margaret has been an inspiration & encouragement to many of us over the years. She has now asked to step down from this role, & offers of help for Carolyn are requested later in this newsletter.

Heather

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Editor's Comment

This will be my last editor's comment, as I have asked Heather to find a new newsletter editor. As I am no longer on the committee and not going to any rides I am not really in touch with what is going on in the group. I have only survived because of the tremendous amount of work done by Carolyn and Rob Edwards. I am sure they will continue to help whoever takes over as editor.

Poor Carolyn had done all the hard work preparing for the Cranham ride only for it to be cancelled at the request of the farmer and the National Trust who own the venue and a good part of the route. The weather has improved a bit since but much of the route is still extremely muddy.

Congratulations Due!

Rachael Rogerson became National Champion with Gryphon (aka Lori) for the second time, at Kings Forest this year. This must be a unique achievement - the combination has held both Northern & Southern Championships concurrently, as well as the National Championship twice now. In addition, a glance at the current FEI database shows that the combination currently stand at 10th in the Open Combination World Rankings!

What a pair!

Newsletter Editor

We all owe Margaret a great debt of gratitude for all her hard work for Offa's Dyke over the years and most recently as newsletter editor.

Robin and I have put together the newsletter with Margaret for the last few years and printed it at home on our laser printer (along with much of the ride paperwork for the group). We are happy to continue to do this. Karen Jones has agreed to proof - read the newsletter (it's amazing how you don't see your own mistakes).

If there is anyone else in the group who would be willing to help with the newsletter we'd be very grateful for any input. This could be coming up with ideas for the future direction of the newsletter to asking people to write reports and articles (people rarely refuse if asked). If you'd like to help, please contact us.

Carolyn & Robin Edwards

Dates for your diary

World Endurance Championships	Sat 25 August
FOD Autumn Belle National Ride	Sun 2 September
Schooling Lessons	Starting 4 Nov- Feb
Hartpury Equine Therapy Centre Trip	Sat 10 November
Offa's Dyke Annual Meeting	Sat 8 December
Xmas cracker social ride	Sun 30 December
Winter evening talks	Jan and Feb dates TBA

[More information on the website 'rides & events' page](#)

New Ride!!!

Autumn Belle Sunday 2 September 2012

Following the disappointment of all the recent ride cancellations, we are very grateful to Sharon Parr for stepping in to organise a National Ride to fill in the date of the cancelled Tintern ride on Sunday 2 September. Sharon usually organises the Plump Hill Social ride in September, but unfortunately lost the usual magnificent venue. Instead she decided to organise a National Ride at very short notice to add to the EGB schedule. This will be run from the venue used for this year's March Hares ride.

As you will imagine things are a little rushed - putting things in place in just a few weeks. We hope to use a route similar to the 2011 Bluebell Ride and a full range of classes from 64km CR down to 32km NCR. We also need lots of stewards, so if you don't intend to ride, please volunteer to help. Entries and volunteers to Carolyn Edwards. **PLEASE SUPPORT THIS RIDE!!!!**

[Full details on the EGB schedule & the Offa's Dyke website](#)

World Endurance Championships 25 August 2012

Euston Park ,Nr Newmarket, CB8 9HE

This year is the unique opportunity to watch the World Endurance Championships in the UK. Teams from all around the world will be travelling to Euston Park to compete in 160km FEI Championship race.

At the time of writing there are 163 horses listed to start (but there is a note on the website that says "there are further nominated entries which are awaiting clarification from the FEI.") There are 30 countries with at least 3 combinations nominated which means that they will be eligible for the team competition. 36 countries in total.

This is guaranteed to be an amazing race and a one off chance for us all to experience the atmosphere of a world championship event in our own country.

Among contenders vying for the top spot at the 14th world title event will be defending world champion Maria Alvarez Ponton of Spain with her amazing horse Nobby and the United Arab Emirates, winners of the team gold medal at the 2010 world championships. Also listed is former World Champion Valerie Kanavy of the USA.

The Championships are being organised by Janah Management, who run the Euston Park FEI rides. The race will use state of the art electronic timing and the vet area will have a grandstand for spectators to view – free of charge. This should prove very interesting, with a unique chance to watch the way the teams present their horses to vet in a world class competition.

Admission to Euston Park, car parking and access to the viewing grandstand and trade stands are all free to spectators. Refreshments will be available for spectators on Friday and Saturday from 'Jack Snack' outlets and also in the restaurant facilities from 22nd to 27th August. Restaurant prices seem very reasonable with drinks £1, snacks from £3 and cooked breakfast £6.50. Full details on the WEC website <http://www.eustonparkendurance.co.uk/WEC>

Timetable of events:

Thursday 23rd	19.30 Opening ceremony (invitation only)
Friday 24th	14.00 Pre ride vetting
Saturday 25th	7am Start of 160km race
Sunday 26th	9am Best condition. 10.30 Prize giving ceremony



British Team riders in alphabetical order are:

- Alice Beet from Surrey riding Adara Sauveterre
- Tricia Hirst from Mid Wales riding Madjin des Pins
- Nikki Malcolm from Dorset riding Khartoum With A K
- Annette Masterson from Staffordshire riding El Sabio
- Lesley-Ann Parker from Cambridgeshire riding Velvet Echo
- Christine Yeoman from Somerset riding LM Crazy Girl
- First Reserve - Catriona Moon from Somerset riding Leila
- Second Reserve - Beccy Broughton-Booker from Nottinghamshire riding Tawmarsh Muharram
- Third Reserve - Emma Finnie riding Sha Ali
- Forth Reserve horse – LM Greyson

[Come Camping with Offa's Dyke group at the World Championships](#)

We mentioned in the last newsletter that we were arranging a camping field at the venue of the Kings Forest ride at Culford. Wordwell Hall IP28 6UW . This is approx 30 mins drive from Euston Park.

Charges are: £25 per pitch payable in cash £5 per person toilet hire
Basic facilities only on the field ie water + a place for sealed rubbish bags/recyclable stuff but not for bottles! Please take them home or find a recycling bin. Well behaved dogs are fine – there is plenty of excellent walking in the adjacent Kings Forest. Barbecues are also fine as long as sensible safety precautions are taken.

If you'd like to join us, please contact Heather Evans immediately, as toilets are being ordered based on number of campers. She'll give you full details of the camping & directions.

Offa's Dyke Group visit to

Hartpury Equine Therapy Centre

Saturday 10th November 2012 10am – 1pm

Talks from:

Kathryn Nankervis BSc MSc CVPM on 'Injuries to the endurance horse and their rehabilitation'. Including demonstrations of the therapy centre facilities.

Liz Launder BSc Hons MSc (Osteopath) on 'Rider effects on the horse's performance'. Including a demonstration of the ride simulator.

Open to everyone, first come first served. Places strictly limited.
Closing date 27th October 2012. £15 per person

Book your ticket ASAP using booking form below
Contact Rachel Williams for more information.
Email: racheljw@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 07980013355

Hartpury Visit Booking Form

Name

Address

Tel No:

Mobile:

Email:

Send cheque for £15 per person payable to Offa's Dyke Group of EGB to: Rachel Williams, The Tump Farm, Whitchurch, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6DQ.

Information will be sent by email unless an SAE is enclosed.

Schooling Lessons with Carole Broad

We are once again organizing the ever popular winter schooling lessons at Huntley School of Equitation with Carole Broad FBHS. This year the lessons will start the first week in November and run through to February.

Lessons cost £17.50 per hour for 4-5 riders sharing the indoor school. This is fantastic value with an instructor of Carole's calibre. She has been teaching us for several years now and gears the lessons to Endurance riding. Everyone who has attended these lessons has felt the benefit. It's also great to be able to have a decent schooling workout in the indoor school regardless of the weather. We have rarely had to cancel through bad frost or snow.

You need to book on the lessons well in advance (no commitment at this stage, but we may well be oversubscribed – so book early to avoid disappointment). Last year most people booked on all the dates they could make over the winter to get the most benefit. You need to pay me in advance & I bank the money & email the lesson times on the Monday before each lesson. If you cancel after that time your money is not refundable unless I can fill the place from a waiting list.

Provisional dates (all Sundays):

November 4 and 18

December 9

January 6 and 20

February 3 and 17

If you are interested in coming along, please email me ASAP so I can give you full information and let you know when to send the first payment. This is especially important this year, as I will be away on holiday for the first lessons in November and will need to have everything sorted in advance and bank payment for both lessons before I go.

Email: carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk

Carolyn

Congratulations Liz and Marcus!



Marcus and I had the most superb day for our wedding on July 7th, it was fantastic to have so many friends and family celebrating with us! Even the weather behaved, and we managed to avoid the rain. I'm now slowly getting used to being a 'Warner'!! We don't have much time to recover from the wedding before our next adventure, our move to Lower Henland Farm in Devon at the end of September. Its not going to be easy moving 8 horses, 120 sheep and 7 years worth of 'stuff' 120miles south...but I think that's called character building!

Marcus and I are taking up a 180 acre county council farm tenancy. Unfortunately I am not allowed to fill the entire farm with horses (although I am making a sterling effort so far!), as we will be increasing the sheep numbers, as well as having 5,000 quail (for eggs) and arable land.

So, after competing with the OD EGB group for the last 15 1/2 years (since the tender age of 13!) I will now have to familiarise myself with another local group, and say goodbye to Offa's Dyke. However, if any friends ever find themselves in the Cullompton area, please do give me a call and pop in.

Liz

BBO

Many members braved the inclement weather to attend our BBQ in the Forest earlier in July. It was FUN!!

The BBQ site we were allocated had been securely locked, & the key holder had absconded. The rain was filling the outdoor open BBQs with water faster than the gas match could cope, & the gazebo fancied a walk!

Luckily, organiser Suzanne managed to find help in the Forestry office, & we were directed towards another venue at the other side of the area. Here there was a purpose built wooden shelter over a covered gas-fired BBQ - RESULT!!

The gazebo enjoyed its walk through the car park, over fences & through a couple of gates to the new site, & members started arriving in force. Good food & friendly company overcame the British weather. Many thanks to Suzanne for persevering.

This is a friendly fun event that I hope we will repeat next year - maybe even in sunshine!

Heather

Thanks to Jane Walker for sending us this report of a Heart of England ride. If you attend a ride out of the Offa's Dyke area, please let us know what you thought of it.

Jubilee Hack and Pub Ride over the Clent Hills

Jane Walker and Trigger Ishxid, 10yrs old Dark bay gelding

Sam Walker and Zante, Cob 6 yrs old Piebald mare

"Wow" was my first reaction driving home that day. I felt I could take on anything. After all I had just ridden over the Clent Hills. I kept saying "I've done it". Some might think I'm totally mad - Sam was laid back about the whole thing - but it was a ride which I met with low confidence, anticipating the worst; heights and drops and all on a new horse. So why did I do it?

For a year I've wanted to have a go at endurance riding. I joined last year as an associate member with the Offa's Dyke Group of Endurance GB, picked the Ludlow ride as my first ride and went on the training day which was hosted at Liz Taylor's yard and run by Carolyn Edwards and Gina Harris - very informative and nice friendly people. I

was ready to go, had my suitcase packed, but when the day came "I couldn't do it alone".

Another year on and we moved from Wales back to England, which put me in the Heart of England endurance group area. I was contacted by Olwen Law, one of the members (my details had been passed on by Carolyn Edwards, which I thought was such a nice thing to do) and I had a chat to Olwen, who offered to come to mine so that we could ride together and I'm sure one day we will. Olwen told me to check the web site for the Heart of England Group to find out all about the events and rides they were organising.

I spotted the Clent Hills escorted ride advertised and got in touch with Amanda Nelson on facebook. She was very helpful and gave me the number of the organiser - Helen Blair at the Silvretta Haflinger Stud. I rang Helen and entered Sam (my daughter) and myself. I was so pleased - at last I was off on a ride with endurance people! I counted the days, I organised and reorganised, I was ready....The day came. Panic - I didn't want to go!!

We met Catherine Hood on arrival by chance and she was very helpful, showing us where to park and take our horses. There were two groups going out that day and we were in the Haflinger group, basically four haflingers, which included our two escorts Sally Farrall and Amanda Nelson who were also very friendly.

We started off on a nice gentle walk to warm up and calm the horses. (I was told haffis can be quite quirky and one of them, who I think was "the Fat Pony", was quite excited.) We went down the country lanes and through a small village, then onto some tracks where we started trotting. Hey, I thought, I can cope with this! Everyone up front were chatting and laughing (unaware of the wreck on horseback behind them - yes that was me) and I kept telling myself it's going to be okay, you will survive this. I made Sam and Zante stay behind Trigger and me - poor Sam, her arms would ache at the end as Zante likes to be at the front.

The tracks wound up and then opened up into woodland and we were all asked if we were happy to canter once we got to the open hill and could spread out. I panicked and shouted yes that's fine!! (Oh heck.) We were off and it was awesome, like in a film, we just cantered up the hill as it spread out in front of us, little tracks spurring off, trees on one side and little gorse bushes everywhere. There were quite a few people out walking and as we went up through the middle they stopped and watched us. One dog decided to race Trigger and me so Trigger got excited and put in a couple of bucks. At the top we slowed to a trot and walk then, after re-grouping, we started to descend. We went round a loop which took us through some woodland on twisting tracks and

then we started to climb again - so when I thought we were at the top we weren't. Panic!!

We all said yes, we were ready to canter again and, wow, everyone just shot off. Trigger was startled and so excited he jumped up then bucked into canter. I think I yelled at him, but just decided to hang on and let him go. I knew we were okay as he would stop at the top with the others (hopefully). Sam and Zante were behind us. Trigger actually thought it was a race and overtook one of the other horses, but thank goodness we got to the top before he tried to catch the others up. Poor Sam she had to hold Zante back and she can get very strong.

At the top we went round a very large bonfire which I believe was the beacon which was being lit that night to celebrate the Jubilee. We then descended down some very steep paths, which the others didn't even notice and I turned into a wreck again - downhill on horseback. You're probably wondering why on earth does she ride? I was amazed how laid back they all were chatting away, riding on the buckle, and I realised this is what I should be doing, so I had a go and what a surprise, Trigger put his head down to munch, so I kept his head up!! I just shut my eyes most of the way down and amazingly got there.

On the way down Sally asked if we were okay and I told her that I was worried about the canter as I was still getting to know Trigger and his jump and buck into canter had startled me. She apologised and said they were used to going from walk to canter, but assured me we would trot first next time. I felt awful as I didn't want to ruin anyone's ride, but I also didn't want to lose any confidence which would put me off endurance riding.

We came to the pub and were met by Catherine Hood and Jan Hebblethwaite with a drink, which was very welcoming, as the sun had got very hot. Once we were refreshed and the horses had recovered we left for Walton Hill and the ride back home.

We went up a very steep concrete track which Trigger kept slipping on, but made it up, then we went onto a single track through woodland and muddy puddles, trotting, then into a nice canter and up the not so steep hill. It was fabulous, poor Trigger did struggle a bit this time and dropped to fast trot but when we got to the top the view was amazing! You could see for miles. Sadly we had to descend to go home. On the way back we caught up with the other group and rode back together.

When we arrived back at the yard, we said our thankyou's and goodbyes and were all invited back anytime to go riding on the Clent Hills. Once Zante and Trigger were settled and loaded we went to find Catherine to return to her the flash she had leant me, and met a few other endurance riders in the school, including Helen Blair, Diane

Latham, Chris Liggins and Marian Drew. Everyone was very supportive about my interest in endurance riding and offered me advice and help anytime. They said I was welcome to go and school or train there anytime.

I am looking forward even more to my first ride at Cranham on July 29th!

Thank you to everyone involved with today's ride - you have made me very happy. I got to know my horse, Trigger, better and he was such a good boy. Sam had a good time and her horse, Zante, was very well behaved and totally enjoyed herself - not bad for an unfit 6 yr old.

I totally recommend this ride for others of all riding abilities, whether it's for fun, fitness or endurance training.

Thank you for reading!

Jane Walker

Golden Horseshoe 2012.....by Chris Wray

I only really went to the Horseshoe as Zawadi won me a free entry by winning the Progression Award last year, but it has fitted into Takwenya's schedule fine, and will have improved her fitness for her next challenge, though we'll have to do a lot more canter practice before then, LOL!

Takwenya really did do so well – at every challenge I have given her, she has excelled – and there were just so many new experiences this time. There couldn't have been more of a contrast from Haywood Oaks, but she was fantastic – so many gates, so many fords (and one darned deep!), so many big hills, and so many really stony bits – one like a quarter mile scree of loose stones.

I was just so fortunate to be riding with Fiona, we were able to go along at our own pace – a good 12.5kph average until we relaxed over the last mile – though a big mix with some fast cantering, quite a bit of steady cantering, and of trotting, and quite a bit of walking. Fiona and Ollie were brilliant at closing gates, which helped a lot as well!

The 80km was seriously tough – the first 10km after an easy start plunged into a fast running and very deep ford – chest deep (!! Takwenya's first ford! – but she didn't think twice, straight in after Ollie!) – then a lovely section of bridleways and fields but plagued by many gates (most of which should apparently have been open!) Following the CP1 crewing point we had 5km of moor with some horrendously deep peat bog which pretty much had to be walked, then a lovely 2km canter along sheep tracks, then we got the first really big hill – dismounted and walked down and down into the coombe – then 5km of stony going along the bottom of the coombe, before the first

big hill up to CP2. Having got up on top of the moor, we had a lovely canter that started going down again, and on this section after being alone from about 5km we were overtaken by Gill Talbot, Georgina Hirst, Belinda Stewart, Carri-Ann Dark and Ray Davison, and in turn we overtook Sally and 13yo daughter Katy Mellor. The route went down and down – and then right back up and up onto the top at Webber's Post (30km) for the 4th crewpoint at a nice (for the crews!!) viewpoint. Then down and down to the bottom again before a long undulating section switching rapidly and regularly between all 3 paces – suitable to the severity of the going – to the halfway. Towards the end of this section we caught all the others who had gone past, and we were all pretty much together entering halfway. Takwenya had really pulled hard all the way, and I was pretty near exhausted by Webber's Post, but of course persevered.

The first 40km hadn't taken its toll too much on her, as she was (again) at 60bpm already by the time we got the tack off, so we presented immediately and were then able to have a 45 minute eat drink and relax. Nesta, my wonderful crew, had been supplemented by Dessie and Mervyn at halfway which was a great help as I could just flop and refuel, with plenty of hands to look after Takwenya and prepare for the return route. Takwenya mooched around grazing, had another go at her breakfast, and another graze, and I was told she even had a doze at one point. She is a very chilled girl these days – despite the weather being cool, windy and a couple of showers there.

So we tacked up to do the second half – but as I expect you know, the southern half of the route had been deemed too risky, so we retraced our steps the way we had come. At the restart, we all started pretty much together – since restart is 50 mins from arrival, not from presenting at the GHS. Fiona and I let the others draw steadily ahead up the first hill, and once they were out of sight, Takwenya became a whole lot easier to ride – finally I was able to ride 3 paces with loose rein and was being listened to! We didn't see another horse from this point on – the others had gone on ahead, and we never caught the 40km riders – so we were able to ride an ideal pace for the going at all times, and walk the steep hills (up and down), walk the deep boggy peat and keep ahead of gold speed (12kph) with relaxed cantering where it was possible to do so. When we got to the gates, we were through them pretty quick, I was opening, and Fiona and Ollie great at closing them quickly – so we had enough time to walk up the last hill, a final slosh at Comers' Gate, trot the road and walk the fields to the finish – 12.2kph. Takwenya's pulse wasn't great at coming down (last time we saw my stethoscope was halfway so we only had a rather reluctant pulse monitor), but we relaxed for a while and presented just a little before the 30 minutes with a pulse of 54 (needed below 56) – so we were on gold at the end of day 1, though sadly Ollie didn't achieve 55 and the resulting penalty moved them to silver.

Next morning, Takwenya was fresh and alert, striding round purposefully and looking great trotting up – but Ray Davison (also staying at Halse) was doing lots of massage

and stretching with his horse, and he sadly stiffened up more when he hacked over to the venue, failing the trot-up – 4 on gold now down to 3. Takwenya and both the others on gold (Gill Talbot and Carri-Ann Dark) passed the trot up – and so we tacked up and were off. Nearly all the 40km route had been on the southern half, so had been completely replaced by going out on the 80km route for 16km, then a different route to part way down the bottom of the coombe, from where it returned back up the 80km route. The slowest from Monday went out first, so we were 3rd out – just behind Katy Mellor who's mum had been spun at the trot-up, but Katy's pony's initial reluctance was replaced by happiness to follow Takwenya's lead, so off we trotted, chatting – first time Katy's pony hadn't been with her mum's horse! On the way down the first hill we were caught by Fiona, so we trotted on together, catching Sarah Ewart (who had been first off) – I think Katy rode the rest of the day with Sarah, as Fiona and I went on ahead. Fiona only needed to go silver speed (10.5kph) due to the pulse penalty on Monday, but we still needed 12kph, so when we got to the end of all the gates and Fiona crewed slower than us, we carried on. By this point those going faster (Gill, Carri-Ann and Georgina) had gone past us and were away. Takwenya had been going ok (a few stops to say why am I being asked to do all this again?), but now alone (as we were for the remaining 30km of the ride) on the really deep peat she was quite slow so we walked the bad sections, and then reluctantly cantered when we got to the sheep tracks across the top. Suddenly I had a different horse under me as we went through a gate onto the 40km loop to the return route, and we did some good trotting downhill, but had to walk a stony section down to and through a farm. I dismounted for the very steep stony path down into the coombe, and as we turned left onto the return route which she remembered from the day before, Takwenya was in canter mood!

Back up the stony coombe to the steep hill up, which I dismounted and led, and then canter back along the sheep tracks to the deep boggy section which we walked. Final crew at CP1/CP6, then it was just gently does it, keep checking the watch – need just enough time in hand to walk up the hill from the deep ford. After a couple of gate-closing disasters, I had dismounted every gate apart from a couple of slam-closed ones, after we got through the ford I dismounted and led her up the steep hill, final slosh at Comers Gate, trot up the road and through the moorland, walked the fields into the finish. 5 minutes to spare – perfect! Untacked, let her switch off, walked over to the vetting, couldn't get a pulse on the pulse monitor – but she looked relaxed so in we went. I'm sure Jo took much longer than a minute, but gave 47 which was a great relief. Takwenya did a lovely trot-up, good as gold on the fast sprint back towards Jo on a completely loose rope, and we were through – she'd matched her mum with a gold!

Nesta and I had speculated that we would get the trophy for gold nearest the optimum time – only 2 other golds and they had gone past us both days – Gill and Carri-Ann – but when it came to us, in addition we also got a rosette for best from an AHS Premium

Sire (Takwenya is collecting a lot of these!), the old codgers award (best finisher with rider over 55yo), and to my complete amazement the "Fleur" award for the best condition (in the veterinary panel opinion) to go another 40km

Back home and Takwenya is fine, I'm feeling much better after copious daily amounts of yoghurt, and my stiff calves have also recovered. Takwenya has another week off before we start a gradual build-up to the next challenge – planned to be her and my first FEI 2* - at Euston Park on June 24th!

The GHS website (<http://www.goldenhorseshoe-ride.co.uk/EntriesResults.php>) has results, and a photo of us on the "Gallery", Carolyn Edwards has posted several photos on Facebook, and David Saunders has several photos – we are number 21, but these from the presentation: <http://www.saundersphotography.co.uk/dsp2974>

There is also a report (with photo of us) from the antipodes (!!): <http://horsetalk.co.nz/2012/05/23/pictures-2012-golden-horseshoe-endurance-ride/> and we even got a mention

Blaenavon Group Social Ride 8 July

Ally Knight

The training ride at Blaenavon is one of my favorite rides, it suits my pony, Gypsy, as she loves the hilly mountains. Considering the amount of rain we had leading up to it, I was sure it would be cancelled, as so many rides have been this year.



But thankfully I heard it was going ahead, the route had been marked and was waiting to be ridden. I was up at 5am, usual time for an Endurance ride, as I have dogs to walk and other things to sort before we can go. The day started

off DRY, brilliant, it makes life a lot easier getting ready for a ride in the morning. With dogs walked and other jobs done, we set off. An hour later we arrived. Had planned to ride with a friend but she sold her pony the day before so was happy to go alone, having ridden the route many times. But I was parked next to Jan, a fellow Offa's Dyke member, so I happily accepted her offer to ride with her. We set off up the mountain, with our two mares, anticipating a good ride, doing the long loop. We soon caught up with Nicola and her friend, so we carried on as a foursome. On reaching the top we were met by Karen waiting for us, she told us that there was a group of ponies and a donkey, who were blocking our route and refusing to move. Karen thought her horse would get upset if she tried to ride through them alone. So we set off, all five of us, thinking safety in numbers was a good option. On reaching the herd of mountain misfits, Nicola decided the way to get them moving off our route was to trot straight at them, hollowing loudly. Well, the rest of us just agreed, but hid behind Nicola !! This seemed to work, as they took off across the mountain, donkey in tow. Big thankyou to Nicola and her brave horse.

We carried on as a five until we reached where my hubby was waiting with some slosh bottles for our mares. Nicola and friends decided they didn't need sloshing with any water, so they carried on ahead. Feeling refreshed we headed off again, soon to catch up with the other three, who were negotiating the cycle "step overs". I knew Gypsy wouldn't do these if I stayed on board, so I jumped off and she followed me over. Jan's horse was as good as gold and stepped straight over. We set off along the cycle path. Surprisingly the grass verges provided some good cantering going, well for me anyway, Jan`s horse was doing a good working trot and I was just keeping up!! We reached the second "step overs" and again, Jan`s horse stepped straight over and I did try, but it was much quicker to get off and let her follow me over. Up through the village and up the steep climb to the top of the mountain again. Due to the amount of rain leading up to the ride, we did have to do a lot of walking over the mountain as it was very wet and slippery, better to be careful and have a sound horse to ride another day.

The views from the tops were fabulous. We could see miles and because we were going slowly it was great to have a chance to look. Normally we are zooming along and I forget to look at what's around me!! And then we were looking down at the venue. The route still rode well despite the soggy ground. I am very grateful to Belinda and her happy helpers for putting this ride on again with all the hard work involved and the pub landlord for providing us with the venue once again. And a big thank you to Jan for her wonderful company and her very well behaved horse.

Ally Knight.

Kings Forest 2012 Rachael Rogerson

As all endurance riders know sometimes luck is against you on the day but on the 30th June the luck was definitely with Lori and I. The weekend started with a stressful initial vetting however; Lori was a little stiff behind and we had to trot again, fortunately the second trot was much better and we got through the three vet vote.

I had been pretty pumped up about the ride until this point, Lori had felt good in the build up and I was aiming for a completion speed of around 16.5kph, I thought it would probably be won around 17kph. The revised plan, after the eventful vetting was to go round the first loop gently and see what happened. I was hopeful that his original stiffness would improve as the race progressed.

My worries were put to bed on the first loop however. Being wary, I went steady for 45 minutes to warm him up and I was starting to feel a bit happier. We then moved up a gear and started travelling at the planned race pace. Within an hour of starting we had started to catch a few horses. For Lori this was a very good excuse for him to start pulling and being a prat, leading to us having to find our own space. Having managed to get on our own again he then settled into a steady pace until the vetgate. Into the vetgate we went and we got through! Looking at the timesheets I was surprised to find that we were only about 10 minutes behind the leaders and Lori was feeling good. Eating, drinking and looking happy. Perhaps he will be ok.



With the addition of a martingale I regained control and the next loop and vet gate went without a hitch. The third loop, we upped the speed a little, I had hoped to catch the two leaders (at this point Carri-Ann Dark and Suzanne McConnell) to give Lori a target, but after 15kms at 20kph they were still not in sight. Changing tactics we slowed down a click and went at a more comfortable pace. After another 10km we could suddenly see some horses ahead, they must

have slowed down, Lori pricked his ears and he had spotted them and we stayed with them in the distance for the rest of the loop.

Vetgate 3 comes along and we are asked for a second trot, bugger, he didn't look too good. Sarah and I realised we had forgotten to check his feet, the vets let us check his feet and we found a huge pine cone in each foot! We took them out and Sarah trotted him again for the three way vote, he looked much better to me and fortunately the vets agreed! We were through! The vetgate went well, we trotted him up before we went out and he was fine, we won't forget to check his feet again... We had been travelling about 5 minutes behind the two leaders. Suzanne was unfortunately asked for a re-check at VG3 and was eliminated lame. Carri-Anne was still 5 minutes ahead at this point.



We caught Carri-Ann and rode the next loop together, VG4 went ok, we got ahead here but Carri-Ann wasn't far behind and she soon caught us. Lori is a very competitive horse and the fact he had been caught up put him off slightly and he went a bit flat. He soon perked up and the horses went well together.

VG 5 was crunch time and we managed to get through a few minutes ahead. I knew if we got out of sight of Carri-Ann then we had a chance of staying ahead so we set off with a will and Lori flew. He really is an awesome horse when he's on-form! At the last crew point, mum dad and Sarah assured me we were well ahead so we steadied up coming into the finish, taking it easy. Now for the final vetting, deep breath: heart rate good, metabolics passed, trot sound.

We had done it! We had won the national championships for the second time and in the fastest British time for a 160km so far this year. Why did I ever doubt him?!

Young Rider Report from Angharad

Hi guys and welcome to summer...although with the wettest May and June on record and July showing no signs of improvement we could forgive you for forgetting your season! The rain has really had an adverse effect on the ride calendar but hopefully you're still managing to get some rides in! Since we last met quite a bit has changed in Team Morgan!



Our tow car broke down in mid-May on the way to Kenfig Beach for some training with trailer and horses in tow! This left us without transport for our next two rides- 40kms at Cerne Giant and Pen Ddol Y Gader. As we had already entered we hired an Equitrek horsebox and set out excitedly at 5am for Dorchester. However this was not going to be a happy ending! 30 odd kilometres into the ride (or so I'm told) I decided (apparently) to gallop into a gate, throwing myself over it, snapping my stirrup leather, tearing my 3 month old boots and landing with a hefty concussion and a fractured fibula. It took one and a half hours for a paramedic to reach me during which time two ladies waited with me (and I wish I had the memory to thank them!) and Dad and it was then quite a

drive back to our local A&E department where I waited for all of 2 minutes (A&E tip- head injuries and a paramedic report are high priority!) before being taken for X-rays and a CT scan. Thankfully besides a bit of memory loss there was nothing wrong with my head and I came away with just a splint and crutches!

Since the fall I have had little to do with the horses, Maisie was sold thus ending Dad's novice season. My splint was taken off after 5 weeks and after 6 days on two legs I felt strong enough to get back in the saddle. Unfortunately Comet had other ideas and refused to be caught despite my best efforts limping after him for about an hour in the rain! Comet's field mates consist of 1 17.3 ex-police horse, 1 18hh ex-racehorse, 1 16.3 thoroughbred, a 15.3 hooligan, a 15.1 arab whose missing a few brain cells, a 15.1 demon and a nervy blind 14.1 pony. On most occasions I have used jealousy tactics of befriending one of his companions until he storms over or have decanted the entire field but my somewhat limited mobility made me very cautious of my ability to handle the unruly creatures. We persisted however and were lucky enough to have since

captured him, I've only had 2 rides- the first was 20 minutes in the indoor arena mostly in walk and trot with a side of canter on each rein and the second of which was in our much larger outdoor arena where we spent most of our time trotting and did a fair bit of cantering- even extending it down the long side! We're a little unsure and jumpy with each other but we had a really good relationship before the fall and I'm determined to get back to it.

Our car still hasn't returned to us at this point and with a holiday to Florida coming up in 3 weeks my main focus is getting my leg ready to walk 8 miles a day at pace and swim in the breaks!! I'm itching to get back in the saddle and to get out competing again but doubt I will be back on the endurance circuit until next season. So that's it from me, hopefully you are having much better luck and as always please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Takwenya goes to Euston Park.....by Chris Wray

Well, if this makes it to print it is only because not enough of you out there are prepared to write about your experiences! You must all be bored with me – but unless you all submit articles, Margaret will keep sending me requests and you'll all be stuck with more of my boring stuff!

So Takwenya exceeded my expectations at Haywood Oaks which you have likely read about in the May/June EGB magazine, and off we went to use my free entry in the Golden Horseshoe – and if you have all been really bad, you will have had to read about that in here as well. Just in case Margaret decided that was old news and it didn't see print, I guess I should say we went nice and steadily over 80km on the Monday, and 40km on the Tuesday, and were one of the 3 Gold awards in the Exmoor Stag class, and won 3 trophies – the Slowest Gold, the Old Codger, and the Best Condition (these trophies do have real names, but I think my description will give you more of an idea what they were for).

So with the final fitness training under our belt, we're onto the meat and potatoes of our season – FEI 2*. The rides this season as we all know have been really messed about, but from a 2* point of view it has actually turned out reasonably well. The final one of the year was to be Cirencester in mid July, which was a bit soon after Euston to squeeze 2 in – but with Cirencester's demise, EGB have been brilliant to add a 2* to the Barbary Castle schedule in mid August which opens the calendar up nicely. So off we went to Euston for 24th June, in the knowledge that there is an 8 week recovery period before Barbary.

I love going to Euston – I did 2x 1* rides there on Hally (Ionian Extreme), the Morgan I had on loan for 3 years (and yes she loved it as well!) – with my mum living in North

Norfolk I get some days at home and can do Euston from hers in just a day trip with no camping or stabling. Sadly this is about to end as mum is downsizing from a 5 acre smallholding next month to a small detached house about 50 yds from my brother's in a village just outside Bicester – not much help for Endurance venues!

Preparation for Euston was a little fraught – 3 weeks before I found I had a palomino coloured donkey for several days which had me seriously worried, but with the thought at the back of my mind it all could be due to her being in season, though she was much more affected than she had ever been before. Fortunately it did turn out to be just that, and from donkey one day, 2 days later it was warp speed and bucking if I dared to ask her to slow down a bit, please. Actually she is doing donkey again today as I write – 6 weeks later she has taken 1hr 35mins to do what we normally do in 50 mins at walk – at least I know why now and just relax and enjoy the scenery. The season between these 2 was of course the Euston weekend, but it appeared that adrenalin easily trumped all the hormones and she wasn't affected. The other hiccup in preparation is that on the Monday before Euston I started feeling really rough at work, much worse Tuesday (bit like a bad dose of flu), and the doctor diagnosed a bladder infection, so I was onto a 3 day course of heavy-duty antibiotics – fortunately they did their stuff and I felt well enough for the 6 hour drive by the Friday (delayed 24 hours), though this didn't sound ideal preparation for a 122km ER!

After 36 hours for Takwenya in mum's field while I tried to catch up on my disrupted sleep, we got up on the Sunday morning at dawn, loaded and off to Euston. I was really delighted that Georgina Bull and her mum Penny could come and help crew me again following on from Haywood Oaks, and my mum came down to spectate and drive crew around, and she brought 2 very capable neighbours – so I had 4 excellent crew with a very experienced leader. We got to Euston in good time, unloaded for Takwenya to graze while I got paperwork, then we vetted. As expected Takwenya was very cautious of the big roof over the vetting area (that windy day at Cirencester has a lot to answer for!), but she got much better during the day.

The ride plan was to walk at the start, letting go the guys that were going to tank off at 20+ kph, and then get in a nice steady trot for the first km to warm up thoroughly before we get into canter. I ideally wanted to try and do a reasonably even paced ~16kph, but was going to ride very much to how ground conditions safely permitted. I had started the final circuit at Haywood Oaks with Claire Wertheimer – and she was in the same class with a similar intention, as was Caroline Cowley who I'd not met before. So the 3 of us had a lovely sensible start near the back, and fairly soon after we started steady cantering we were overtaking most of the French entrants in the class who were sticking reasonably close together. I was a little uncomfortable that the 3 horses were taking each other along a bit quicker than I wanted – the canter felt a little too energetic, but we were going well through the first crewpoint, then at the second I

asked my crew our average speed and as expected it was around 19kph, so after some deliberation I pulled Takwenya back and let the others go on ahead. We never did ride with any others after this, just as well Takwenya is fine solo. We did the remainder of the first circuit at a steady trot – actually we had some awful slippery rutted conditions underfoot for a long section where farm machinery had made a real mess, so our average dropped back to 17.6kph by VG1.

We were very nearly spun at VG1 – we had presented in 2:57 and had pulse of 58/64 – but the vet was not happy with her trot and we got 3-card-tricked, which fortunately she passed. Having a really close look at her feet when we got back to our crewing spot, I found a small piece of flint trapped between frog and sole – so we were really lucky and her gait was then back to As. We had come in in 11th, 4 minutes behind Caroline and Claire but pulled a minute back by vetting quicker – but Claire was out lame unfortunately. The second loop was my favourite – all alongside the Rushford road, through Shadwell Park and Riddlesworth Hall – fabulous cantering pretty much the whole way. Since we were alone, we just bowled along at a comfortable canter, riding for a short distance with Mel Davison (she was doing the 3* 160km, and going quite a lot slower), and into VG2.

Up to now I'd always dismounted at the timekeepers and walked Takwenya to our crewing spot – but since they were using transponders there was no need to stop or have crew at the timekeepers – so we decided to experiment at VG2 – to canter right to the timekeepers, trot through and right up to the crewing point – presentation was 5:03 and 60/60 pulse – so we then knew that Takwenya found the walk from the timekeepers useful. Our slower present let 2 French slip past, but 1 horse spun meant we dropped only to 12th. Oh, and our average speed for the loop to vet presentation was 17.82. So the longer present may also have been something to do with the faster speed we'd done coming into the VG. All vet parameters were good, so into preparations for the 3rd loop. It was around this time that the weather started deteriorating – we'd had drizzle when loading, which dried up by the time we'd reached Euston and it had been dry and cool, but now we started to get showers and we had a torrential downpour during the 3rd loop. Also, some of the 3rd loop going was poorer than what we'd been doing, so we regulated our pace, and were overtaken by another 2 French – so were 14th into VG3.

VG3 was back to plan A – presented in 3:19 with pulse 63/64 (the vet called it after about 10 seconds) and other parameters great. Average for the loop 16.4kph, with the poorer going. There were 3 horses spun here, so we were back up to 11th. VG3 was Takwenya's first ever re-present, she had pulse of 52/56 and all other parameters were great, so we were off onto loop 4. I knew this would be the most boring part of the ride – 23km of farm tracks and no grass for cantering, and so it proved – average speed on this loop was down to 15.07kph, all trotting, Takwenya telling me she was getting

bored. At VG4, her pulse hung a bit before dropping so our present was 3:43, but she only had the pulse taken for a few seconds each time before it was called at 64/64. We'd been overtaken by 2 horses during the loop but 2 ahead were spun – so we were still 11th. The re-present went smoothly, and we were off on the 5th and final loop.

We were back on the 3rd loop over again – but when we'd done it before there had only been a few horses through before us – but now it had suffered several showers, one of which had been absolutely torrential, and the 160, the 120 and the 80 had all been through at least once each. There was a section of a couple of km that was really deep and boggy now, and many km through woodland had a nice greasy layer of mud on top. The last thing I wanted to do was risk anything having done 100km already, so we walked all the really bad sections, and trotted slowly the slippery stuff. So our average speed for the loop felt a lot slower, but was still 13.8kph – at which I was really pleased despite being passed by yet another 2 of the French! The best bit though was that Takwenya decided herself as we passed the last gateway into Euston Park that she was going to canter in with ears pricked, and we got quite a cheer from the many people at the finish line (I am sure there were there for the 3* winner, not us!).

We had a much longer walk to our crewing spot from the finish line, and gave her a good clean off before final vetting, but were still there in 9:24 – pulse 56/56 (taken over a full minute to make a change), gait A as it had been all day apart from the VG1 blip, dehydration 1.5, all other parameters normal. Someone ahead got spun, so our final position was 12th in an overall average of 16.19kph – result! We had even almost caught Caroline who had had a very slow final loop – we finished just 4 minutes behind. I was also surprised to see that “pride of the North” Robert Newall on Loti de Caussanel was 25 mins behind us – had been pretty much that gap all day and I'd not seen them at all! Takwenya had been an absolute star all day – eaten and drunk really well, been very relaxed in all the VGs, and had been obviously taking everything in all day – Georgina called her the “all-seeing eye” – and she really had been!

It had been a fantastic team performance – crew were just brilliant and Georgina had been a rock despite feeling pretty unwell herself, but the greatest credit has to go to my fabulous girl. Another great ride to maintain optimism for the future – Barbary Castle here we come, we hope!! After 4 days chilling in my mum's back garden, I took her out for a gently walk round the lanes with one of my crew on another crew's horse, and she clearly felt VERY well in herself – mega extended walk, and some bucks when I wouldn't let her go faster when we rode along some fields! Back home to Wales, a second week's rest, and now we are just starting to build back up to some cantering to prepare for Barbary Castle. Hope to see you all there!

“BEYOND NOVICE TRAINING”

In June, Offas Dyke Group of EGB held a brand new training event aimed at members who were planning to go on to 64km and 80km rides with mid-way vetgates. The training comprised two sessions, the first being without horses and followed the format of a panel discussion with some of our most experienced members.

We met at Delwyn Hall’s lovely yard where Lesley Dunn, Gill Talbot and Rachael and Sarah Rogerson gave advice and answered questions on a wide range of topics including preparing for longer rides, feeding for endurance, crewing en-route, approaching vetgates, preparation of the horse for vetting at the vetgate, tips during vetting, management of the horse and rider during the vet hold and preparation for re-start. Chris Wray set up a dummy vetgate and Delwyn provided a horse for demonstration. Our mentors had brought various pieces of equipment that they find useful in the vet hold area, and showed us a variety of different feeding products to tempt picky eaters in the vet hold whilst Delwyn very kindly fortified us all with refreshments. Chris Wray provided a useful checklist upon which we wrote copious notes – some of the things we had learned would be useful at our next training session a fortnight later.



The ridden session was held at Treworgan Farm, Llangrove, near Ross-on-Wye and we were lucky to have a dry cool day perfect for riding. The going was just right and provided miles of headland, with up and downhill stretches and several small water crossings. Six horse and rider combinations rode in two groups, riding three separate circuits of approx 8.5 km with a simulated vet gate in between. The circuits increased in

speed each time starting at 10 kph, then 12kph and finally 14kph plus and on the last loop Alan, Rachael and Sarah met us on course with running sashes that we took at pace. Each time we 'vetted' (Belinda Stewart stood in as our 'vet') we tried to get through in less time than previously, and experienced crews took over to bring down pulses and give us useful tips about crewing, vetting and after ride management. It was very useful to get to know our horses a bit better, and what makes them 'tick' to help get their pulses down in the quickest time through the vet gate. This proved to be a very useful and constructive afternoon and it was also a great opportunity to get in some canter practice.

Some of the riders at the second session brought their baby horses and this was a very useful taster for them to experience a vet gate without the stress of the real thing. The training was great value for money and if we run it again it would be well worth attending. Treworgan Farm was a great location and a number of our members use it for regular training. Very many thanks to Rachael and Sarah Rogerson and Chris Wray for organising it and coaching, Gill Talbot and Lesley Dunn for coaching at both sessions, Belinda Stewart, Steve Rogerson and Angharad and Alan Morgan for helping on the second session. As always, we can't hold these events without others generously giving up their time.

Suzanne Garlick

Clicker Training for Horses

Rachel Williams

I don't know of any of my horse owning friends that use clicker training so I would like to introduce this exciting training tool.

I have been training animals for as long as I can remember, some of my first memories are of teaching our sheepdog to sit, by using a biscuit to lure her into position. At the time, choke chains were very popular, as were strong verbal corrections, but I didn't see the need for any aversives when I could use a food treat instead. In 2001 I took my young dog, Sparkle, to clicker training lessons. The training method was so powerful, I saw significant differences in her motivation, focus and understanding of correct desirable behaviours. She went on to be a very successful agility dog.

In 2008 I bought a foal with the intention of backing and training him myself. The following year I began a post graduate diploma in Animal Behaviour at the University of Southampton. We learned about how animals learn and how training methods apply and I started thinking about the way we train and handle horses. I started to realise that clicker training can be a fantastic tool for horses, and have since trained my youngster this way.

What is clicker training?

Clicker training uses positive reinforcement (normally food, but theoretically could be anything the animal enjoys) to reward correct behaviours. A distinctive 'click' sound is paired with food, so the click itself indicates reward will follow. In training, the clicker communicates that the animal is doing something right. Because the 'click' is so clear and distinctive it provides precision timing and can mark correct behaviour immediately, even the smallest behaviours or changes in response. Therefore, unlike any other training methods, the clicker allows very accurate training allowing the animal to learn and repeat correct behaviours quickly. Clicker training can be explained by scientific learning theory (which has been well researched and understood since around the 1900's). Clicker training has been used to train many different species of animal, but is most popular in the dog training world.

Clicker training and horses

Negative reinforcement (pressure and release; the removal of punishment contingent on correct behaviour) has been very effective in training horses for hundreds of years. However, with more scientific research and better understanding we are now finding that positive reinforcement is a more effective and kinder way to train horses. Whilst clicker training is an alternative to other methods, it does work well alongside traditional training. There are now many equine trainers that realise the benefits of clicker training. Whilst teaching horses this way is in its infancy, there are international riders that have clicker trained horses that have gone on to win medals; including John and Beezie Madden, USA Olympic Team Showjumpers.

Many people believe that horses should never be fed from the hand. However, clicker training can actually be used to overcome problems of biting and mugging for food. The unique aspect of clicker training is that attitude is rewarded as well as behaviour. It is vital that the horse is rewarded for a good attitude as well as correct behaviours. This type of training is a powerful way of encouraging good attitude in work and creates a calm relaxed horse.

I should emphasise that clicker training is an 'approach' not just a training method. The approach is to maintain a calm happy horse and build a mutual understanding. I do most of my training at liberty (loose) allowing the horse to lead the training and work at their own pace. Any difficulties during training gives me feedback; caused by anxiety or lack of understanding. Concepts of dominance and respect are not relevant and the use of pressure / punishment is avoided. Before dealing with unacceptable behaviours, the motive or cause must be identified before teaching a new more appropriate behaviour. The approach influences my perception of horses as a whole, not just during training.

Clicker training is not a magic wand, and there are no instant results. As with all other training methods, clicker training is reliant on trainer ability and requires good timing.

Advantages of clicker training

- Fun for the horse and owner.
- Builds a strong relationship between horse and owner.
- Horse becomes more willing.
- Less stress for the owner. *In situations where the horse may refuse or object, the horse is taught the correct behaviours so the owner avoids the stress of conflict.*
- Rewards calmness and good attitude.
- Accurately marks correct behaviour.
- Use of aversives is reduced or eliminated.
- Focus is on correct behaviour. *Whilst traditional training focuses on reducing wrong behaviour and telling the horse 'no', clicker training focuses on correct behaviour, helping horses understand what we want from them and telling them 'yes'.*
- Can change the emotion of fear and anxiety to pleasure and calmness.
- Active participation of the horse.
- Owner reads the horse and horse is allowed to communicate during training.
- Long retention of learning.
- Learning is stronger. *Because there are clear consequences to behaviour.*
- Mental exercise. *Can create games or tricks, ideal for horses on box rest.*
- Overall more confident, calm horse.



Training my youngster at liberty. The aim is teach him to be relaxed regardless of what is thrown at him. The training sessions are slow and methodical, building up from simple items such as a body brush to more scary plastic bags or hose pipes. This can be particularly useful in reducing reactivity in spooky or sensitive horses.

Visit my website www.rachelwilliams-animalbehaviour.com or my facebook page www.facebook.com/rachelwilliamsequineservices for further information, training videos and more.

Rachel Williams BSc (Hons) Dip ICAT PGDip CAB
Animal Behaviour Therapist

Horse Trials

With a bright bounce I leapt into a lively canter. At this rate I'd get round the 40k at Golden Horseshoe in no time. Which was naughty of me really, because I was supposed to be doing a Walk and Trot dressage test with my rider. I know that because the classroom had flowerpots around the edges and a metal box (like the ones you see on the road) with people in it. We were also wearing our best clothes: I had my smart numnah and leather tack on, and she had her best blue tweed rug and funny beige leg coverings. So definitely not endurance, but I knew I wasn't going to do that because I hadn't had any of my special feed or salt (yuk).

She likes to take me to different things (she calls them "disciplines" not a very accurate description when I'm doing them, but nothing wrong with hoping ..) to keep me busy. And 7 out of 10 cobs like to be kept busy. People say it's not fair on me and I don't know what I'm doing.... Oh, but I can assure you all I do, I do ..

I like endurance, because I can more or less please myself what I do for 4 or 5 hours at a time as long as I go in the direction she asks me, but I also enjoy a bit of eventing. That includes going round in circles, like today (for you humans, think about it like double maths), going over funny coloured poles in an arena, (getting better: practical chemistry) and jumping in open fields (playtime !). What I like most though is pretending I can't do anything: I did that very enjoyably a couple of weeks ago refusing to go over a tiny ditch on a pleasure ride. They aren't called fun rides for nothing. She was very cross with me because she had (a) told the other people stuck there that they should "follow us , we do cross country" (she'll never learn and serves her right for showing off) and (b) we had to go half a mile round to get back on the course. The others had told me there was a troll in the ditch, so she should be grateful I saved us.

She wasn't grateful that time a black monster (turned out to be a dog, I did feel silly) popped its head over a bush and I had to run off back down the hill. It was very steep and I must have gone a bit faster than she wanted, because she got off before I'd even stopped. I nearly hit a tree: they must have been worried because they were going to get the air ambulance for me but decided

I didn't need it and we walked very slowly back to the taxi. I had several weeks off to recover as well, very thoughtful of them.

She usually sends me off to school in the week to keep me occupied whilst she is busy. If I don't go I have to make my own amusement and pretend to be frightened at signposts, cyclists and drains when we do get round to going out. I know it's pathetic but I can't think of any other way to tell her .

We tried Trec a few times, and made a good start at the Welsh Championships a few years ago. It all went wrong when the daft bat misheard the yellow jacket and thought we had to go at 12k for the next stage. I heard it and knew it was 4k : but it was fun charging past everyone else and when she realised, she gave up and I galloped home for a late lunch.

Sometimes when I get left behind by the Arabs (I just can't keep up; they're so quick some of them even though my legs go as fast as they can and I've been practising for weeks), I wish I were more athletic or really, really good at one thing, instead of just being quite good at several different things. Sometimes though it's amusing when big posh horses pass me and say " you're doing well aren't you, for a native, are you getting tired?" and then we get to some rocky, steep tough going and I pass them and we never see them again. Ha !

So is there a place in modern equitation for the multidisciplinary riding horse? Well don't ask me: I'm only a cob.

Barbara Rees

Janet Bitmead

Five members of the Offa's Dyke Group and one from Heart of England attended Janet's memorial service in the beautiful church of Kempford. The church was filled to capacity, during the service we learned that Janet had had a very busy and filled life, had high powered jobs and was also a successful rally driver.

After the service we were invited to the George Inn for refreshments. Here we chatted to Paul and offered our condolences. We looked at the photos on display many showing Janet riding and doing Endurance, and having a good time

Delwyn Hall

Fine Fettle Feed & Team Teke
present an illustrated talk



Hoofprints in Central Asia



adventures of an Akhal-Teke stallion

Hartpury College, Thurs 15th Nov., 7.30 pm

Refreshments, discounted products, breed info

Tickets (£4 inc. refreshments)/further details and photos:
www.finefettlefeed.com/www.kyzyltekes.com
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Wanted

**Ride reports,
photos,
articles,**

For the Website & newsletter

Don't be shy. Please send lots of stuff to Carolyn & Robin Edwards either using the contact details on page 2 or by the contact button on the Website

Adverts are free to Offa's Dyke members & associate members.
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For non members of Offa's Dyke Group, we ask for £5.00 subscription per year for the newsletter. Please send this form with a cheque made payable to OFFA'S DYKE BRANCH OF ENDURANCE GB to: Carolyn Edwards, Duart House, Brookfield Road, Churchdown, Gloucestershire, GL3 2PF.

Alternatively, the newsletter can be downloaded free of charge from our website 'news' page. Some previous newsletters and archives are also available

www.offasdykeegb.co.uk