



Offa's Dyke Group
Of Endurance GB
Newsletter – October 2011
www.offasdykeegb.co.uk



Chairman's Comment

The Dragon is next weekend and to me that marks the end of another endurance season. My horses are already looking woolly, but the haircut will have to wait another couple of weeks. I can't believe the Group had ten rides this year!

Cranham once again had some wonderful weather and views. Many thanks to Margaret McKiddie, who's run it for 21 years. We all really appreciated it.

Plump Hill social ride The last group ride of the year with a good turn out and the only ride I got wet at this year. Many thanks Sharon for another lovely ride.

Tintern sadly cancelled due to lack of entries. Thanks to Mark Holland for the work he did organising it.

Inter-regional team Wales and Offa's Dyke was well selected by Chris Wray and had excellent result with second place. Welsh inter group challenge final ride will be Dragon so let's hope he continues to be good at selecting folk.

Open group meeting gave an insight into what people wanted, more info inside and we will be looking for people to be buddies so please offer.

Annual meeting and Prize giving to be held in December so don't forget to send in your trophy cards to Chris Wray and please come along to join us.

2011 Still to come, schooling sessions at Huntley and Coaching to achieve your goals with Pam James in November-details inside.

2012 planning is well underway you will see some of groups rides on EGB website in next year's schedule. We expect some changes to social rides so watch our groups website and newsletter. We are in process of organising some evening socials for early 2012.

This will be my last message as Chair. Where does three years go? I have to say thanks to Carolyn and Rob Edwards for all the effort they put in on the website and work on membership. It made the job easier; and to ride/event organisers for giving me so much to put into my Chair's message.

Gina

Committee Contacts

- Chair Gina Harris
14 Oak Way, Huntley, Gloucestershire, GL19 3SD
Email: g.harris31@btinternet.com
- Vice Chair Debbie Williams
The Tump Farm, Whitchurch, Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6DQ
Tel: 01600 891029 Email: clinwilcharmaine@hotmail.com
- Secretary Vacancy
- Treasurer Liz Taylor
Lock Cottage, Oxenhall, Newent Glos GL18 1RL
Tel: 07737 871085 Email: elizabeth.taylor@stonegate.co.uk
- Junior Representative Louise Rich
Email: louise_rich@hotmail.co.uk
- Trophy Secretary Chris Wray
Pentrewheeler Farm, Cwmcarnvan, Nr Monmouth, Gwent, NP25 4PL
Tel: 01600 860938 Email: c_wray@tiscali.co.uk
- Membership Secretary &
Groups Liaison Officer Carolyn Edwards
Duart House, Brookfield Road, Churchdown, Glos, GL3 2PF
Tel: 01452 857352 Email: carolyn@edwardsglos.fsnet.co.uk
- Newsletter Margaret McKiddie
Kimsbury Cottage, Upton Hill, Upton St Leonards, Glos, GL4 8DF
Tel: 01452 813670 Email: margaret.mckiddie@btinternet.com
- Child Welfare Officer Delwyn Hall
Mitchmore Dell, Mitchmore Farm, Holme Lacey, Hereford, HR2 6LJ
Tel: 01432 870348 Email: dave_dell@mypostoffice.co.uk
- Others Belinda Josephi, Heather Evans, Sue Loveridge, Sharon Parr,
Mark Holland, Rachel Williams, Suzanne Garlick

Web site: www.offasdykeegb.co.uk

Editor's Comment

As another season comes to an end I have given up the idea of doing any ride this year but hopefully we will be back in action next year, though Bonnie will be 22 years old then so perhaps Misty will have to take over as my main ride. I hope that you have all enjoyed your season and achieved what you hoped. If not, like me, you can only look forward to next year. I think in general that ride entries have been down, no doubt in part due to the high cost of fuel. Our rides have been reasonably well supported apart from Tintern which had to be cancelled due to lack of entries. It used to be a popular ride as a prelude to Red Dragon and feed-back as to how to make it more popular again would be useful.

Dates for your diary

Coaching day with Pam James	Sun 20 November Sun 27 November	see page 4
National EGB AGM	Sat 26 November	
OD Annual Group Meeting	Sat 10 December	see page 9
Schooling lessons and stable management	Sun 6 November Sun 4 December Sun 11 December Sun 15 January Sun 22 January Sun 19 February Sun 11 March	see page 5
Xmas ride	Sun 8 January	see page 11
Maryland (provisional)	Sun 12 February	
FOD March Hares (provisional)	Sun 4 March	
Ludlow (provisional)	Sat/Sun 16/17 June	
Cranham (provisional)	Sun 29 July	

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

Identify your goals for Endurance

with coaching from Pam James

Two training days are planned:

20th November Venue TBA-possibly near Newent Gloucester (places available)

27th November at Delwyn Hall's house, Holme Lacy, Hereford (fully booked)

Times 9.30-4.00

Cost £20 per person 6 places per day (payable when booking confirmed)

Pam is a level 3 qualified coach with many years experience in endurance (more info on EGB coaching page). These coaching sessions will be on the basis of the sessions Pam did in Denmark last year. See the article about it on page 38 of the EGB National Magazine May/June issue

What the day will cover

- Goals – what you want to achieve with your horse.
- Personal profiles of horse and rider strengths and weakness – working with what you have got! You and the horse!
- Detailed Individual program designed around each individual's lifestyle, ambitions – fitness for both horse and rider
- Preparing for competitions and how to avoid possible mishaps.
- Pre attendance: each participant will give Pam three things they want to especially talk about.
- Finally we will look at example photos and discuss rider and horse at that particular moment.

Apply now. Final application date 12th October

To book a place please email via Offa's Dyke website
or phone Delwyn Hall: 01432 870 348

New Stable Management Lessons

Following a suggestion at the recent members open meeting, we've arranged some stable management lessons to be run in conjunction with our schooling lessons at Huntley School of Equitation. If you aren't booked on the schooling lessons you can still come along 'on foot' to the stable management lesson (booking in advance). We hope these sessions will be interesting and fun. They will have an 'Endurance Slant' - so will be relevant to our sport.

We hope that these sessions will be of benefit to many of our members. I'm sure even those of us who have owned horses for a number of years can always learn something new. We will have all the facilities at Huntley, including a heated lecture room, the barn to tie up the horses for the 'hands on' practical sessions and their huge collection of equipment for use in the demonstrations and for us to practice on our own horses.

The idea is that we will have our 1 hour group lesson with Carole, followed by the stable management with Hayley in the barn, with the horses tied up. A most welcome cup of tea or coffee will be followed by that week's talk &/or demonstration. We may then get to practice what we've just seen on our own horses, using Huntley's equipment if necessary. We expect the stable management sessions last between 30 mins & an hour.

We are very lucky that our instructor will be Hayley, who is currently a BHS Intermediate Instructor, but by the time of her first lesson will hopefully have qualified as a BHS Instructor in stable management. She is happy to cover any topics we request, but as a starting point we thought some of the lessons could cover:

- Basic First Aid
- Tack fitting e.g. bits, boots, rugs
- Bandaging & preparing for travel and overnight stays
- Basic safe handling
- Condition scoring, feeding
- Vaccinations, teeth, worming

Any other suggestions welcome

These lessons will be open to all Offa's Dyke Members and Associate Members. You have two options: Either come with your horse and have a riding lesson as well as the stable management lesson, or come along and take part without your own horse. There will be no additional charge for those attending a riding lesson and there may be a nominal charge for others depending on demand (booking essential).

The schooling lessons have proved hugely popular this year and as we are limiting numbers to 30 per day, we currently have only a few places available on some dates and a waiting list for others. Dates as listed in 'Dates For Your Diary' Page 3

If you are interested in coming to the schooling lessons and / or stable management lessons please contact me straight away so I can fix the arrangements with Huntley.

Carolyn Edwards (contact details page 2)

Open Meeting 21st August

Margaret McKiddie

I must say when an open meeting with members was discussed I was rather sceptical about it and thought few, if any members would attend. I was proved wrong by the attendance of 18 people and a very lively interactive evening with lots of useful topics covered.

Everyone was positive about the WEB SITE and NEWSLETTER and liked SOCIAL EVENINGS and TALKS.

In 2012 we plan a talk from Abbi Tennant about her time in South Africa where the horses all competed barefoot (see page 12) and will hopefully link to this a talk on Barefoot trimming. Other ideas are a 'Bring and Buy' tack sale, a chance for gossiping and another evening with some feedback from our members who went to Belgium.

There were requests for more TRAINING ARTICLES in the newsletter e.g. feeding, how to get a horse fit and travelling horses. We are currently trying to find people willing to write these! Volunteers please contact newsletter editor. There was also a request for CREW TRAINING.

COACHING. Pam James is the Offa's Dyke member who is now a qualified EGB coach. She outlined what coaching she had to offer. (see page 4 for details).

BASIC HORSE SKILLS. Jenny Letherbarrow, who vets at several EGB rides had commented that some people would benefit from some basic horse care skills.

We hope to set up a talk from Jenny this winter. We have also arranged some instruction on stable management skills from a Huntley Riding School instructor in conjunction with the schooling lessons (see page 5 for details).

A BUDDY scheme was requested by several newer members. This is an opportunity for more experienced members to help out, who may offer to ride with and/or advise those new to the sport. We are in process of setting this up so please support it (see page 8). *PLEASE VOLUNTEER IF YOU CAN HELP*

FACEBOOK page to encourage Juniors and Young Riders, or those who just enjoy this kind of contact. Liz Taylor has done this already(see page 12 for details)

OTHER DISCUSSIONS. Gina Harris raised the question of ride rosettes. Under the new system of Grading being amalgamated with ride specific rosettes. It is increasingly difficult for ride organisers to know how many rosettes to order. She suggested that we should stop Ride-Specific rosettes and have ones common to all Offa's Dyke Rides in a mixture of colours. This means left over rosettes could be passed to the next OD ride. There was a mixed response to this suggestion but she will raise it again at the next Groups Meeting to see what other Groups think.

ANNUAL MEETING. There was a suggestion from the floor that perhaps the Offa's Dyke meeting should be a more formal affair with smart dress and a meal. 2011 is already organised but we are always open to change and if people want this please let us know.

The meeting ended on a positive note with all agreeing it had been worthwhile, thanks to all those who had turned up and contributed and we have a firm intention to make this a regular event

You don't have to wait for the next 'open meeting' to let us know what you want from OD Group. Please contact us any time via the website or by phoning any member of the committee.

New Buddy Scheme

One of the things newer people have been asking us for over summer and again at the recent open meeting is for a 'Buddy' scheme, where they can ask for help and advice from more experienced Offa's Dyke members. We have tried this sort of scheme in the past through the newsletter, but with limited success. Now we have the website, we feel there is more chance to keep the scheme up to date, as we change information regularly. It also avoids the need to publish people's contact details, as we will put them in touch privately.

The scheme will only be available to Offa's Dyke members and associate members. We will not allow non members to contact anyone.

What we need is for as many people as possible to volunteer to help and of course some wanting a buddy. To be a buddy you don't need to be an advanced rider. Even if you have only been doing endurance for a short time yourself, you can talk about how you got started. If people get on well they may decide to ride out at home together or at a ride. It is actually very helpful to have volunteers who are riding their own horses at novice speed, as this is what new people need. An advanced horse & rider may opt to be an email/telephone buddy. Someone to ask questions is always useful. Even if you don't have a horse to ride at the moment, you can be a buddy and it's an excellent way to help our sport and make friends at the same time.

We will soon set up a 'Buddy' page, accessed from the Offa's Dyke website main page. This will list the people willing to help and brief details of what they are offering. If someone wants to get in touch with one of the 'Buddies' they will do so through the CONTACT button. Liz Taylor has kindly offered to then put people in touch privately by email.

To volunteer to help, please visit the website Buddy page. The information you will be asked for does not include any contact details for security reasons. We will ask for:

- Name
- Membership number (not published)
- Location
- Riding level

What can you offer (tick)

- Telephone advice
- Riding out from home
- Accompanying at rides

Other comments:

The page can be updated regularly, so if you want to add or remove your name from the volunteers at any time, you can do so.

PLEASE VOLUNTEER TODAY-THE MORE THE MERRIER

Please all come along to our

Offa's Dyke Awards Evening and Annual Meeting

Saturday 10 December 7.30

New Room: Agincourt Hall, Bridges, Monmouth

All Members, Associate Members, friends and partners are very welcome to come along and enjoy this fun and sociable evening. Bridges is a lovely venue with bar facilities available to us. This year we were lucky enough to book the largest room, so loads of space to spread out and enjoy ourselves! (Same entrance as last year but turn right inside)

Once again we are having an 'American Supper'. Please bring along a plate of savoury food to share. We will provide deserts, plates, cutlery etc. Drinks are available to buy from the bar. Food will be followed by a brief Annual Meeting- hear how the group got on this year and how well our members did in competition.

This will be followed by our Awards Presentation. Rosettes and trophies will be given to Members and Associate Members, from pleasure ride rosettes to highpoint trophies! To see last year's winners and trophies visit our Offa's Dyke Website, News page/AGM 2010. Remember to win it you need to be in it – so send in your trophy cards to Chris Wray in plenty time.

Finally the ever popular raffle will be drawn. Please bring along a raffle prize to share. Money made on the raffle helps pay towards costs of the evening, which is of course free to all.

Directions:

From A40 Ross-on-Wye, A466 Chepstow (turn left off the Monmouth Wye Bridge):

After the Monmouth Wye Bridge traffic lights take the slip road before the tunnels (caution, 30mph) and turn Right at the end, then Left at the mini-roundabout at the bottom of the hill.

From A40 Raglan: Immediately after the tunnels approaching Monmouth, take the slip road, and go Straight Over the mini-roundabout.

From the mini-roundabout, take the left lane and go straight on at the traffic lights, straight over the roundabout and right fork at the mini-roundabout (Drybridge House is on your left at this point). After about 30 yds, turn left into Drybridge House grounds, and follow the road round left to the car park.

Type NP25 5AS into satnavs. Further details at <http://www.drybridge-house.co.uk/contact-us.html>

You've got to be in it to win it!

It's time to send in your trophy cards to claim your rosettes and trophies at our Annual Awards evening on 10th December. **Send your completed cards straight away after your last ride to Trophy Secretary Chris Wray** (see contact details page 2). He needs time to check the results – see who's won and order the necessary rosettes before the event. If you've lost your form you can print another from the forms page of our website – or ring Chris

Please hurry!

There's no need to send copies of your Master Cards this year, as Chris will check the EGB data base for your National rides. So you only need to have verified any social rides and non competitive rides. Just list everything you've done – riding and helping on the card and fill in the top part, about your horses breeding etc. Chris will then work out what awards you qualify for.

N.B. Remember the deadline for claiming your horse's EGB national mileage rosettes is also coming up. You need to write to Results Coordinator, EGB office before 28 October to claim them (see page 157 of the EGB handbook for details)

Offa's Dyke group has the most marvelous array of awards up for grabs, including an Associate Members Highpoint Trophy. See the photo below of last year's Trophies



Christmas Cracker Ride



Sunday 8th January 2012



Staunton, Forest of Dean

A lovely social ride on forestry tracks, no gates & minimal road work. 17km and 22km options.

Mince pie and mulled wine to follow. Come and work off those Christmas calories!

Entries to: Suzanne Garlick, Dove Cottage, English Bicknor, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 7PQ. Tel: 01594861019 Email: suegarlick@btinternet.com

Cheques payable to Offa's Dyke Group of Endurance GB. £10.00 members and associate members, £18.00 Temporary day members

Make sure you renew your membership or associate membership in time for this first OD ride of the season

New Facebook page

EGB OD group now has a presence on Facebook. Anyone can 'like' our page, which can be found under 'OD Endurance Group'. You can also use the link on the OD website home page.

The aim is to improve communications between members. You can use it like a forum, to request any assistance for rides (need a crew/riding partner?) for example. We also aim to keep it updated with details of rides and events being run by the group.

Please, help us keep the page relevant, fun and interesting, by posting comments, photo's or information.

Liz Taylor

As we mentioned in the last newsletter Offa's Dyke's Abigail Tennant has spent the summer out in South Africa working and competing for an endurance yard. She's had some great experiences and taken part in lots of FEI races out there. Abi kindly sent us this update on what she's been up to out there and has agreed to come and tell us about it at a pub social evening over winter. This will probably be combined with a talk from a barefoot farrier, as the horses Abi has been riding compete barefoot.

Perseverance Stud, South Africa

Abi Tennant

"Barefoot and Bitless!"

Perseverance Stud is situated outside of Graaff-Reinet on the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The stud is owned by Francois (Bob) and Laura Seegers. This stud produces both full and part-bred Arabians for Endurance and is one of the leading studs within South Africa currently competing barefoot.

On 2nd June, I left the UK and flew to South Africa to join the Perseverance Stud as a volunteer work rider. It was a 12 hour flight from Heathrow Airport to Johannesburg, followed by an hour and half flight from Jo-Burg to Port Elizabeth. I touched down in PE in the afternoon of 3rd June. South Africa is only ahead by an hour so fortunately I did not have to suffer with any jet lag. Lucy Dixon (Laura's sister) welcomed me at the airport and drove us the 3 hour trip to Graaff-Reinet. Lucy does all the PR and marketing for the stud.

On arrival Bob, Laura and Ashley Gower (trainer) were already away competing at a ride so I did not meet them till 4 days later when they returned from Christiana.

Jefferey's Bay 18th June

Two weeks into my time in South Africa and I was entered for my first endurance ride here. I would be riding Perseverance Matrix at Jefferey's Bay in the 80km stepladder. However, Jefferey's Bay suffered with torrential rain from the Friday prior to the ride so on the morning of the ride it was cancelled. This cancellation was due to there possibly being a health and safety risk as most of the route had washed away or was waterlogged. All markers had also vanished as powdered lime is used to create the arrows for this ride. I was quite shocked to have a ride cancelled due to "a bit of rain"!

Fauresmith 5-7th July

It was not till the beginning of June, when I finally got to do my first official ride here, Fauresmith. Having not ridden at Jefferey's Bay my first ride was therefore to be one of the toughest rides in SA, a three day race of 200km. This ride is well known here and is run annually at Fauresmith in the Free State. Prior to this ride, Laura and Bob had assigned me Liberty to train for this race. It was not only to be my first Fauresmith but also her's as well. Laura, Ashley and I would be riding this 200km race with Jedi, Mauser and Liberty, with Bob, Donalyn Hennessy (a business partner's daughter) and one of the groom's, Dion, being our crew. Laura had given Ashley and me both a talk prior to the ride on the speeds she thought we should possibly ride at and what to expect.

At the rides in this country, of all levels, riders are weighed in with their saddles to be able to be assigned into the categories depending on their weight. This makes things fair amongst the competitors, otherwise a heavier rider would be at a disadvantage to a light weight rider.

I was to ride at Fauresmith in the Light Weight category, Ashley was to ride in the Young Rider and Laura to be in the Standard Weight. Laura and Jedi also made the South African Springbok Team for this ride.

The ride is broken down into 80km to be ridden on Day 1, 80km to be ridden on Day 2 and 40km on Day 3. The course this year was said to be much harder than previous years due to the route being washed away in places, revealing more stony/rocky terrain. This ride is very popular so it is impossible to have over 200 horses all start together, therefore competitors are started according to their qualifying times. The clock will be newly started for each rider so it does not put anyone at a disadvantage no matter when they start. Laura and Jedi were in one of the first groups to leave, followed by Ashley and Mauser about 5 minutes behind and then Liberty and I further 10 minutes behind Ashley. I only saw my fellow PSV competitors at vet gates throughout the ride.

All three PSV horses completed Day 1 successfully. Laura and Jedi were in the lead group. Although Ashley and I never saw or rode together, by the end of day 1 our times and speeds were very similar so that meant on Day 2 we would be starting together.

Day 2 and PSV horses are still going strong. Although Ashley and I started together I was not to keep up the same speed as him, so had to rein Liberty back under control away from Mauser. End of Day 2 and there had been many competitors being vetted out but the Team PSV horses were still going strong.

Day 3 and it was a short 40km's, compared with the previous 2 days this did seem very short. The PSV horses still looked good and were riding strong. Despite Liberty and I dropping back and losing the pack we started with on our first leg by the second we had made up the time as well as catching up with those we had started with.

This ride proved to be highly successful for all three of us and our horses, even with the three of them being ridden barefoot! Laura and Jedi came in 5th in the Standard Weights, Ashley and Mauser came in 17th in the Young Riders and Liberty and I came 10th in the Light Weights averaging at a speed of 19kph.

Albertinia FEI 30th July

Three weeks after conquering Fauresmith, I was to ride in the 120km FEI** at Albertinia with Perseverance Kandahar. Albertinia is a very tough course due to 80kms of the route being in deep sand. This was to be Kandahar's first 120km, so I was on orders to take it gently and get him round.

This ride would be my first time riding FEI as a senior and I was not going to make the minimum amount of weight for senior level. Bob made me some weights which he attached to my saddle with ties and duck tape so that I would be over the 75kg mark.

Laura, Bob and Ashley were also riding but in the 80km FEI* with Jedi, Mauser, Mabruk and one of the PSV horses, Neptune, was also leased to another rider for the 80km.

The 120km started at 4am in the pitch black with the 160km class. There were 6 120 riders and 2 160 riders. The first 40km were straight up a dirt road and back with us all following a car to light the way. The next 3 legs were in deep sand for the entire way with only small sections of dirt road. Loops 1 and 2 I rode round with the pack but the final 2 loops I never saw them again. Although did see Ashley and Mabruk on my loop 3 going in the opposite direction. Kandahar completed his first 120km at a speed of 14.97. We came 1st in the Standard Weight 120km and Kandahar also won Best Condition. This is my first win at any race so I was thoroughly pleased.

Ashley and Mabruk also won the 80km YR class and won best condition too, this being a first time win for both Ash and Mabruk.

All horses completed their distances at Albertinia, so it was another good result for Team PSV.

Blakeridge 13th August

The closest ride to the farm is Blakeridge, which is less than an hour away. Bob, Ashley, Donalyn and I were all to ride in the 80km with Matrix, Mercury, Mabruk and Liberty.

This course was very flat and across only farm land so no tarmac or dirt road at all, apart from 2 road crossings. Ashley and I rode the entire 80km together, working as a team. We had trained Mercury and Liberty together so knew they would work well. The last loop of the 80km we clocked at 25kph and passed a fair few in our classes.

Ashley won the 80km YR with Mercury, I came 3rd in the Standard Weight with Liberty, Donalyn won the Standard Weight with Mabruk and Bob came in 2nd in the Heavy Weights.

Both Donalyn and I rode this 80km with twisted ankles. Previously she had fallen in one of the camps (known as a paddock or field) prior to Albertina, whereas I had missed my footing whilst jumping over a fence the weekend before Blakeridge. I had continued to train on it regardless through the entire week before Blakeridge without any painkillers until the day of the ride. This weekend was another success for Team PSV, even with two injured riders!!

Walvis Bay, Namibia 30th August

Bob and Laura were to be riding in the African Championship 120km with Mauser and Jedi. Ashley and Donalyn would be accompanying them as crew, whilst I would be staying behind to train the rest of the horses for the ride following Walvis Bay.

It was a busy 2 weeks for Lucy and me on the farm whilst they were away. Bob and Mauser completed the 120km Heavy Weight coming in 11th place, but unfortunately Laura and Jedi were vetted out 10kms before the end due to a slight stiffness.

Tarkastad 120km Team Challenge 17th September

The Tarkastad Team Challenge consists of a team up to 5 horses and riders with the best 3 times to count. All those in the team had to ride a 120km each and there was a cash prize of R10,000 for the winning team.

The Perseverance Team consisted of Bob, Laura, Ashley and myself riding Karoo, Mabruk, Mercury, and Kandahar. All 120km competitors started at 4am in the dark with the first loop of 40km. We rode the first loop as a Team and were all into our first vet gate as the sun was rising. Laura left the vetgate first, closely followed by Bob and followed by Ashley and me. For loops 2 and 3 Bob, Ashley and I rode together. Unfortunately, Kandahar and I were vetted out at our 3rd vet gate after doing 100km with only 20km to go due to an irregular pulse. We now think that Kandahar was suffering from a virus as he was not at all himself and was showing high pulse, respiration etc.

Laura and Mabruk were the first 120km competitors home and won the standard weights as well as gaining Best Condition. Ashley and Mercury won the Young Rider and won Best Condition. Bob and Karoo came 3rd in the heavy weight category. Although our team did well, we unfortunately did not win the cash prize.

I so far am highly enjoying my time here at Perseverance Stud. I've had some good results here as well as learning a lot from Bob and Laura about barefoot horses. I have even been allowed to try and do a barefoot trim on one of the stallions, although their hooves are so hard that I did not get very far.

I shall be here till the end of November by which time Africa will be in summer. Fingers crossed the next rides prove successful for Team PSV!!!

Abi Tennant

Young Riders

Hi I'm Louise Rich and I ride most of the Oakleaze horses. I have 5 horses all at different levels from one just going to advanced to two international horses and one who is on the British young riders squad for Abu Dhabi this December. I have competed for the past 8 years all on homebred Arabs. I have had a fantastic season so far and I hope to finish on a fantastic note with my mare entered in the 160km at red dragon and the other being on the young rider team.

I hope you have all had a fantastic season and hope to see you at red dragon

Louise Rich

Offa's Dyke Young Rider Rep

Did You Help At A Ride?

This year the group has held 10 rides which required 128 helpers. This doesn't include the organisers or entries people and we are very grateful for everyone of you who volunteered. We only had to ask for help at Plump hill. Each one of you will be entered into a prize draw, once for each time you helped. The 5 lucky winners will be announced at the OD Annual Group Meeting.

Some people are very committed and help at numerous rides
Info as follows:

5 people helped	4 times
8 people	3 times
11 people	twice
52 people	once
76 people in total	

Approx 25 were not members and are often relatives of members, so about 45% of our members helped at a ride Many thanks to you all.

If you haven't helped on the ride day there are sometimes jobs needed before and after the date so please be ready for next year and volunteer your services. Without the helpers our sport can't continue.

Belinda, Pam and Delwyn decided to join me in a trip to France to support the British team. We flew out on the Tuesday. We bumped in to several people at the airport also doing the same thing as us, Tora and Mel from Bristol and then Mary Stubbs and Steve Rogerson. We had a couple of days enjoying the French countryside and food before the ride due on the Saturday. We travelled up to Mayruise for a reccy and then in to Ispanac for the Friday to watch the vetting and a gossip with everyone. We had lunch with one of the team, Catriona Moon and her mum, Jacki. They gave us an inside view on the route.

The roads in the area were hair raising- very narrow very steep and no sides. I'm afraid I didn't take many photos as I did most of the driving in the day; and I can't understand why the others didn't let me try to take photos and drive !!!!! Belinda drove at night she was the brave one or perhaps she felt safer holding the wheel.

We had copies of the route and maps so planned our Saturday (ride day), aiming to see as many vet gates and the finish as possible. We went straight to vet gate 2, as though the start is very exciting you can't see much. We were in time to see all our team in and were sad to hear one had not started. The horse's welfare was more important and perhaps it had been affected by the travelling which was fair enough. Another horse was retired after vetting at VG1. The remaining horses looked great and everyone was high as we rushed off to VG3. By this time the horses were starting to thin out, hard ground, tough hills and thick fog as they went up to Mont Aigouse.



Nobby- Now twice European Champion, World Champion and WEG Champion. What a horse!! Photo courtesy of Tora Thomas

We slipped into holiday mode and stopped for lunch, a convenient café on the roadside where the horses passed. We watched the horses come through the town, with people cheering on David and Christine Yeoman's. Sadly Karen Jones was out at vg3, a tough call but knowing what was ahead of them a fair decision. Catriona was by now a long way back so we went on to VG5 to see the leaders in.

The winning horse was amazing, how it managed to keep such speed up over the rocks and steep hills with little horse Nobby (current world and European champion) hard on his tail. Several people in the past have commented on the riding ability and



horsemanship but he was good, he had to be. Only the good could manage the course. It may not be our idea of a classic riding position but it works. The weather was kind on ride day cool compared to 30 + degrees the days before and it did not really heat up all day, so most horses we saw were spun on lameness.

Winner- Ali Khalfan Al Jahouri and Kalifa Photo Steve Rogerson

We then rushed on to the finish to see David in and we found out that Chris was spun on the represent at vg5. Catriona was still not in sight. It was very emotional seeing David finish, his horse looked great.

We then decided not to wait for Catriona but she did it and over a course like that it really brings back the motto of our sport

‘To finish is to Win’.

Catriona and Leila at the finish. Photo – Steve Rogerson



We were blessed with good weather again at Cranham this year. Carolyn and I had worked hard to modify the route after last year, when it rode so slowly that some people were too slow to get a good grade and a few were out of time completely. We took out some of the stonier sections, rode others in the opposite direction and added new bits.

Interlocking loops are always difficult to mark clearly. Carolyn had made some new signs and I had written a new talk through. I marked one potentially confusing gate with an X on the map and in the talk through as I thought to make it clearer. The sign Carolyn made for the gate said 'X out through gate turn left', which we thought made it clear, never thinking some people would interpret that as 'do not go through gate'. I wrote an article in the last newsletter about the value of reading the talk through before a ride. I accept that for spectacle wearers (or anyone on a restless horse) it can be difficult, but if read in advance, one might remember that there was a gate marked X!

The results did bear out that it was easier to do the speed this year. Yes it is a more challenging ride than the Forest of Dean and some of the tracks are a bit stony. The torrential rain that we seem to get more of, does wash a lot of the top soil off the steeper tracks. Nevertheless the final results were reasonably good and we are supposed to be an Endurance Society not a Ride in the Park. Results advised by EGB office.

Class	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Completion
64	3	2	1	1	
50Nov	1				
40	1	3	1	1	1
40Nov	4		2		1
30		1	3		
30Nov	5	5	1	2	3
NCR					19

Of the 73 starters, 18 failed due to the following reasons: 6 lame, 8 wrong course, 2 out of time, 2 lost shoe.

3 riders have kindly sent in their experience of this year's ride

Ally Knight

I was very much looking forward to the Cranham ride this year, knowing there was a route change. It's always good when this happens, especially when you have been riding the same route for many years. The old route was tough and challenging and I always struggled to make the time. The day dawned perfectly. I think most people will agree the weather has a big part in our sport. For my mare, she likes it the hotter the better. The outward route was the same as last year, with only one easy gate to do. It rode very well and we reached check point 1 in no time. The middle section was ridden in reverse which made for lots of cantering and the new bits were much quicker this year. The going was perfect all the way round and with the remaining gates open or manned it really does make such a difference to ones overall speeds. My mare finished the ride fresh this year and vetted with good pulses. Many thanks to Margaret and Carolyn and their many helpers. Also many thanks to Margaretha for being such great company and riding partner and to my long suffering hubby crewing us both. It always gives me such satisfaction when I have done a great ride and leaves me buzzing for days. Well done everyone. Ally Knight.

Cranham ride report by Gina Harris

I have ridden at Cranham ride for many years but for the past few I have been going out early with Carolyn to ensure markers were up and to open the gates. I am not good at remembering rides so I could always be relied on to not know where I was without the markers and last year we added just a few.

This year Carolyn was helping at the venue as she will be taking on organising the ride in the future. I knew that there were going to be route changes from the website, newsletter and ride info and I didn't want to go wrong. So as per Margaret's article in the newsletter I read my talk around 3 times. In my times I worked out for check points (still on pen and paper no GPS). I ensured I added extra points X and A in order I should reach them.

Cranham was once again lucky with the weather, the dark skies cleared as I set off and we had wonderful sunshine. Excellent views of the Cotswolds and May hill, where I live were visible from timekeepers spot. The ride is quite hard with hills, some grassy fields to canter on, some tracks are stony but if you go slower it is fine. Route changes meant that it rode better and I only opened 1 gate all day thanks to stewards and organisers tying them open. I did refer to my map a couple of times but because of reading the talk around and with signs on route, several pointing to CP2, I found my way round the course easily.

This route is marked by Margaret and Carolyn on horses the day before. They used to walk and do it on a bike, but using horses means higher markers which are not so easy for walkers to take down. A few people went the wrong way several of whom were local and hadn't read the info.

Thanks must go to Sue Rich for helping me through that huge river I couldn't get my horse over (small stream 2 feet wide and 3 inches deep)

Thanks again for a wonderful ride to Margaret for whom I think it was the 21st time of organising this as Competitive ride and well done to Carolyn who agreed to take it over for the future.

Debbie Williams

Having finally managed to achieve a couple of completions on a very excitable Arab I was almost looking forward to possibly completing another ride. The weather was set fair so that was a good start. I had been to a wedding and after wedding party the day before which was not perhaps the best preparation!! Feeling decidedly not 100% and having had a bit of trouble loading, we finally set off. By the time I arrived at the venue Woody was up for some fun but having successfully vetted (by the skin of our teeth) I was pleased to be on board and off on the ride.

For the first time he left the venue on his own and was reasonably sensible. We enjoyed a change in the route very early on and were quickly caught up by more riders. Woody was still behaving sensibly and carried on, on his own, when they stopped to be crewed. Then the interesting bit. We arrived at a gate with a sign on it I could not quite fathom so took the track by the side of wood. Note if you cannot read your talk through without reading glasses make sure you take some with you!!!! Needless to say I had gone wrong but luckily did not go far before coming across a steward who was surprised to see me!!! Thanks to Piers I was back on the right route again – and a very welcome toffee supplied by him.

All went very smoothly and the change in route was really nice as we tend to do the same rides year after year. Considering how hard the ground had been the tracks rode beautifully so we both had had a very enjoyable ride. The icing on the cake was another completion and a very relaxed horse at the finish.

Final Comment- Margaret Mckiddie This is my last year as Cranham Ride Organiser I have done it twenty-one times and that is enough. Carolyn Edwards, who actually did most of the organizing this year, will be official Ride Organiser next year though I will no doubt find something to do as a helper!

As I pulled back the curtains on Sunday morning I was greeted with a very grey sky and heavy rain – my first thought was that I was going to get very wet! Thankfully by the time we arrived at the venue the rain had stopped and the sun was even trying to shine.

There were already quite a few people at the venue when we got there and horses and riders were beginning to set off. Having collected our numbers, we unloaded the horses from the trailer. I was riding Frayaa and Lesley had brought Zara for her 1st ride since the Arab Marathon 5 (or maybe 6) years ago! We hoped she wouldn't be trying to go quite so fast today!



Having tacked up (thank you Delwyn for holding Zara - I hope you didn't miss your riders at the crew point), Frayaa and I set off. We rode through a lovely field (if only we were warmed up) and into the woods. We had not been in the woods long when Gwen Pickering rode past us. Frayaa decided that she really wanted to keep up and we rode the rest of the way together.

Photo courtesy of Dave Smedley

The route consisted mainly of tracks through the woods with some good steep climbs and even some lovely views across the Severn. The weather was really very kind to us and the odd shower that did catch us was really quite pleasant after trotting up some of those hills. Certainly a ride to help with fitness!

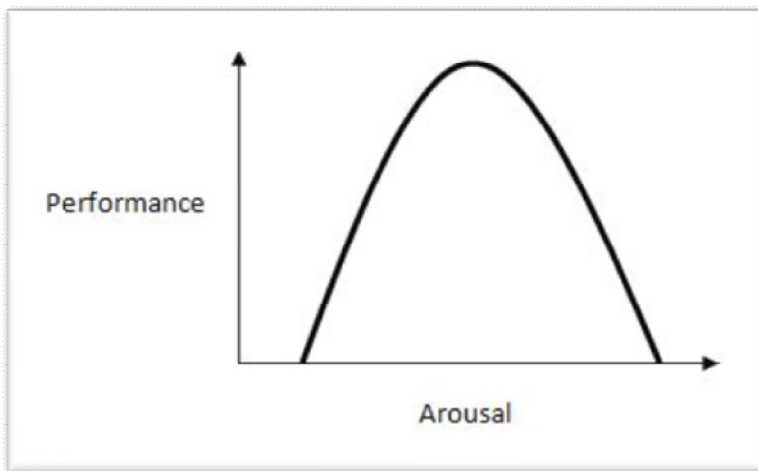
Frayaa was feeling good as we headed back towards the venue and we had a good canter up the field. We then had a nice canter around the field and decided to do the first loop of the woods a second time!

Lesley who had done the shorter route was topped up with coffee and already had Zara in the trailer by the time we got back. They had enjoyed it as much as we had. Thank you to Sharon and co for organising this ride once again – we will look forward to it next year.

But he behaves nicely at home!

I'm sure we have all experienced it; what is an angel horse at home turns into a handful at a competition. It might be that your horse stands perfectly still for grooming and washing at home, and always picks his feet up for picking out, stands nicely for mounting and hacks out sensibly responding to your every aid. But to your frustration, he arrives at a competition and appears to have forgotten everything you have ever taught and expected from him. I think we all realise that the environment or context is just too stimulating for the horse, resulting in high levels of arousal whether this be anxiety or anticipation. But what is the best way to deal with problem?

In 1908 Robert Yerkes and John Dodson made an interesting discovery that we now know as Yerkes – Dodson Law. In brief, arousal has a direct relationship with learning and performance.



There is an optimum level of arousal for performance; too little arousal and performance is poor but too much arousal and performance is also poor (see figure A). They also noted that difficulty of the task changes the optimum arousal level, with an easy task requiring higher levels of arousal and a difficult task requiring low levels of arousal.

Figure A. An example of Yerkes – Dodson Law

Applying this law to our horses might appear rather tricky; surely the only solution is to work on a horse's arousal levels?

Before I began working in equine behaviour and training I worked as an agility dog instructor. Sheepdogs are renowned for their intense working drive and many owners encourage high levels of arousal. At agility competitions I regularly see dogs that are 'high as kites' and 90% of the time these dogs perform poorly; despite performing perfectly at home. Agility handlers are now discovering techniques based on Yerkes – Dodson Law that can give them a winning dog despite the dog being extremely aroused and the environment challenging.

So what is the best solution? It is certainly possible to reduce the effect of the competition environment on a horse's arousal levels, and there are obvious benefits to this. Repeatedly taking your horse to different events where you set off last and ride slowly and calmly will over time result in lower arousal levels associated with the competition environment. However, you are not teaching your horse how you want him to behave and therefore should the environment become stimulating your horse is likely to revert to his previous antics. I also

wish to highlight that even once a horse is less aroused at a competition and is generally relaxed, your horse may still not behave as you wish because the problem behaviour is now learned. Take for example, a horse that doesn't stand still for mounting and once the rider is on he races off. This problem may reduce as the horse becomes more settled at competitions, or he may just be learning that the sooner he races to the time keeper then the sooner he can start. Punishing a horse for not behaving as we expect is likely to increase arousal further. So should we accept defeat and allow our horse to behave as he needs; fidgeting when tacking up, going its own speed, being difficult to vet? No, we must never excuse our horse's behaviour based on arousal.

The best solution is twofold. The first part is based on task difficulty, as found by Yerkes and Dodson with high levels of arousal the task must be easy. When we initially teach our horse a behaviour, i.e. slowing when we pull the reins, the task is difficult, but as the horse learns what we are asking of him he finds it easier to understand and respond correctly. We must carefully increase arousal levels ensuring that the horse is always able to behave as it has been taught. Being thorough in your training, taking it slowly and methodically is a simple way to ensure your horse is capable of behaving how you expect.

Secondly, and most importantly, is that we ask for our horse to perform very simple easy behaviours even when aroused. Such behaviours are known as 'control' behaviours whereby we ask the horse to do something specific and is then heavily rewarded. Initially, the horse may be frustrated by having to perform a control behaviour, but as the horse learns what the rider wants then the task can be made more difficult. Let me provide some examples: a horse wants to rush off once mounted, but the rider sits still and stops the horse until he stands still for just a second before allowing the horse to move forward. Over time the horse learns that standing when mounting is an effective way to be allowed to walk on, the horse finds this easy and the rider can ask for increased time of standing before walking forward. Another example may be a horse that refuses to stand for the vet, he prefers to spin round and drag his handler about. Asking this horse to stand still for just a second then rewarding it by walking around can be built up over time so the horse can stand for the whole veterinary inspection. Such an exercise not only provides us with behaviour that we want, but also teaches the horse some level of self control in stimulating environments; plus improves communication between rider and horse, and gives the horse more confidence in the rider because the rider is making the decisions.

I hope this provides you with some brief understanding into the psychology and physiology of the ridden horse. However, you may realise that it is a complex topic. If you are concerned about your horse's behaviour, or would like help and advice in training and retraining please consult a professional.

**Rachel Williams BSc (Hons) Dip ICAT PG Dip CABC
Animal Behaviour Therapist. www.rachelwilliams-animalbehaviour.com**

Offa's Dyke Pleasure Ride is Instrumental in Saving the Lives of Two Yearlings

When you undertake to organise a ride there are all sorts of things to think about and potential problems but the 2010 Black Mountains Pleasure ride presented an unusual challenge for me.



At the end of June I was busy checking out parts of the route for fallen trees etc when I came across two pathetic little yearlings that were clearly close to death. They were lying right by the track we use on the last stretch of open hill heading back towards the venue. They were just about able to stand and walk but were painfully thin and very weak. I was in a dilemma of what to do as even if I reported them to the RSPCA or to SWHP how would they be able to get to them. I phoned

Jenny MacGregor at SWHP in Monmouth and she said that if they could be walked to somewhere that was accessible to a trailer then she would arrange for them to be collected but was not hopeful that they could be saved.

Over the next few days I kept seeing them and couldn't get them out of my mind. I rang one of the farmers whose land borders the hill and his wife agreed to walk up and take a look. She was really concerned and with the help of her grand children managed to coax the colts down to their farm so they could be collected by SWHP.

You can see from the photos just what condition they were in. The staff named them Starsky and Hutch and it is only due to their dedicated care and the excellent veterinary attention that they received that the two of them survived. When they arrived at the horse hospital neither would eat and it was only after they were given saline and live yoghurt that they started to take an interest in food. For five weeks Starsky had to be helped up every time he lay down and Hutch for almost as long.



It's amazing to see the two boys now – healthy, happy and extremely mischievous. They are back at the centre this week to be castrated and then they will go out to loan homes until they are ready to be backed. The horses that are taken in by SWHP always remain in their ownership so their future welfare is secure.

Hopefully if I organise this ride again in 2012 I won't encounter the same problem but I might just be asking you for a donation to SWHP!



Karen Jones

Gate Proposal

Carolyn Edwards

In the last newsletter, I explained that I was intending to put a member's proposal to the National AGM to amend the Gate Allowance.

The proposal has now been submitted by me & seconded by Judy Taylor. We are recommending a change from the current allowance of 30 seconds per gate, which begins after the first 10 gates. We have split the proposal into two parts: one recommending that the gate allowance commences after 5 gates and the second that the allowance increases to 1 minute per gate. This is in case someone agrees with one part, but objects to the other

If you agree with us that the gate allowance should be increased, please vote for the proposal. All members of EGB are entitled to vote & you don't need to be present at the AGM. You can either send a postal vote, or ask someone who is attending to vote by proxy on your behalf.

Carolyn Edwards & Judy Taylor

Advertisements

Due to change in personal circumstances I need to reduce numbers;

For loan (or part-loan) to approved home only. Forge Quest, 15.1 PBA. He has seen and done it all, and although 19 years old is sound and athletic. Suitable for most riders for hacking and PR's/CRs up to 40k.

For Sale Bronze Nadhir 15.3h grey gelding, 8 years Chatanz/Nahat, intermediate level endurance now. Big, bold substantial sort. Good in traffic, shoe, box and clip. FEI prospect for next year. Chatanz is sire of many top endurance horses, Nahat is half sister to Murmansk and related through her dam line to Nobby £4,200.

4 year old full sister may also be available.

Contact Sharon Parr, 01594 544559 or email silverstonefarm1@tiscali.co.uk

For Sale

5' 9" Green heavyweight Horseywear New Zealand rug. Original design without neck cover.

Good condition. £45

Karen Jones tel: 01873 890771

Photos Needed!!

Offa's Dyke Group is planning to produce a fixtures calendar for 2012 featuring photos taken by members throughout the 2011 season. This could be of anything from members riding at events (UK and abroad, Young Riders, FEI etc), action shots in the vetting area, crewing, dogs or panoramic views like Rob Edward's wonderful photo of the Forest's stained glass window that featured on a cover of EGB magazine last year. The idea is to produce the calendar as an A4 or A5 single card that will be sent to all our members and also made available at our rides to promote future events. Our webmaster will create a contact point through the website for you to email any photos that you would like to be considered for inclusion. Apart from being a fun memento of the competing season, this could be a really exciting promotional tool and an opportunity to show off the photographic skills of our members and their crews. Please don't send any professional photos taken at events as this will infringe copyright.
Suzanne Garlick

Adverts are free to Offa's Dyke members & associate members.

Other adverts cost £5 per half page.

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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

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