



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



Chairman's Comment

Hello all – welcome to the first Olympic Year Newsletter from your new Offa's Dyke Committee.

Several long standing committee members stood down last year, after countless years of combined service to Endurance within the Offa's Dyke Group of both EGB, and in several cases, of the EPHS of GB. We appreciate deeply the dedication, experience & enthusiasm from which we have all benefitted. This group has been in the forefront of innovation and progress within Endurance in this country, and a good number of our Group members have excelled at our sport at the highest levels.

It will be a hard act to follow, but hopefully past committee members will still 'help us out' and continue to participate with Group efforts in the coming years!

We have several enthusiastic new committee members, who joined us at the first committee meeting of the year, on 5th January. Please note that Alan & Angharad Morgan, Rachael & Sarah Rogerson and Margaretha Herman are the 'new faces on the block', in this respect.

Later this month (see 'Dates for your Diary' – 28th January!) please support a young and already successful member of our Group – Abbi Tennant - who is giving us a talk about her experiences in South Africa last year. A real star in the making – one not to be missed. Her presentation will be followed by a talk given by an Equine Podiatrist.

Heather

Committee Contacts

- Chair Heather Evans
Springfield, Walford, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5RB
Tel: 01989 566034 Email: zzaapp999@googlemail.com
- Vice Chair Debbie Williams
The Tump Farm, Whitchurch, Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6DQ
Tel: 01600 891029 Email: clinwilcharmaine@hotmail.com
- Secretary Rachel Williams
The Tump Farm, Whitchurch, Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6DQ
Tel: 01600 891029 Email: racheljw@hotmail.co.uk
- Treasurer Liz Taylor
Lock Cottage, Oxenhall, Newent Glos GL18 1RL
Tel: 07737 871085 Email: elizabeth.taylor@stonegate.co.uk
- Junior Representative Angharad Morgan
Email: llangennyddflyingcomet@live.co.uk
- Trophy Secretary Chris Wray
Pentrewheeler Farm, Cwmcarvan, 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
- Others Sue Loveridge, Suzanne Garlick, Alan Morgan, Margaretha Herman, Rachael Rogerson and Sarah Rogerson

Other Roles

- 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

Web site: www.offasdykeegb.co.uk

Editor's Comment

Having spent a whole season without a single ride it will be a shock to the system and also to the horses if we actually go to a ride this year! I had meant to enter the Christmas Ride but as the Saturday night was a Scottish Society dance it seemed too much of a shock to the system.

I am hoping to make it to Maryland but who knows. Both horses are as out of condition as I am and also very fat. Bonnie will be 22 this year and perhaps it is time for her to retire but she is only 280km short of her 8,800 km trophy (I thought we would easily do that in 2011!) and it would be lovely if she could get that, Madoc did!

Fortunately other group members had a more active and successful season and it has needed very little arm twisting to get plenty of good articles for this newsletter. I must also give credit to Carolyn who has done most of the hard work of putting it together, not to mention Rob who does so much work for the group with the web-site as well as the newsletter.

I wish you all a successful season in 2012 and please keep sending in articles without having to be chased to do so.

Margaret

Enclosed with this newsletter or by separate mail if you have the newsletter by download or email should be:

Social Ride Entry Form*

Trophy List

Trophy Card - members only (AM cards are posted separately when they renew)

If you need more copies they are available from the 'Forms' page of the web site.

*Note that the Social Ride entry form has been revised in accordance with EGB guidelines.

Remember that your nominations for the 'Team Trophy' need to be with Trophy Secretary Chris Wray by the 14th April by either email, post or downloading the form from the 'Forms' page of the web site.

See Trophy List for details. Both members and associate members can be on a team.

Dates for your diary

Schooling lesson	Sun 12 February	
Social evening with talk	Sat 28 January	See Page 5
Maryland Group Social Ride	Sun 19 February	See Page 6
FOD March Hares	Sun 4 March	
Schooling lesson	Sun 11 March	
Bwlch Raid Group Social Ride	Sun 8 April	See Page 8
Ludlow	16/17 June	
Blaenavon Group Social Ride	Sun 8 July	
Cranham	Sun 29 July	
Tintern	Sun 2 September	
Plump Hill Group Social Ride	September TBA	
Offa's Dyke Annual Meeting	Sat 8 December	

More information on the website 'rides & events' page

Note:

Black Mountains Ride cancelled, as we couldn't find a suitable date to run it

Feb & March Social evenings cancelled due to lack of a suitable cheap venue. If you know of a pub with an available meeting room for future social evenings, please let us know.

Reminder!

Associate membership renewals are due now if you want to continue to enjoy discounted entry to our Social Rides. Next Ride Maryland 19th February

Social Evening with talk Saturday 28 January

This social evening will be at English Bicknor Village Hall (Starting at 7.30 pm) Bar available. Free Entry

Abbi Tennant (Delwyn Hall's grand daughter) will be giving a talk about her six months in South Africa, at the Perseverance Stud on the Eastern Cape, last year. She rode up to 160km, very successfully, on horses belonging to her hosts, all of whom are kept & ridden barefoot.

Belinda Josephi has organised an accompanying talk from her barefoot trimmer, Lindsay Cotterell DAEP.

This will be extraordinarily interesting to all - please join us promptly at 7.30 for 7.45 start of illustrated talks.

Directions to English Bicknor Village Hall:

English Bicknor is a small village in the Forest of Dean, about 5 minutes drive from the March Hares/ Bluebell venue.

From Monmouth: from the A40 dual carriageway take the left hand turn across the old bridge signposted Wye Valley. Go straight ahead at both mini roundabouts taking A4136 Staunton Road (as if going to Christmas Cracker) towards Coleford. Pass through Staunton village, then at the traffic lights go straight ahead towards Gloucester. Turn left after about 1 mile or less, at The Pike House (new building of flats on the LH corner) towards Ross, Symonds Yat and English Bicknor. Keep straight on for about 3 miles. The Village Hall is on the left on a straight stretch of road in the middle of the village, just before the phone box.

From Gloucester: At Huntley take A4136 towards Monmouth and the Forest of Dean. Pass through Mitcheldean, past Cinderford turn, through Brierley and past Five Acres College. At traffic lights go straight ahead towards Monmouth, past Five Acres petrol station on right and take next right at Berry Hill Pike crossroads, signposted Christchurch. Keep straight on for about 3 miles. The Village Hall is on the left on a straight stretch of road in the middle of the village, just before the phone box.

From Coleford: from the B4028 (Chepstow Road) at the traffic lights by Police Station go straight ahead towards Monmouth and take right turn up hill past houses towards Ross. At junction with A4136 go straight across at the Pike House towards Ross, Symonds Yat and English Bicknor. Keep straight on for about 3 miles. The Village Hall is on the left on a straight stretch of road in the middle of the village, just before the phone box.

From Ross: take B4234 towards Lydbrook and Coleford. After Lydbrook continue straight on towards Coleford and English Bicknor. After English Bicknor sign keep straight on for about a mile to find the Village Hall on the right on a straight stretch of road in the middle of the village, just after the phone box.

Maryland Ride - Sunday 19th February 2012

New organisers for this year (Mark is taking a well earned rest!). We have slightly changed the route, tried to take out a slippery down hill road section, added in a new uphill pull for those wanting to use this as a training ride and added a slight detour to take in a bit more of the Wye Valley scenery for those riding just to enjoy a day out - just a few more twists and turns plus a nice new level canter track for everyone to enjoy!! Lots of options for distance which you can choose on the day (just let the time keeper know your plans and arrive early if you plan to ride the long routes!) - we also have Celia Saunders, (photographer) coming along.

If you plan to bring a lorry or a non 4x4 towing vehicle, I would suggest you give us a ring first to discuss best parking areas:

Lesley 01600 860746 email: lesley@wh-arabians.co.uk

or Gill 01291 689639 email: gilliantalbot247@btinternet.com

Note: Entry fee for this ride Members & AMs £13.50 Non-members £21.50, which includes an additional £3.50 towards the forestry charges for this ride.

IF YOU DO NOT PLAN TO RIDE - PLEASE OFFER TO HELP 😊

Ride Entry fees for 2012

EGB national entry fees have increased this year. Check the schedule for details.

Offa's Dyke group have decided to keep our entry fees unchanged for another year. Our Group Social Rides remain fantastic value at £10 for members and associate members and £18 for non-members. However we have faced big increases in forestry charges this year, particularly from the Welsh Forestry. For rides such as Maryland and Tintern the total charges can add up to approximately £5 per rider. Obviously with all our other overheads such as first aid cover, rosettes, Raynet, route marking etc, we feel we can't absorb all the charge in the normal ride entry fee. We felt it fair to ask riders to make a contribution to the additional cost for the rides affected, rather than make a blanket increase to our social ride entry fee (eg £3.50 extra for Maryland & £2.50 for Tintern)

Note therefore: For 2012 some of our group rides will have an increased entry fee to help towards the cost of the Forestry Charges.

Check individual ride webpages & entry forms for the cost of entry for each ride

A Brand New Ride for 2012!

Bwlch Raid Ride – Sunday 8th April

A brand new ride for 2012 organised by Fiona Griffiths.

Bwlch is on the A40 between Crickhowell and Brecon.

The venue is just before Bwlch on the left coming from Crickhowell. There is good access for all vehicles (20 mins from Abergavenny with a trailer).



The ride will go out over Buckland hill through Bwlch, crossing the A40 and on to Bwlch Mountain. There is a pull up on to the hill with views to Llangorse Lake and Pen a fan on your left and the Black Mountains and the Sugar Loaf on your right. The bridle path across the hill is wide and grassy, gently undulating offering over 7km of possible canter. There are some options for steep pulls up if you want extra fittening work. The route will be marked and there will be a talk round, offering different distances and difficulties.

Main route 20km with an easy route 16km - all distances to be confirmed.

Fiona is hoping to have stewards on route (definitely on the road crossing) and the ladies from her local RDA group will man gates (5 in total) and make cakes and tea, hand out numbers etc.

[See Web Site for more details and the entry form](#)

Please enter rides early!

It was a nightmare for poor ride organisers in 2011. The Bluebell Group Social Ride was nearly cancelled, the Tintern National Ride was cancelled for the second year running and other ride organisers were tearing their hair out thinking they might have to cancel until the last minute, when entries finally arrived to make the ride viable!

This year the Christmas Cracker Ride was full and we were turning away entries. March Hares entries will also be limited due to parking and is the only Forest of Dean ride this year. If you want to be sure of a space, please enter early to avoid disappointment.

Please enter all our rides in plenty of time. Bear in mind if you need to withdraw before the closing date you get a full refund.

What a fab Annual Meeting!

Thanks to Chris Wray for finding such a lovely venue for our Annual Meeting and Awards evening. The room at Bridges was spacious & warm with a stage for the awards presentation, plenty of space to spread our sumptuous buffet and also a bar available. We were so impressed that we've booked it already for 8 December next year.

Please make a note in your diaries to come along & also fill in your trophy cards throughout 2012 and claim your trophy points. Only 25 people sent in their trophy cards in 2011 out of a total 140 members & associate members. We had some trophies were no-one applied for them! Remember you have to be in it to win it!!



Once again we had a 'American Supper' where we asked members to bring along a savory dish to share & the group provided delicious deserts. I don't know how this always works out – but it does. By some miracle we don't end up with 300 sausage rolls – but instead a fabulous spread of the most amazing food.

The 'AGM' was presided over by retiring Chairman Gina Harris, who once again kept things moving along nicely in the briefest possible time to move on to the buffet followed by the prize giving. After 3 years sterling service to the group we presented Gina with a thank you gift of 2 vases and a bouquet of flowers to fill them.



We had an amazing array of raffle prizes this year ranging from a bottle of champagne to a toilet seat! This raised a record breaking amount contributing to the cost of the hall. Thank you everyone!

Chris Wray did an excellent job of explaining all the awards, which were presented by Gina. Robin Edwards took photos of most of the recipients & these are available to view on the Offa's Dyke website.

Helpers draw

Once again all the helpers at our rides and events were entered in a draw for £10 countryside store vouchers and 5 lucky recipients were announced.

This is our way of thanking all the people – members, friends, family and neighbours who help at our events throughout the year.

Every time you help your name goes in the 'hat' for a thank-you voucher at the Annual Meeting.

Trophies and Awards 2011



For more information about our Trophies and rosettes, please see the trophy list, which is included with this January Newsletter and is also available on the website

Pleasure Ride Rosettes		
Awarded to members and associate members who have completed 5 pleasure rides, 4 of which must be OD rides	Lindsay Williams	Alan Morgan
	Margaretha Herman	Angharad Morgan
	Suzanne Garlick	Fran Brown
Pandora Distance Rosettes		
Presented by Margaret McKiddie in honour of her long distance mare Pandora. Awarded to horses completing at least 240, 320 or 400 km in the current season. If your horse has already gained a 240km rosette for a previous season he/she will need to complete an extra 80 km to be eligible. 200 miles/320 km rosettes can be claimed for two seasons, thereafter an extra 80 km will need to be completed to be eligible. 250 miles/400 km rosettes can be claimed in successive seasons. Only one Pandora rosette can be claimed for each horse.	240km	
	Alleka Shareen	Lindsay Williams
	Stella II	Nicola Davies
	Oakleazefarm Czamak	Louise Rich
	320km	
	Sanchi	Louise England
	Oakleaze Farm Czarena	Louise Rich
	Firefox Tango	Suzanne Boulton
	400km	
	Oakleazefarm Czako	Sue Rich
	Swallow	Heather Evans
	Llangennydd Flying Comet	Angharad Morgan
	Takwenya	Chris Wray
	Kenitra Du Somail	Sharon Parr
	Oakleaze Farm Cziko	Louise Rich
Barik	Abigail Tennant	
Warrens Hill Arabians First 80 km Rosette		
For horses completing their first 80km or longer ride.	Sanchi	Louise England
	Takwenya	Chris Wray
	Oakleazefarm Czamak	Louise Rich
	Barik	Abigail Tennant

Grade 1 Rosettes		
Presented by Sharon Parr for EGB cumulative grade 1 distance in increments of 400 km.	400km	
	Llangennydd Flying Comet	
	Takwenya	
	Oakleaze Farm Czarena	
	Shushi	
	Shuwaiman Al Bahrain	
	800km	
	Ebwgrannell Diplomat	
	Swallow	
Junior Rosette		
For riders aged 15 and under on 31st December at the end of this trophy season completing any 3 rides.	Sarah Tobin	Silver Echo
	Beth Tobin	Dizzy
Clear Card Rosette		
For a horse's 24 consecutive competitive ride passes without a fail (novice rides – on a separate card – may count towards the required 24 passes).	Takwenya	Lady Dancer
Thoroughbred Rosette		
Presented by Delwyn Hall for the Thoroughbred or 50% (no less) Thoroughbred who successfully completes the highest distance.	Swallow	Heather Evans
Native/Neddy Rosette		
Presented by Delwyn Hall to the full/part bred native or unregistered with less than 25% Arab, Thoroughbred or Warmblood who successfully completes the highest distance.	Llangennydd Flying Comet	Angharad Morgan
Associate Members Trophy		
Awarded to the Associate Group Member who gains most points overall (riding and non-riding).	Alan Morgan	Maisie
	Claire Jenkins	Popsters Morning Mist
Pandora Trophy		
Awarded by Margaret McKiddie for novice riders who, before the commencement of the current season, have not started in more than 5 competitive rides. The horse or pony need not be novice. Not more than 10 competitive events to be entered. Rides to be 50 km or below.	Suzanne Boulton	Firefox Tango
	Margaretha Herman	Alex I



Jan Rath receiving a special trophy from retiring Chairman Gina Harris. This award was for the impressive achievement of 100 competitive rides without a single fail on her amazing horse 'Lady Dancer'. Jan also collected several other awards on the night including her National Distance Award for 4800km on 'Lady Dancer'.

Mistress Harriet Trophy		
Presented by Paul and Gina Harris to the junior rider (17 and under during this trophy season) who successfully completes the highest distance.	Llangennydd Flying Comet	Angharad Morgan
Cindy Trophy		
Awarded by Gareth and Lindsay Williams to the veteran horse aged 16 years and over at the start of the current season who successfully completes the highest distance.	Auburn Emblem	Gina Harris
	Ground Kontrol	Sue Rich
Mitchell Arab Racehorse to Endurance Horse Trophy		
Awarded by Gabrielle Franklin to the Arab (minimum 50%) horse that has raced, scored on points for all completed EGB rides including NCRs.	Franzara	Lesley Dunn
Warrens Hill Arabians Trophy		
Awarded by Ray and Lesley Dunn to the homebred horse who successfully completes the highest distance. The owner/breeder must be an Offa's Dyke member and to have helped at a EGB or EGB group ride	Swallow	Heather Evans
	Takwenya	Chris Wray

Team Trophy			
Awarded to the highest points for a nominated team of 3 combinations (3 riders, one horse each) in all types of ride except ERs.	Chris Wray	Fiona Griffiths	Andrea Champ
	Belinda Stewart	Nicola Davies	Kerri Costello
Bonanza Trophy			
Presented by Ray and Lesley Dunn to the highpoint registered Pure, Part or Anglo Arab in Endurance GB competitions.	Oakleaze Farm Cziko	Louise Rich	
	Takwenya	Chris Wray	
Madoc Trophy			
Presented by Margaret McKiddie for the highpoint horse in Endurance GB competitions. To be eligible the rider or owner must produce evidence of helping at least one Offa's Dyke ride.	Takwenya	Chris Wray	
	Swallow	Heather Evans	
Belstar Trophy			
Awarded to the highest point horse and rider Open or Advanced combination in graded rides only. Best 10 graded rides to count. Winners of the Madoc and Bonanza Trophies are excluded.	Swallow	Heather Evans	
	Llangennydd Flying Comet	Angharad Morgan	
The Offa's Dyke Challenge Trophy			
Presented by Carolyn Edwards in memory of Tarr Steps Hannah to the Horse/Rider combination scoring the most trophy points in their 3 highest scoring completions on Offa's Dyke Group rides.	Takwenya	Chris Wray	
	Barik	Abigail Tennant	
Shimara Cup			
Awarded by Fiona Wilton for the group member who gains most points overall (riding and non-riding).	Chris Wray	Heather Evans	
Unsung Hero Award			
Awarded by the Committee to the individual who has contributed most to the Group during the current season.	Margaret McKiddie		

Buddy Scheme

In the last newsletter we announced the new Buddy Scheme and due to the amazing response from volunteer Buddies we are now able to open this scheme to any Member or Associate Member of Offa's Dyke who would like help and advice on the next stage of Endurance.

We have buddies from all levels from Novice up to International level who can offer advice by telephone or email on progressing to your next level.

Some of the Buddies are willing to ride out from home or possibly escort at rides.

See the web site for more details of the scheme and the buddies.

Tread and Trot

A number of themed leisure routes enabling horse-riders, walkers and cyclists to explore some of Monmouthshire's most inspiring locations have been launched recently as 'Tread and Trot'.

Becky Hughes, adventa's Tourism Innovation Officer said: "adventa and Monmouthshire County Council Countryside team have been working hard together over the past two years to put the routes together. We have also worked closely with land owners and rural businesses to ensure that the routes can be as beneficial as possible to the local economy. It is hoped that the routes in Dingestow, Wye Valley, and Tintern will extend the length of time visitors spend in the area as well as encouraging more visitors out of season."

Full details are available on their web site: www.treadandtrottrails.co.uk

Xmas Cracker Ride Success

Many thanks to all the stalwart Offa's Dyke bods who made us foreigners so welcome on the first weekend ride of 2012.

Saran Allott-Davey rode my Lusitano mare Violeta and I took my little white Lusitano stallion Venturoso. Saran's new young horse, Coco, (yet another Lusitano - watch out all you Arabs!) has only just arrived in Wales, so she left him at home this time.

The weather was perfect, the going much better than one would expect after all the horrible wet we have had, and the course was just so well marked out with sawdust, there were absolutely no hiccups or question marks as to which way we should be going. It rode very well and we seemed to get back for our mince pies and mulled wine in no time at all.

Both Venturoso and myself are currently afflicted with undetectable ribs, so it was with much regret that I refused second mince pie (he didn't get one at all!) alluring though it was.

We are all looking forward to Maryland, next. After our gentle warm up, it shouldn't be too much of a shock to our systems, and we will have remembered all the things that we forgot last weekend eg sweat scraper! Doh!

Jenny Myerscough

From Abbi Tennant is the following great news:

I have some excellent news to share with you all!!!

I have made it as a finalist into the 2012 Social Media Awards under the category Amateur Rider!!!

The Awards are based upon strict engagement criteria such as how quickly they respond to comments, post original content and demonstrate good etiquette online. The top ten for all categories with the most unique statements got through to the finals. During the 9 day run up to Christmas Eve, 2,629 individuals submitted a total of 8,137 nominations via the ESMA's facebook App. There were nearly 2,000 nominees to pick from by the ESMA team. The final results will now be based 70% on scores from the Expert Panel and 30% on votes from the public. The ESMA panel are from the best equestrian marketers, digital professionals, social media guru's and branding experts from across the globe!

My website and blog were nominated and I am now in the top ten. I'll need as many votes as possible and would love to show how much of an Equestrian sport Endurance is!

Voting will close at 12:00 on the 10th February.

Link to vote on <http://www.equestriansocialmediaawards.com/voting>

And should anyone feel like a look at my web and blog here's the link to that also <http://atennant-endurancerider.weebly.com/>

Thanks for all the support!!

Please vote for Abbi - this is fantastic PR for endurance. Well done Abbi!

Young Rider Representative



Hi. My name is Angharad Morgan and I will be your Young Rider Representative for the 2012 endurance season. By the time you read this newsletter I will most probably be 18 and you might have done your first training ride of the season (based on this are there any guesses for my date of birth?!) A few of you might have had the honour of meeting me but I'm sure many of you haven't so for your benefit the best way to describe me, besides amazing, is short (although I maintain that I am no less than 5 foot tall.) As this is my first opportunity to communicate with you I'm going to use it for a rather boring monologue all about me, my mammoth (pony, I meant pony!) and my horse. I hope however that as the year progresses I will get to know a lot of you and will be able to use this space to talk about your ideas and achievements! Hopefully you'll also learn that I'm not half as egotistical as this introduction would have you believe!

First and foremost there's me, the most important member of Team Morgan! I've been riding (or attempting to) for 9 years and I got my first pony on 18th October 2008 after 6 months of searching and a broken arm! I started endurance in 2010 after being invited on a non-competitive ride with a fellow livery yard member. We've enjoyed success in the endurance sphere (at least when compared to other disciplines!), twice making the Welsh Team and winning the Offa's Dyke Junior Trophy as well as the novice trophies in our first season. We're currently riding at open level but are hoping to complete an 80km to qualify for advanced next year (who wants to take charge of making sure that I don't wimp out of this?!) In my spare time I'm also a sixth form student studying biology, history and geography and have applied to study geography at university in October.

Then there's my pony, mammoth, best friend, enemy, the cheese to my macaroni, the fruit to my loom and the most fantastic character I have ever had the pleasure to be employed by. He's not your typical endurance horse. My shining red knight in armour

is actually a Welsh Section D who's almost as vertically challenged as I am (13.3¾ if you want to be precise.) He had a shady background exchanging hands frequently before becoming a national level show pony and I think he demonstrates perfectly that endurance is a sport for any horse so long as they're fit and healthy. We also partake in a wide range of disciplines such as dressage, show-jumping, x-country, gymkhana, jump cross, one day events and even the occasional rodeo performance. Endurance I feel really helps you to understand and form a partnership with your horse and gives you confidence in them. Before endurance success to me was not being thrown off at a jump or just getting one refusal when a filler (I mean horse eating monster) was presented. Now we've started jumping 2ft6 courses (major wuss here) and not a stupendously long spider eyelash has been batted at the polyfillers and planks. This of course doesn't mean that he doesn't always achieve his permanent ambition of flooring me he's just limited his attempts to the equitation ring and the endurance rides of September (Gower Gambol and Three Rivers, I'm looking at you!) Oh and for those purely interested in the basics his name his Comet, Llangennydd Flying Comet.

I should probably give you a brief run down on the rest, less impressive members of Team Morgan. There's my Daddy and his (MY) horse Maisie (Conundrum Charlotte or Miss Demolition in the jumping ring). Daddy used to be my crew but a year ago he bought his own horse (if you can't beat them - join them!) and they've just completed a year as associate members and now I'm hoping to guide them through their novice season! Maisie is a gorgeous 15 hand



7 year old piebald appaloosa x cob but she's rather limited in scope with her talents and despite a year of schooling is still relatively green. Then there's my crew - my non horsey mother, my sister who nobody realises exists because she spends all her time in the backseat of the car and our talkative Jack Russell Lexi!

Hopefully you guys are all really excited about your forthcoming season. Whether you're an associate member looking to take part in training rides or a full member starting a competitive season the best advice I can give you is to set a clear aim of what you want to achieve, then compile a calendar of rides that you would like to go to or are within your travelling distance (we set ours at 2 hours away for one day rides.) You

may not follow it, you may not even look at it, you may discard it and tell me I have two heads but I like organisation and I certainly think it helps!

Good luck guys!

P.S If you have any suggestions/ideas/questions/issues then please contact me!

You can email me at: llangennyddflyingcomet@live.co.uk

Add me on Facebook: www.facebook.com/thatssomammoth

Stalk (err follow?!) me on Twitter: www.twitter.com/thatssomammoth



Try something new this winter

Sporting disciplines all have different demands on the equine body. For example, dressage horses regularly use their abductor and adductor muscles whilst jumping horses require strong gluteals for propulsion. Endurance horses predominantly use their back muscles, hamstrings, leg extensor and flexor muscles and the shoulder muscles. This is mainly due to negotiating varying terrain whilst maintaining a set speed.

The bad news is that continuous repetitive use of the same muscle groups causes problems within the muscles and ultimately increases the risk of serious damage to muscles and tendons and finally ligaments and joints. Problems such as strains, trigger points, muscle tension, stress points and spasms are all believed to be linked to over working and repetitive action. The effects of continuous repetitive work are exacerbated by fatigue, extended gaits, insufficient rest and recovery, poor balance or coordination, not changing leg leads and importantly rider fatigue, ability and balance. It is likely that many endurance horses are subject to continuous repetitive use of muscles and other risk factors.

The good news is that there are ways to reduce and relieve these muscular problems associated with continuous repetitive work. Regular physiotherapy or sports massage incorporating stretches is one way to treat muscle problems, and is certainly recommended as a way of assessing a horse regularly. However, another fantastic way to relieve muscle problems is to work your horse in a different discipline and winter is the perfect time to try something new.

Working your horse in a different discipline can provide a range of benefits: develop and tone muscle groups which are used less in endurance but are none the less important for moving correctly and efficiently; allow over used muscle groups to be stretched and problems relieved; provides a change in routine, the opportunity for both horse and rider to learn something new and reduce boredom or sourness. The winter schooling lessons with Carole Broad FBHS is an amazing way to work your horse over winter. Carole has a keen eye for spotting stiffness and areas of weakness, and will help you work on any issues your horse may have. It is even possible to try some dressage! Jumping is also a great way to stretch the equine body, but obviously jumping an untrained or non-jumping fit horse has its risks. Be sensible and start using poles and cavaletti, or consider signing up for lessons or a workshop.

Last winter I took my old endurance pony (Midnight Star) cross country schooling. It was a little hair-raising, he used to compete quite well in cross country and is also known for his speed and strong head! He had a great time negotiating small fences, banks and water. You may wish to use groundwork to encourage your horse to use muscles he didn't know he had. Ground work can be anything from backing up to working over obstacles. Working over a range of obstacles such as steps and labyrinths will gently work various muscle groups, increase proprioception and coordination and strengthen core muscles. Groundwork can also be useful; exercises such as turn on the haunches and forehand can be applied to gates to make endurance easier! There are many sports out there, from le trec to driving. It is possible to find a trainer and learn something completely new over winter.

Have fun!

Rachel Williams BSc (Hons) Dip ICAT PG Dip CABC
Equine Sports Massage Therapist (www.rachelwilliams-esmt.co.uk)



End of Season Antics – Maria Stapley

After a relatively quiet season, Lesley and I decided that Frayaa (and us) might enjoy some end of season fun. We thought about entering the Dragons Tail again as Frayaa had done so well the year before but, as if she knew what we had planned, she picked up a cough that took a while to shake off and put her training back.

So, what could we find for her to do instead? The Breamore ride had been moved to October this year and was two weeks after the Red Dragon. Then there was the Arab

Marathon two weeks later again. Frayaa had recovered and training was going well and so she was entered into both!

The morning of the Breamore ride arrived and it was a glorious day. While Lesley tried to settle Frayaa, I headed off to the pre ride briefing. It turned out that the trail riders hadn't yet arrived to mark the route and so the start was put back by half an hour. As I walked back to where Frayaa was grazing the first of the trail riders arrived – phew!

The trail riders and 100km riders had set off and it was soon time for the 80km race to begin. We assembled at the start and set off in a very civilised manor trotting out across the end of the cross country course.

Frayaa was going really nicely covering the ground with her big trot. We soon passed the place where there were some P.I.Gs and she didn't even notice. The peppermint on her noseband must have worked!

Further into the ride we passed the trail riders and some of the 100km riders going in the opposite direction. We reached the next checkpoint and then turned around to follow them. After cantering over some lovely fields we soon overtook the trail riders – it was down to me and my map to find our way round!

All seemed to be going well and I was beginning to feel quite pleased with myself as we had managed not to get lost – and then we went wrong! I made the mistake of following some markers instead of following my map and set off with a group of other riders down a track. We continued up the track until we reached a main road. This definitely wasn't right and so we turned round and went back again to rejoin the correct route. Poor Frayaa, I think she did nearly an extra 10km there and back on a horrible stony track.

Thankfully we were soon back at the venue and into the first vet gate which Frayaa sailed through although we had lost quite a bit of time on the riders in front. I set off on the second loop with two of the riders I had got lost with. They were doing the 100km so it was nice to ride along with some company.

Back at the venue and again Frayaa sailed through the vet. Somehow with everybody getting lost at some point, we ended up setting out on the last loop in the lead. The final loop was around a chasers course and was lovely – plenty of cantering along grassy tracks. We loped along and soon enough we were heading back to the venue and Frayaa and I had crossed the line. Just the vetting to go - with some extra hands acquired (thank you Mary and Steve) to help cool her we were soon into the vetting. She passed and we had won! What a clever horse she is!

No sooner than we had her safely home our thoughts turned to the Marathon. It was only two weeks away and that was sure to fly by! Lesley and I had been trying out various contraptions to ensure that I made the 70Kg weight required for all riders. I commenced a two week weights and eating programme (not sure it did much good but I enjoyed stuffing my face) and managed to borrow some lead shot diving weights

from a friend. These were nice and soft feeling and fitted perfectly into the weight cloth Les Sparks had fitted to her saddle. Coupled with a pair of heavy leather boots with steel toe caps and we were there!

We stabled at the barracks next to the racecourse the night before – that was an experience in itself! We had to have ID cards and only pre-registered vehicles were allowed in.

The night was soon over and the morning of the Marathon had arrived! While warming up I tried to keep Frayaa calm and away from any of the overly excited horses. All seemed to be going well and Frayaa walked calmly towards the parade ring. Once in the parade ring however, she knew something different was going on and added a few big spooks as we marched around, just to make sure I was paying attention!

It was soon time for the race to start and all horses headed out onto the race track. We were under starters orders and we were off! I don't know if I have ever had such an adrenaline rush! 25 horses setting off together at a gallop is certainly an experience. Frayaa was very excited and desperate to catch up to the horses at the front. I decided to keep her at a slow gallop – it was that or out of control! I have never seen her so excited!

About half way round the race course she started to settle and I was able to relax a little (and take a glance at the pulse monitor!), through a gap in the fence and out across the fields. When we were level or behind another horse she was settled but as soon as her nose went in front she wanted to catch the next one!

I kept glancing down at the pulse monitor to check she wasn't over doing it. She was certainly up for this and was very keen to go faster. Her pulse stayed around 110, no problems there, on you go Frayaa!

Up the steep hill, around the woods – the drive round I had been on the day before was definitely helping as I knew what was coming up next and was remembering the lines I had planned to take the day before. By this time she was cantering along beautifully. Her canter has really come on this year and she is much more comfortable and seems to find it much easier than before. It could be that she is now just a stronger horse but I think the new v-girth system on her saddle has helped too.

We cantered on and after what seemed like no time at all we were coming into the vet gate. We trotted in and then reached the compulsory walk section. Off I jumped and walked to collect her time card.

The first horses in were about 8 minutes ahead of us and had vetted when we arrived. All hands on deck with the crewing, saddle off, plenty of water on her, did she want a drink, and her pulse was down. In we went. A pulse of 52 (there was a queue for the vetting) and we came out of the vetting only 4.5 minutes behind the leaders!

In no time at all I was back on board. The horses in front of us were soon setting off. And then it was our turn. 30 seconds to go, another circle, 20 seconds, a smaller circle, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and we were off! We galloped off up the race course with Frayaa eager to catch the horses in front.

Out into the fields and I could see the horse that had set off in front of us in the distance. As we were cantering down the first hill it was starting the climb up the next one. On we cantered but the horse in front disappeared from view in the undulating ground. We cantered on hoping to catch it.

As we passed the first steward they told us that the leaders were 4.5 minutes in front – we may not have been gaining on them but they weren't getting away either. We pushed on up the hill that runs along the side of the woods. As we neared the top I glanced down at the pulse monitor – 196!! Ah! What am I doing to her?! Slow down Frayaa. You feel fine and seem keen but let's just trot steadily to make sure. The pulse rate slowly starts to drop, maybe it is a real reading but surely not, she is still really keen. Let's trot a bit further and see what happens. As we round the next corner it suddenly drops to 60 something – phew it was just playing up on me.

Well, we've lost a bit of time now so our chances of catching the other horses are gone. In fact we don't see another horse the rest of the way round which Frayaa is most unimpressed with (she was enjoying her day at the races!) We carry on with perhaps a little less motivation than before and I decide that we may as well enjoy the rest of the route. We canter steadily/fast trot the rest of the way round and Frayaa crosses the finish line with a definite spring still in her step.

Just the vetting to go and we will have successfully completed the Marathon. She gets through the vetting with no trouble at all; in fact the head vet said to us that it was really nice to see a horse finish in such good condition. I am so proud of her. We may not have won or even come in the top 6 but to get a comment like that when you know your horse has been working hard really is special.

Of course many thanks must go to the crew for getting her through the ride in such good condition – so to James, Heather, Mary and Steve a very big thank you. A huge thank you must of course also go to Lesley for letting me ride her wonderful horses and giving me the opportunity to have experiences like this.

To anybody who is considering entering the Marathon next year or at some point in the future I would certainly recommend it! It's totally different to an endurance ride but an experience I certainly won't forget.



Identify your Goals for Endurance:

Coaching Day with Pam James

At an open meeting in the summer a coaching day with Pam James had been suggested by some members and it was agreed that 2 days of coaching could be offered to Offa's Dyke members. I was very keen to take up one of the places and Gina was able to coordinate the two days and make sure that the places were offered and taken. Before the groups of six met with Pam (a level 3 Endurance Coach), she asked us all to briefly let her know our level of experience and a few details about our respective horses and three things that we hoped to achieve or find out through the coaching.

Dates and venues were set and Gina made sure we all had directions and on the morning of 27th November. I arrived at 9.00 am (1/2 an hour early – sorry about that!!) at Delwyn Hall's house for one of the 2 sessions. Delwyn instantly made us all feel very welcome and gave us a tour of the yard; her lovely foal was a bit of a highlight and kept us entertained through the day – sleeping flat out in a patch of sunlight and then demonstrating his rather fantastic stick twirling trick! Delwyn not only opened up her house but kept us fully fuelled with tea, coffee, biscuits and mince pies and this certainly helped to focus our minds. Big thank you to Del for providing such a nice venue and for the constant flow of refreshment. One member couldn't attend so we were a cosy group of five – all with very different levels of experience and achievement and with a diverse group of horses. It was very reassuring to know that I was not the only one with a very novice horse and as the least experienced endurance rider I gained a huge amount of reassurance and advice through the day.

Pam started us off by getting us to summarise to the rest of the group where we are at with endurance – of course most of us were very happy to extol the virtues (or otherwise) of our various four legged partners and then we got down to some assessment work. Pam provided a very detailed self-assessment exercise which we completed with some discussion and this gave us a clearer picture of our strengths and weaknesses in all areas. The assessment included evaluation of our physical, mental and technical skills for endurance riding and was, for me at least, quite illuminating. Having done this, we could all see areas for improvement and some areas of strength which we had perhaps not considered. The discussion during this exercise was also very helpful as Pam was able to answer lots of related (and some not so related) queries about the things which we need to assess and understand. The assessment and discussion process took us through most of the morning so by the time we stopped for lunch, most of us had a record of things which needed work on.

After lunch, Pam challenged us with some action planning. Most riders plan their year in some way but Pam wanted us to identify in a very detailed way exactly what we were aiming to achieve in the coming season and how we were going to get there. The

action plans we worked on identified weekly exercise and feeding plans – with each ride or schooling session clearly stated in terms of length, work done, timing etc. Pam was able to give everyone plenty of individual attention so that the action plans were tailored to everyone's different needs and in my case Pam was able to advise exactly how much work I should be aiming to do each week and what sort of rides/competitions I should consider. The result for me was what I had been hoping – a season of reasonably gentle pleasure/training rides for my rising 5 year old with an NCR possibly at the end of the season so that we will be ready for a novice season in 2013. Pam's action planning was really helpful and during this session we agreed that we should meet again as a group at the end of March to review progress. This was a bit of relief as planning the whole year in one hit seemed a bit daunting!

Pam's final task was to get us to review some photographs of situations and events and get us to evaluate them. These included a couple of conformation critiques (amazing how everyone sees very different things in horses isn't it?) and some situations where horse and rider were either struggling or things were working out well. I have to say I found reading these photos really quite tricky...more experience needed.

When the day came to an end – with more tea, biscuits and mince pies thanks to Del, I felt mentally rather shattered! I think everyone really enjoyed the day as it was challenging enough to really feel that we had achieved quite a lot (and I certainly would not have devoted the same amount of time and attention to the task left to my own devices at home) but we still had a very jolly time and I really enjoyed getting to meet some of the other members. Everyone was very open and supportive and Pam somehow managed to keep us on task. Everyone was able to go home with a good understanding of their (and their horse's) strengths and weaknesses, development work needing to be done and a detailed action plan for the coming year – Well done everyone! Big thanks to Pam for answering about a thousand questions and sharing her invaluable experience as well as getting us to complete all of her planned tasks and to Del for letting us take over her kitchen. See you all out and about in 2012!

Fenella Lloyd



[Piers Geddes on *Partnership*](#)

Partnership is an overused word, its meaning diluted and weakened. A rider's partnership with a horse may go no further than the horse doing the work while the rider sits in the saddle and directs it. Don't worry, I'm guilty. But of late I've dimly become aware, as far as Flynn is concerned, that it isn't like that at all. He still does all

the work, but it's clear he's taking a lot of the decisions too. Increasingly, he's in charge. Perhaps he always was. So he's not just joining in but playing a full part.

Over speed and gait I have influence, but not much more. That's fine, he knows more than I do. If he wants to slow down on certain surfaces I've learnt to accept it, and equally – this can become exciting sometimes – to let him zing along much faster than I'd have chosen to go, or ever suggested to him. It's a cliché, but he hasn't put a foot wrong. So far, at least. There have been times – one Friday's splendidly soaking Red Dragon comes to mind - when on rutted tracks and steep downhills we've really motored, and part of the exhilaration was feeling we were going as a team, nearly as one creature. But at that point he had taken over almost completely.

Can I trust him? Certainly. After all he trusts me so why shouldn't I? And emotionally it's very rewarding. Steering I have some power over, and brakes a little but it's rarely necessary. Nor that effective: at the delightful Quantocks in March he was determined – no, he was certain, that he would catch that liver chestnut who'd started ahead. He would not be shifted from this idea, nor the white-hot pace it dictated. Once achieved he stayed happily nearby throughout the ride, ahead or behind that same keen horse, and it was a very good decision. To go alone or in company is as much his choice as mine, perhaps more.

But he's slowly accepting walking up hills, possibly because we usually catch up those who tackle them fast, and often before reaching the top, still at a walk. Once more on the flat away we go again because he's fresher, and fresher still if I've walked up beside him.

Yet it isn't all speed. Last year at our first 80km at Mynydd y Gaer I offered him the chance to go faster but he never took it, steadily going on alone as we were for every step of the second loop. He was right as usual, and on a hard ride we slowly ticked off the miles. "No, you get off and lead me down this steep path," he said physically, "as you did the first time." Okay, I said. Usually though he attaches himself to others, in a way I have yet to understand. It can be troublesome but on the whole seems to work. He decides, and it's as rare for me to veto it as for him to make a serious protest or even mutiny about a choice of mine. I have to get us to the start (more complicated than he realises, I suspect). That's my task; then he takes over, for to complete the ride is his. I come to the fore again when we've finished. Of course it's not quite that simple, but as time passes and he becomes more experienced it's increasingly the way it works. And so the ride has become a partnership of a slightly different kind: during it, he has the upper hand; before and after, I do. Just about.

"I am the rider and he is my horse", is becoming "I am the horse and he is my rider". It's not a bad way to be, and I don't want him to change me for another.

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