



Offa's Dyke Group
Of Endurance GB
Newsletter – October 2010
www.offasdykegb.co.uk



Chairman's Comment

Congratulations to Sarah Rogerson who as reserve stepped in at the last minute to ride at WEG and completed the 160km. At the time many groups members were doing Plump hill ride and raised about £350 to support the team in Kentucky. Somehow I know they were definitely going much faster than us. You can hear more about WEG as Sarah and her family will be giving a talk at the January social event.

Our events continued to have excellent weather

- Cranham run by Margaret McKiddie
- Under-hay Bluff run by Gabby Franklin (first time as ride organiser)
- Plump Hill Kentucky fund raiser run by Sharon Parr
- Tintern national ride sadly cancelled due to low entries - organiser Mark Holland
- Special thanks to Belinda Stewart and Julian Costello who have covered First Aid

Promotion of Endurance: - Margam Park Demo facilitated by Margaret McKiddie was support by all Welsh groups sending people to take part and man stand. Countrywide Equestrian at Ledbury had 'try something new theme' day and our group had a stand.

Home international in Scotland saw one of our young members Angharad Morgan and her family tackle the trip. She was successful (see article in newsletter).

Red Dragon As the season draws to a close the groups riders had great success at the Red Dragon

With winners in 160km Gill Talbot, 120k Maria Stapley and 80km 2nd Maria Stapley, 3rd Karen Jones and 4th Carolyn Edwards, plus many others being successful in the CR classes despite the weather.

Trophy time It is time to think of the annual meeting and prize giving in December. Please send your trophy cards to Chris Wray (details in newsletter).

New venue for annual meeting which has a bar, as last year we will have an American supper (bring along a plate of savoury food) puddings will be provided. Raffle prizes always welcome.

Join the Committee we are always pleased to welcome new people to the committee or organise an event. We need a new younger rider representative (don't have to attend meetings just keep us up to date with the news) and associate members are also welcome.

Thanks again to everyone who have ridden helped and organised an event, we are already into planning 2011 with 2 social evenings with talks, dressage show and ride dates already being scheduled.

Hope to see you all at the annual meeting - don't forget your trophy forms

Gina

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Editor's Comment

How time flies another year nearly over. For me, it has not been a particularly successful one and rides up and down the country have had poor entries, the high cost of diesel no doubt a factor.

Offa's Dyke group however have had much to celebrate, from a very new member of the group Angharad Morgan competing successfully in the Home International, Gill Talbot winning the Red Dragon for the third time, 3 being well placed in the Little Dragon and Maria Stapely winning the Dragon's Tail, Lesley Dunn winning a Dressage competition, new pleasure rides being enjoyed AND of course Sarah Rogerson at the very last minute being included and completing successfully in the team at WEG. Our own Kentucky Fund Raiser; Plump Hill PR, organised by Sharon Parr, held on the very same day raised about £350 for the team

Another very positive thing has been so many more offers of help at rides. At Cranham I was able to have gates manned and water points available AND the helpers seemed to enjoy themselves. Helen Mayo said 'I enjoyed it Watching and listening to the buzzard flying high up in the sky, smiling faces on the riders, fine horses going past and the chance to read my book and best of all no Sunday roast to cook, well not until evening'. Piers Geddes, who walked a long way to his gate AND supplied the riders with sweets also said he enjoyed it 'Not always the case when volunteering!' and commented on the happy smiling faces of the riders. The good weather obviously played a part (in contrast to Saturday and Monday when Carolyn and I got soaked marking and demarking the route). I wonder how many saw in last weeks Horse and Hound Archive page from 1970 under 'Some things never change' a comment about a long distance ride in Yorkshire where the behaviour of the riders was appalling, not polite to stewards and never thanking gate stewards. I am so glad some things DO change and our helpers DO need to be appreciated.

A number of people also volunteered to come along and help at an Endurance Demonstration at the Welsh Festival of the Horse at Margam Park at the beginning of September. We had Chris Wray with two of his horses and Gwen Pickering doing a mock ER with start, mid point vetting, and racing finish. Chris's horses were mother and daughter and obviously thought it was a competition to see which could buck best! They obviously did not think twice round the ring at Margam Park was much of an Endurance Ride. The real star of the show was 10 year old Holly Rawnsley on her little spotted pony who also did a spot of bucking. Holly was so attached to her red number bib, wore it all day and even to the pub where we went for a meal at night but according to her grandmother Joan she was NOT allowed to sleep in it as she asked. Unfortunately attendance at the event was poor on Saturday and almost non-existent on the Sunday when the weather was appalling. Pat Conn did a sterling job of handing out information about EGB on Saturday but had few opportunities on Sunday although she was at least under cover.

Margaret McKiddie

Dates for your diary

Schooling lesson	Sun 14 Nov	
Trophy Evening & AGM	Sat 4 Dec	See page 6
Schooling lesson	Sun 12 Dec	See page 7
Christmas Cracker – socialride	Sun 9 Jan	See page 10
Schooling lesson	Sun 16 Jan	
Pub Talk and social evening	Sat 22 Jan	See page 8
Schooling lesson	Sun 30 Jan	
Maryland- national ride	Sun 6 Feb *	See page 9
Schooling lesson	Sun 13 Feb	
Pub Talk and social evening	Sat 19 Feb	TBA
Schooling lesson	Sun 27 Feb	
March Hares – National ride	Sun 6 March *	
Dressage competition	Sun 13 March	
Bluebell – social ride	Sat 16 April *	
Bluebell – National ride	Sun 17 April *	

- Provisional dates TBC by rides committee

More information on the website 'rides & events' page

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 4th December. **Send your completed cards straight away 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 or Carolyn

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. He also has records of Offa's Dyke social rides and events, so you only need to have verified any non competitive rides you've done with other groups. 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 Wendy Dunham before 28 October to claim them (see page 153 of the EGB handbook for details)

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



Please all come along to our

Offa's Dyke Awards Evening and Annual Meeting

Saturday 4 December 7.15 for 7.30pm

New Venue: The Ballroom, 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 (see below for details).

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 2009

Finally the ever popular raffle will be drawn. Please bring along a raffle prize to share.

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>

Schooling Lessons

Dates are now set for this winter's schooling lessons. The first one held 17th October was very successful and it was nice to see some new faces, along with some of those who have been coming for the past three years.

November 14th

December 12th

January 16th

January 30th

February 13th

February 27th

March 13th – Dressage competition

Cost is the same as last winter - £17.50 per hour in the indoor school at Huntley School of Equitation with Carole Broad FBHS. Groups will be 4 or 5 depending on demand and time constraints. Open to Offa's Dyke members and associate members.

Payment must be made two weeks in advance and in case of cancellation, you may lose your money if we are unable to fill your place. The group runs the lessons as a service to members, not to make a profit.

If you are interested in coming to any of the lessons, please contact Carolyn Edwards (preferably by email: see page 2 for contact details).

For those of us who may feel we could do better Heather Evans has sent us, with his permission the view of Performance Consultant Jon Finn see his blog at www.performingbeyondpotential.com/blog

Reflecting to Motivate Positive Change

Personal reflections can be a powerful method of instigating a positive change to an individual's performance behaviours. However, according to the Broaden and Build Theory of Emotions, reflection can only be successful in motivating positive behaviour change if the reflector is able to focus on both the negative, and the positive aspects of their current performance. Specifically it details that for every one negative aspect of current performance that the individual considers, they must also identify three positives aspects in order for reflection to be successful.

As end of season approaches so does a natural point for personal reflection. With the understanding that 3 (positives):1 (negative) is indicative of successful reflection, I would challenge everyone who reads this blog to reflect on their own performance by writing down six areas where they have performed really well this year, and two areas where they feel that they can improve. Where will you direct your intensity of effort?

Jon Finn

Pub Talk and Social Evening

Saturday 22nd January 7.30pm

Queens Head, 1 St. James Street
Monmouth, NP25 3DL, Tel 01600 712767

Sarah Rogerson and family are coming along to share with us their once in a lifetime experiences competing at the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky.

Offa's Dyke Member Sarah was selected as reserve for the British Team and flew out to Kentucky with her twin sister Rachael. She then had the drama of a last minute inclusion in the team, when one of the British horses was withdrawn. Sarah rode the American based horse Winston (FFC First Csea Lord) owned by Stagg and Cheryl Newman. See her article in our July newsletter about her experiences riding Winston last winter in America.

Following her experience Sarah said: 'I am recovering, although it is surprising how long it has taken to sink in and be able to get back on with normal life again. The experience itself was absolutely incredible with so many different aspects; from the shock of getting to ride and preparing for the most important race of my life in 18 hours, the achievement of completing, to being treated like an equal by Carl Hester and Mary King'

Queens Head Pub We have been given free use of the restaurant next door to the pub. The landlord Neil Bell isn't charging us for use of the room but hopes that people will stop by at the bar before or after. They no longer serve food and there is no direct access from the bar but the landlord's happy for people to take drinks next-door.

Directions :From the south on the A40 go through tunnels at Monmouth and continue to traffic lights and turn left. From Forest of Dean A466 or A4136 to Monmouth, at traffic lights cross over A40 and go ahead into Monmouth. The Queen's Head is about 50 metres from the traffic lights on the corner on your right. Turn left, Blake Theatre in front of you, just past that on right is entrance to Glendower Street car park.

From the north on the A40 it's best to turn right into Monmouth at the roundabout (first roundabout after Ross-on Wye). At traffic lights turn left and follow same road around to the right (away from Leisure Centre) and Queen's Head is on the left at the sharp bend (leading to the A40 and A466). Give way to traffic from the left and go ahead (i.e. not follow sharp bend). Blake Theatre in front of you, just past that on right is entrance to Glendower Street car park. You may also, from this direction, find street parking before the pub. Pub is on Gloucester & Forest of Dean map LR162, OS national grid ref SO 5105 1280.

www.queensheadmonmouth.co.uk

Maryland

Pleasure Ride

A National Ride in the Offa's Dyke Group area

Sunday 6th February 2011*

Please send your entry in January – the Handbook does not usually come out until after this Ride!

Scenic, with views of River Wye, 250m drop and climb on 26km route. Mostly in Forestry Commission evergreen woodland. Made-up limestone forest tracks, and routes of earth, grass, round gravel, earth/fixed and loose stones, or tarmac.

Similar route to recent years. Fully marked route with checks. 26 km with loops giving option to continue or finish after 9 km or 17 km. Monmouthshire - near Trellech - halfway between Chepstow and Monmouth off B4293.

Facilities: Catering by Lesley's Catering Company. First Aid. Route marking/checking/response by motorcycle trail riders from the Trail Riders Fellowship (www.trf.org.uk). Toilet. Photographer. No Vet. No Farrier. No coralling. **NO** Water.

Entries to: Heather Evans, Springfield, Walford, Ross-on-Wye. HR9 5RB

Entries close: Monday 24th January 2011.

Entry questions? Tel: 01989- 565 249 (speak clearly on answering machine) or email: horse@mark-holland.info -- NO ENTRIES BY E-MAIL.

Send completed national ride entry form. **Enclose** minimum C5-size self-seal SAE for return of ride information and cheque payable to "Endurance GB": £20 for non-members and Group Associate Members giving 'temporary day membership', or £15 for members.

We look forward to meeting you at the Ride. Organiser: Mark Holland.
Questions not related to entries? Also tel: 01989- 565 249.

* Ride may be moved to 13th February if weather, etc is unsuitable.

Christmas Cracker Ride



Sunday 9th January 2011



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 Belinda Josephi, Morgans Cottage, St Briavels, Lydney, Gloucestershire, GL15 6SG Tel: 01594 530598

Cheques payable to Offa's Dyke Group of Endurance GB. £10.00 members and associate members, £15.00 Temporary day members

Details are included in this newsletter of Schooling lessons at Huntley this year. There is a tendency among other disciplines to think Endurance riders do not do dressage or schooling but our schooling lessons and mini dressage competition were well attended and at least one rider was inspired by last year's events to take it further!

A Winter's Dressage Dreams

Lesley Dunn

During the last long cold winter the horses hardly got ridden due to the weeks of almost continuous snow and ice up in these hills above Trellech. I had been given a set of Prelim Dressage Tests for Christmas, so I was delighted to hear about the Offa's Dyke Dressage competition last March. It gave me the impetus to start riding my young mare Chiana again and book a couple of schooling lessons with Sarah Spencer-

Williams, which we share with Gill Talbot. Chiana needed some schooling and experience of riding in an arena. In the dim and distant past I had ridden and even judged some Dressage, so I did have some idea what I was supposed to do, but my last Test was in 1996 when Chiana's brother Chatanz was in training for his Stallion Performance Test, so I was certainly a bit ring rusty. Thank goodness everyone was allowed to compete in their normal warm and comfortable Endurance riding gear. One less thing to worry about.

The journey to the Huntley was uneventful. It was the first time that Chiana had travelled on her own, and I was driving on my own too. She unloaded with no fuss and stood at the back of her trailer stuffing her haynet as if she had done this a million times before. She was totally relaxed as I clambered aboard then rode around the warm-up arena. Then it was our turn to go into the spooky indoor school. She goggled at everything the first time around the school, but did everything that I asked and somehow we achieved riding Test A. Amazing. A bit later and it was time for the Prelim Test, which included canter around the arena. Chiana had never managed more than a strike off into canter before, but somehow we managed to scramble our way around. You can imagine my delight to find that Chiana was placed in both classes. Such an achievement. I felt so proud of her.

A few days later I was glancing through the schedule of the AHS National Show at Malvern. The same 2 Dressage classes were featured. I had 4 months to improve on our performance so I felt that we had every chance of not disgracing ourselves at such a major event. Gill & I continued with our lessons. Sarah was beginning to get picky about the finer points of Chiana's way of going – could it be we were improving? However, Chiana continued to find right leg canter difficult around tight turns, although her trot work was usually good and we had got the idea of a true 4 time Dressage Horse walk, not a swinging Endurance horse walk. At the beginning of July I found a local Dressage event at Severn Vale Equestrian centre that meant that Chiana would have the experience of riding a Test within white boards before her big day. Of course "proper" riding gear was required. I managed to find and just about squeeze into my clothes from over 20 years ago. I really did struggle riding with Jodhpur boots and metal stirrups. More practise needed there. It was a rainy, windy evening. Chiana ignored the scary boards after the first longside, but slipped very badly and nearly came down at canter on the hard, rough and slippery grass surface. We rebalanced to trot, but I only asked her for canter strike off on a straight line after that, then rebalanced to trot for the rest of the movement. We had some sympathetic and encouraging comments from the judge and 8s for walk. An instructive outing.

Gill had kindly agreed to come and crew for me at the Arab Show, so Chiana and I knew that we had to be on our best behaviour. Chiana is one of those little darlings who lean on the back ramp of the trailer and – well you know what happens next! So the first

thing that the Crew needed to do once we had arrived at the Show was a thorough wash of the grey ponies bum. Poor Chiana was totally gobsmacked by the sight of all those horses milling around – some prancing and snorting – just what was going to happen next? So she listened very attentively to me for confidence. The slightest hint of an aid and she did exactly what I asked. I needed to sit very still and relaxed and concentrate. Our turn in the arena – we actually cantered correctly all around the arena ! amazing (scored 8!!) – so I promptly forgot to ask for her “Dressage Walk”. Never mind, I know she can do that well if I remember to ask her. There were over 30 horses in that class and my clever little Chiana achieved 6th place with a score of 67.6%. I felt so pleased as she had held her own against far more experienced Dressage horses.

So into our Intro A class. Everything happens so quickly in a Test, but I managed to avoid a “Senior moment” and remembered it all. I came out feeling that her trot work wasn’t as good as it is at home, but that we had done as well as could be expected in the circumstances. What more could I ask. Even Gill was proud of us. Back later to collect our score sheet and Wow a posh Red Rosette!! She had won the class by 8 points with a score of 74%. All 7s and 8s on the scoresheet! I had never achieved that before. I can still hardly believe it. Must have been the Crew’s expert pony bum-washing. Must remember that next year.

So thanks to Fiona and Carole Broad for the Offa’s Dyke Dressage event which inspired me to dream; to Gill and Sarah who kept encouraging me along the way; and of course to that very special little horse Chiana.

Congratulations to Offa’s Dyke’s Sarah Rogerson, who at the last minute successfully competed for Great Britain at the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky. Below is Sarah’s report on her experience. To hear more come along to our Pub Social Evening Saturday 22 January. See page 8 for details.

World Equestrian Games, Kentucky

Sarah Rogerson

Some of you may have already read about how I got to be in the position of first reserve for the British Team in Kentucky. I had the opportunity to qualify on Winston, a lovely American trained and bred horse, while I was staying over there last winter. His owners kindly let me put my name up for selection for the British Team, which at times seemed completely implausible but we kept on hoping and did everything we could to show to the selectors, chef and vets that a horse living the other side of the Atlantic who they barely knew was worth a place on their team. After being selected as a reserve and then as first reserve for the team, we attended all of the training days, either on my mum's horse or

once I was able to ride one of Chris Yeoman's. The training days were great in the most part but as the tension grew closer and the harder it got thinking about the fact that my gain would be someone else's misfortune, also that it was very possible that for us it could come to nothing at all.

Chances of me riding got slimmer when all five of the British horses were passed fit to travel and set off on their several day journey via Liege in Belgium where the European horses all flew from. They then had quarantine at Cincinnati before making it to the Lexington Horse Park in Kentucky. Our horses all flew well. At this point Rachael and I flew out to join the team, we were presuming that I would not get to ride and we were looking forward to being involved with the team and experiencing my first World Equestrian Games. Obviously I packed all of my riding kit! The final declaration was made on the morning that we arrived, with riders and horses as follows; Beccy Broughton with Java Sunlight, Chris Yeoman with LM Midday, David Yeoman with Haszar, Ros Clapp with Nazeeka and Janice Cockley-Adams with Roxane du Bout du Monde. Rachael and I spent most of Wednesday in the venue taking in the enormity of actually being there and in the training area watching the top riders and horses from all over the world from all disciplines preparing for the biggest competition in the world. We then drove 6 hours to North Carolina to see Stagg and Cheryl, the owners of Winston, and their lovely horses. On Thursday we rode Winston and Super up to the top of their favourite mountain, which was amazing as usual and then returned to the whirlwind of WEG. Friday morning was when things started to get tense to say the least. The horses did their usual routine of feed, walk, trot up, exercise, trot up and then snooze. I was stood some distance from where the British team vets were assessing the horses but it seemed clear that 4/5 horses looked great but Roxane had an issue. While the horses were being exercised I had an awful hour of sitting round trying to keep calm with my heart and head exploding. The team vets did decide to withdraw Janice's horse, I cannot begin to imagine the heartache they must have gone through. Meanwhile I was busy organising paperwork with Liz, Hugh and Des, and phoning Stagg to tell him that his horse would be competing, and my mum and dad to tell them their daughter would be competing in WEG. My mum managed to get a flight almost immediately but at such short notice my dad had to stay at home to look after the gang.

Winston arrived at around 9pm muddy, hairy and with the wrong shoes on.

We had now reached Saturday. By 9am he was clean and waiting fairly patiently in line to be vetted. Everything went perfectly, the horses, grooms and riders looked immaculate and we were unofficially awarded best turned out above all other nations. I was whisked off for photos and Winston was asked for a drug test, but we eventually met up at the stables to begin the shoeing, clipping, riding, crew reccying, vetgate setting up, panicking, etc. It was decided that I would ride as the individual and the other four riders would make up the team, a

sensible decision because Winston was such an unknown. The opening ceremony was in the evening. My mum arrived just we walked into the stadium alongside the Dressage, Eventers and Reiners.



Race day, the horses were walked and tacked up by the stables and then we rode down the start which was about a mile away. The warm up went really well, and started nicely in a group. The course was mostly wide grassy tracks but was quite technical with plenty of ups and downs and cambers, plenty of river crossings, through peoples' gardens, through barns. It did get a bit silly but the local millionaires loved it. I came into the first vetgate just behind the other British horses around halfway down the field at 19k, a bit quicker than plan A but got through fine. At this point I handed Winston over to Rachael who did everything to prepare him for the next loop, she had the enormous challenge of working with a horse and people she had only met two days previously in such tense and important situation. The whole support team (vets Hugh and Rob and physio Gavin worked fantastically well together with Rachael, Stagg, Cheryl and Janine (one of Janice's crew), we also had Stagg's physio and farrier who were there with the US team, my mum and the human physio looked after me. The second loop went well, this was the toughest and longest loop of the race. There weren't any noticeable hills in the area but the course designers found them, we treated every climb with respect to save our energy for later in the day. Having

only ridden Winston in one other 160km and not doing his day to day training, it was difficult to judge how much to let him go on in the early stages. Winston came into the next vetgate quite excited and took a little while for his heart rate to come down as he unwound, he is still pretty young. He got through fine and Hugh was actually more pleased with how he looked than after the first loop. On the third loop I let him go on a bit in the first half of the loop with the intention of slowing up slightly on the second half, this went well and he felt really good. He got through the vet but was a bit off his food, which was pretty unusual for Winston so I planned to slow up a bit on the next loop. At this point the team were in bronze position, with Ros, Chris and David running very strongly.

Winston left the vetgate well but after a couple of miles he started to back off, I continued on carefully and came across Beccy and Java at the next water stop. She was also beginning to struggle, so we continued together at a slower pace. One of the difficult things about this ride was the lack of crewing on course, so they had little idea of where we were or how we were doing. The horses seemed to find that loop mentally tough as well as physically because the course was forever looping towards and away from home. They did pick up as we returned to the venue, both got through and Winston's appetite was back. Shortly after I set off on the fifth loop, we came across a Swedish girl who, like us and many others were now in completion mode, our horses worked really well together and gradually picked our speed up through the loop, and came into the last vetgate with Beccy. Both horses vetted well and were due out within a few seconds of each other, and both passed this re-inspection at the end of the hold. We were given the unfortunate news that Ros and Nazeeka had been eliminated at the last vetgate, but Chris and David were both still going strong. By this stage the front runners had already completed, with Nobby named as Champion again, he has now won the World Championships, European Championships and the World Games. He is a truly incredible athlete, and Maria has just had a baby 7 weeks previously!

Most of our last loop was going to be ridden in the dark, with the course marked with glow sticks. Due to Ros being eliminated, this put an extra pressure on Beccy and also me to make sure that we completed. We ended up riding the last loop as a group of four, Beccy and I, the Swedish girl and a South African girl who I had met and ridden with at my qualification ride on Winston. All four of the horses were feeling well, and we passed quite a few riders, I managed to relax for the first time all day knowing that my horse felt good and we were on the final stretch. The final vetting was under floodlights and thankfully we were both successful so that was four out of five British riders and a team position of 6th, which is the best team result apparently for 17 years.

The experience as a whole was fantastic, completing my first championships, being involved with the other disciplines, Mary King and a few other eventers

actually came down to the vetgate to find out how we were doing and what endurance was about.

Thank you to everyone who helped raised the huge amount of money needed to send our team over, it really would not have been possible without you. We were very proud to represent you.

At the other end of the scale we have one of our newest and youngest riders jumping at the challenge to go to Scotland to ride in the Home International. 16 year old Agharad only joined EGB this year. She came along to our Novice training afternoon in April, along with crew – dad Alan and has thrown herself wholeheartedly into her first Novice Season with Comet. Thanks for this super report on her experiences on the Welsh Team at the Home International.

Riding For Wales

Angharad Morgan

It was a quiet unsuspecting evening when the phone rang and my Dad bellowed relentlessly for me to take the call. Unsure of who it was I picked up with a simple 'Hello' and a voice answered 'Hello Angharad, it's Pat Conn here.' I was relatively new to the sport of endurance having started only in the March but I'd been reading the Endurance GB website vigorously enough to know who Pat was- the Chef D'équipe of the Welsh Endurance Team. I'd been selected to ride for Wales as part of the Home International and Celtic Challenge Team at 40km.

The Home International and Celtic Challenge are two team competitions held between the four home countries- Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland. The teams consist of six riders who complete different distances ranging from a 160km two day endurance ride right down to a 30km competitive ride. The winning country is that ultimately with the most horses finishing, but tiebreakers are least penalties incurred and total distance completed. The four nations take turns in hosting the competition and this year the host was Scotland. The venue was as far North as you could possibly get, Burgie Equestrian Centre in Inverness. It would take two days of travelling to reach and if that wasn't problem enough for us the competition was being held on the 28th/29th August. We would only land back in Britain having been in Florida for three weeks on the 25th August.

Determined not to miss such a golden opportunity for both myself and my horse Comet my parents set about investigating places to stay on the way up and methods of transport as unfortunately we wouldn't be able to travel on the team lorry. Comet stayed with a friend who kept his fitness up while we went away and on the 26th August, the day after landing back in Britain we set off on a 7 ½ hour journey to Biggar, Scotland where we had been kindly offered a stable by John Edgar, who was very into

endurance and wanted to do for us what others had done for him. We were very lucky that Comet is an excellent traveler and you often can't tell if he's even in the trailer. We'd taken extra precautions and fully bandaged and booted him up as well as tying low haynets to encourage his neck down. We stopped every two hours at a service station to offer him water, give him a tiny amount of food and check all his bandages. The journey was mainly on Motorways and we hit very little traffic so we arrived smoothly in Biggar with one pony none the worse for wear at around 6pm. Comet gulped down the water and some feed and John kindly cooked us some dinner and gave me some advice about the ride. After that we went to settle into the hotel for the night before our journey to Burgie the next day.

If, the next day Comet had point blank refused to load onto the trailer we would've completely understood but he almost happily walked straight in and began munching on his fresh net of haylage. The trip to Burgie was shorter, only 5 hours but on slower, bendy and in places badly maintained roads. Comet didn't make a fuss whilst travelling but he was rather bored and uninterested when we made our regular stops to check on him. When we eventually arrived at the equestrian centre we settled Comet into a stable and met the other members of the Welsh team. The other 40km rider was Charlotte Fleming and her horse Mr Darcy who we had previously ridden with at the Forest of Dean Bluebell ride and Cirencester. Comet and Mr Darcy ride well together so we decided to ride as a pair- this was comforting news as the team informed me that the route wasn't brilliantly marked and required map reading skills! It also allowed my parents/crew to team up with Jane (Charlie's crew), who would be crewing for another team member on the Saturday so they could find the best places to crew. Unlike Endurance GB, under Scottish Endurance rules you are allowed to crew at any suitable place on the course except for within 100yards of a checkpoint or Raynet operator.



After meeting the team we went to watch the teams vet, having opted ourselves not to vet until Sunday morning when we would be riding. The English Team had taken full advantage of the world cup and were all sporting matching goods including Robinson's English flag rugs for the horses! It was nice to see a lot of variations in the size and breed of the horses taking part, although there were a lot of Arabs there were also cobs like Comet who is a registered section D. After vetting we took part in the team parade. We all wore our red polo shirts and black joddies and we painted a red dragon onto the bum of our mascot pony- Woody a little roan cob. The Irish team were all in their green and yellow hoodies and their mascot pony a beautiful dun was wearing green glasses and a hat. The Scottish were a blur of blue polos, kilts and bagpipes whilst the English were clearly the most organised and well matched wearing identical clothing and each waving two flags behind a mounted horse and rider resembling a knight.

On Saturday we took Comet out for two short gentle stretching rides just to keep him moving and entertained as he doesn't like being stabled and he has an old hip injury that occasionally plays him up. We also worked out the timings for the ride the next day. I needed to ride at a speed of 11kph which meant a riding time of 3 hours and 38 minutes. We thought we'd be clever and get ahead of the game by finding the crew points for the following day. We drove aimlessly in circles for two hours and failed to really find anywhere of use. Luckily for us Charlie's crew Jane was already out on course crewing for an 80km rider and knew exactly where we needed to be.

We woke up on Sunday morning to near gale force winds, an overcast sky and rain. Just the kind of weather you want to ride in...not. The vet slot for the 40km class was between 9:30-10:00 although we went earlier as there wasn't much activity going on. We took Comet to the farrier first who looked quickly at his shoes and ticked his vet sheet. Having only been shod a week prior to the competition we were rather hoping he wouldn't have any problems! We took him into the vetting with his rug on due to the bitterly cold winds and the vets took his rate underneath the rug only insisting it be removed to trot up. I was a bit nervous about the heart rate as although Comet's is naturally low it can sometimes become artificially high due to excitement. Luckily he was feeling relaxed and passed vetting sound with a heart rate of 35bpm. We went back to the luxury of a stable to tack up and get all the kit ready, including a medical armband and first aid kit that is mandatory to all Scottish endurance rides!

We met up with Charlie on Darcy on the way to the starting gate and walked into the holding area. I had my stopwatch at the ready, waiting to press start as the lady said go but as she said the word go, Darcy took off across the field at full gallop. Comet tried to follow suit but I sharply turned him into the top of a luckily empty vet ring where we spun a few crazy circles before trotting down to rejoin with Charlie and Darcy who were now back under control. The slightly hectic start had meant that I had failed to

start my stopwatch opting instead to control my pony and Charlie's watch wasn't in synch with the starters. We were also slightly thrown and despite having seen the route out of the venue managed to miss the first gate! Shaky starts aside, we were still underway and soon into our rhythmical trot with Comet leading the way.

The ride was similar to Ludlow and Forest of Dean. It mainly consisted of forestry tracks, some grassy, most stony and a few really shoe suckingly boggy along with some stretches of road. We passed the checkpoints ahead of time, riding slowly but not stopping as we would rather have to wait to cross the line than be pushed for time. The marking was adequate but not very telling and between turns there were hardly any comfort markers. Turns were marked with two pieces of tape on the same branch that could easily be mistaken for one or be hidden by the wind. There was no clue as to which way you were turning if you did spot the elusive markers so Charlie read the map and I hunted for markers in each direction! Upon arriving back at the venue we had about fifteen minutes to kill so we decided to get off and let the ponies graze. With about two minutes to spare we decided to make our way down to the finish only to find that we were not going down but turning off to the left. Panicked as to how far out we were going to have to go to get back in, we had to take off at a trot down to the finish where we crossed the line in 3 hours, 37 minutes and 54 seconds which was annoyingly rounded down to 3 hours 37 giving us a speed of 11.06kph and incurring no penalties for the team.

After arriving back we quickly put a rug on Comet and skipped the traditional wash down as there were no signs of sweat or warmth. We offered him buckets of water which he happily drank and then let him graze quietly away from the rest as he can be very skittish and we didn't want to risk a spook increasing his heart rate. After our half hour we presented to the vet. The Scottish not only take a heart rate and ask for a trot up they also take a heart rate after the trot up. Comet's heart rate was 38, his lowest yet and although lazy he trotted up sound. His heart rate after the trot up had risen to 41 which is supposed to be a sign of strain but we and the vets believed it was more due to a lady at the side of the ring, waving a flag about and shouting at a dog towards the final few seconds of the pulse being taken. In Scottish terms he incurred no penalties because he rode at the chosen speed with a heart rate of under 48 giving him an individual Gold and a Grade 1 for Endurance GB. Darcy also vetted sound and achieved gold with a heart rate of 43.

Later that evening we went to the presentation where Wales won the team handling and turnout award. Unfortunately we lost both of our 160km riders through lameness but our 80km riders finished 4th and 5th. We sadly missed out on the novice trophy because our riding time was rounded down to a minute too fast although technically it was only 6 seconds. Wales finished 2nd in the Celtic Challenge and 3rd in the Home International with Scotland taking both wins. It was a very successful individual trip and

we were so proud of the way Comet performed after all the travelling he had endured. We arrived back in Biggar to balloons and bunting decorating the stables along with a congratulations card. Comet arrived back home safely on the Tuesday evening having been a complete star for the entire experience and we hope to be able to get on the team again next year although what slot we would fill hasn't been decided as we could no longer ride as novices!

.....

'Malabar Storm Wins Red Dragon 160km ER for the 3rd time!'

Unlike previous years, when the weather has been Spring like at Red Dragon, and the old turf has ridden exceptionally well, this year the ground was sodden, and on the Sunday the 2nd day started in Monsoon conditions with strong winds. The welcome dew ponds up on top of the mountains turned into lakes, the streams into fast flowing, white water torrents and rivers that were extremely tricky to cross. Undeterred, Malabar Storm led from the start, presenting into the overnight hold in 2nd place giving Annie Joppe and Fantom a 3 minute lead on day two. We overtook the leaders at the bottom of the first steep hill climb and then led it to the most exciting gallop for the finish.



This is Malabar Storms 5th start in a 160km ER and his 5th win, he has also completed Golden Horseshoe and gained a coveted Gold Award.

This was my 4th win at Red Dragon.

Gill Talbot

My colleagues were all looking at me as if I were slightly mad on the Friday of the Red Dragon ride, the rain was lashing down at the office windows and I told them I would be camping for the weekend and (hopefully) riding 120Km across the hills near Builth Wells. To most endurance people this probably sounds like fun, but to my home comfort loving colleagues I definitely seemed a bit mad!

I was lucky enough to have been given the opportunity to ride Lesley Dunn's horse Frayaa in the Dragons Tail. Lesley had kindly travelled Frayaa to the venue and vetted her on the Friday afternoon while I was at work. I arrived at the venue just in time for the briefing where Lesley met us and confirmed that Frayaa had passed the vet and was settled in her corral. I was curious to know what Frayaa's pulse had been at the vetting, as last year when she first went in the shed it was 102! Thankfully with the addition of some ear muffs (!) her pulse was 52.

Following a night of little sleep (a combination of a deflating air bed and being far too excited) we awoke to a cool and misty morning. Frayaa and I made our way down to the start and we were ready for my second ever race ride.

We were off! As many of you will know, the race rides at the Red Dragon start behind a car with the horses trotting out together along the road before heading onto the hills. There was something very special about this for me, with the misty morning, the noise of horse's hooves and seeing their warm breath, it almost felt as if we were in Robin Hood or heading to battle!

As we left the main road and headed onto the hills the ride spread out. I rode steadily up the big hill and we passed through the mist and into the sunshine as we climbed. On top of the hills there was a cool breeze and the weather was fine, a complete contrast to the previous days rain. Frayaa settled into her big trot and we motored along nicely. The tracks were quite wet but we were able to trot and canter over most of it, slowing to a steady trot where the tracks were slippery

As we headed down the hill towards the check point, I could see that the riders that had seemed to disappear when we got onto the hills were really not that far in front. We had decided that my crew (made up of Lesley and my boyfriend James) wouldn't meet me here, but Mary Stubbs and Sarah Rogerson kindly handed me a slosh as we went through. A short road section and then we were out on the hills once more.

It seemed like no time at all had passed and we began descending from the hill tops towards the vetting. There were some slippery and stony sections coming off the hills but Frayaa was coping with the conditions really well. At the vet gate Lesley met us

with sashes and James grabbed my card from the time keeper. We walked Frayaa to the Landrover, took her tack off and headed to the vetting. She passed easily (pulse of 52 – we would go in faster next time) and she was soon tucking into some food in the sunshine.

Heading out onto the 'Lollipop' Frayaa and I caught up with a Scottish lady on a grey horse who had travelled for 2 days to be there. (We lost her on the way back down, I hope she made it round.) Carolyn Edwards also caught us and the three of us trotted steadily up the hill. Frayaa seemed to get a bit bored of the road but as soon as we hit the grass she was keen to go and the going at the top was lovely. A herd of wild ponies came galloping down the hill at one point, Frayaa wasn't sure whether to be excited or scared but I thought it was lovely to watch. We also collected a herd of sheep that were running down the track in front of us. Carolyn said that for a while she thought they would be joining us at the next vetting!

We were gliding along beautifully and I could see an area marked with hazard tape in front. Danger I thought, better give that a wide berth, and we headed on around it. There seemed to be very few hoof prints in this direction and I couldn't see a marker up ahead. When I turned to look back, Carolyn was helpfully pointing in the direction we should have gone, and I realised that the hazard tape meant don't go past this point not avoid – you live and learn!

Soon we were coming off the hills and trotting back down the road towards the next vet gate. We followed the same plan as before and managed to get through the vetting faster this time. After the hold we headed out again. I found out I was in 6th place with Carolyn just in front.

We were climbing back out onto the hills and I couldn't believe that we were heading towards home already. Having been crewed outside the village, we trotted through Aberedw and soon passed the last check point. Frayaa was still feeling keen and we trotted steadily up the hill. All was going well until we reached the farm yard where there were 4 or 5 collies chained to kennels. Frayaa isn't the best with dogs and as they ran at her barking with their chains clanking on their kennels she definitely thought the opposite direction was the best plan! She did however go through the gate but the dogs didn't do much for keeping her pulse rate low!

Back out on the hill tops Frayaa stopped to have a drink and Carolyn and Karen Jones caught up with us. The three of us continued on together, coming off the hills in a trio. The descent was slow due to the mud and wet conditions but once we reached the road back to the venue we all pushed on. We were soon on the track that runs along the river bank and Frayaa was feeling great and gliding along in her big 'power trot'. As we crossed the road into the venue the three of us were still together, and we

cantered on towards the finish. We came up the hill and through the gate, and then turned towards the finish line. We cantered down the bank and with about 75m to go we hit the flat. I shouted 'go on Frayaa' and she really did go! Apparently we crossed the line at least a horses length in front, all I knew was that she was in front and enjoying herself as she wasn't that keen to stop!

We headed back into the show ground, took her tack off, gave her a drink and her pulse was dropping nicely. We put her ear muffs on and took her to the vetting which she passed. I didn't know where we had come at that point but I was so proud of Frayaa, she had behaved beautifully, responded willingly to everything I had asked of her, and seemed to enjoy it all as much as I had.

I wandered Frayaa around that evening letting her stuff her face with as much grass as she could manage and found out that we were 2nd! As it got dark we tucked her up in her stable for the night with plenty of food. Lesley, James and I went into Builth for fish and chips, had a nice long chat about the days events and made plans for the next day.

At about 4am on the Sunday morning we were woken not by the pitter patter of rain on the roof of our tent, but by the drumming of a torrential downpour. By 7 the tent was beginning to leak and a large puddle was surrounding my shoes that I had left in the porch area.

Having passed the vetting, an already wet Frayaa and I started out on the 40Km loop. Once again we climbed up the big hill and headed out across the hill tops. Today however we couldn't see a thing and I had to squint to make out the markers that had seemed so clear the day before. We soon reached the 80Km/40Km split and Frayaa was convinced I was asking her to go the wrong way. We began to descend from the hills and the tracks were wet and slippery so we took it very steadily. On reaching the bottom of the hill, the river had burst its banks and was flowing across the road, so slowly through it we went. We then followed the road up and up without seeing another horse. I was starting to wonder whether I had missed a turn off when in the distance, a Landrover could just about be made out through the mist at the top of the hill. I had made it to the check point but at this rate we would be out of time!

We continued back on the route from the previous day. We crossed another river and soon came to the pond/lake on the top. Nice and steadily through this as I really wasn't sure how deep it would be! Then we spotted a horse in front and soon caught up with them and we rode the rest of the ride together.

We made it back to the venue and Frayaa was vetted with her ear muffs on once again. Various people commented that they made her look like a mule – poor pony! She

passed and we hoped that we may have won the Dragons Tail and later that afternoon it was confirmed!

Coming 1st in the Dragons Tail and 2nd in the Little Dragon meant we were lucky enough to come away with lots of lovely prizes. £200, a Thermatex rug, a years supply of Speedi-beet, NAF vouchers, a stained glass dragon and a wormer (I'm sure Frayaa will appreciate that one!) A very big thank you to all of the sponsors for donating the prizes. I would also like to thank Lesley once more for letting me ride her wonderful horses and for her and James crewing us all the way round.

PLUMP HILL PLEASURE RIDE

Helen Mayo

I awoke on Sunday morning with relief to hear no raindrops, not that I am a fine weather rider, just knowing my long suffering husband was willing to drive me to Plump Hill Ride and also prepared to have my sister with him. Coping with me is bad enough, but when he has two of us and no Sunday lunch until teatime I am pushing my luck.

We were one of the first to arrive. The venue was down a long track, through a tidy farm and out into a large field. I presented myself to the organiser collected my No.8 bib headed back to the trailer unloaded Vinnie and set off leaving John and Sally to admire the view, read the Sunday papers.

Vinnie has been doing his Pony Club job looking after my boss's daughter for the summer competing and winning a show jumping class, 3rd prize at Howick horse trials and generally being a good all rounder so today it was my turn for the fun. We left the start and potted on down the field with a spring in our step feeling pretty good with life, skirted the woods in the next field and then found our way into the Forestry.

Everything was going well until I realized putting my mobile phone down my chaps was not the best idea. Thud I heard it drop to the ground oh bother (or something like that). Nothing for it, will have to get off and horror of horrors will have to get back up again (how I wish I was 21 again). Vinnie stood as good as gold and up I got back in the saddle. So off we went still amazed at the luck we had to be in such a smashing area.

After travelling along the route for a while we were joined and overtaken by Belinda and friends, Vinnie really did not want to be left behind so our pace increased!!

We eventually came to the road, travelled about a mile and then back into the woods. The views across the Severn were brilliant. After another good canter we came to the turn for the short route I bade farewell to Belinda and friends and headed off back to

the venue.

Down the hill we went, passing the duck pond saying hello to a couple enjoying a rest on the village seat admiring the houses and gardens. Next, back on to the Flaxley road, into the Forestry and home.

First out and first back. I had enjoyed the ride. Sorry I did not go the full distance. I imagine the view from Plump Hill was fantastic, but as Vinnie shoe was clanking, John had probably read the paper from cover to cover and Sally had no doubt finished her knitting it was time to call it a day!!

Under Hay Bluff

Piers Geddes

First time out on a new ride has a zing to it that even the best of familiar rides don't have. Where will we go? What will it be like? Of course this applies to the horses as well as their cargo, and it was certainly true at Gabby Franklin's Pleasure Ride Under Hay Bluff on August 29th. She'd usefully organised good weather too, so after a few days' rain had softened up the going, we lucky ones trotted off to roam around a lovely corner of Herefordshire – its hard to remember you're in England there – and admire the views of the Black Mountains and across the Wye Valley into Mid-Wales.


Now what a lot of riders like is variety, and this we were given on a splendid route: quiet lanes with verges, plenty of fields and headlands to get a bit of a spurt on if you wanted to, some forestry, and a delightfully invigorating stretch of moorland to follow that gorgeous bridleway at Llanrosser. And another wild patch on Vagar Hill. It's a wonderfully rideable district if you've someone to guide you around it. The marking? Terrific. Only the very skilful could have gone wrong or got lost, and it's impossible to believe anyone did. The helpers were all appallingly nice and even offered free marrows with rosettes at the end. Vegetables on the completion of the ride? Another first. It's an idea worth developing.

I'd swapped horses for the day and was lucky enough to ride Barbara Rees' Ianto, a handsome and sturdy black cob. Riding him is to ride a horse on castors instead of hooves, so smooth and comfortable, a bit different to Flynn the Arabian; and he never moans, indeed doesn't even appear to notice, having old Cement-Sacks on his back. He's a delight and I think enjoyed being out as much as his rider.

Seriously this was a great day, and there's definitely scope for the ride to be lengthened or developed. Or left as it is, simply to enjoy. Thank you all, we had a nice time and would like to come again. Any chance?

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For Sale in aid of RDA

I was recently given a lot of brand new tack, mainly full size, which I can sell in aid of my RDA group. The leather isn't English, but the quality is good and it would be nice to raise a considerable sum to support RDA.

Carolyn and Gina worked out cost of equivalent in Robinson's catalogue, as shown below, but I would be happy to accept offers of considerably less. If you think you may be interested in anything, I could bring it along to the AGM on 4 December for you to look at.

Margaret McKiddie. Tel 01452 813670

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Found

After Cranham ride: Shooting stick and folding Chair.

If either belong to you, please contact Margaret McKiddie (see contact page 2)

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