

ON THE RIGHT TRACK



NORTH LANCASHIRE BRIDLEWAYS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2009

GREETINGS ALL

Welcome to the November / December newsletter. Several people have sent articles for this edition so it makes for some cheery reading in the midst of the awful flooding and gloom we have been suffering of late.

My Shetlands seem to have turned into weird little amphibious beasts. They have spent so much time standing in the rain that their coats have taken on a scaly quality, something like a cross between duck feathers and thatching. They have a lovely dry field shelter with good thick stable mats to stand on, but they choose to brave the elements and defy the storms. If I push my fingers underneath their coats they are soft and fluffy and warm, so I guess they know what they are doing. Meanwhile, maybe I ought to keep the hair from their next molt - their coats are obviously a lot more efficient than anything I have found to keep the rain out. Don't even mention waterproof trousers (waterproof? - in my dreams) I might as well pull on a pair of knitted long johns for all the waterproofness they offer.

Moan over, I shall settle back into my customary winter mode of semi-hibernation. Suffice to say that the NLBS never hibernates and members seem to be out and doing all sorts of superb rides on terrific bridle paths all year round. Visit the website for all the latest news www.nlbs.org.uk and come along to the meetings at Hest Bank Memorial Hall. If you have a horse, or even if you are a walker with a dog who can't manage stiles, do join us - the membership form is on the back page.

Merry Christmas, happy 2010 and most of all happy riding!

SHEENA

CINDERELLA CAN GO TO THE BALL

After a few unsuccessful attempts to keep metal shoes on my flaky hoofed mare (Sonja) and with helpful consultation from the blacksmith, the search was on for alternative hoof boots.

The first task was to measure the hooves, this involved drawing round each hoof to provide a print from which length and breadth could be obtained. From this we learned that she had very short wide hooves and it very quickly became apparent that they were going to be difficult to fit. Advice was sought from the saddlery shop online and a prompt reply received limiting our choice to Old Mac's. Further web searching also found Marquis hoof boots and as width was the only measurement required it sounded like they might work. Hiring of the boots seemed the best option and their arrival was quicker than their selection. On first inspection they appeared a master piece of German engineering. The first pair were too big, the second pair Sonja just did not seem too happy with, so it was back to the drawing board. With only days away from the hoped for Lowther leisure ride and the ultimatum no boots, no ride, Old Mac's hoof boots were sent for. They arrived with two days to spare, they seemed to fit and with the addition of the inner socks we



got to go to Lowther. Conditions as you well know have been wet this year and so terrain on the ride offered both road work and bog, but the boots stayed on and did the job well. They may seem a little like sloppy trainers but both Sonja and I were very happy with their effect, no painful stones for her and no being left behind at home for me.

After this initial success we had a remeasure and decided the much acclaimed Renegade hoof boots would fit on the back and duly imported a pair from the USA. Their design is so simple and they fit so neatly and look so trendy just keeping them for the back seemed a waste, so they were tried on the front - a perfect fit.

LINDA HOBSON

WILLIAM'S THINK TANK

Boots and Bling

Wandering around the shopping village at the Horse of the Year Show, I stopped at a jewellery stall, thinking that some new sparkly earrings might be nice, only to realize that the bling on display was not for me but for my horse! I wonder what William would have thought if I had bought him some diamante ear muffs - 'wish she'd stick to buying carrots.'

I don't think hairy Dales ponies called William do bling, although he does have a very nice auburn tint to his mane, 'William's henna highlights' as Sheena calls it. He does look quite nice with a few plaits and a ribbon or two but I think diamante, charms and bells could be a bit too much. Apparently if I am to believe some of the 90,000 web sites that came up when I Googled 'horse bling', I can become a bling queen when I am experienced in decorating my horse and when I have got enough bling I can live happily ever after in Blingdom (I presume that's next door to Far Far Away Land). Charms may not only be decorative but can include stones of symbolic meaning guaranteed to cure all sorts of horsey problems (not to be confused with stones that get picked up in shoes and generally don't solve anything).



To bling or not to bling?

So no bling for William, but we did try a set of Boa Boots this summer. They were not things of beauty and sounded like a pair of clompy wellies as William walked along, much to the alarm of his friend Prince (who is slightly more refined than William and does wear a bit of bling). Prince skipped across the road well away from scary William who was actually striding out quite well in his boots, but as Anne Wilson found they did tend to twist round, so I don't think they are the answer to not being shod. It sounds like Linda Hobson has found some better looking boots that work for her horse, so maybe if I get a set of those, encrusted with the right bling to maintain energy, lightness and calm at all times - all my problems will be solved!

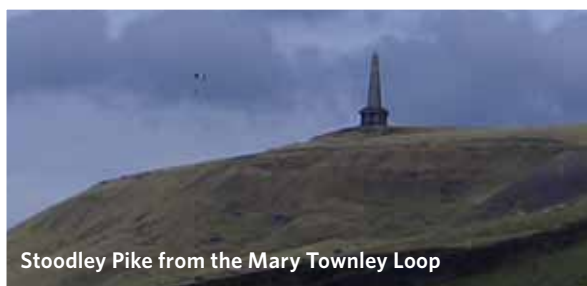
HELEN WILKINSON

LOOP 4 LIFE

Towneley Park, Burnley, July 26th

This is a ride that truly tests the endurance of both horse and rider. It incorporates two climbs and two descents of up to 250 metres (800 ft), numerous gates (some rider friendly and some not!), and on this occasion, very testing weather conditions to boot!

Starting off from the picturesque surroundings of Towneley Park, Burnley, the first climb of the day soon appeared as we made our way up the steep hill of Mount Lane to Cliviger village. Crossing the road onto Scholey Head Lane the route makes its way steeply up the concessionary bridleway before dropping down to meet the Pennine Bridleway / Mary Towneley Loop at Holmes Chapel. After going underneath the railway the climb starts again and here you meet, Heartbreak Hill! Very aptly named, the horses were clearly somewhat out of breath by the time we got to the top, so we stopped at the commemorative memorial stone to Lady Mary Towneley for a few minutes rest.



Stoodley Pike from the Mary Townley Loop

The wind and rain were blowing quite strongly here as we carried on following the Mary Towneley Loop. Branching off to cross Deerplay Moor, the wind and rain in our faces and no sign of breaks in the cloud, we passed the Trig Point at Thieveley Pike some 449 metres (1,474 ft) above sea level. We did manage to trot in some parts across the boggy ground but it soon became too wet again and we walked the rest of the way to Heald Top Farm past some loose horses who looked at us as though we were mad.

We had just passed the highest point of the route here and looking down we could see the sun shining in the valley. Unfortunately we were still well up in the clouds where the wind and rain were relentless. Despite this we both agreed that out of the two we would prefer this weather to being pursued all day by flies! Heald Top Farm marked the half way point, so we were now on our way home, after being out for 2 _ hours and covering about 6 _ miles!!

We made our way down Greens Clough along the stone / slate track. It did get so steep we got off and walked, I think the horses were grateful for the break and it helped stretch our legs, although missing a turn meant we had to climb part way back up which was not fun at all!

We were now at the bottom of the valley crossing the A646 and at the base of yet another steep hill. Here the horses got their second wind and we cantered along a narrow track, trying not to look down at the steep drop to our right. Once at the summit we made our way along Black Scout. It was very boggy so we could only walk most of the way - this ride would have been slightly better done about a month ago before we had a lot of rain and in reverse (as last year), as we could have cantered a bit more up the hills we had to walk down doing it this way round.

We then went through Coal Clough Wind Farm. You use the maintenance track so you pass very close to the turbines. One of our horses wasn't too keen and tried to scurry past them, the other wasn't

bothered at all. (We saw the Air Ambulance go out later and we heard that a rider had been thrown when passing through the wind farm, but I don't know the details)

Then we met up with the Long Causeway road and went along this for a _ mile until we turned back onto the Pennine Bridleway for a short time. Once more descending, we eventually met up to where we had branched to Holmes Chapel in the morning so we then made our way down the concessionary bridleway to Cliviger. Reaching the road we felt it would be better to get off and walk again as it is a steep descent and the rain had made the road slippery. Back on board at Towneley Park we walked past the sheep and horses until we were through the final gate where we enjoyed a last canter back to the venue - the lovely track here was too good to resist!!

So we had made it - 13 miles in just under 5 hours!! Wow! It had taken a long time for such a relatively short distance and not helped by the very inclement weather (it was even raining slightly back at the venue by now). However after completing it we felt a real sense of achievement and we were very proud of the horses.

As for doing the ride next year, well I did say I wouldn't do it again after doing it last year, so you never know, but I take my hat off to those who regularly ride round there, as the hills are hard work. It shows what wonderful riding we have in parts of our county thanks to the efforts of people such as Mary Towneley and the local bridleway officers and other volunteers.

SARAH WEBSTER AND MOWGLI
SUSAN HEATON AND CONNIE

AROUND LAKE WINDERMERE - AGAIN

On the Tuesday after Whit Monday Lynne Hodgson came and picked up Poppy, me and my saddlebags as I don't have transport. We then collected Bobby Dazzler, her lovely 15.2 coloured cob and her husband Peter at Witherslack.

We parked at Grange-Over-Sands large car park, put the car keys on the driving seat for Peter to return home. We unloaded the ponies and 'click' the car locked itself. We needed a car-thieving hood, but Peter walked the length of the prom to a garage. The chap came straight away and in two minutes, with the aid of a plastic wedge and a wire he was into the car. Luckily the ponies had gone to sleep.

Off we eventually set with Sue Gill on her Fell pony, Rosie meeting us on the steep Hampsfell Road. Her keen pony kept jogging and trotting on, which began to upset our steady mounts. Lynne had a bright yellow new numnah which, with the weight of the saddle bags, kept slipping backwards - (moral - try new things before the holiday).

On top of Hampsfell the cows had made deep ruts and the Fell sank to her hocks in one place. You will know my fear of bogs so I carefully took a different route. The fields on the way down were covered with deep footmarks so it was a very steady progression. Lynne led Bobby and rand Peter to bring here old numnah to Cartmell. At Longlands big, red, heavy iron gate nearly fell on Lynne as it was off one hinge. This area has been blocked many times. Sue left us at Cartmel and Peter arrived with the numnah. We reached Sayles Farm by Lowick Bridge at about six o'clock. They fed us and we had an early night in their comfy caravan.

Early morning brought rain and wind. The forecast was not good. At about 11am Lynne rang Peter again to rescue us (Peter said he

wasn't going to answer the 'phone again!). We had an enjoyable morning watching a gasmas fit a new water boiler in the caravan and drank coffee.

The trailer arrived at lunchtime and Peter Gallantly took us through Coniston tow Elterwater Country Guest House. Here the ponies were turned out on an overgrown tennis court. The rain ceased at 4pm. We had a scrumptious meal and slept with our downstairs window straight onto the ponies' tennis court. They stared at us in bed. There were leaves on a tree by the window, but come the morning it was bare, as was the whole area.

We set off in sunshine over Loughrigg Fell to a short cut through Ambleside, avoiding the one-way system. Up the woods, steep with outcrops of rock which Poppy strode over carrying me safely to the top. Lynne led Bobby here but I could no more have climbed up than flown.



Eve, Poppy, Lynne and Bobby

We eventually came out with glorious views of Windermere, first time, and down Robin's Lane to the Post Office. We sat eating ice creams with loads of school children (school holidays) and adults stroking and chatting to the ponies. They were all interested in our trek. We then went through Troutbeck, up by Dubbs Lane and down to Ings. We put the ponies at Buckleys, ate at the pub and stayed at a B&B.

The next day got hotter and hotter. We rode on the unfenced and gated road to Crook, then quiet lanes back to Witherslack. We saw lots of new horse homes with stables and ménages.

Back at Lynne's house, her cousin Sue was actually sunbathing it was so hot. I was whisked back home with another great little holiday under my belt.

I know we cheated in the middle but at 71, I'm not after a medal.

EVE HALL

OUR VERY OWN 'HORSE WHISPERER'!

Perhaps the photograph tells it all. How wonderful to have such a relationship with your horse. But Lorraine can apply it to dogs also.



Roll on spring time



On a very rainy morning we were quietly riding through the village of Austwick when a lively little dog came running round the horses. Suddenly there was chaos. A woman came from nowhere, chasing the dog but waving an umbrella, a van stopped and three young men got out to join in.....yet thankfully the horses were impeccable, standing motionless with all this going on around.

The frenzy continued for about ten minutes and we wondered how we would get out of it.

Lorraine was pushed to the limit when the dog came up in front of Roxy and began standing on its hind legs. Was it going to bite? There was still the frenzy and the dog was loving every minute. Lorraine quietly dismounted, got down on one knee and called gently, 'Come here sweetie'. Ugh, I could think of other names to call the dog!!

Magically, the dog quietened and came up to Lorraine, tail wagging and perfectly happy to be caught. Panic over!

All I can say is 'Ride with Lorraine and all will be well'!

NORTH LANCASHIRE BRIDLEWAYS SOCIETY

We are working for all riders in the area.
You will benefit. Please support us!
The membership fee is only £5 per year

To play an active part in the Society brings with it new friends and a chance to participate in many pleasure rides and social activities and a real sense of achievement in promoting safer riding for yourself and others. Even if you do not wish to play an active part in the Society your membership fee helps to provide safer riding facilities in our area for everyone.

Please join now by filling in the following form and returning it to the NLBS Membership Secretary:

MRS B E HARTLEY

The Cottage, Millhouses, Tatham, Lancaster LA2 8NF

Cheques should be made payable to:
North Lancashire Bridleways Society

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

E-MAIL [OPTIONAL]:

Please tick here if you are happy to receive minutes of meetings by e-mail

I enclose my membership fee of £5

SIGNATURE: