

ON THE RIGHT TRACK



NORTH LANCASHIRE BRIDLEWAYS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2020



Hello, hello

Well, here we all are in lockdown and, to state the obvious, it is a bit weird. We were wondering how everyone is coping and whether some people might like to share their stories and strategies.

As you'll know, our newsletter is somewhat irregular and maybe, in these days of high tech electronic communication, it doesn't really have a place anymore. But, in these weird times, maybe something a bit old fashioned is a good idea and if we all have a bit of enforced down time, maybe more people might like to put pen to paper – (OK, key in some words).

So, this is the thought. The NLBS and Bowland TREC are pretty much sister organisations and both have a similar encouraging ethos. Without bridleways TREC would be a very different, school-based discipline and without TREC a good number of us would not have the confidence to ride the bridleways, especially some of the less used ones when you need your horse to be sensible and unflappable.

Both organisations need some younger members and any good ideas to attract young people would be fantastic. Riding is a great leveller. Us oldies may well have experience and wisdom but the young riders are so cool and adventurous it would be a shame if any bridleways close before they can experience the joy of off road riding in this fantastic area.

If we get enough material we could produce some regular newsletters during the Covid Misery. Who is riding? Who is not? How are you managing to exercise your horse? How is your livery yard coping? Have you any tips to share? Any photos? Sketches? Links to useful online stuff? Books? Television programmes? Anything you'd like to rant about? Pictures, poems, letters? Whatever.

If you have, send it to newsletter@nlbs.org.uk. We'd really like to hear from you and who knows, it could help cheer up people who are feeling flat and miserable 'cos after all, we all like to talk horse.

Keep safe and happy horsing,

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT
The NLBS AGM has been cancelled for May
due to you know what.

nlbs.org.uk REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1076096

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Lottie's Lines

Circles and Lines

Last summer Lottie and I did some online dressage tests. We practised our circles and strived for bend and impulsion. We managed flat circles, egg shaped circles, and wobbly squiggly circles; even occasionally a round one! We worked on our top line (always very wide, not always curving the right way). Although Lottie is too short to really get a hollow back we are usually going along with her nose stuck out. Sometimes it seemed an impossible task to achieve that forward, active trot that would score a seven but doing lots of positive thinking – her rhythm is very even, she does a lovely square halt and those new jodhpurs I've just bought look very smart; our score did improve over the summer, a great sense of achievement.

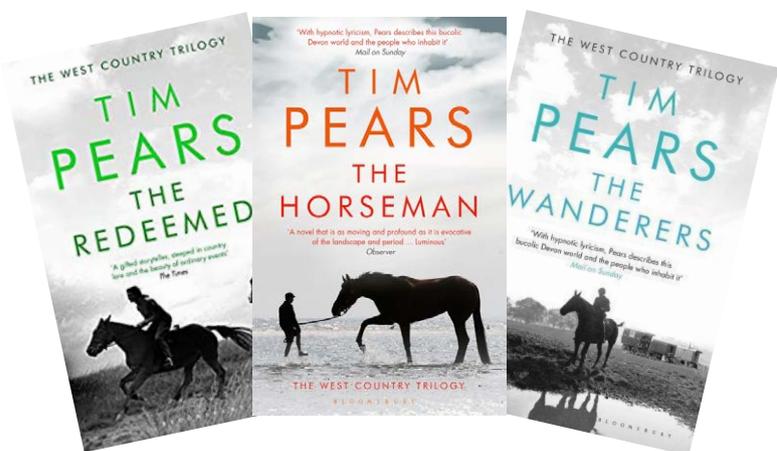
In September, with a bit of encouragement from Sheena, Lottie and I found ourselves camping out in a field doing our first TREC competition; a new experience for all of us. Doing the level 2 pairs competition we successfully did every mistake in the book – didn't mark my map very well, didn't read it carefully enough, forgot to read it, forgot to look for check point markers and having read the map properly (must go round that rock three contour lines up from the fence) went off course to chat to Sue Armitage and completely missed the rock.

This year started with renewed enthusiasm to do better, but the world has suddenly become a very different place and competitions are unlikely to happen, instead we are appreciating the freedom to practise our groundwork skills in the field and quiet lanes.

This year Lottie is learning to bow, next year we're sure to score an eight if we can both do the salute at the end of our dressage test.

Helen Wilkinson

Book Recommendation - The West Country Trilogy - Tim Pears



These books are great if you are looking for a good read to lose yourself in. Together known as 'The West Country Trilogy' by Tim Pears, the first in the series is 'The Horseman' about a young boy who is the son of a carter. Set in 1911 it is fascinating to read how heavy horses were handled and worked. It is interesting that some of our innovative 'modern' techniques were being used 100+ years ago and have perhaps just been repackaged for today. It is also a relief that some practices have fallen out of fashion.

The first book reflects its title and then books two and three, 'The Wanderers' and 'The Redeemed' are a really good yarn encompassing the Great War.



Thank Goodness for Creatures

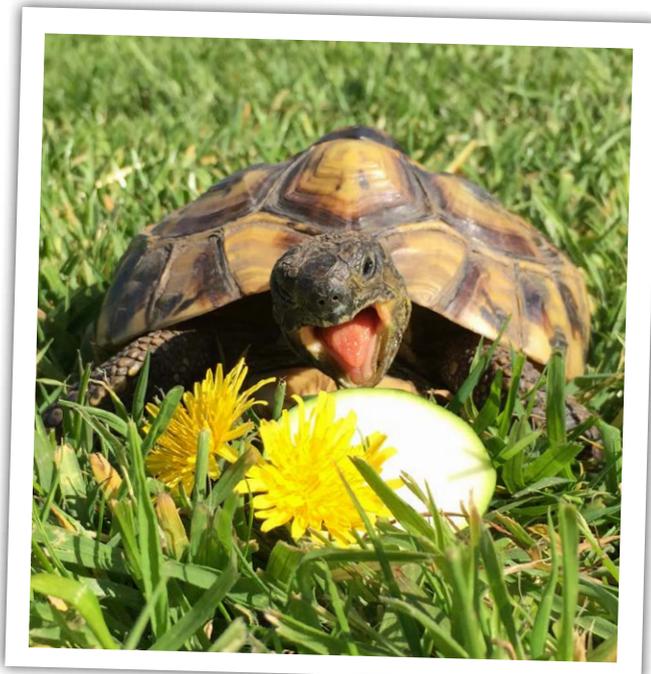
In January, someone gave me a tortoise. Not something I had envisaged but they were moving away and I am the daft woman who has lots of creatures and therefore surely wouldn't mind having a tortoise too. Hmmm.

In January, the tortoise was in a box fast asleep and when I pointed out that I live quite high on a windy hillside that probably isn't perfect tortoise conditions, well...

In April, just as the lockdown was becoming real, the tortoise woke up – and the wind blew in icy blasts certainly not conducive to tortoise health. However, now I am beginning to wonder if we shouldn't all have tortoises as an aid to relaxation. In these days of slow TV and slow radio you can't get much slower than a tortoise and he/she/it is fascinating. I am delighted when it eats a piece of courgette followed by a rich yellow dandelion flower for pudding. It is terrific when it suddenly hoists itself up onto its scaly legs and makes off purposefully across the grass – and, good grief I've just spent best part of an hour tortoise-watching.

I wonder, do they make rugs for tortoises?

All this has nothing to do with horses. Except that it is now part of my morning routine. Walk the dogs, sort the ponies, feed the poultry and put the tortoise out to grass. Of course, at this time of year grass is a balancing act with my ponies. Two aged Shetlands and a Cob. Too much grass is not good, too little grass is not good. Jack the Cob will be seven this time and needs his nosh. He has been a slow burn. My bargain basement gypsy cob arrived as a leggy baby almost six years ago. My decision to have him was not a bit scientific, I just liked him. I maintain that as I am lucky enough to have a little bit of rough pasture next to my house horses are cheaper than therapy. My Shetland boys have kept me sane through some difficult times, simply because I can go out and sniff them and share their sweet breath and they don't think I am even a bit weird.



Courgette. With relish.

Rising seven, Jack has finally grown into himself. From a raggy, rangy yearling he has filled out and now sports a lovely lengthy mane, abundant feather and a nice broad back. My sort of no nonsense beastly. When I first sat on him at four it was a bit like sitting on a washing maiden – all angles and spikey bits. We did a lot of cautious in-hand stuff, mainly because I remembered a pony when I was little that had a terrible dip in its back, apparently caused by being backed too early. At five Jack went for a fortnights adventure at Rest Harrow Livery Stables and was backed again by a confident young person with a lot more pluck and elasticity than me. (I had slithered ignominiously off the side one day in a most unspectacular fashion and in spite of a soft landing, managed to bash my ribs up which made coughing and laughing rather difficult for some weeks – a routine I did not wish to repeat in a hurry.) Then it was over to me. I know I've been a bit wussy but thus far it seems to have paid off.



Jack in October '17.

Thank Goodness for Creatures

Last year we did a bit more hacking out, joined in with Helen Wain's TREC training at Rawlinshaw and had a pop at the Oakwood TREC event last September. Ha – it is the joining in that matters. We were last, last, last but it was great fun, great experience and thanks again to everyone who waited to ensure the stragglers got home.

After the filthy wet windy winter when we achieved nothing, so far this year Jack has become more - interesting. He has moods. We could go from terrible beach donkey plodding to naughty squealing and pronking in a matter of moments. Occasionally he adopts the stance of a china horse and makes an unseemly snorting noise rather like a train letting off steam. Not a comfort. But, as our farrier, Jim Ainley recommends – "Do the miles, Sheena. Do the miles." Jim is right. Jack is settling and becoming a much nicer ride.

So, I am riding during this lock down. I feel rather guilty that I should enjoy the privilege of riding. We seldom meet anyone and if we do I suspect it would be quite difficult to spread pollution from horseback, unless I was to lean down and cough at them. I try to make our excursions as varied as possible: never trot in the same place, do figures of eight where we have never done them before, approach different gates and pretend to access the catches (with gloves on), even if we're not intending to go through them. Early days someone suggested 'peppering in' hill work. Hum. Our rides are well seasoned – essentially, they are hill work. There is very little flat and Jack approaches the ups with gusto. He's getting much better at the downs. Never lacking enthusiasm, he will swing along in the manner of Dick Emery* in drag. (Now there is a cultural reference that will only resonate with over 45s.) And then, just like Mr Emery in his high heels, a back leg will slither down the tarmac and he'll switch to a ploddy cob walk. Not aesthetically pleasing but amusing and it sure makes me concentrate.



Jack in April '20.

The weather has been wonderful so far. I hardly dare to even think that we could do with a drop of rain. Like most people, my field has gone from welly-grabbing quagmire to dusty concrete. I wonder what the rest of the year will hold with regard to both weather and coronavirus. Frankly, I thank my lucky stars that I have animals. I'm not sure I'd even get out of bed at present in I hadn't.

Oh, and should you be worried about the welfare of the tortoise – it comes indoors at night.

*(Better Dick Emery's drag than Harry Worth's shop window. Google it.)

My Personal Lockdown

Eve Hall - NLBS Chair

My lockdown really began in early November last year when I had a cataract operation on my left eye, which was very successful. Poppy had to go to Vicky's as I wasn't allowed to get dust and dirt in it by mucking out.

Four weeks later she was set to come home when she got a nail in her front foot, so she needed bandaging up and not stand in a wet field. So we made a dry area for her by altering the garden a bit and she was able to come home.

Then came the wind and the rain. I don't go out in foul weather but Kay bravely managed to take her out for me.

On 13th March I had an operation on my right eye. This wasn't so good as I'd got a thorn in it 40 years ago whilst clipping a hawthorn hedge and I'd just pulled it out and carried on! No health and safety back then...

Poppy went off to Vicky's again but came back after a few weeks as the isolation began. So, you see, I haven't ridden for ages and I might be a bit stiff when I try for the first time when the ban is lifted. Also, there is the problem of the saddle. I put a stool beside Poppy and try but fail to lift the saddle on. I borrowed a Wintec from Liz Davidson as these tend to be lighter weight, but I can't get the girth tags up as they are too stiff, even though I used oil. So, this is my solution to try next. Put a towel or really lightweight numnah on first, then lift the saddle on minus girth, stirrups and seat saver and then fit them in situ. I'll tell you how I get on. How boring!

Good luck in lockdown.

Eve.

Eve! This is not boring at all. You are a blummin' inspiration. It is fantastic that you carry on horning when most folk are happy with carpet slippers and cocoa. Hope your next bulletin sees you back in the saddle and if anyone has any helpful ideas please let Eve know.



Losing weight.

Just A Horse - by Jess Schwarcz

From time to time,
People tell me 'lighten up, it's just a horse.'
From time to time
People tell me, ' a lot of money spent'
From time to time
People tell me, 'it's just a horse.'

If you really think it's
'Just a horse, '
Like 'just a promise, '
'Just a friend, '
Than you can't see
The beauty of it all.
You just can't see.

The distance traveled,
The time spent,
And the costs involved for
'Just a horse.'
The reason to rise,
Early in the morning,
Taking those long walks,
Even when it's pouring.

It's my proudest moments,
My only company,
The saddest moments,
And the gentle touch,
That gave me a reason to go on.

It's the hopes and dreams,
And the coming of the future.
The fond memories of the past,
And the unforgettable joy of the coming day.
So...

If you really think it's,
'Just a horse, '
Like 'just a promise, '
'Just a friend, '
Than you can't see,
The beauty of it all.
You just can't see.

'Just a horse'
Brings out the best in me,
'Just a horse'
It gives me who I am and
Keeping me from being,
'Just a girl.'
'Just a woman'
'Just another passing being'

I'll smile and nod to agree,
knowing deep down I don't.
you may think it's 'just a horse, '
but it never will be for me.

If you really think it's,
'Just a horse, '
Like 'just a promise, '
'Just a friend, '
Than you can't see,
The beauty of it all.
You just can't see.

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.

KATE LENNOX
Brandywell, Cark-in-Cartmel, Grange-over-Sands
e-mail: kate.lennox@talktalk.net

Cheques should be made payable to: North Lancashire Bridleways Society

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

EMAIL (OPTIONAL):

Please tick here if you are happy to receive minutes of meetings by email:

I enclose my membership fee of £5.

SIGNATURE: