

WEST SOMERSET & EXMOOR



NEWS AND VIEWS

Summer 2019

Hello again to all our members,

We hope you are all enjoying these summer days at last! And have been able to get out and about on your horses and ponies. Exmoor is truly beautiful at this time of year and perfect for riding before the horseflies arrive en masse! This WS&EBA newsletter includes an interesting new item for members, an edited update from the Exmoor National Park Authority. It gives an insight into the amount of very valuable work the Authority does to keep our Bridleways as accessible as possible.

Between now and last winter, your Committee has been very busy - and we have had two very successful and happy guided rides, giving us some lovely *VIEWS* to share with you



Five riders, Sue Elsdon, Peta-Jane Field, Mary Hannah, Amanda Lang and Clare Luhr joined Barbara Wigley on Sunday 12 May to ride from Comers Gate, across Winsford Hill and on down towards Tarr Steps, where we skirted around the hotel and rode along the bridleway above the River Barle. The scenery was spectacular. We all watched in

admiration as Sue jumped her handsome bay Section 'D' over the 'money' logs! (Two logs have their cracks filled with pennies and the occasional 5p or more!). Then it was time to

head for home via Watery Lane and Winsford Hill.



We had two lovely comments about the ride

from our two new members Clare Luhr, pictured above on her grey Standardbred, Rupert, who said:

"I would just like to thank everyone involved in West Somerset Bridleways, I went on the Comers Gate guided ride on 12 May 2019. I was a little apprehensive coming along on my own but was greeted by friendly faces and like-minded riders. It was useful to have Barbara as our guide, so I could just follow along enjoying the view without worrying about where we were actually going! It was a perfect length ride for me and nice and controlled which was good for Rupert (my horse) who is still learning and needs to be kept calm! You're all doing a brilliant job of organising these rides, I appreciate the time and effort that goes into arranging them, they really are great value for money and great fun! Thank you Clare."

And Amanda Lang, pictured above right on her coloured mare, Jazz, added:

It was a great ride. I have got a lot more confident since buying Jazz 18 months ago after my other mare (who wasn't as well behaved) had been lame for a year. This was the first time I took her out on my own and drove the 90 mile round trip so it was a great confidence boost for me and we have been to a few more rides since with lots planned! This type of ride is so useful without all the excitement of a big event."



On Sunday 23 June, eight riders, including three new members, Sue Alexander, Lucy Hernaman and Isla Luhr managed to join Shelagh Dean for a guided ride starting from Haddon Hill Car Park despite most of the roads to its starting point being closed!

Shelagh adds, "And the Wimbleball Triathlon generally made life more interesting! My husband managed to direct two lost trailers and my sister Jenny worked as the steward in the car park. Thank you both!"



We set off from Haddon Hill, riding down to Bury village and passing the old bridge. We carried on through the ford to Hartford via Storridge Woods. We rode a loop using two bridleways round to the Wimbleball lakeside and back down to Hartford across the dam. We rode back up by the dam towards Haddon Hill. We were going to ride along Lady Harriet's Drive and head across the moor. However the heavens opened! And as we had already been out for nearly three hours - the riding pace was steady - everyone opted a quick return to the car park to avoid a soaking.

I hope riders enjoyed meeting each other and will perhaps return to Haddon Hill. The car park is an excellent venue, with space for parking, a toilet and plenty of grass for horses to munch."

One rider, Beth Rawle said, "*Most of the route was off road, using bridleways and forestry land bringing us up close and personal with the dam at Wimbleball Lake!*"



We had a lovely, big ford crossing in the beautiful village of Bury.



Many interesting obstacles on route kept us on our toes! Riding past Exmoor Fisheries, there was a big water pump shooting water into a pond and a barricaded off bridleway!



Then, further on, we found we were sharing our narrow route with the triathlon runners! Quite a lot for my young Arab to cope with, but cope he did!

We had been very lucky with the weather, but unfortunately as we drew level with the road crossing the dam, the heavens opened! The decision was unanimous to head back to the car park sooner rather than later, missing out a canter track that Shelagh recommended we return to do at a later date."

And now for *NEWS* of our next exciting big event

The September Pleasure Ride & Treasure Hunt with optional Handy Pony!

This annual jamboree has a new venue!

Charlotte Wilson and Chris Wareing, of Brendon Manor Stables and Trekking Centre, Lynton, have very generously agreed to 'host' our Treasure Hunt and Handy Pony on Sunday 1 September.

Charlotte says, "*Riders can ride all over the open moorland and down into the valleys and across the clear streams below. Brendon Manor's location and our trekking routes take in the unspoilt ruggedness of Exmoor, and the natural beauty of the North Devon coastline.*"



This year the Pleasure Ride and Treasure Hunt will follow a route of approximately 10 miles through this beautiful and varied countryside.

Barbara who knows the moor very well indeed, is extremely excited about planning the route which will follow a section of the Tarka Trail along the spectacular Cheriton Ridge.



In her opinion, this whole area offers the most glorious moorland rides! As the route is planned and plotted by Barbara – she is going to ride it beforehand - and then it is very kindly being checked out and marked by Mr Neil Arnold and the local trail bike riders who have years of experience marking out endurance routes all over Exmoor, this year's Treasure Hunt promises to be a real treasure in itself!!

Shelagh Dean, who is setting up the Handy Pony Competition, is thrilled to have a field with some excellent natural obstacles, trees in pairs for doing figure of eights around, hummocks and banks to walk up - and down! There is even enough space for a controlled canter as well as walk. It will be intriguing to see exactly what challenges Shelagh and her sister come up with to test the handiness of your horse or pony!

The combination of a wonderful hack, all marked out so you can't get lost with a fun competition, and rosettes, a prize or two, and treasure! Well, what better way is there to spend an early autumn Sunday!

Your committee will be on hand as stewards to help you, Charlotte and Chris have allotted a huge field for parking trailers and their towing vehicles, and there is a nearby car park if needed for lorries.

ONE VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE: PLEASE SEND US A PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR HORSE'S OR PONY'S VACCINATION RECORD WITH YOUR ENTRY. PLEASE SEE THE ENCLOSED ENTRY FORM FOR FULL DETAILS ABOUT THIS REQUIREMENT AND HOW TO ENTER.



We look forward to welcoming you all at Brendon Manor in a couple of months!

And now for a brief synopsis of The Exmoor National Park Authority's most recent update., but first, some facts and figures which you may not know:

Within the Exmoor National Park (ENP) there are almost 464 kilometres of Bridleways, 64kms of Restricted Byways and another 64kms of Byways open to All Traffic and 18,000ha of Open Access land.

Over the past two years the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) have repaired, built or replaced 293 bridges, 1936 field gates, 651 hunting gates, 2820 signposts and removed 205 fallen trees. The ENPA Field Services team have improved or maintained miles of paths which have eroded or deteriorated, such as The Chains permitted bridleway, West Anstey to Zeal and White Rocks public bridleways.



The ENPA have recently confirmed the diversion of the bridleway which runs down through the Smallacombe valley, Porlock Parish after extensive consultation and a site meeting.



This is an area where intensive rearing and shooting operations take place throughout the year. The proximity of shooting pegs on the bridleway have raised concerns as to whether this particular shoot is following the 'Code of Good Shooting' to which is practised by responsible shoots on Exmoor.

This is of special interest to us as we are planning to ask a member of the British Association of Shooting and Conservation (BASC) to come and talk at our AGM in November as there seems to be a distinct lack of knowledge and understanding about each other's sporting pursuits.

Wales is undertaking a major review on public access, including allowing horse riders to use public footpaths that are suitable for multi-use; lifting restrictions on Open Access land which would permit horses to have legal access. If any of the above proposals are implemented, it would have a significant and positive impact on riding opportunities in Wales. **If** it happens, and **if** riders behave in a responsible and sensible way, then maybe the English Government might be persuaded to follow suit? Your Exmoor Local Access Forum has already asked the ENPA if they would consider opening up access for horses and cyclists on any land they own, so maybe we're ahead of the game here on Exmoor – let's wait and see!

Finally, Peta-Jane would love to hear any feedback about this newsletter and also if any member has any stories after our future rides, she will be happy to hear them and write them up! All words and photos always welcome! This is YOUR newsletter! Please use it! peta-janefield@outlook.com

Please could you let me know if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by email or by post. Remember to keep looking at our website www.westsomersetbridleways.org.uk where you will find the details for all the committee members, minutes of meetings and future events - and don't forget we have a Facebook page, too. Thank you very much!

