



Season's Greetings December 2010

Committee:

Chairman: Anna Reynolds 01869 331714

Treasurer: Hilary Stratton 01608 737509

Secretary : Alice Reynolds 01869 331714

Membership Secretary:

Committee members:

Bernadette Evans 01608811203

Jill Cartwright 01869 331422

Beverley Hart 07817 322185

Sally Browne 01993 812726

Felicity Wilson 07799 475910

June Collier 01869 33125

This frosty weather has gone on long enough and I'm sure everyone is fed up with breaking icy water troughs! I hope you've all had a chance to look at the revamped website (www.oxfordridingclub.co.uk) it's still under development and if you would like to see other things added or have any suggestions please let me know.

Area Indoor Winter Dressage



12th February 2011 at Hartpury College. This is for teams of four (two doing P18 and two doing N24) and is a good chance to prepare for the season ahead and to ride in the International Arena.

If you are interested please get in touch with Anna ASAP as preliminary entries have to be in mid January.
djmr@doctors.org.uk

Subscriptions....

are now due; we are keeping them the same as last year. Please find the form attached and return to Beverley Hart.

Hunter Trials

Our Halloween Hunter Trials on 31st October at Swalcliffe proved to be a great success with a large number of entries and three good courses catering for all abilities. Thank you everyone for all your hard work on the day, we couldn't have done it without you!



Training Day

Area 18 Liaison Group put on a training day at Hartpury College on 6th November 2010. Riding club members and Hartpury students were used as willing guinea pigs in three workshops throughout the day. Local four star event rider Rosie Thomas gave an interesting lesson on grid work and show jumping exercises focusing primarily on the importance of rhythm and impulsion.

Becci Trower, chief instructor at Hartpury and BRC Master Judge provided insight into what a riding test judge is looking for and how to do a good Style Jumping round.

The day finished with Nicky Maddaford, dressage rider and trainer of young horses, on producing the young horse for dressage competitions.

AGM Ludwell Farm 2nd December 2010

This was a very successful and jolly evening that started with Ginny Elliot, Chef d'equipe for the Irish event team, talking about the recent World Equestrian Games. (Unfortunately Teresa Stopford-Sackville was unable to come due to the bad weather). She spoke about the financial difficulties the team faced, the beautiful park in Kentucky, the tough but fair cross country course and the other disciplines taking place, in particular the pure dressage and reining.

Jane McBean's report summed up the clubs activities and successes throughout the year. For a small club we have done extremely well with one team and two individuals qualifying for the BRC Championships in three different disciplines. Our social events, fun rides and show jumping clinics with Simon Nicholson have all been well attended and the calendar for next year will be out in January.

As everyone is aware, Jane has stepped down as chairman after a number of years and I would like to thank her for all the hard work, enthusiasm and kindness she has shown towards the club. Anna Reynolds will be taking over and two new committee members were also voted in, Bernadette Evans and Felicity Wilson. Jane also read out the treasurers' report and currently ORC has £4555 in its accounts which is reasonably healthy for this time in the year.



June Collier Recommends....A Riding Holiday in India

Marian and I packed our bags and off we went to Rajasthan. A land of diversity, chaos, crowds, poverty, squalor, noise, smells, dust and heat. Friendly, warm, welcoming people, (very pro British which makes a change!!) opulence, vibrant colours, stunning architecture, paintings and scenery, and amazing Marwari horses. The horses with curly ears! Wow they were quick (their normal day job is tent pegging, one of the fastest equine sports) very well schooled stopping when asked, a rare luxury for me!

Our trip started with a day touring Delhi, a combination of influence from Mogul, Raj, and Victorian Brit's. The next day our journey took us in a rickety bus to Dundlod Fort in deepest Rajasthan, a journey that was an experience in itself as after the heavy monsoons some of the roads had disintegrated and we were constantly turning back to find alternative routes. We went at breakneck speed, swerving to miss cows, children, ladies in amazing saris carrying huge loads on their heads, goats, camels, bikes and rickshaws

overloaded with people. We eventually arrived at the fort and were ceremoniously greeted by the Maharaja (Bonnie a bewhiskered gentleman wearing a turban, kaki with long brown riding boots, just as you imagine from the films!) flanked by two mounted guards. We were all presented with a lay made of fresh marigolds. Bonnie was to be our guide for the next seven days. That evening we were taken to see the horses, mainly mares are used for the treks as all the males are entire. Our first impression was that they were a bit thin, but then most of ours are too fat. They came in all colours and were about 16hh and very well cared for. All the food they eat has to be bought as they were kept on sand. Their diet consisted of mainly peanuts, husks, leaves, stalks and all. Hay is a rare commodity as very little grass grows there. The tack we used was English military; there is still an enormous British influence everywhere. After inspecting the horses we returned to the fort, changed for dinner and dined on the roof. It had a very colonial feel about it but had the most ancient plumbing, the electricity went off at 11.30 pm and came on at 7.30am and the hardest bed I have ever slept on. This fort and the palaces we stayed in afterwards were obviously very beautiful and grand in their heyday, but now give the impression of impoverished gentry. No lottery grants to put them back into shape?

Our trek started the next day and the routine was to ride about four hours in the morning, a long lunch and a sleep for two or three hours followed by another couple of hours riding in the late afternoon. We had a team of grooms who followed in a truck; they looked after the horses and us. We climbed onto the mounting block in the morning got on the horse and then later got off and walked away! When we stopped for a drink they appeared to hold the horses head, tighten the girth, even to check if a natural break was needed, obviously used to middle aged ladies and their habits!! (Of course in India there is an abundance of very good tea and Kingfisher beer!!!). The household staff came too and we were very well fed with lots of vegetables, spices, the odd chicken and goat, and an abundance of puddings.

The terrain was very dry, sandy and quite flat, on one of the days we rode along a dry river bed, on another the salt flats of a dried out lake. There were lots of birds, some very pretty parrots, quite a few deer and as there is a total ban on hunting and shooting, the deer population is increasing and becoming a nuisance. The farmers are having to fence in their fields for the first time and Bonnie said it was changing the landscape and affecting the rides as he now had to find ways around the fenced-in areas. It was harvest time and the crops were being brought in. Most of the work is done by hand (quite often the female hand and head for carrying loads) camels are still the main animal being worked in the fields. A single furrow plough drawn by a camel was a familiar sight. Some "Fergy" tractors on the more affluent farms, most of these were fitted with sound systems and played very loud music, driven by the younger men, usually at least two per tractor! We rode across the fields that had been cut and there were no irate farmers telling us to keep to the path. Most of the people had goats and a cow or two. The cows being sacred were treated with great respect. In one village our guide showed us the "old cows home" where they are sent once they are old, funded by the government and a charity. He explained that unlike Britain they looked after their elderly relatives and put their cows into a home once they became infirm!

We rode through a lot of small villages and towns, very poor, with no modern facilities, no tarmac roads, electricity or drains, but nearly all the men had mobile phones, quite bizarre. The children found us fascinating especially in the afternoon when we had our nap, we would wake up to find a row of them standing over us just looking! On two of the nights we camped out in very civilized tents with comfy beds and carpets on the floor. The horses were all tethered nearby. In total we road for seven days followed by a week of sight seeing, Diwali in Jaipur was not to be missed and an Elephant ride to the Amber Fort. The Taj Mahal definitely lives up to expectations and to finish the holiday we went to India's "Appleby Fair" where you could sell or buy anything - fabulous horses, camels painted and dyed for the occasion, donkeys, mules, tack, spices and food. I could have sold Marian if only she could cook curry!

We had a great holiday, the experience of a lifetime.