

Committee:

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Jill Cartwright
June Collier
Felicity Wilson
Sally Browne
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Louise Way



December 2013

We had a really interesting and informative talk at the **AGM** from lawyer, Esther Stirling on the pitfalls of buying, selling and loaning horses. There was a very helpful message to all of us that getting a simple but clear contract at the outset can save many problems. We really enjoyed her talk and are very grateful she was able to come. Sally Browne provided us with a wonderful venue for the evening and was a marvelous hostess as always!

This year we've not sent as many riders to the area qualifiers for one reason or another but we did had two very good results with Sarah Beveridge winning the Intermediate Eventer Challenge at Milton Keynes in April and Lex Merrick winning the Open Horse Trials at Solihull in June. Well done to both of you!

Our five fun rides have all been really well supported and June is planning more in 2014 with some different routes. We often call at a pub on the way or enjoy a bite to eat back at the boxes. These rides are always very enjoyable and it's lovely to be out in company in a new area.

Qualifying competitions start early in the New Year. These are in all disciplines and are for individuals, and/or teams of four. Do please have a look at the Dates for your Diary and get in touch with the team manager for that competition. I shall send out reminders nearer the time when I have the

schedules. I'm keen to give more people a chance to represent the club and get involved. Your horse must have an up to date passport and flu vaccination certificate and your entry fee must be paid to the team manager before the entry is submitted. It's always fun being part of a team and we have great fun regardless of our results!

ORC has continued to hold clinics throughout the year. **Simon Nicholson** teaches over a grid and SJ course weekly or fortnightly at Duns Tew. He is hugely experienced and always gives confidence whilst working on rhythm and position to ensure best results. **Owen Cooper** teaches XC technique at his base in Swaliffe Park Equestrian either in an arena or over the XC course. The facilities are very good and he is a popular trainer with lots of empathy. Also, **Matt Jenkins**, professional dressage rider, teaches weekly at Beaconsfield Farm, Great Tew. He's a gentle, encouraging trainer who has ridden at Grand Prix level and will bring out the best in you and your horse. Details of clinics are on the 'Events' page of the website and dates and prices sent out to members regularly. I do hope you can come and that we have something for everyone.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a very happy and successful New Year. Please do get in touch if you have more ideas for ORC or if you have any questions , Anna.



2014 Dates for your Diary

- **11th January 2014** – Owen Cooper XC clinic at Swalcliffe Park Equestrian. Contact Beverley: beverley.hart@hotmail.co.uk
- **1st February 2014** – Junior and Senior Novice Indoor SJ, Senior Intermediate SJ and Junior Open SJ (points) at Moreton Morrell. Contact Anna: djmr@doctors.org.uk
- **6th February 2014** – Annual Dinner at Killingworth Castle. Contact Felicity: felicitywilsonsmith@yahoo.com
- **15th February 2014** – Junior Winter Dressage Qualifier at Moreton Morrell. Contact Anna: djmr@doctors.org.uk

- **16th February 2014** – Senior Winter Dressage Qualifier at Moreton Morrell. Contact Anna: djmr@doctors.org.uk
- **23rd February 2014** - Snowdrop Ride around Barton Abbey. Contact June: junecollier@btinternet.com
- **2nd March 2014** - Junior and Senior Novice Indoor SJ Qualifier and Junior and Senior Intermediate SJ (points) at Solihull. Contact Anna: djmr@doctors.org.uk
- **22nd March 2014** – RWHS Junior and Senior Top Score SJ Qualifier at Solihull. Contact Anna: : djmr@doctors.org.uk
- **29th/30th March 2014** – Novice Indoor SJ and Winter Dressage Championships at Hartpury
- **5th April 2014** – Junior and Senior Festival Challenge Qualifier at Milton Keynes. Contact Louise: looeez23@googlemail.com
- **26th April 2014** – ORC Dressage and Show Jumping Competition TBC
- **27th April 2014** – Junior and Senior Festival Combined Training Qualifier and RWHS Junior and Senior Dressage Qualifier. Contact Anna: djmr@doctors.org.uk
- **4th May 2014** – Bluebell Ride around Ditchley Park. Contact Bernadette: bernadette100@aol.com
- **10th May 2014** – Horse Trials, 80cm, 90cm, 100cm (points) at Moreton Morrell. Schedule
- **24th/25th May 2014** - Two Day Event at Offchurch (points). Schedule
- **31st May/1st June 2014** – Festival of the Horse and RWHS Championships at Aston-le-Walls
- **19th June 2014** – Summer Ride to Great Tew. Contact Beverley: beverley.hart@hotmail.co.uk
- **22nd June** – Junior and Senior Horse Trials Qualifier at Solihull. Contact Louise: looeez23@googlemail.com
- **6th July 2014** – Junior and Senior Dressage and Riding Test Qualifier
- **13th July 2014** – ORC Summer Dressage Show, Over Worton. Schedule
- **19th July 2014** – Ride around Tusmore Park/Jubilee Ride. Contact Bernadette: bernadette100@aol.com

- **20th July 2014** – Junior and Senior SJ and Style Jumping Qualifier at Solihull. Contact Anna: djmr@doctors.org.uk
- **1st/2nd/3rd August 2014** - National Horse Trials Championships at Swalcliffe Park Equestrian
- **25th August 2014** – Summer Ridgeway Ride. Contact June: junecollier@btinternet.com
- **30th August 2014** – Junior and Senior Dressage to Music Qualifier at Moreton Morrell. Contact Anna: djmr@doctors.org.uk
- **6th/7th September 2014** – National Dressage and SJ Championships at Lincoln
- **11th September 2014** – Blenheim Riding Club Eventer Challenge. Contact June: junecollier@btinternet.com
- **4th/5th October 2014** – Dressage to Music Championships and Quadrille Qualifier at Bury Farm, Bedfordshire
- **26th October 2014** – ORC Halloween Hunter Trials – pairs and individual classes at Swalcliffe Park Equestrian. Schedule
- **November 2014** – AGM TBC

June and friends in Africa

The intrepid team was off again – June, Gina, Marion and Janet set out on a safari on horseback in Botswana.....



After flying out and meeting up with our new travel companions we had a six hour trip to Botswana and we were firm friends by the time we arrived. We started laughing on the way out of the airport and didn't stop until we returned the following Sunday. Well, that's not strictly true, we did have to be quiet on a few occasions to avoid being eaten by lions!

We entered Botswana from the Limpopo River by driving across the dry river bed. We were met by our guide and taken to our camp. We had a sumptuous lunch and were hoping for a relaxing afternoon after our 24 hours of travel but no! We changed into our jods in the open (no time for being shy) and after a short briefing were off to meet the steeds. They turned out to be some of the nicest horses I've seen, similar to ones at home, TB x Shire or sports horse types that were all very well-schooled. We were matched up perfectly and set off immediately into the bush. Within ten minutes we came across a herd of elephants and giraffe interspersed with impala and kudu. This constant show of wild life was with us throughout the eight days we rode, they were never far away.

The camp for our first night was very civilised. We were handed a G&T or beer within minutes of dismounting followed by a hot shower and the most delicious dinner by candle light. Our tents were on raised platforms with extremely comfy beds. The only warning was "don't leave your stuff outside, the baboons steal things and you might see your hat on a hyena in the morning"!

The day started with West, our guide (an accomplished horseman who had a wealth of local knowledge about the flora and fauna of the area and who could also give an insight into Botswana's history and politics) bringing us tea in bed at 5am, followed by breakfast. The plan was to be mounted and ready to go by 6.30am. The horses were immaculately groomed and brought to the mounting block for us to get on. In the afternoon on our return, they would be untacked and allowed to roll in the dust. We rode for about three hours with the odd "bush bathroom" stop, have a break for an hour and then ride for another three. The terrain was very dry and dusty and everywhere there was evidence of elephants. They break down the trees and eat all the vegetation in their path including the thorns that look like steel needles (and

feel like them if you are unfortunate enough to get too close, which we did on occasions.) We rode along dry river beds and climbed escarpments. The horses had two paces, walk and canter, no silly trotting. On the first day we encountered lions under a tree but we couldn't get too close as they might eat the horses or even us if they were really hungry! Everywhere were elephants, giraffes, kudu and impala (or bush McDonalds as the locals refer to them as they have a dark line on their rear in the shape of an "M" and are eaten by all the carnivores.) One day we saw an impala carcass high up in a tree, taken there by a leopard to eat in peace. We galloped alongside the zebras and on one occasion as we were riding along a river bed to a pool, a large pink head popped up and then a little pink head; it was Mrs Hippo and her son. Not far away was the most enormous croc gliding through the water. A good thing we didn't paddle that day! An ostrich and even a tortoise made an appearance later and frequently the warthogs would come out and say hello along with the numerous birds and reptiles. We rode along the "M1" a long straight dirt road with a truck appearing once an hour. One day we came across a family of hyenas who were not in the least bothered by us or our horses and another day we had a rare sighting of a brown hyena. There were gnus, wild dogs that looked like stripy foxes and hundreds of dark blue guinea fowl.

The afternoons were spent relaxing followed by afternoon tea. Each evening we had 'sun downers' on rock escarpments watching the sun set or a drive in the truck to see the wildlife we couldn't get close enough to in the day, mainly the cats. We saw leopards just a metre away, unconcerned by our presence and two lionesses with cubs just casually laid under the trees. One night we did get into a bit of a predicament when our guide took us to the river bank to watch a herd of elephants below with their young rolling in the dust. A few of them came close and within a few minutes we were surrounded, elephants on three sides and a twenty foot drop on the other, we felt a tad vulnerable! One large cow decided we were encroaching on her space and bellowed loudly in a threatening way coming straight at us! West calmly revved the engine but she wasn't scared. We sat it out for a bit and then reversed a little, she moved forward and we moved back, he revved again and flashed the lights. After a while she roared off and so did we. I've

never known Gina so quiet! The G&T sun downers went down well that night! We had a few more near misses with the elephants but despite that the highlight of my week was seeing a baby elephant in one group. It was about three days old and was being taught to stand up by his mum when he really just wanted to stay asleep - a wonderful sight that I'll never forget.

The food was very good throughout the week - gastronomic delights all cooked on an open fire, chicken, pork, lamb, goat, beef, fresh fruit and salads, cakes, pastries, and sweets. Our chefs were two amazing ladies, Martha and Grace. They even made me wheat-free cakes and pies which is something most of the restaurants in the UK can't manage! We told stories and we spent a lot of time laughing. We would discuss the day's events and our many ailments. Six hours in the saddle meant there were definitely some aches and pains! Two nights were spent sleeping under the stars with our beds in a circle around the fire. Were we vulnerable being surrounded by some of the fiercest wild animals in the world with eleven tethered horses as bait? Not a bit of it, what creature in its right mind would be brave enough to attack Marian in her nightie? The sounds in the mornings were a pain in the well who wants a cheerful bird or a laughing hyena at 5 am?

You would think eight exciting days in the African bush was dangerous enough but the scariest part of the holiday was the flight from Johannesburg to Cape Town. Our luck was in or so we thought as we were upgraded to business class. We were fed and watered and about to relax when an off duty stewardess who was sitting next to us suddenly said "just sit there and don't move". Creeping slowly down the back of the seat in front was a scorpion. I was ready to squash it with my napkin but she said NO in the sort of tone that even I took notice of! The steward came very quickly and removed it in a box. He said if I had squeezed it, it would have stung me and I could have died. A sobering thought at the end of an exciting holiday.

