

# ON THE RIGHT TRACK



NORTH LANCASHIRE BRIDLEWAYS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2008



HERE'S TO SOME FANTASTIC WEATHER IN 2009

## DEAR ALL

Well, here we are in the depths of winter after a pretty dreadful summer. At least we have enjoyed some very sparkly frost and snow recently and whilst it may not be ideal riding conditions, it certainly feels a lot more cheerful than grey rain. Soon be the shortest day and another springtime to look forward to. I have included the picture of the bridleway as an antidote to Christmas trees and a reminder of wonderful rides past and future.

Another busy, successful six months for the NLBS. All members will be able to read about progress, projects and events in the Minutes, and non members can visit the website and see what we are all about. Better still, non members can use the form on the back page and join us. At still only £5 a year membership could even make a good Christmas present. We are a very active group, full of ideas, energy and always offering support and encouragement.

Very best wishes to everyone - and their horses - for 2009.

Happy riding

SHEENA

P.S. Please think about sending some bits and bobs for the next newsletter, due out around May '09. Rides, events, pictures, hints, tips, things for sale, things wanted - anything to make our newsletter a good read.

sheena@creativemarketingsolutions.co.uk Thanks!



NEIGH, NEIGH, THRICE NEIGH

# WILLIAM'S THINK TANK

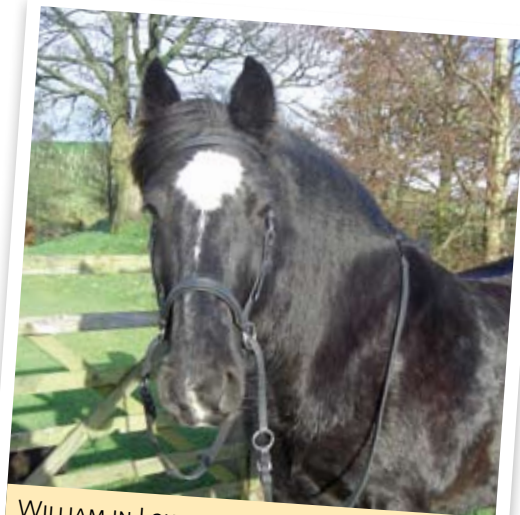
I'm sure we are all suffering in some way or other from the effects of such a wet summer. William hasn't quite got webbed feet, though he has grown a very woolly and greasy winter coat - obviously expecting more rain. In one of the earliest Think Tanks I talked about going on a summer holiday when all we actually did was walk up the road to Greenhall stables and the closest that William got to the beach was the sand school for a bit of hard work. So it was very exciting in this grey and dismal summer to actually have trip to the beach at Bardsea near Ulverston.

William was staying with Steve and Linda's horses for a three week holiday/training session and we did manage a few dry days during his stay. I was able to go up and have a lovely ride over Birkrigg common and down on to the beach. The tide was too far out to go for a paddle and the sands have changed over the years, as they do in Morecambe Bay, so maybe not a good idea to go too close to the sea, but there is still a large area to ride on. Unfortunately it was as wet on the surface as the fields, so the imagined wild galloping was in reality a bit of ponderous galumphing! Good for a bit of fitness training though and a lovely change from the roads and moors of Lowgill. There is good parking here and there are wide grassy tracks on Birkrigg so on a lovely clear day with views of the bay and the lakes hills what could be nicer than riding out with friends and ponies. The beach is a great place to ride so I've sent in my BHS card campaigning to our local MP for coastal access, it would be a shame to lose any access to this wonderful coast that we live so close to.

William was also able to do a bit of driving practise while at Ulverston. He did some driving as a youngster, but my small hilly paddock was not an ideal training ground so with a large flat meadow to trot round it was time to see if he remembered those early lessons. Fortunately he did, happily pulling the cart as if he'd been doing it all his life. Ears up and a good forward trot round the field and over the rough bits William defiantly passed his

driving test (well I'd give him a pass certificate though the driver could probably do with a refresher course!). Now I just need a small light weight vehicle for going out on our busy roads, and I suppose I will have to think about getting William shod, or maybe a set of boots. Does any one have any experience with native ponies and boots? Whatever I decide it sounds like the piggy bank is going to need filling up before we do much driving.

HELEN WILKINSON



WILLIAM IN LOWGILL

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## THE HORSEY LIFE

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY WITH A RATHER REMARKABLE MARE BY **SIMON BARNES R.R.P. £12.99**  
(Short Books isbn 978-1-906021-42-9 Oct 2008)

In the first paragraph of the first page of Simon Barnes' biography of his "rather remarkable mare" Dolores, he baldly states "let's not talk about love at first sight, or any guff like that ...it wasn't love...there was certainly something. There was a connection. Was it entirely one way?" And that is the essence of this extraordinary book.

From the first moment he approaches this "stubby little mare" with unusually large ears and a huge arse from whence comes her power he begins to appreciate what makes his horse of nearly thirty years' standing something so special for him. On first mounting her, as his

foot entered the stirrup iron "it was as if I had turned a key. All the lights came on. She started buzzing. To tell the truth I was a little alarmed: a little intimidated. She was rather more horse than I was expecting". And so it begins.

Simon Barnes is a wonderful and witty writer. His use of prose is exquisite and subtle and his integrity of observation remarkable. He never claims to entirely understand what goes on in a horse's mind, but his ability to unravel what goes into making up the bond between man and horse is awe inspiring. He also has a deep basic honesty about our own shortcomings as owners of horses, as friends of horses, as guardians of horses and he tackles, full frontally, the issue of fear and riding and why in spite of the fear we go on and do it.

Simon Barnes is the least boastful of writers but it is quite clear that in some ways he is utterly fearless, although as he disarmingly admits, not in all things and his wonderful loved and loving mare, Dolly, who has never in her life refused him a jump returns his trust in her in full.

His riding and horsemanship techniques might in some circles be frowned upon but the reader has to conclude that this man is a remarkable horseman and lover of animals and humans in equal degree.

I cannot recommend this book too highly. A brilliant Christmas present.

MARILYN EDWARDS



# TRAILER TRIALS

Earlier this year I was lucky enough to be able to buy a horse trailer. It is a thing of beauty – a blue, double, Ifor Williams model with a front off load. It is 12 years old, with a new floor and tyres – but to me it knocks spots off the posh wagons with cut glass decanters and grooms compartments. What more could I ever wish for... Apart from something to tow it with.

Anthony appeared a month later. He is a venerable Land Rover (most definitely male, with all the snorting and grunting he does). He is much the same age as me, and we are both fast approaching 50. There was some rational thinking behind the decision to buy such an old vehicle. The insurance is very low and there is no Road Tax to pay. If I look after him in the manner in which he is certainly accustomed, he could well appreciate in value. But, all that apart, he is simply beautiful and has oomph.

Apart from a trailer tent, I have never towed anything substantial. With the tent attached I knew that if I got into any schtuck, I could do the helpless female routine, unhitch and push the wretched thing onto the verge. An 'orse trailer is serious and not to be taken lightly. Anthony himself is quite a challenge – he has similarities to the Morris 1000 I learnt to drive in. Choke, starter button, dip switch on the floor, no power steering and, unlike the Morris, he has lots of terrible knobs and sticks with 'overdrive' and 'four wheel drive' written on them. We did much practicing before we went near the trailer.

The first time I hitched up, I was shattered before I'd even moved forwards. There is so much to remember. Jockey wheels, ball hitches, light sockets – not to mention actually aligning the Land Rover with the trailer's hooky jobs. One can't shove a horse trailer in the same way one can a trailer tent. My arms felt like chewed bootlaces and I honestly thought that I would never, ever manage on my own. I have lots of really good friends who were on standby, to advise, direct, encourage and make tea. Many thought I was completely mad – and maybe they were right.

Eventually, after many cautious sorties, much reversing and shoulders developing like an all in wrestler – it was time to venture out on a maiden voyage with Jake Horse on board. He is so cool. He has traveled in a box a few times, but apart from a trip of five miles when I bought him at nine months old – I had no idea if he would even load. He did. Beautifully. He was far more interested in the hay net than any neurotic flapping I might be doing. A friend followed us in her car and reported that he stood calmly, chewing throughout. We had only traveled a mile or so, but my elation was quite disproportionate! Sad old bag – or what?

Some days later, bolstered by my success, I decided to bite the bullet and go to Lupton to ride with a friend. Had I written a list of 'things that I would not like to meet when towing a trailer' all the following hazards would have been on it. Hitch, load, OK. Venture forth, having planned the route carefully so as to cause as little disruption to other road users as possible. White knuckled with clenched teeth and the face of a gargoyle – I manage to take the wrong turning to Low Bentham and end up on a tiny lane, frothing with beautiful hedge parsley and dog roses. (This I know because the damned things are stroking the windscreen and there is no way I can turn around.) No oncoming traffic.

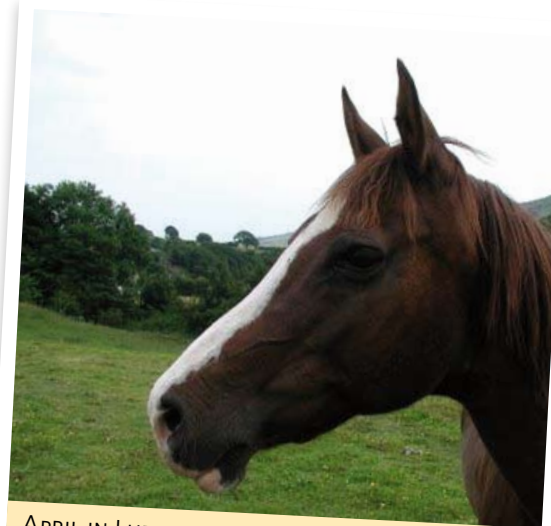
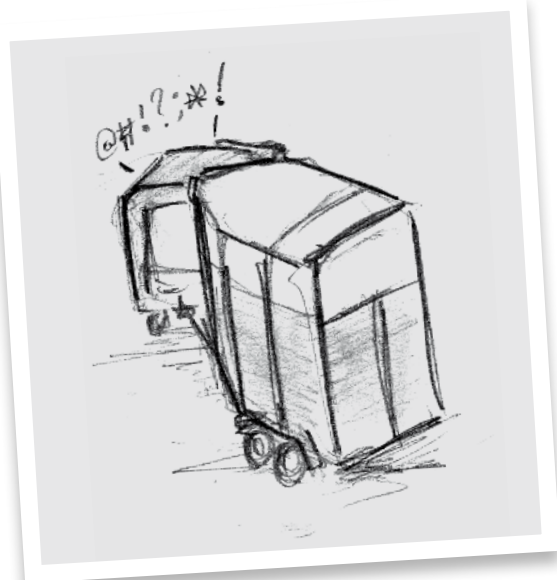
Arrive in Low B to find a funeral in mid fune. The undertaker obviously decides that the gravitas of the occasion might be interrupted by a snorting Land Rover and a neighing horse and waves me through. It is not easy to be unobtrusive in such a situation.

From Low B to Burton in Lonsdale and lo – there are traffic lights on the steep hill through the village. I must do a hill start and stay cool. OK. I turn left towards Cantsfield wherein I meet two huge lorries, traveling in opposite directions and they are stuck because the road is not wide enough for them to pass each other. I tuck into the hedge, terrified that I will drop a wheel into the ditch and cause disaster. All well and the lorries hiss and squeal on their way. Jake stamps a bit and lets out a mournful whinny.

Surely now all would be well...? Ha. It being around Appleby week – a bolting gypsy horse attached to a stunning gypsy caravan is hurtling towards us. A man has the reins and is running, legs going like bees wings, to try to steady his magnificent beast – all flowing fetlocks and jingly bits, (to say nothing of the horse). Please, Jake, do not neigh and excite the beast any more. It shoots past and the guy leaps up into his seat. Quite the circus act. They are followed by a double decker bus, a lorry and a JCB.

And so – to the A65. All well, apart from for the poor beggars following – we reach 38mph at one point. On arrival in Lupton I need to lie down but Jake is unfazed – happily chomping and uber-cool. We have a superb ride – clear day, no wind, high fells – perfection. All worth the effort. Since then we have been out an about many times – with two in the trailer. We have ridden all around the fantastic bridleways of Austwick, enjoyed the Whittington Charity Ride in September and done several trips to Farleton Knott. Should anyone see me driving Anthony – ignore the white knuckles and the gargoyle features – I am concentrating – but I am having a very good time!

SHEENA ROBERTSON



APRIL IN LUPTON

# HOLIDAY IN THE EDEN VALLEY 2008

In July Linda and I set off up a long bridleway from Sedbergh to, eventually, Ravonstenedale. Linda was on Zanah, a 15.2 black mare aged 24 and I was on Poppy, a 14.2 Appaloosa/Dales cross aged eight.

As we were dropped off, saddled up and adjusted our saddlebags it began to rain, so out came the macs, but it soon stopped and they were not needed. We had ridden this BW before, but we encountered some hazards. At one place a small stream rushed over an outcrop of rock at Hollow Gill. Zanah went over Ok but Poppy spun round and her back foot slipped off the narrow sheep path. She did this a second time, so I got off and led her. Several gates were narrow so we had to lift our saddlebags up to get through. At the other side of one, the sunken BW was too wet to ride so we slid down a ditch and onto an open field to continue. Each gate took about ten minutes to negotiate and by Adamthwaite Farm we appeared to be riding straight into an open trailer! The farmers saw us and said he was herding a bull into it to go for slaughter, so we quickly retraced our steps to go through the farmyard before we heard thundering hooves.

Down to Ravenstenedale, main 685 to Newbiggin on Lune (short distance, grass verge and no lorries for Poppy to shy at, luckily). We then turned right, over the fell to Crosby Garrett. We met an old iron gate in a wall which fell over when moved and took the two of us to lift it back. We arrived at Will and Meg's after putting the ponies in the field - Will made us sausage and chips, which was very welcome.

The next day, on Will's advice, we rode up the fell on tracks back towards Newbiggin on Lune again and back another way - all on BWs and no roads all day. You can do lots of rides from here over the fells.

That evening a ewe panicked and fled up some scaffolding onto the cottage roof. It took Meg ages to go up and coax her down to join her lamb!

The next day we set off on the lanes to wander round to Crosby Ravensworth. On a BW at Breaks Hall we came to an electric fence which Linda cautiously unhooked, but it pinged back, upsetting the ponies. Linda led Zanah away and she stood on her rein and snap - both head pieces broke and the bit lay on the floor. Luckily, we ride with headcollars underneath our bridles, so we walked to the farmyard, where the farmer said we needn't have gone that way - the locals use the yard to pass through. Linda has a small leather

strap and buckle which she managed to mend the bridle with to get her home.

The next gate, an iron one, I got off and was edging it open unaware it was off its hinges when Linda yelled "Eve, watch out!" and I only just avoided it falling on me. All this time Poppy was grazing peacefully and waiting. She is a star!

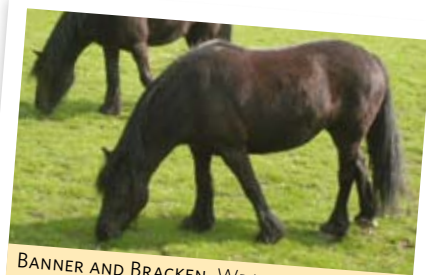
We had a warm welcome at Douglas's and a super meal.

The following day we set off over Crosby Ravensworth Fell to Orton and were picked up at Tebay. Another great little holiday. I hope I have many more to come.

## EVE HALL



KENTMERE



BANNER AND BRACKEN, WRAY

## 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: