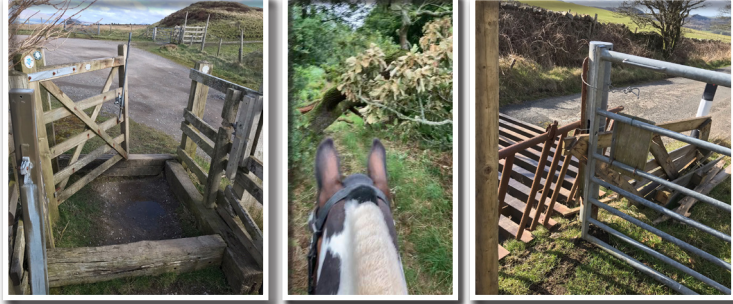


# ON THE RIGHT TRACK



NORTH LANCASHIRE BRIDLEWAYS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2022



Hello

Here we are, almost at the darkest time of the year – how can that be? Whilst I'm creeping about in the half light, avoiding the mud, I keep thinking what a great summer we had. Remembering how lovely it was to set off at six o'clock in the evening without having to keep an eye on the clock and how fantastic to have clean feet and feathery fetlocks.

In our very special part of England, we were extremely lucky. No drought. We still had green grass in October, flowing rivers and wind enough to blow the clegs away. Jack Horse and I really took advantage of the weather and were out and about more than ever before. We've made lots of new friends, met some crackin' horses, put faces to names, explored new routes and had great fun.

Most of the people we've ridden out with are members of NLBS. It really is a good way to share local knowledge, get your horse used to being with others, enjoy the countryside and chat. After a late summer ride around Levens, led by Sharon Cash, we did a critical appraisal of Bridget's new trailer – with a cup of coffee and much banter. Everyone agreed it is just perfect, including Hope, who strolled in cool as a cucumber.

Earlier in the season several of us took the ferry across Windermere and then rode up to Wray Castle for an ice cream. The ferry people were great. Delighted to see horses - although perhaps a little perturbed when all five of them decided to poo at the same time and there didn't seem to be a shovel. It was a bit busier on the return journey with lots of bicycles and Lycra.

One lady seemed to want to get her handlebars as close to a horse's rump as possible. She rode up behind us several times en route and then somehow ended up on the same ferry crossing. Obviously our 'please pass wide and slow' hi-viz doesn't apply to bikes! Thankfully, none of our horses were nowty. Personally, I wouldn't go that close to an unknown dog's back end, let alone a horse with hefty feet. Hey ho.

There's plenty of information and updates on the website. Check it out. [NLBS.org.uk](http://NLBS.org.uk)

Here's to the winter. Let's hope for crisp mornings, bright days and that the national news improves.

Happy riding,



When is a boat not a boat? ... When it's a BOAT.



# Lottie's Lines

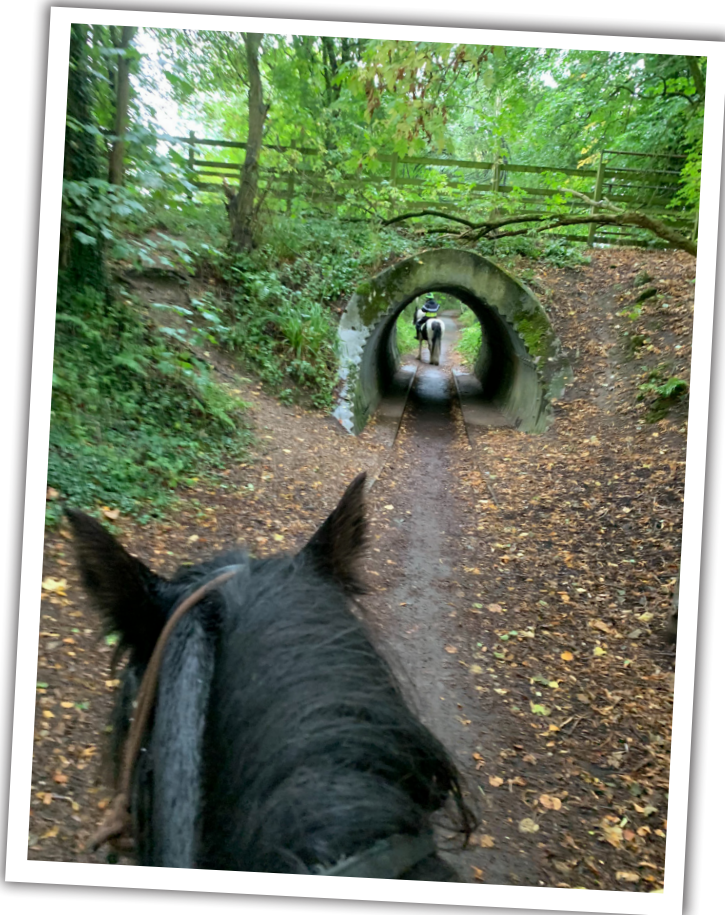
## Just having a leg stretch

In last year's Newsletter Lottie had just had a visit from the physiotherapist and we had a self-improvement plan in place. Leg stretches and banana stretches (she prefers bananas to carrots for those neck and back stretches) for Lottie, a relaxing ride with tea and cake for me! So, the big question is, did we keep our New Year resolutions to stay fit and healthy and did Lottie turn into a beautiful, elegant dressage horse by the end of 2022?



Well, Lottie is still a round woolly cob whose pirouettes aren't going to win any prizes, but we have kept up our fitness regime and we have moments when the dressage diva is revealed; work in progress I think. The exercise plan has been helped by a pension pot that I sensibly invested in a small horse box so we have been able to enjoy some pole work clinics at Fleet Farm with

Hannah Joel (surprisingly Lottie did actually think about the poles and pick her feet up) and a weekend at Belle Vue trying some jumping; Lottie got quite enthusiastic when going round the working hunter jumps. Hannah was also teaching that so now we have no excuse for going slow in the pole clinics.



Millenium Greenway

We have done lots of hacking out in new and interesting places, making good use of the bridle paths that the NLBS works to maintain, a good few of them passing by a café or bacon butty stop. Sheena and I rode along the millennium way when a survey was being done on its use as a multi user track. We weren't the only ones out on our horses that day so hopefully we have contributed some useful evidence for the development of the route. We have also tried working horse equitation and horseback archery so it is safe to say that elegant we may not be, but like many good cobs Lottie can turn her hoof to lots of things.

**Helen Wilkinson**

# Afternoon Tea at The Barn



## Just A Thought...

During a TREC training session with Helen Wain she asked how old I was when I started riding. 'Seven,' I answered. 'First lesson on my seventh birthday.'

'Ah,' said Helen, cryptically 'I thought so.'

Apparently, I sometimes do something with my reins that has once again become the thing to do. Don't ask. I've no idea what and whatever it is I am not conscious of it - however, her question made me think. Riding styles and techniques come and go a bit like fashion, but I do wonder if we are finally getting on the right track, at long last.

My first lesson was on a cow-hocked, cross little Welsh pony called Albert. He was 11.3hh but I was told he looked bigger (just in case I didn't want to sit on the smallest pony). The only safety element was a necessity to wear strong shoes, with a heel and preferably steel toe caps. Not sure how many seven year olds had steel toe-capped shoes or indeed any other shoes apart from school shoes but whatever I wore was OK. Hats were not obligatory although you could use one from the pile in the tack room. I was given a mottled brown-green number like a pudding basin, with a hole in the top where the little vent thing should have been. No safety strap just a bit of elastic that you made sure was tucked away above the peak. The hat was made to fit by popping your hanky under the still-rather-posh red Pytchley Beaufort lining.

This being 1967, everything was rather military and serious. The ponies were lined up and we were taught to mount. Stand next to your pony's nearside shoulder... (This in itself was difficult. Nearside? I didn't know right from left but I sure as Hell got to know nearside and offside PDQ. In fact, I still know that better than left and right.) Face his tail. Reins in the hand nearest the pony. Foot in the stirrup. Hop hop hop... and swing up and DON'T land like a sack of potatoes. Thankfully, I didn't so I wasn't made to get off again and repeat until it was right, whilst everyone watched.

Now Albert had a loose tooth and this worried me greatly. Our instructor was an old lady (she must've been late 20s, but to me she seemed very old) and she explained that horses lose their teeth just like children and Albert was about the same age as me. Not sure this helped. I can still remember the feeling of a loose tooth. That awful, stomach-churning moment when it slipped out of its socket and spun around on the bit of gum it was still attached to and the horror of Uncle Ralph offering to put a thread around it, tie it to the door handle and slam the door. Good grief. Nightmare.

**Continued on next page...**



Albert had a habit of whipping round and biting your bum as you were getting on. Apart from the fact it made you get a move on the remedy was to ensure you kept your offside rein tight to hold his head away. Nowadays we might well consider what was causing Albert to exhibit such behaviour. What was he finding uncomfortable? Was his saddle pinching? Had he got any aches and pains? How was his back? How were his teeth? However, not in 1967. He was just a grumpy pony and probably had many reasons to be so. It was unheard of to mount from the 'wrong' side. After all, one might cut one's manhood off with one's sword if such a feat were undertaken. This wonderful fact was completely irrelevant seeing as we were all girls and tended not to carry swords. So, poor old Albert dutifully spent all his Saturdays doing half hour lessons from nine until five thirty, with an hour off for the instructor's lunch. Even if people had booked an hour-long lesson, they still had to get off and on again after half an hour. Not to mention the 'exercises' which involved hopping on and off. No wonder he tried to bite backsides. He did a Sunday morning and a couple of weekday evenings in the summer. For this he had enough grass and in the depths of winter half a bucket of carrots on a Saturday, gleaned from around the edge of the Co-op Farm fields. No tack checks, x-rays, ultrasounds, massage or physiotherapy.

Albert was wonderful. A woolly little grey with a wide forehead and a 'princess's thumb mark' running down his shoulder. His ungainly trot, a consequence of the cow hocks, taught me a rising trot in no time. This wasn't aptitude, simply necessity. It was almost impossible to sit to such a bumpy stride. The fact he was cross only endeared him to me even more. After the first few weeks I took to standing beside him whilst the next rider mounted, in a bid to distract him and prevent him from being told off and also to fill my nostrils with enough pony smell to tide me over for the week.

Back to the reins. We were told to treat our reins as pieces of cotton. Pull too hard and they would snap. Hands DOWN! Thumbs uppermost along the reins. Hands together. If you can't do that, loop your little fingers through the mane just in front of your saddle. One pony jerked his head up and down regularly. This was because the rider, (any rider) was moving their hands and the joint in the snaffle was acting like a nutcracker on his tongue. We all felt hugely guilty and sat incredibly still but, looking back, I wonder if maybe, just maybe, it was something else completely because he did it with even the best, most experienced riders.

If anyone was spotted pulling on the reins you were made to tie a knot, fold your arms and continue without them. Of course, this wasn't really as awful as it sounds as these ponies knew the drill and it was an exercise we did regularly anyway, but it certainly made you think.

Years later, around the beginning of the nineties, I started going to a riding school again in a bid to get my equine fix. SHORTEN YOUR REINS! Hands UP and apart. Maintain contact at all times. Blimey. Difficult to change ingrained habits. I suspect somewhere between the two extremes is the right method. And similarly, somewhere between the over-diagnosis trend and the do-nothing-at-all method is a happy medium. After all, if you ask a saddle fitter, dentist or vet for advice they will be almost duty bound to come up with some reason for something. Sometimes weird habits are just a phase and sometimes, is it better to give it time and see if the phase passes?

Albert was still going strong when I moved away at 17. Which made him 17 too. A lob-cobb'd little gelding with attitude, but a hugely important part of my childhood. I would have given anything to take him home, cow hocks, bad temper and all.



# The Business End...

**The Greenway Development** – Caton Parish Council consultation on the Greenway; Tim Blythe has oversight of the whole Greenway and here are his contact details if members have any specific comments for Tim:

**timothy.blythe@lancashire.gov.uk**

**On Thursday 18th August** a blocked bridleway was reported. High Beckfoot Lane adjacent to Kirkby Lonsdale golf course was completely impassable due to a large fallen tree. The reply was immediate and on Friday 19th August the tree was removed. Wow. Thank you very much indeed to the people with the chain saws.



**Just to let you know...** the last of four BW signs purchased by NLBS through Halton Parish Council has gone up on the horse access track along the Bay Gateway. With massive thanks to a local good neighbour for all his help and expertise.

**Very belated 'Christmas lunch'** morphed into a summer afternoon tea (that sounds like a very good idea). Members met at The Barn in Scorton to celebrate. Eve was given a lovely painting by Sharon Cash depicting Eve and Poppy on one of their many wonderful riding holidays. Certainly a memory to treasure. (See photos on page 3)

**The Famous Tack Sale** took place on Sunday 23rd October. A great come back after lockdowns. As usual, very successful. Good bargains and delish cakes. A good boost to NLBS funds.

**The new team are in place** to keep the NLBS on the right track:

**Bridget Pickthall** [chair@nlbs.org.uk](mailto:chair@nlbs.org.uk)

**Julie Sico** [vicechair@nlbs.org.uk](mailto:vicechair@nlbs.org.uk)

**Kate Lennox** [membership@nlbs.org.uk](mailto:membership@nlbs.org.uk)

**Check out the website** for more information, contacts, dates of meetings and forthcoming events. [nlbs.org.uk](http://nlbs.org.uk)

**If you know anybody who would like to join, our membership application form can be downloaded from our website.**

