



NEWSLETTER OF THE
LONG MYND AND DISTRICT BRIDLEWAYS
ASSOCIATION

The Portway

I promised you an article about my riding tour of Iceland. It was fabulous—you can see what the weather was like in the picture (right) of Völlur. Also in this newsletter is Gill Bridgeman's account of this year's LMDBA horseback holiday in Herefordshire.

The big news this time is the launch of the Association's website, spearheaded by Chairman and Webmaster Mike Bowen. Get surfing and tell us what you think.



Inside this issue:

- A tölt tour of Iceland** 2
Nigel Clements
- My initiation into the Long Mynd Bridleways Association** 4
Gill Bridgeman
- Forthcoming Events** 6
- Chairman's report 2008** 7
Mike Bowen

www.longmyndbridleways.com Your new website is launched



Christmas Dinner

- Saturday 13th December
- The Station Inn, Marshbrook
- See page 6
- Menu and booking form enclosed with this Portway



Your Bridleways Association now has a brand spanking new website packed full of interesting stuff—news, views, stories, the history of the association and

much much more. Go and surf to longmyndbridleways.com and see for yourself. Read about the summer bridleway clearance at Corndon, see the

pictures of the very successful Hack for a Snack to Picklescott.

Tell us what you think!

Snaefellsness—A tölt tour of Iceland: Part 1

Nigel Clements



The first week of August this year was a glorious week – wall-to-wall sunshine and the most stupendous horse-riding through mountains and along beaches. You're right – this wasn't in the UK. This was Iceland – and a six day expedition along the Snaefellsnes peninsula in the North-West of Iceland, about 100 miles from the capital Reykjavik. What was it like? Well, just fabulous!

The first night was spent in Reykjavik, and at 9 am on the Sunday morning we were bussed to Stori-Kalfalaekur, a farm of 1500 hectares meaning "big cow by the little river) to meet our horses for the first time. By now I had discovered that I was the only Brit in the party – there were 20 paying punters on the tour, the others being mainly from France and Germany, and some from Switzerland, Denmark and Belgium. There was quite an age range – some were older than me, some were families with children. Some had been on several Iceland tours – others had done tours in Mongolia, Jordan and the Andes. All were competent riders – this is not for novices or nervous riders. Luckily for me it turned out that English was the only common language amongst everyone, and certainly the only way to talk to the Icelanders running the show!

We picked out saddles, riding hats and wet weather gear, and then we awaited the arrival of the horses. Five of the staff and three sheepdogs disappeared and came back herding a huge number of horses into a big corral – we discovered there were 98 Icelandics all patiently waiting to dis-

cover who was going to be ridden that morning. One-by-one we were presented with our first mount; my first steed was called Völler (which means "Field") – an apricot dun. We tacked up and eventually the 20 of us rode off with our Ishestar representative Willborg, (an Icelandic woman who works as an actress and part time horse-tour guide) and one of the Stori-Kalfalaekur staff Jön. We walked carefully for about twenty minutes along a fairly stony track, horses and people getting used to each other. Then we pulled off the track and stood clear. What was about to happen?

The rest of the herd then appeared on the track, three ridden horses at the front marking the advance boundary of the herd, and two ridden horses at the back who's job it was to keep the herd moving and round up any strays who stopped to eat. The rest of the herd was loose, and this is the style for the rest of the week. All of us now set off in formation – the ride leader, then the herd, then two staff members and the guests at the back. "You are not allowed to go in front of the staff members!" At all times they must separate you from the loose horses!" 98 horses altogether with only 27 ridden at any one time.

So we set off along lava tracks through quite poor grassland (with Icelandic horses everywhere – it made our fields on Wentnor rock look very rich grazing indeed) on our way towards the mountains. This stretch of the Snaefellsnes peninsula consists of mountains separated from the coast by what appear to be ancient salt marshes that are gradually becoming slightly more lush as

the grass takes over – so it's very flat. And the speed we went at! We spent more or less the whole week at high-speed tölt, the extra four-beat gait that Icelandic horses have that is essentially a very fast walk. (It amused me that the "Beware horses" road warning sign in Iceland is a silhouette of a horse and rider at fast tölt). We did very little canter, trot, or walk, and Völler was really up for it. He settled in behind the two lead horses that the staff were riding and felt very keen. All the horses seemed to know that they weren't to go past the staff leaders. Another thing that struck me was how close we all rode to each other, even at speed – for large parts of the ride there were 20 horses and riders all in an almost "close box" formation sometimes four horses abreast and there was no kicking or biting or "ears back" behaviour between the animals (nor between the riders!) Imagine trying to ride such a formation back home! These horses get on so well together.

We did 30 km on the first day, ending up in the foothills of the mountains. The whole ride took a break about every half-hour, in which the loose horses we turned off the track and allowed to graze. After the lunch stop we all changed to a fresh horse – my afternoon ride was called Táta (little girl). She was another excellent tölter, but she preferred to be at the back of the ride. It was a perfect first day: the weather was sunny with a few clouds, there was a persistent but not strong wind, and 14°C. Perfect riding con-

(Continued on page 3)

"You are not allowed to go in front of the staff members!"



A tölt tour of Iceland Contd.....

(Continued from page 2)

ditions and no midges! (How wonderful it is to see so many Icelandic horses with no sweet itch in sight)

Overnight we left our horses at another farm called Grimstaðir, and we were mini-bussed back to Stori-Kalfvalaekur. Don't expect two-star luxury on this tour – I spent the night in a Portakabin, but it wasn't too uncomfortable and after about seven hours in the saddle I didn't need much help sleeping – despite there being virtually 24 hours of daylight. It's not a gourmet experience either – the menu was fish and lamb, on alternate nights. But it was hot and filling.

On the second day we drove back to where the horses had over-nighted and set off along the contours of the foothills and into a long glacial valley called Hítarhólmur. This was through multi-coloured mountains (colour depending on the type of volcanic activity that formed each mountain. Iceland is very active seismologically. Earlier this year there was an earthquake of 6.7 on the Richter scale close to the capital that damaged quite a lot of property. Luckily no-one was hurt) and along low bushy hillsides. This is a geologist's paradise: vast lava fields, soft tracks through ashes and the high palagonite mountains give this a real lunar feel. Apparently the early NASA astronauts did their moonscape training here. My horse for the first part of the morning was Nasi (horse with a snip). He was a dark bay and proved a very popular ride because several people rode him during the week and all reported perfect gaits and a light touch. Later I was paired again with Völlur, and we all had a third

(Continued on page 8)



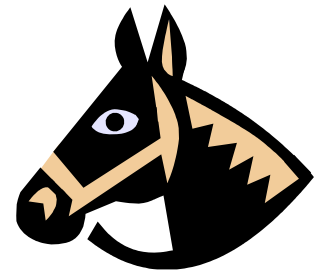
Will they choose me? Horses await their riders for the day.



Turning from the mountains towards the sea. A rare slow section allowed me to use my camera whilst in the saddle



A lunch break with the mountains of the Snaefellsness peninsula in the background



“Iceland is very active seismologically.Earlier this year there was an earthquake of 6.7 Richter close to the capital.....”



My initiation into the Long Mynd Bridleways Association – Gill Bridgeman



Since I moved to Shropshire just over four years ago from the home counties I have been introduced to many horsey people, events and social evenings by my neighbour Cilla Allmark, without whom I would probably be able to count the number of acquaintances made on one hand!

Cilla talked me into joining the LMBA with the lure of a three day break in Herefordshire and this proved irresistible as I love long distance riding. I currently have a herd of eight horses and ponies but my main horse for riding out is my speedy little energizer rabbit of a Morgan horse, called Dancer. He was actually a gift horse but that is another story!

The three day holiday we were headed for was based at Tack Farm, Ullingswick, nr Leominster. Tack Farm is a fairly new Equestrian Centre which offers show jumping, cross country and working hunter classes, and also hosts Fun Rides and various other events. It has excellent facilities and our base was in a self catering dormitory which sleeps thirteen (six bunk beds and a single). Also in the room is a dining/kitchen area, and a shower/ WC next to the dormitory. I was not sure how I would cope with this arrangement, as the last time I'd slept with a room full of people was when I was eleven years old at school camp – and these were all strangers



apart from one! But we got on very well and it was very enjoyable – there were seven of us in total.

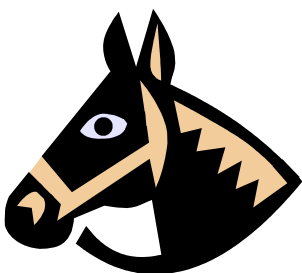
We couldn't have asked for more perfect weather after our dismal summer – apart from some fog to start the days it was wall to wall sunshine. On day one when we arrived, we were allowed to use the cross country course which has a fabulous arrangement of jumps of varying sizes, from logs on the ground (my height!) to much larger ones for the brave. There are also ditches/banks/ water jumps to play around in. You can only access a couple of the fields by jumping into them and this gave me no option if I wanted to stay with the others - thankfully I managed to stay seated and actually enjoyed it. Afterwards we all went on a little hack around the bridlepaths.

Day two was a longer ride to Hegdon Hill, the horses all got on fabulously and the horses/ riders were all of the same speed and ability which helped

tremendously. The front rider would shout back 'okay to canter?' and after hearing a few cries of 'yes' would take off – if you were at the back and didn't hear, it was tough! Luckily I was at the front most of the time!! In a line you just went at the speed of the leading horse but occasionally on the stubble this would turn into a bit of a race – it was like being a teenager again.

The countryside was very pretty and a highlight of the day was stopping for lunch at a gem of a place, a beautiful 16th century farmhouse called Little Hegdon Farmhouse where we were treated to a feast of homemade sandwiches, quiche and cakes (not to mention beer if we wanted!) – all made with home-grown produce. The gardens were immaculate and had far-reaching views, the hosts Howard and Sue were very friendly and welcoming and

(Continued on page 5)



This year's LMDBA holiday Contd.....

(Continued from page 4)

it couldn't have been a better lunch stop – a brilliant find Lynn, and definitely to be recommended to anyone thinking of visiting the area. In the evening we had a pub meal locally and then were ready for bed.



Sunday's ride was in a southerly direction towards Marden, we weren't able to have a pub stop at lunch time as unfortunately the pub we were going to visit had closed down, so we did a three and a half hour hack, returning to Tack Farm for a late lunch.

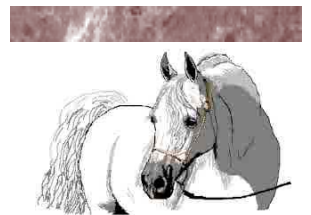


This was a faster hack and there were many opportunities to canter/gallop. Some of the canters along the green lanes got quite muddy and you had to be prepared to stop suddenly or cannon into the horse in front of you if the going got a bit too deep, and you could end up rather plastered if you got too close – but it was all great fun!

As we were all about to leave for home unfortunately one of the trailers got a puncture right in the field gate and no-one could get out – but thanks to girl power this was sorted (who needs men anyway?!) the tyre was changed and we all got away. And talk about good timing – on the way home it started to rain!



I really enjoyed myself and will definitely go again, thanks to Lynn Townsend for organising a great holiday.



Forthcoming Events

What's On—some dates for your diary



Guided Pub Ride

Saturday 22nd November 2008—1030 am

Pub ride to Hill Top pub on Wenlock Edge. Starting at New House Farm Shipton TF13 6LB (on the Corvedale Road). We will be leaving at 1030 *prompt*. GR SO 549907.

The leader will be Mary Williams—please telephone 01584 841217 to reserve a place.

Numbers will be limited.

Christmas Dinner 2008

Saturday 13th December—Station Inn Marshbrook

This year's Christmas dinner will be at The Station Inn, Marshbrook at 7-30pm. There is a menu and booking form enclosed with this Portway. Hurry up and book—numbers are limited! Details on the booking form.

Winter Quiz

Friday 16th January 2009— 7-30pm

Crown Inn, Wentnor

Message from Les & Sue

The quiz held on 10th October raised £70 which will be donated to the Air Ambulance. A big thanks to all of you for your support once again, without which the charities would not benefit. Every little helps. Thanks also to those who donated raffle prizes - this is much appreciated.

This time, the winning team was The Dudgeley Dunces with the "consolation prize" going to The Bog Brains. It was a close-run thing all the way through and we felt you all enjoyed it. The next quiz will be held on Friday 16th January 2009, at The Crown as usual. Due to tables being in short supply and Mike at the Crown having to juggle his dining bookings, could you *please* book your table at least two weeks in advance. Just ring Les or Sue on 01743 791621. Many thanks once again for the support.

Bridleways Holiday 2009

Tregoyd Mountains?

After the success of the 2008 holiday (*see Gill Bridgeman's article on page 4*) we are looking forward to 2009. It has been suggested that we go to the Brecon Beacons. Carol Williams has been to Tregoyd Mountain Rides before (Welsh TREC Championships) so she can take charge of the map reading! Have a look at www.tregoydriding.co.uk and see what you think. Please register your interest with Lynn Townsend 01694 722667 or lynntownsend@btinternet.com

Do you want basic bunkhouse accommodation or B&B in the farmhouse? Stabling or grazing? I won't make further enquiries until I have enough interest. Date? Probably middle of September.



Chairman's report for 2008

Mike Bowen

Association Chairman Mike Bowen gave his report to this year's AGM on Friday 10th October.

And so we come to the end of my twelve months as Chairman.

Primarily I want to thank everyone of the Committee, I know we only do these things because we're keen and passionate, but an awful lot of work goes on, mostly behind the scenes, quietly at home, on the phone or in the evenings - sometimes out in the cold and in the pouring rain. Much of what is done is not talked about and very often not acknowledged - simply because frankly people are not always aware of what you're doing.

Well THANKYOU - On behalf of everyone for what you have done over the past year. Now I've mentioned the Committee but there are others who are not committee members or area Reps but who I consider to be some of the most valuable assets of Long Mynd bridleways.

I'm thinking particularly now of Les Lee for the excellent Quiz Nights he puts on and of Nigel Clements for the tremendous work he does in respect of The Portway. Frankly, never mind the rest of us - I don't know what LM&DBA would be without you!

And people like Allan McVittie and Ruth and, again, Lucy who allow us into their homes WITH HORSES and are kind hosts for our Hacks for a Snack events.

Yes, much of what has been done this year has not been in full public view. Three or four bridleways have been cleared by individuals not by way of clearance parties. Many hours have also been spent walking bridle routes to check them out. I'm thinking now of the miles Sue and Helen have walked in respect of the progress being made with Natural England. Many will by now be aware that we as a committee have and will continue to support the exchange of a dead-end bridleway which Natural England wish to conserve - in exchange for a new route to run parallel to the Stiperstones car park road. This will be such a good deal for local horse riders, especially if we can also gain an additional route to run alongside the old Gatten Plantation as well. Fingers crossed.

I am still conscious of the miles walked and work entailed in getting the bridleway at Corndon opened at last. This route makes possible a long circular ride from the Bog. I am pleased that it was initiated by local riders and that the clearance extended our 'working' area and built upon good relations with landlord and tenant - and brought us good, keen members.

There are two further bridleways where pressure has been brought to bear. The one route has been cleared by the landowners themselves after we made an 'offer that they refused'. We await news of the other.

I said at the start of the year it was my aim to get a web site set up. I'm pleased now to say I've done that by the skin of my teeth. Just today I uploaded the files and need time now to sort some glitches out. But it's there folks!

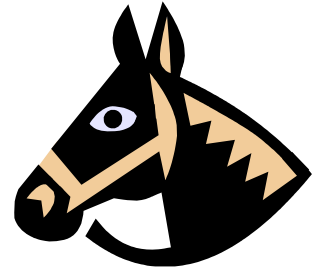
I regret that I was unable - as intimated in my first magazine - to arrange for everyone to have their own fitted, logoed leotard!

Welcome Back Pauline

Welcome back to Pauline Traille who after two years in the New Forest decided there was no place like South Shropshire and has moved back to Woolstaston.

Horse for Sale

Jemma—Extremely well-bred Fell Pony. 14hh 7 years old. Ridden regularly by adult & 13yr old on own and in company. Jumps, X-Country, water, etc. Has been to Pony Club camp. Easy load/shoe/catch/traffic etc. £3,000 ono to right home.
Judy Collyer 01694 781367



Don't forget to go and surf to the LMDBA new website

longmyndbridleways.com

for updates on what's happening in your association.

Let us know at The Portway what you think.



THE PORTWAY

NEWSLETTER OF THE
LONG MYND AND DISTRICT
BRIDLEWAYS ASSOCIATION

Nigel Clements
Portway Editor
The Green Farm
Wentnor
Bishops Castle
SY9 5EF
Phone: 01588-650394
Email: nigelclements@btinternet.com

Portway Publication deadlines.

The Portway is a quarterly publication. The next edition is due in February 2009. The deadline for copy to reach the editor is:

Saturday 24th January 2009

Membership Secretary

Lucy McFarlane
Coates Bungalow
Ratlinghope
Shropshire SY5 OSS
Tel: 01588 650412

A tölt tour of Iceland Contd.....

(Continued from page 3)

mount to end the day; this was a mare called Rós Nós (meaning mare with red nose and white snip). She was the first horse that I struggled to get into tölt.

The age of the horses in the herd varies considerably; horses retire from the herd based on energy rather than age – some stay on the tours until as old as 22. When they retire they stay on the farm, perhaps to be ridden by the children. Siggí the owner has three brood mares from whom he breeds youngsters to add to the herd – part of the training of youngsters is to run as a loose horse on the tours without being ridden. He doesn't own all 98 – some are borrowed horses from neighbours who are pleased to get their animals exercised. With 27 horses being ridden at any one time the large herd allows the riding to be shared, the high-speed to continue across the week, experience for the youngsters and spreads the grazing as would happen in the wild. It also allows for people to go through a variety of rides, and indeed a mix and match with riders experience, preferences and temperaments. It also makes for a very exciting tour!

Again we spent most of the seven-hour 30 km day at fast tölt. Some of the tracks were quite stony; if these were at home we would be horrified about our horse's feet, but these sure-footed beasts sped through without putting a foot wrong. They splash through rivers with no hesitation (prepare to get quite wet at times) – be careful of the trolls, though. They are legendary in these parts.

Read Part 2 of Nigel's tölt tour of Iceland in the next edition of The Portway

Your Committee



Officers

Chairman	Mike Bowen 01743 792238
Vice Chairman	Helen Foster 01694 771283
Secretary	Lucy McFarlane 01588 650412
Treasurer	Moira Clements 01588 650394
BHS Ex Officio	Don Pearse 01694 722350

Local Co-ordinators

North West (Group 1)	Sue Lee 01743 791621
North Long Mynd (Group 2)	Lynn Townsend 01694 722667
South Long Mynd (Group 3)	Moira Clements 01588 650394
North East (Group 4)	Helen Foster 01694 771283
South East (Group 5)	Judy Collyer 01694 781367
East Central (Group 6)	Sally Coombes 01694 724646
Pulverbatch (Group 7)	Linda Russell 01743 718409
Tugford (Group 8)	Bronwen Williams 01584 841259
Titterstone Clew (Group 9)	Gill Eyre 01584 890797



Next Committee Meeting
Friday 23rd January 7-30pm
Sunnydale, Batch Valley, All Stretton