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One monthly meeting—
amazingly NOT
ONLINE!

"She'll leave a huge gap in the local horse scene always so generous of her time and skills to enable us all to enjoy our horses."

"Bless her"



50 years service at Chepstow Racecourse

Wye Valley Riding Club

HAPPY CHRISTMAS to all Members from the Committee.

Well where to start.....

In writing this newsletter we have such big shoes to fill.

2020 has been a difficult year for everyone, as a club it has proved a challenge in many ways. With the end of year bringing such sad news. Losing Marilyn so unexpectedly, was devastating news she had been a stalwart of the club for 30 years ♥

As a committee we have tried to keep member participation up throughout the year even

though many clubs have done very little. We have tried to provide what we could to you our members. A tall order when most of our activities involve meeting as a group whether this is on or off our horses.

We have managed some online activities including a quiz, webinar and meetings via zoom. A few training sessions in between various lockdowns. Team activity has been limited to dressage online. Amazingly

we did sneak in one monthly meeting that involved horses and people all in one place, the lunging demo with Sarah Spencer Williams was a welcome break in what had been a quiet few months.

Our Vice Chairman Pam Davidson winning the Leo Harris award is a great achievement (see report on page 2).

We're all hoping 2021 will be a much more active year - at some point!

Marilyn Kirton

By Pam Davidson



Marilyn Kirton sadly died on Friday 4th December, aged 76, in hospital after a short illness. We will all miss her enormously.

Marilyn joined the Wye Valley RC in 1990, taking over from the retiring Mike Good. She was a friend of Margaret and Roy Raikes-May (founder club members) and kept a retired chestnut

mare, Rosie, at their riding school and stud at Earlswood.

She was an amazingly efficient Treasurer and kept the Club's finances in order. In addition she was our membership secretary, welcoming new members with the latest newsletter with details of all our activities - she later took on editing the newsletter as well.

She became well-known to other clubs in Area 15. Over the years, we have run several area qualifiers and Marilyn was always part of the organising team, taking on the role of entries secretary and event secretary on the day. Clubs tell us that she was always very helpful, sorting out queries and changes to team members at the last minute.

When she joined us, she was working at NatWest bank in Chepstow. She also worked part-

time at Chepstow racecourse, receiving a 50 year service presentation fairly recently. She also volunteered as Treasurer at Chepstow, Howick and Mount Ballan horse trials for a number of years.

She adored her two poodles - firstly Peaches, and currently Tia who is staying with her friend Heather.

Marilyn - you had so many friends and colleagues, more than you probably ever realised, and we will all miss you. With much love.

"Marilyn was such a committed member of the club and she always put people first."

Membership Fees 2021



The Riding Club Piggy Bank needs topping up! Membership Renewals are due.

Membership Fees, 2021 2020 has seemed an exceptionally long year for many reasons and for WVRC it actually was! Our club year ran for 15 months due to the change in the financial year to start on 1st January. This has been a difficult year and we have not been able to organise as much as usual – in particular our WVRC shows at Howick, teams at qualifiers and face to face monthly meetings. However, we have managed to put on other “events” including the photo competition, an online show, the Centaur Biomechanics Training Aids webinar and two quizzes. Members have also taken part in 2 virtual dressage competitions. We

did manage two face to face events: a dressage training event at Howick and a lunging demonstration by Sarah Spencer-Williams. We hope you have enjoyed taking part or reading about these in Newsletter or Newsflashes. Membership fees for 2021 are due on or after 1st January. **We have had to put the membership fee up from £28 to £30 to reflect the increase in the fees we pay to British Riding Clubs.** They have had to pass on some of large increase in the cost of insurance cover that they provide for individual members with at BRC activities and to insure the club. The affiliation fee has increased by £1 to £16

per member and the club affiliation fee has increased by £35. We plan to have an active 2021 and have already started running monthly flatwork training sessions at Park Farm and are planning more jumping sessions for early next year. We hope you will renew your membership in 2021.

The 2021 membership fee of £30 is due on or after 1st January 2021. Remember that you will be unable to compete in any teams (assuming there will be qualifiers!) or take advantage of the lower rate for members at training events unless you have paid your fee.

We will send a reminder, with details of how to pay, at the end of December.

Winner of the Leo Harris Award 2020 – Pam Davidson



The Leo Harris Award is given annually to the Riding Club member who has made an enormous contribution to the success of club activities at a local, area and national level over a significant period of time. The committee thought that our very own Vice Chair would be a perfect candidate, so we submitted this case on her behalf. We were absolutely delighted when we heard that she has won this prestigious award, and hope that she will be able to attend the awards dinner whenever it can be held.

Pam joined WVRC in 1982, becoming Committee Secretary later that year, and began to organise competitions/events. She has been Vice Chair for many years, and actively involved in all club activities.

She became Area 15 representative in around 2000 officiating as Steward at qualifiers and helping at national championships before becoming Chief Dressage Steward for BRC, a role she continues to this day. Her dressage arenas are marked out with military precision, as anyone who has seen them at Lincoln will agree!

A major achievement has been organising the Area Horse Trials qualifier for over 12 years. Involving 120 volunteers and judges, and attracting over 200 competitors; this has been so successful that it has generated an income for the Area which is used to subsidise training and residential camps for clubs.

Pam has also been a keen team member, competing on Molly in 1985 at the Prix Caprilli championships, and 10 years later on Molly's daughter FloJo at the Riding Test and Show Jumping championships.

Her colleagues have many positive comments:

At club level:

“She gives countless hours of support but never expects anything in return. Helps at many events and is often there first and last to leave. A stickler for the rules but keeps us all safe. Without people like Pam these events wouldn't happen for all to enjoy.”

At area level:

“I know how hard she has worked for BRC over the years both on the National Committee, and as Area Representative. She is totally dedicated to BRC and has been the cornerstone of Area 15. She is always on hand to advise and guide the folks in all our clubs, and works with other areas' representatives to organise events. As an official steward myself, I know I can contact her at any time to ask for advice and guidance. Pam has a vast knowledge of the rules and she is totally fair and unflappable even when things (or competitors!) get difficult. Pam always makes herself available for all the championship dates and works hard in not only the official tasks but also the unseen ones, and is not afraid to get her hands dirty and set about the more mundane work such as setting-up and clearing-up. Pam is a good all-rounder and always willing to help.”

At national level:

“I have worked with Pam for longer than I care to remember and together with our other dressage colleagues from around the country, we are what you may call a well-oiled team. Pam's knowledge and commitment to running both area qualifiers and the dressage sections at championships is amazing. I find Pam an inspiration, she is always there to support if any problems arise, soon putting everyone at ease.”

And finally, from a fellow committee member for over 30 years:

“Pam is just always there to help, whether at club level, at area qualifiers or at national championships. She knows – or can find out – everything, and is a great support to everyone who works with her.”



How to lunge correctly with Sarah Spencer-Williams (UKCC Level 3 Coach) Wednesday 9 September 2020

Following months of lockdown, the club decided to organise an outdoor meeting in the hope of good weather and not too many restrictions caused by Covid-19! Outdoor gatherings of up to 30 people were allowed, so we organised a demonstration of good lunging technique with Sarah Spencer-Williams at her yard in Trellech.



The weather gods were kind, and we welcomed 26 attendees to the event. With Sarah and her team, we were at capacity, with members glad to be out and socialising, even though it was at a distance.

Sarah began by showing the tack that she uses, which is kept as simple as possible. She uses a saddle fitted with side reins and a bridle, although a lunging cavesson would be more suitable for an unbroken horse. She generally feeds the lunge rein through the inner bit ring and clips it to the bit ring on the outside. As a rule of thumb, the side reins plus the width of a fist should reach the horse's bit when standing in a relaxed position. But to begin with, the side reins are clipped to the saddle, and the horse warms up without restriction. Brushing boots are essential to prevent injury.

The first horse, Woody an ex-dressage horse in his mid-twenties, needed to loosen up in walk, trot and canter before being fitted with the side reins. Sarah stressed the importance of the correct positioning of the lunger at the apex of a triangle, with the lunge rein, the horse and the whip forming the three sides. By using body language (think big to push the horse forwards and away, and small to slow down) the lunger can influence the horse's paces. She also focussed on the safety of both the horse and rider, by taking great care to ensure that once the side reins were fitted, the horse needed to be pointing in the right direction to be able to move away immediately. The lunger can walk alongside the horse to begin with while it settles, before allowing it to move out onto a large circle. For most lunging purposes, trot is the most beneficial pace, but some short spells in canter can be used to improve the trot. By the end of his session, Woody was moving rhythmically in a lovely outline on a perfect circle – something for us all to aspire to!



The second horse, Brook a younger and fitter event horse wasn't very keen on being lunged. She was a good example of the kinds of issues that many of us face with our own horses. Although she was quite lively, Sarah connected the lunge line in the same way as for Woody since she considers using the lunge rein over the horse's head to be too severe - although it can be used for very head-strong horses in the interests of safety. Brook decided that the audience was very scary, spending some time cantering round calling to us all until she settled down. Only then did Sarah fit the side reins and work on the trot. She kept Brook busy by varying the speed in the trot and prevented her from falling in by pointing the lunge whip at the centre of her rib cage (where the rider's leg would be). She also varied the size and location of the circle by moving with the horse herself to encourage Brook to focus on her work, asking her to bend by giving and taking with the lunge rein. Once again, after a good 30 minutes, Brook was working beautifully, with her nose vertical and her body bending along the line of the circle.



By this time, the temperature was dropping, and the darkness drawing in, so the Q and A session was kept short. It was a very useful evening, picking up on many of the points made in the webinar by Russell MacKechnie-Guire earlier in the year, and has hopefully inspired many of us to lunge more effectively – and more frequently - to improve our horse's way of going.

Reporter: Janet Peters, photos by Karen Chase

Experience of a New Member

By Sara Morris

Sara and Gerry after completing their Walk and Trot test in the summer heat



This is my first year being part of a riding club and after receiving such a warm welcome, and having some successful group lessons, the pandemic hit bringing everything to a halt.

I set myself a target this year to develop myself and my horse Gerry. So I decided to put myself out of my comfort zone and have a go at the BRC/NAF virtual dressage Walk and Trot test (run in the summer). I was pleased with my results scoring a respectable 60.53%. Not bad for a beginner rider and a horse that couldn't trot a 20 metre circle a year ago.

I then saw a post through the riding club Facebook page for the virtual Interdressage series run by British Riding Clubs. So I decided to give it a go. Every month I would have a test to work on, record and submit to the judges. I would then receive my scores, feedback and exercises to do to improve. Doing this gave my schooling sessions at home some purpose and gave me some targets to work towards. It was also nice to be able to represent the riding club and get Wye Valley Riding Club out there.

As a result my marks improved, as well as my riding, and so has Gerry's movement and balance. As a result of the Interdressage series I now feel more prepared to get out and about on Gerry and work on our next set of

goals. I have to say a massive thank you to Kat Burton for all her coaching and support. A big thank you to the riding club also for presenting these opportunities and proving that even during a pandemic you can still do something positive to progress yourself and your horse.



Sarah and Gerry in their Christmas Cracker outfit.

[Editor's note: Sara is too modest to mention that she came 4th individually and 4th as a team in the summer league of the Interdressage series – see the latest issue of Rider magazine! She is also a team member for the BRC Christmas Cracker virtual dressage competition, and competed in the WVRC virtual Show, so has certainly made the most of her membership].

"A big thank you to the riding club also for presenting these opportunities and proving that even during a pandemic you can still do something positive to progress yourself and your horse"

Calendar of Events 2020/21

Date	Type	Event	Speaker/Instructor/Organiser	Location
16/12/20	Monthly meeting	Christmas Event	tbc	On-line
20/12/20	Training	Flatwork	Sarah Spencer-Williams	ParK Farm Dressage, Goytre
13/01/21	Monthly meeting	Preserving our brideways – the BHS 2026 Project	Will Steel, BHS	On-line
17/01/21	Training	Flatwork	Sarah Spencer-Williams	ParK Farm Dressage, Goytre
03/02/21	Monthly meeting	AGM		On-line

Christmas Cracker - Online Dressage Competition

By Kat Burton

Our hidden dressage divas of the club came to shine again!

We put in a good representation for the club and all members did us proud flying the flag for Wye Valley Riding Club.

We may not be the poshest or the most fancy but we sure had fun doing it! Out came the tinsel early subjecting it upon our poor steeds. And our elaborate collection of Christmas jumpers which is much comfier than competition jackets - both which i'm sure have gathered dust this year! A bit of much needed festive cheer came early! Though some chose better weather than others to accept their challenge in!

The team was first come first serve and consisted of:

Sara Morris and Gerry riding the walk and trot gaining an improved and well deserved 65%

Tim Peters and Allanagh Sea Sprite riding a beautiful and consistent Novice test gaining an impressive 67.11%

Janet Peters and Landsome T tackling a Elementary test in stormy conditions! Achieving 65.32%

Liz Pitcher on Godington Utopia riding the prelim test to achieve a score of 61.2%

And then our lovely individuals:

Amy Jenkins riding Cocoa, brushed of her

dressage boots after many years and a new combination to achieve a respectable 61.58%

Jaci Crocombe and Gyps Farwell overcame injury to ride a decent prelim at 62.6%

Hannah Matthews and Garn Glad Atlantic Quest did the Prelim Riding test to score a very good 66.82%

Margi Osborne and Woolaston Shadow-dancer riding the Prelim Riding Test to score a very high and amazing score of 73.18%!

I'm sure everyone had great fun doing it and appreciated the distraction. No excuse now, we know who to call upon for dressage qualifiers!

Do you know exactly where you are? What3words

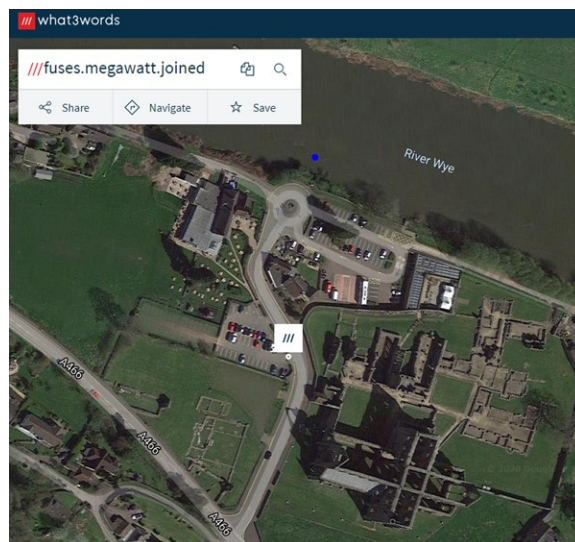
In the event of an emergency, have you thought about how you would describe where you are to the emergency services? 'Where's the emergency?' is one of the first questions you are asked when calling 999. But saying exactly where you are can be challenging. Emergencies can happen anywhere, from a remote beach in Pembrokeshire, to the side of the M4, or in the country lane near you. Services often can't detect where you are automatically and landmark-based descriptions are prone to errors.

The police, ambulance and fire and rescue in our area all encourage the public to download the free what3words app, which can help them find you in an emergency. What3words has divided the world into grids of 3m x 3m squares, giving each square a unique combination of three words - a what3words address.

For example ///fuses.megawatt.joined will take you to the car park entrance of the Anchor Inn in Tintern - where we would have been having our Christmas meal if Covid-19 hadn't got in the way!

There are lots of examples on the website where what3words has helped emergency services reach people injured in accidents or just lost.

www.knowexactlywhere.com.



The app is free to download for both iOS and Android and works entirely offline - making it usable even if there is an unreliable data connection.

The technology is available in over 40 languages, including Welsh, and can be used anywhere in the world. The words allocated are filtered to take account of word length, distinctiveness, frequency, and ease of spelling and pronunciation, and to reduce potential for confusion, and remove offensive words.

what3words can also be used via the online map at what3words.com.

Exciting Monthly Meeting coming up.....

Preserving our bridleways – the BHS 2026 Project

The BHS has obtained funding to support its work on Access to the countryside for horse riders and carriage drivers over the next few years. The key deadline is 1 January 2026, when any claims for bridleways or other routes used by horses, which are not marked as such on current maps, must be received for them to be considered. If claims for Defined Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) are not made by then, they will not be considered for the foreseeable future.

Full details of the project are available at: www.bhsaccess.org.uk/project2026 where there is a very good handout called 'Getting started on the Project 2026 website'.

The project has a Project Officer, Will Steele, who is running lots of online courses on how to do the historical research necessary to claim that the current maps are incorrect. I participated in one recently about the Dobbin database, which was fascinating. Dobbin is a compilation of various scales of OS maps (plus Google satellite images) covering England and Wales, county by county, so that you can see how your favourite routes are recorded. If anyone is already doing research into those routes, it will be marked on the map, and you can contact them. If not, you can mark up the route yourself, and when you have time, complete an Evidence Record for that path. There are lots of historical maps on the Dobbin site that you can go through to see whether the route was previously a public right of way, which would provide evidence that the current map should be updated. There is a lot more to it than that, and I have not attended any of the other courses, but those of you who hack out a lot may well be interested.

So if any of you know of a route that is marked as a footpath, say, and you know that it is in use by horse riders, this is your chance to have it upgraded to a bridleway (or more) before it becomes closed to horse riding altogether.



STOP PRESS

Will Steel, the 2026 Project Officer has kindly agreed to give the club an online talk on rights of way and what we can do to identify them on Wednesday 13 January 2021 at 8pm. The link for the meeting will be emailed to all members in advance, so there is no need to register.

Will would like real examples of actual or potential horse routes in our area that are currently not on maps that he can use in his talk. Simply mark up on a map – or photo of a map – photograph it with your phone, and email it to me by the end of December at the latest.

Contact Janet Peters at tandj5lanes@gmail.com or 07717 507551

**A Happy and Safe
Christmas to all
Members from the
committee
See you in 2021**



Wye Valley Riding Club