

Chair Report - Annual Group Meeting

EGB Lancashire Group

Taking place on 23rd February 2017 at 7.30pm at Charnock Richard Football Club, Charter Lane, Charnock Richard

Good Evening everyone - . Thank you for coming tonight, it's encouraging to see you all here supporting your EGB Group.

I am especially pleased to see a few of our newer members here also .I realise it can be a bit off putting to come to some thing like this when you are new to the group, but it is really a great opportunity to get to know fellow members better and learn more about your sport. We really_ do need to try to encourage more of our new members to come along.

I would also like to welcome representatives from the national committee, those being our EGB Groups Director Kerry Dawson and Esther Young our EGB Operations Director. Thank you for coming along to join us tonight.

Firstly , in case you are wondering, I would just like to explain that this AGM is taking place later in the season than usual, and that our current financial report will actually cover longer than the usual 12 months, as you will see when we come to the treasurers report. We have for a number of years held the AGM at the end of November, usually just before the National AGM .This meant that any proposals made at the latter event had not been approved or even discussed, in time for us to discuss at our local meeting, and also that our group accounts were not produced in line with national and indeed, the EGB actual financial year end. So this year we decided to move our AGM to early 2107, making the financial year end 31st December in line with national requirements. Whilst the end of February is probably later than desirable, this is the first opportunity for it given the date of the Presentation Evening and training event in January- after all we only have so much time available don't we? We plan that future AGMs will also take place in February each year.

In summary of the year, am pleased to say that we consider the 2016 season to have been very successful as far as both national EGB, and specifically EGB Lancashire is concerned. As far as rides are go, we had plenty of rides on offer - at which there was a good entry. Our financial position was good allowing us to purchase a long awaited new set of number bibs, and also to make a £1000 donation to national as you will see shortly. Our membership is strong, and our members have been successful in a variety of ways. We have also continued to offer training, the recent one day training in January being particularly successful (but cold), and our extensive range of merchandise , especially the personalized stuff is doing really well.

So initially, rides - In Lancashire this season, we had a good range of rides on the schedule. This included the brand new Dolphinholme ride, the several more longstanding events we all know, and pleasingly a couple of the rides which were new in 2015 were also put on in 2016. Obviously the task of ride organizing wasn't too horrendous, and we didn't put off those newly recruited ride organisers of the 2015 season at their first attempt. We really appreciated these new ROs as we discussed last year, as we have been concerned for the last few years that most of our rides are organised by the same 'oldies' and apart from them getting rather weary with the task, their goodwill is being stretched rather, and it's only a matter of time before they retire from the role. The worry is then that wi.thout new organisers learning the ropes, the ride routes and contacts are lost. If fewer people are available to assist in setting i"p new rides, our ride schedule decreases and the vicious circle of lack of support, decreasing membership and loss of interest kicks in. So I am really pleased that we have started to recruit new RO's - but I do need to stress that we need some more. It really isn't as bad a job as you think - is it ROs. Apart from creating new rides it may be that someone would be willing to shadow an existing ride organsier to see how it's done, possibly with a view to taking the ride over in the future. As an example we probably need someone to step in and assist Glenda Griffin with the Formby Ride this year. It is a very popular ride and it would be a shame to lose it now all the donkey work is done - but Glenda is struggling for time this year, and could certainly do with the help or even a volunteer to take it over completely. So if anyone is thinking of volunteering to be a ride organizer I can only encourage you to talk to us about it. And if its encouragement you need, it was great to hear the comments of some of the newer RO's in that they did actually enjoy the experience and found it was a pleasant change to see things from the other side - quite enlightening in some cases as well isn't it????

Still on rides we decided that after several years of no change to ride entry fees we would unfortunately this year need to increase the group ride entry fee slightly. You will hopefully be pleased to hear though, that this increase is by just one pound, so hopefully it won't hurt the pocket too much. You may have noticed the new seasons ride entry form reflects this change to £16.

Linked to rides you will recall that we introduced the ride helper scheme last year where we require members to help at least one ride a season for them to be eligible for group trophy points. I know that it initially caused some concern and possible confusion in some cases, but it really does seem to have settled in well now, and everyone knows what is expected of them. It really wasn't fair that all the work was placed at the feet of the same people all of the time. It is only right that if you are competing in our sport, you contribute and put a little bit back by helping in at least one ride. I know it seems disappointing if there is a ride on which you want to ride, but instead you have to help - but think of the ride organizer who not only is unable to ride their own ride, but they give up a lot of additional time, and effort as well. So it is wonderful that just about all our riding membership has come up trumps and managed to help - and that's what filled our ride schedule and that will hopefully continue **in future seasons.**

Just to clear up a couple of queries about this helper ride - for that ride you helped at and listed on your mileage card, you have all been given the kilometerage for the ride in your annual and lifetime kilometerages, but those points are not included in trophy points.

Last year we made a really good attempt to distribute the ride calendar more evenly across the season. This was better than the previous season of 2015 but we still had a few gaps and a few members commented on this. We do our best, and it is difficult planning rides so they do not coincide with any national rides which our membership might wish to go to - which would obviously deplete entries to our ride. Clashes with other local group rides and events, and even things like tide times, and god forbid, ride organiser's personal lives also come into it. We do our best and will attempt to spread it evenly this coming year as well, but please bear with us if there are some sparse times of the year!!

The Ulnes Walton Wander in April was again very successful and even better supported than previously, so it seems to be growing in popularity as it becomes more established. It is planned to continue again this season, but slightly later than usual because of other clashes. I hope the date of Sunday 28th May - being Sank Holiday weekend - is not too off putting for entries and helpers alike, so please mark the date down in your diaries. Although the other Lanes competitive ride - the Heapey Hack had to be cancelled in 2015 because of closure to some paths during work by United Utilities, we did plan to try to reinstate it even just as a pleasure ride for 2016. However, because of various other issues going on, and the continued work of United Utilities this didn't happen. Possible for 2017 but we will again need another new ride organizer for this.

Well moving onto membership, our aim each year is to increase membership both by encouraging new members - both Full and Associate - and by trying to maintain existing memberships from year to year (i.e. encouraging re-enrolment). I am pleased to report that we are still in a very healthy position membership wise with a slight increase from 2015. In 2016 we had 35 Associate Members and 70 Full Members i.e. a total of 105, as opposed to last year when we had 31 AMs and 66 FM (97 total). We still have the perpetual problem of natural wastage where people join very enthusiastically but for a variety of reasons then only stay for one or two years. We have investigated this but don't seem to be able to reduce it.

We will continue our recruitment efforts with this in 2017, and I would encourage all of you to publicise our sport and encourage new membership whenever you can. There still seems to be quite a few regular pleasure ride attenders who don't join, despite the benefits. They often say they do not fall into the bracket of 'endurance riders', or even don't want to be considered as that, as their reason for not joining is often 'I only do it for a bit of fun'. - Don't we all? Something which always intrigues me is the number of entries which non- EGB pleasure rides e.g. some charity and hunt rides and even our own bridleway groups attract. Our group rides are much better supported when just advertised as a 'Pleasure Ride' without emphasizing EGB. As I have said before, look how successful Formby is - most are nonmembers out for a bit of fun. Perhaps we need to change our marketing slightly but we have said that before I think - not done much about it though!

Obviously with a good ride program, and maintenance of good membership figures, we were able to maintain a healthy financial position. As a result of this we were able to reinvest some of this into the group via our January training event, and also by the

purchase of new number bibs. These wonderful luminous green bibs will be seen at our first group ride of the season - Croal Irwell on 9th April.

Now back to training. After much discussion at last year's AGM, we still did not manage to clearly identify exactly what the membership wants in terms of training. Ideas ranged from evening talks to full day ridden assessments, with training advice and riding lessons etc. We decided that a full day of demonstrations and lectures would be a good place to start, having felt that anything which involved the membership bringing horses for assessment, would involve too much standing around doing nothing, with long periods of horses tied up in boxes etc. whilst other things were going on. As a result we offered our training day in January at Chorley Equestrian center courtesy of Sarah Bamber and Linda Cowperthwaite's arrangements. This was a VERY freezing cold day, but I think everyone attending really got something out of the demos of both horse behavior by vet Gemma Pearson and physiotherapy techniques by Lisa Emmerson, complemented by the feeding lecture of Top Spec's Anna Welch. So we do plan more of this - but hopefully at a slightly warmer time of the year, as indoor schools are not the most hospitable of places in mid-winter.

We made significant efforts again to boost sales of Lanes Group merchandise by extending the range, and establishing consistency in supply in terms of quality and sizes etc. and this was definitely successful. Remember you can get full personalization in the embroidery of all of the items - this seems very popular. We hope to have some additional items on offer soon, including trailer plates, mugs, and key rings etc.

Well now on to the successes of the Lancashire group. There were many successful wins and also, as always happens with horses, some disappointments. Our individual riders competing at higher levels in CERs as well as GERs, achieved well and several were placed in the national Awards listings. Particularly noteworthy was Young Rider Kate Atkinson's superb performances. So much so that she was invited to attend an all-expenses paid trip to Dubai for her, her family and of course her horse, and after much debate she finally decided to take up on the opportunity. This really was a chance of a lifetime not to be turned down and although she sensibly retired but sound, without completing the ride, she found the whole experience incredible. Something perhaps we all aspire to. Although some might find it a bit contentious the whole family (and others) were also impressed with the efforts they saw being made there, to improve both horse welfare and a fair sense of competition. Something which is very encouraging for our sport particularly at the moment.

Equally we had quite fierce competition locally across all classes of rides, as was demonstrated at the recent Annual Presentation evening at Ribby Hall. I think all of those in attendance had a great night - you certainly all looked very glamorous. We did try to speed things up a bit as there are so many trophies and awards to give out that the presentations themselves can go on for what seems forever. I think this was achieved as best we can, as we still want everyone to physically come up for their award. All achievements are very important to whoever is awarded them, no matter how big or small - everyone deserves their moment of glory. I don't know if you felt this worked ok by reducing the number of photos taken during the awards. Is there still room for improvement? Do we have any suggestions for this? However, I do need to stress we did have a wonderful night.

One thing which does concern me slightly is the reluctance of new members to come along. I know it can seem a bit overwhelming to come to something which you feel everyone knows everyone, and you won't fit in - but that isn't necessarily the case - and you soon do get to know everyone. Considering that, please as current members, will you make every attempt to encourage newly joined members to participate in group activities, and come along to events such as this. We are not a clique, but one of the friendliest and most helpful of horsey disciplines. Perhaps that's the problem - and they think we are like some of the others!!!! But seriously encourage everyone you can to come - we do like to see as many there as possible.

Anyway enough of that, I would just like to take this opportunity briefly to thank the membership for the wonderful presentation you made to me at the end of the awards ceremony. Those of you who were there know what I mean, but I really was touched emotionally by it, and really did appreciate it.

Following on from trophies and points etc. we had a couple of issues this year where new members were unaware of our local points system, and the trophies and awards evening, till ~~the~~ the end of the season. This we are rectifying by making doubly sure that everyone who joins as a new member is being contacted directly by our membership secretary Sarah, to make sure they fully understand how the system works - then everyone will be able to collect trophies and awards. (as long as they help at

a ride). I know that all the info is on the website and in other info which goes out to new members, but clearly people are not reading things!!!!

So to rider successes. Many of our national events have been dominated across the board by lanes Riders, - Lindum springs to mind as it is always so popular with our group. This year it was even more special, having hosted the EGB Inter-regional competition. After several years seriously trying to regain the number one spot, the North West team of Lanes and Cheshire riders actually brought home the trophy - so well done to everyone involved.

Aside from Kate Atkinson another very successful and promising junior rider is our own Lily Gibbons who has again had a very successful season - it's so encouraging that we now have some strong, up and coming young members. This is being aided by us welcoming Izzy Wilson as a Young Rider representative to our committee. She is doing a sterling job in going out to local Pony Club meetings, to encourage their participation in our sport.

We obviously have many more national successes and I can't name everyone here but I can't go without mentioning Rachel Atkinson's superb success in Madine in the autumn, and this season's Lanes Group Champion- Linda Cowperthwaite who carefully and successfully brought Maraday Mysteron (Ron to his friends) back not only into competition, but also to the winning post. Well done everyone and although I can't name all successes I do hope that your plans for this season all come to fruition.

To help encourage everyone even further in their aims and targets, we introduce two new trophies this year- the Mox and Kitty Pleasure Pairs trophy- the name in itself gives you a clue to requirements, and also courtesy of the Bamber family, we have the Phoenix Trophy which is for new competitive novice combinations i.e. novice horse and novice rider. Full details of the Trophy descriptors are on the Lanes Group website.

Anyway I have rabbited on long enough, but always feel I have to in order to make it worth your while coming!. As you know (or should do)- after the formal proceedings this evening, we will have the wonderful chips and butties which our host always produces. This will be followed by our Ride Organiser's meeting. Although we usually hold this as a separate event early in January, we changed things slightly this time and I would like everyone to attend to throw in their two penneth - even if not a ride organizer. As already discussed we do need new input and help, but don't worry- you won't be roped into anything you don't want to do.

So my final theme is thank you. Thank you all for coming tonight I hope you find it informative and enjoy the chips!! Thank you to the committee who give up a lot of their time, and are fully committed to working for our membership. Thank you to all the ride organisers especially, for everything you do to allow us to continue indulging in our sport and Thank.YQY to the membership for making the Lanes group the wonderful group it is.

I would also like to thank Esther and Kerry for travelling here, on not a pleasant night, to share the evening with us.

Good luck for next season everyone and enjoy the rest of the evening.

Sue
