

CAMBRIDGE AND WEST SUFFOLK DRIVING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2011

Leaders and Wheelers

Recollection of a Good Day

Madame is at Book Group this evening, a thinly disguised excuse for a glass of wine and a good gossip! It has been a glorious late winter's day and tonight, with a wee dram, I'm reflecting on an afternoon spent achieving what has been a long held carriage driving ambition.

Driving horses is an excellent way of (what I'm told) ladies are best at, multi tasking! How else can you enjoy the landscape, marvel at the wildlife, engage passers by with a few words, all at sedate pace and finally rock up at the local hostelry?

The partnership of horse and driver is what we all hope to attain. After a few years driving and being 'helped' by many partners, Robin, Ally, Winston, Sugar, Shanty, Dan and memorably Welly. His erstwhile owner is of the school of thought – here's the reins, 'the best way of learning is to get on with it'! I think in my case the trick was surviving the muddles!

On a particularly fine early March afternoon, with the promise of spring around the corner, I was back to square one in terms of the 'oh crikey' feeling on the carriage. Milly and Poppy were harnessed and 'put to'. It makes a great deal of sense if you want to pull anything heavier or travel over hilly country to increase your horsepower. In England most harness horses are driven in blinkers as singles, pairs or teams so they are not 'distracted' by the lumbering carriage behind them. Milly and Poppy have been driven as a pair for some while, and more recently as a tandem, one of the most perverse methods of driving imaginable. Why else would you want to halve the horsepower and double the difficulty? Blinkers are mere decoration when the leader turns round to look you square in the eye!

Four reins is quite a handful and four wheels are twice the number I drive at home! With a great deal of concentration we drove up the lane, complete muddles were avoided, just. The leader, Milly did seem a long way away! We ventured from the lane into the field with me wishing that I'd just a little longer practicing on the rein machine. After 10-15 minutes of walking the inkling of an understanding was beginning to dawn, so with a deep deep breath I asked the horses to 'trot on'. It is said that a bit of 'way' (in nautical parlance) helps the steering, and it did! A few cones placed strategically around the field were attempted, and not flattened! I even missed the gate post and negotiated the bridge over the moat!

What a marvellous way to begin my driving season, thanks to kind horses, generous owners and a great deal of beginners luck!

It is good to see tandem driving is all the rage in the Club; oh my dear, singles are so last year!

IBC

Tandem Rein Handling 19th February

We met in the coach house at Worlington for an introduction to tandem driving. Sallie Walrond, who is a founder member of the Tandem Club, gave a talk and demonstration of the traditional method of rein handling. We had four rein machines; 1 fixed, 2 portable, and one made by Brent complete with horses' heads which were weighted enabling them to be driven 'on the bit'. The latter were called Trial and Error.

We all tried to master the technique, with varying success. It needed much concentration and a lot of practice. We also discussed tandem harness. Three turnouts, so far, are having a go: Linda and Brent with Millie and Poppy; Maureen and Liz with Sylvie and Carrie; Mouse and Shirley with Jake and Chloe.

The tandem meet is at Elveden this year on 3rd July. This is a date to aim for.

In Attendance: Hilary, Linda and Ray, Maureen, Liz and Terence, Graham, Diana Hoult, Fiona Powell, Ian and Sandy, Ginette Stanson, Steph Wormsley, Brent, Shirley and Sallie.
SDR

Thetford Drive March 27th 2011

Despite losing an hour's sleep due to the clocks being put forward everyone arrived in good time. Eleven turnouts took to the tracks of Thetford Forest at Santon Downham. We had an assortment of ponies, cobs, and horses, varying in size from Friesian to Miniature Shetlands, singles, a pair, and two tandems. The tracks were good and the weather kind. When we returned to the boxes we enjoyed a convivial picnic lunch.

Attendance:

Shirley and Jo with Chloe; Ian, Sandy and Dawn with Dan; Eunice and Wally with Winston; Ben and Davida; Linda, Ray and Brent with Millie and Poppy; Diana and Mark with Prince; Maureen (Howard) with Buddy; Hilary and Shaun with Blanket; Louise and Andrew (Green) with Robbie and Conker; Marianne, Richard and Pauline with Sam; Terence, Liz and Maureen with Sylvie and Carrie. MW

BOXWORTH AND CHILDERLEY DRIVE

SUNDAY 8TH May 2011

This year's drive at Boxworth and Childerley was particularly memorable for three reasons: a) it didn't rain; b) no-one lost their way (actually, that's not strictly true) and c) for the first time at Boxworth there were two tandems.

The glorious Spring weather had threatened to 'break' over the weekend to bring much needed rain to East Anglia. However, Sunday dawned bright and breezy with the promise of another dry day.

The drive was about 9 ½ miles and took in some familiar tracks; however, once on the Childerley Estate, the route covered some new and exciting tracks and three little woodlands. Many of the woodland tracks had been mown, but some of the bends, inclines and overhanging foliage were a bit challenging in part. Despite the ground being so hard, the field margins weren't too rutted or bumpy. Sadly the bluebells were past their best, although the cowslips were still flowering on the ditch banks.

The route was marked with bright florescent, orange-backed arrows which (almost) guaranteed that no-one should lose their way. The exception was our route planner (who will remain anonymous) who didn't believe his own directions. Fortunately his groom had an altogether better sense of direction and navigated them back on the right track! In addition, another of our drivers was seen disappearing over the horizon in the direction of the next village until a call on her mobile phone effected an 'about turn' and a return to the original route.

All returned safely to Pages Farm where we gathered for lunch, sheltered from the 'robust' breeze.

With special thanks to our hosts John and Judith Witherow at Pages Farm, to University Farms for allowing us to 'trot on' through their farm and particularly to Martin Jenkins of the Childerley Estate for opening up his wonderful tracks and woodlands.

Dramatis personae:

Liz and Terence with Sylvie (looking resplendent in blue ribboned mane)
Richard and Linda with Chester
Eunice and Wally with Winston
Hilary and Sean with Blanket
Judith and Richard with Sonny
Jeff and Gwen with Comet
Ian and Mouse with Dan
Linda and Ray with Millie and Poppy (in tandem)
Shirley and Bethany with Lucy and Frisco (in tandem)

Other guest during the day:

Jeanette and Frank
John and Rosemary
Maureen
Angela
Sandy
Sdc – May 2011

Worlington Training Day 14th May

Sadly, this was cancelled as insufficient numbers were able to attend.

Try Tandem Day 15th May

Sallie again came to help and advise. The meeting was well supported and very interesting. First we practiced rein handling in the coach house. Then Brent and Linda brought Millie and Poppy to the yard for the correct procedure of putting –to to be demonstrated. Safety points were discussed and harness adjusted. Brent, accompanied by Linda then drove the tandem into the field and round a course of cones, with Sallie commenting and advising. Brent then drove interested members for short drives in the field.

Meanwhile Shirley was harnessing Lucy and Frisco (Lady Iveagh's ponies), ready to put-to with Sallie. Lucy and Frisco were then driven round the field until Sallie was confident that the whip was safe and competent. Back in the coach house there was more discussion and chat (of course) over tea and biscuits.

Thank you Sallie, and Linda for turning out her ponies Millie and Poppy so beautifully.

Present; Mouse, Maureen, Liz, Ray and Linda, Angela, Rosemary and John, Hilary, Ian and Sandy, Fiona, Sue Ram, Brent, Shirley, and Sallie who kindly signed Brent's and Shirley's tandem attendance sheets. SDR

N.B.

Just in case anyone has not yet seen a copy of this month's Carriage Driving, there is a very nice article about the C&WSDC by Fiona Powell.

Know Your Horses

So, where are we now?

Now that the Driving Season is on its way
It's important that you don't lose your way
So don't fall into the perennial trap
Get to know your Ordnance Survey map

- 1 Which way up is an OS map orientated?
 - A) East/West
 - B) North/ South
 - C) It depends upon which way up you are holding it

- 2 What does the scale 1:50000 mean ?
 - A) The proportion of egg whites to sugar grains for the perfect meringue

- B) Approximately 1 1/4 inches to the mile illustrated on the map
C) Your chances of not getting lost on a drive
- 3 How would you tell your Left from your Right?
- A) You have “L” and “R” embroidered on your gloves
B) Your Groom is usually on your left, except
C) When it is a Lady Groom and she’s always Right
- 4 What does “PH” mean on the map?
- A) A handy place where you can have the *ph* of your soil tested
B) A Public House at last - Hooray!
- 5 What does “PC” mean on the map?
- A) It’s the local Internet Café
B) A Public Convenience - what a relief!
C) It’s where the local Police Constable lives
- 6 What do the contour lines symbolise?
- A) The ground is a bit ‘upp-ish’ and ‘down-ish’
B) The height of the ground at 10 metre vertical intervals
C) What’s a contour line?
- 7 How would you recognise a By-way?
- A) It’s a muddy, churned up track favoured by 4x4’s and ATVs
B) It looks like : - + - + - + - + - + - on the map
C) Usually an after thought; eg “By the way....have you thought of...”
- 8 What does - - - - - symbolise?
- A) A “Bridal Way”
B) A “Bridleway”
C) Tear along the dotted line

Your Scores:

Mostly “A” You are getting the hang of map reading, but you could do with a bit of revision. It might be advisable to go out with another turn-out and you can lose your way together.

Mostly “B” You are familiar with map reading and should manage a drive with out getting lost.

Mostly “C” It’s better that you don’t go out on your own; you may never be seen again!

Many thanks to Sandy for our excellent quiz this time.

If anyone would like to make up a quiz for our next newsletter we would love to hear from you. Any style of quiz – crossword, word search, mystery picture, questions – any contribution would be super. Why not do it together over a Drink, on a Drive, whilst walking the Dog, in fact any of the Ds for which our club is renowned.

And Just to make You Smile...

A literary quotation from The Importance of Being Harnessed by Hosses Wilde:

To lose one horse, Mr E. Scaping, may be regarded as a misfortune. To lose both looks like carelessness.

The Way Through the Woods

Rudyard Kipling

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a path through the woods
Before they planted the trees,
It is underneath the coppice and the heath,
And the thin anemones.
Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ring’d pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,

(They fear not men in the woods
Because they see so few)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As if they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods...
But there is no road through the woods.

Dear Drive Organisers,

Please send me any drive or event reports that you would like me to include in the next newsletter. Any reports that could have been in this one but are not can probably still be added if you send them to me and I speak to David nicely. If you have any outstanding attendance figures not included here, even if there is no report, please make sure you get them to Liz Wheeler in good time. She would like them as soon after a drive as possible, but at the very least she must have them well before the AGM. The attendance shield is reliant on their accuracy.

Le Trec

All you need to know for this year's Le Trec will be
on the website very soon

Enjoy the rest of the season.