



## Newsletter – November 2007

Hi all,

Its that time again! The leaves are turning, the evenings are darker and its time to dig out the winter clothes for all. It's a chance to reflect on recent months, take stock and make plans for the future.

Its been a huge year for me. I had a major operation early in the year and a 3 month recovery slowed me down in terms of riding and training, but I was busy with writing for Horse and Rider Magazine and the seemingly endless editing and checking process for my book, 101 Horsemanship Exercises, which is now out on the shelves. First reports are very positive and lots of you have given me great feedback....thank you !

My neighbour Trish Tyler has kindly offered to host a demonstration at Oldwick Saddlery, followed by a **book signing on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November**. It starts at 11am; working with a horse from their yard and then with mine, and the book signing will be at 12.30. There is no charge, so do come along and support the event, we look forward to seeing you.

Sue Gardner and I have worked together this year on various projects and its been lots of fun. We tried a new format called the 'Road Map' Weekend, where students were shown how to devise a step-by-step route to a chosen goal. The objectives had to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time framed), and it was quite a challenge to break down our goals into bite size chunks in that way.... but the results were remarkable. Everyone achieved their aims and had greater motivation because they could clearly see where each step was leading which made it all seem more 'do-able'.

We will be running more 'Road Maps' here next Spring, but if you have access to in an indoor arena we will be happy to co-organise something if you and your friends are keen to work on your horsemanship skills over the winter months.

We are also doing 2 hour 'Problem' Solving sessions at yards and clubs. These are introductory lecture/demonstrations for groups of 10+ and are a great opportunity to begin learning how to understand and resolve the types of difficulties people commonly experience with horses. The charge is only £10 per head, so again, if you like the sound of this please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Sue has come up with a great idea for this winter now that the evenings have drawn right in. She is running an 8 week course (2 hrs per week) on How Horse's Learn. It will cover theory/video footage / simulation (the horse's perspective) and a couple of live demonstration's picking one of the student's horses that might have a clipping problem, or something similar; which will be a great example of the importance of feel, timing, approach and retreat, some of the many subjects discussed and taught on the course, for more information have a look on her website or give her a ring. [www.naturalhorse.co.uk](http://www.naturalhorse.co.uk) mob: 07813 913386

Its been a busy late summer here but I managed to escape with Esteem to Cornwall for a week visiting my good friends at Bluehorse in Wadebridge. ([www.bluehorseuk.net](http://www.bluehorseuk.net)). Specialising in Lusitano horses, Bluehorse is run by Kate Mably and Frederico Saramago, a Portuguese Classical master and horseman.

The art of Classical and Natural Horsemanship play a significant role in the teaching and philosophy adopted at Bluehorse and I went down to one of their clinics in October to help out with the horsemanship teaching and to learn more Classical riding from Frederico.

We had a fantastic time over the three day clinic and on the last evening we all had a chance to show off our achievements by performing dressage to fabulous live Opera singing in the indoor school in front of an audience of 100 invited guests ! There was everything from Quadrille and Pas de Deux, liberty display and jumping, in Portuguese costumes and Tops and Tails. It was a great success and has given me all sorts of ideas for doing something similar here ....so if you fancy riding to music and tripping the light fantastic with your horse give us a call and get your name on the list !

Talking of Esteem, she is very well and going beautifully. The work with Frederico has taken us to new levels of collection and balance, bringing greater lightness to everything we do. She has also been great at the practical jobs like leading a rather exuberant Regalo out around the farm next door so he can gain experience and confidence in the outside world. He is 2 ½ now and well on his way to 16hh. He is rather stunning (I'm not biased, of course) but has had a tough time this year as he developed Sweet Itch very badly which made him most unhappy. We tried just about everything and have found the most consistent way to manage it is by keeping him under wraps day and night so he looks rather liked the 'Caped Crusader' most of the time. It seems to work but its not ideal... though I probably have more trouble accepting it than he does ! If you have any Sweet Itch success stories you would like to share I would love to hear them.

Fortunately now the midges are less of a problem, we are able to do more and he is finding life much more interesting. Assuming we can keep the allergy under control I plan to take him along to a few events and demonstrations next year so I hope you will come along and meet him.

Meantime, don't forget we are available for lessons, here at Oakwood or wherever suits you, whether you want individual help or group sessions and do let us know if you have any ideas you would like us to organise.

We look forward to seeing you soon.  
Best wishes (and an early Happy Christmas !)

Rio and the Oakwood team.