

# Long Rider Lessons from the Past

## By Edward Percy Stebbing

In our on-going effort to document the history of equestrian travel, The Long Riders' Guild has uncovered a "lost" Story from the Road.

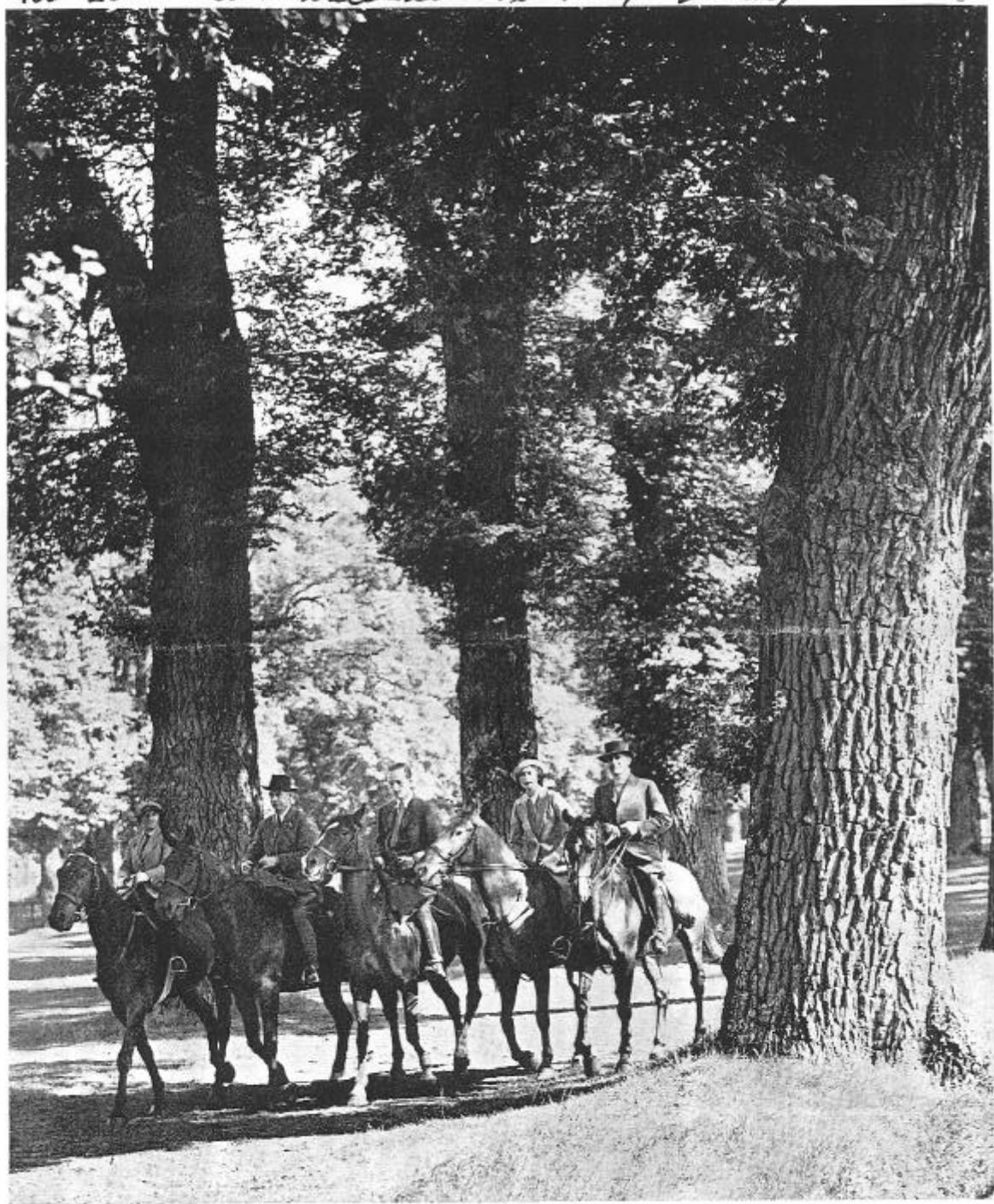
While doing research for The Guild's *Horse Travel Handbook*, we recovered a rare book entitled *Cross Country Riding*. Written in 1938 by an English Long Rider named Edward Percy Stebbing, there are less than half a dozen copies of the book now in existence. In addition to sharing the wisdom gained from years of riding in both India and England, the author made the startling announcement that he had been inspired to write his book because of the immense success of "The Long Distance Ride." A diligent hunt through a great many archives finally located a copy of Stebbing's article wherein he described how hundreds of equestrians rode from all points of England so as to gather in a grand ceremony in southern Britain.

Dated August, 1937, the story described how a host of British horse riders set out from eight starting points, bound for a central meeting place at Eastbourne. Not only were the editors of the sponsoring magazine surprised that more than twice as many people as expected decided to ride across Southern England, they also reported that one contestant came from as far away as Norway. Nor was an age a factor, as the oldest rider was 76 and the youngest only 11 years old.

What Long Rider Stebbing's terrific article reveals is that there are unexpected lessons to be learned when ring riders venture out of doors, be it in 1937 or seventy years later in 2007. Not only do they develop their courage, more importantly, they realize that riding isn't merely about detail, it is about individual accomplishment. Regardless of what year the calendar says, equestrians in search of the "centaur moment" are learning that it isn't "*Thou Must*" but rather "*This Is*."

## THE LONG DISTANCE RIDE

*For Horse-lovers Balendon 12. 1. 39 Dunny*



### The Start from Windsor

**T**HE Long Distance ride organised by *Country Life* and *RIDING* attracted an entry more than twice as large as had been expected. There were eight starting points from which the riders converged on Lewes on the second day, thence completing the ride to Eastbourne. The picture shows a party from Windsor passing through the Great Park on the first day.



The Last Lap of the Long Distance Ride. A party of competitors rising the Downs between Alfriston and Wilmington. In the distance are the Firle Hills with Firle Beacon on the right.

## THE NATIONAL HORSE WEEK AT EASTBOURNE

An Unqualified Success

By THE EDITOR

**T**HIS great Horse Week at Eastbourne has been a fine success. An arena of great size, beautifully situated at the foot of the Sussex Downs; a horse show with many of the best horses in the country paraded in the ring; judges of international and national repute; a gymkhana with huge entries, and then the long-distance riders. Of these, one hundred and thirty-three started from their several points and one hundred and eighteen entered the ring to parade before the judges; and every one of these enthusiastic riders passed four veterinary surgeons and were judged in the ring itself by Col. J. R. C. Gannon, the manager of the Hurlingham Club, Col. W. E. D. Campbell, and Mr. R. S. Summerhays.

On the morning of Tuesday, July 13, the Sussex Downs were every now and again obscured by a drifting sea mist, and all eyes were turned towards the flag staff erected at the top of Kennel Hill, anxiously seeking the arrival of the first horse and rider. From time to time a loudspeaker on the Show Ground announced the movements of the riders, and at last we heard that the first to leave the final check at Jevington might be

expected to appear over the top of the hill at any moment. From the time of this announcement onwards, the focus of interest became the little patch of gorse by which the flagstaff stood, and at exactly 11.15 a clear bugle note, borne down to the arena on a south-west breeze, proclaimed the first arrival. A

short time later, horse and rider passed the entrance gates to the veterinary officers in their enclosure outside the ring, and so on for the final test before the judges opposite the grand stand.

For hour after hour the long procession of riders streamed down Kennel Hill. The wonderful ride across the Sussex Downs from Lewes had undoubtedly given them the best ride of the hundred-mile journey. Every horse which entered the Show Ground passed the vets. and the judges, received their red rosettes and will in due time have sent to them from *Country Life* a bronze medal engraved with their name.

On all sides appreciative remarks from the riders about the courtesy and kindness they had received on their journey were heard. Kind people provided them with tea and lemonade, piloted them across the hills and

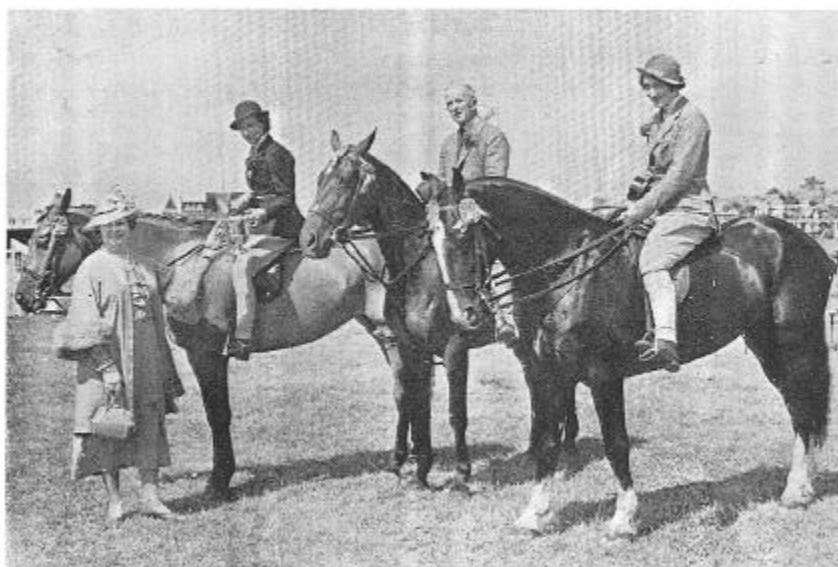


A competitor from Norway: Miss Ellissia Dimsdale, who travelled all the way from Oslo in order to compete.

along bridle paths. Everyone seemed pleased to see them and anxious to be of assistance. Among those who completed this long trek, the very first mention must be made of Mr. Blair, aged 76, who arrived in great heart, fit and well and full of enthusiasm. Young Master Ostrer, aged 11, was completely composed and apparently untired. He arrived with his sister.

Among the early arrivals was Miss Dimsdale, that most enthusiastic lady from Norway, who, although unfortunately not able to ride the horse she had brought from Norway owing to an accident, nevertheless, still undaunted, procured another for the journey. Particular mention must also be made of the very plucky Miss O'Brien, who started from Eastbourne and arrived with a fractured bone in her ankle. She was in considerable pain for much of the way, but carried on to the end.

A surprisingly large number of entrants rode as teams, and these made an impressive display as they came in. Sharing, perhaps, in the great appreciation of the crowd for Mr. Blair, was the long-distance Alsatian dog, who followed his team from Reading, and he, like all the other competitors, will receive a bronze medal. A popular arrival was Tatters, ridden by its owner, Lady



The winning team: Miss Sybil Charles, Lt.-Col. Gardner and Miss Ann Schuster, of the Knoll Riding School, Studland, receiving the cup for the Long Distance ride from Lady Newnes.

Kitty Ritson, both of whom are well known to readers of *Riding*. Tatters, in spite of his years, was quite unconcerned with the journey, it seemed.

It was not known until two days later that a young lady of 15, Miss R. Grant, who rode from Canterbury on a small brown pony, was the winner of the *Country Life* Cup, thanks to the condition of her pony and to the exceptionally fine display she subsequently gave before Major C. B. Toms in the *manège* test and jumping. When Miss Grant's age and the number of her competitors is realised, the merit of her performance is outstanding. Among the riders who competed as teams the judges selected Miss A. Schuster, Miss S. Charles and Lt.-Col. Neville Gardner, the horse ridden by the last-mentioned being the only one to receive full marks for condition.

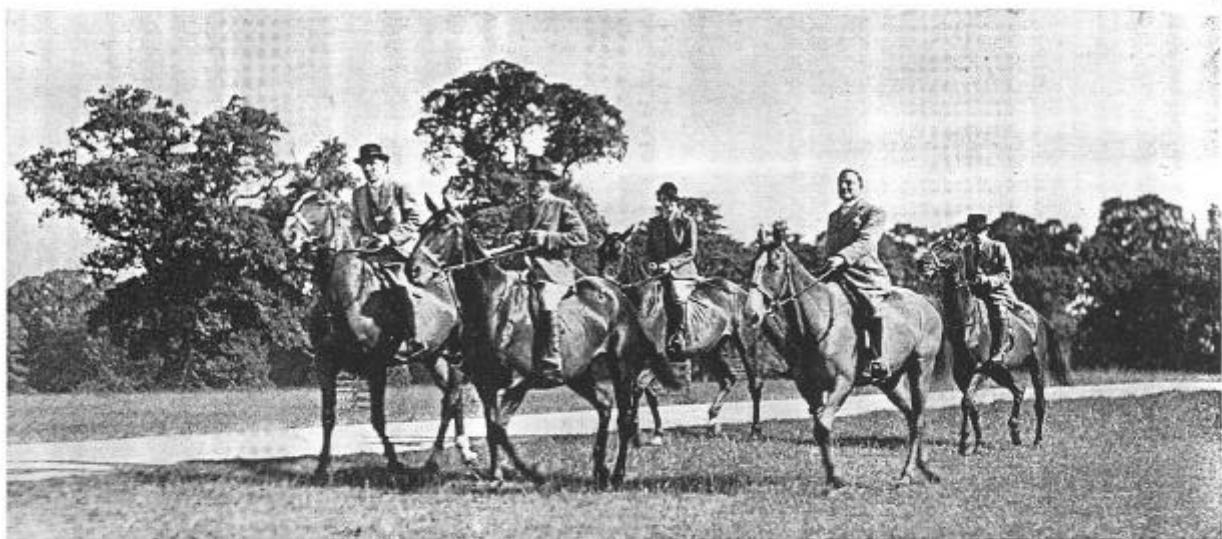
Having seen almost all the horses arrive at Redhill, at Lewes and at Eastbourne, and having studied each one as closely as time allowed, I am able to draw certain conclusions from this distance ride. I am satisfied that the smaller horses came through the test better than the larger, those about 15 hh. appearing to stand the journey better and very few of those of 16 hh. or over impressing me by their condition. The "quality" horses, that is, those showing a certain amount of the thoroughbred, were always standing well, even those—as some of them were—of considerable age. When it is considered that these horses were ridden by people of very varying weight, that many of them were of all ages, being very cross-bred and of poor conformation, it was a remarkable and indisputable fact that the condition of each horse almost without exception was excellent.

I would like to emphasise the fact that even when off the road, the going was very hard and the weather mostly sultry to hot. It seems to me, therefore, that the greatest praise must be awarded to the riders in general, who must have ridden their horses not only with consideration, but with great understanding. After all, it seems that the object of this ride was accomplished: a long and pleasant tour for both horse and rider.



The oldest competitor: Mr. D. R. Blair, aged 76, who was the oldest competitor and finished the ride. At the other end of the scale was a boy of 11.





(Above) One of the many groups in the long-distance ride. Setting out in brilliant sunshine, through delightful country.



(Left) A country lane. Much of the ride had to be along the "hard highroad," but bridle paths and open country were used whenever possible.

(Below, left) A wayside halt at Chelwood Gate. The Hon. Zoe Maxwell and Miss B. Stafford, who started from Bromley, loosen their girths and allow their mounts a mouthful of grass.

(Below, right) Major Faudel Phillips judging Class 2 Riding School.

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(Above) Chasing the pig, one of the most amusing events in the Gymkhana. Miss Mary Orr is seen on the far side.

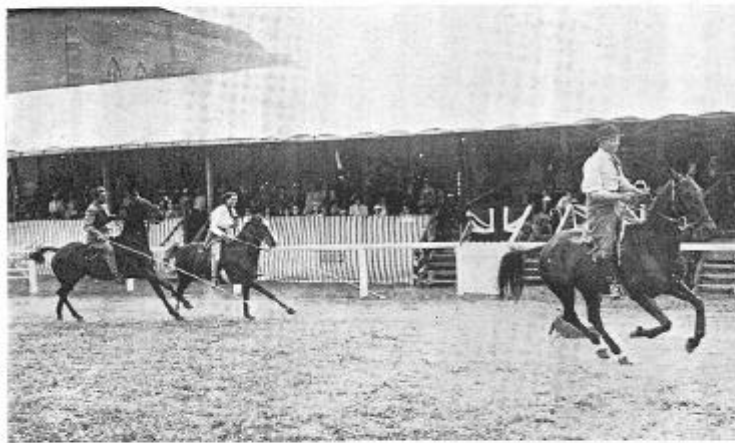
(Above, right) "C" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, gave a riding display during the Show. Our picture shows pick-a-back riding over fences.

(Right) An Epsom school. Mrs. Joan Nelson, of the Epsom Riding Establishment, with her pupils—winners in Class 2.

(Below, left) The Obstacle Race. One of the obstacles was to back through a gap in the hurdles. The riders' strange appearance is due to ducking for apples, which they have just accomplished.

(Below, right) The Harness Class, Miss Black driving Mr. Bertram Mills's Entry to win first prize in the Harness Class.





The following competitors completed the ride and will receive a bronze medal :

**WINDSOR.**—J. F. Rayner; Lady Kitty Rinson; Mrs. D. M. Roselli; Miss H. L. Jones; D. R. Blair; Miss E. C. Dimdale; J. R. Macarrell; W. A. E. Lyte; T. Heppell; F. Dowling; J. Bishop; W. Scott-Worthington; Miss A. Deane; W. J. Payne; F. J. Anderson; A. D. Lyne; K. E. Mariner; Miss H. Donald; Miss L. Saffery; Miss P. M. Wilcox; R. H. Walling; Mrs. A. M. Duncan; Miss B. Guroey; Miss C. M. Abbey. **READING.**—J. A. F. Rhodes; Miss D. Johnson; Miss Gladstone-Paine; T. N. Farr; Mrs. Mayfield; H. C. Booth; Miss N. Lindner; Mrs. E. F. West; Mrs. L. K. Williamson. **WINCHESTER.**—Mrs. C. Benton; Miss E. L. F. Baker; Miss C. Labouchere; Miss C. H. Cook; Miss E. P. Allison; Miss W. Storey; N. Duce Lance; Miss D. Duque Lance; S. Holt; Mrs. S. Holt; Mrs. R. Gordon; Mrs. E. E. Wood; Lieut.-Colonel Gardner; Miss S. Charles; Miss A. Schuster; Miss H. M. E. Barry; Mrs. N. Brassey; Miss E. D. Blake; Miss A. K. Bonstead; Miss M. M. Ledson; E. Wyatt; A. E. Winn; Miss D. M. Wedd; Miss Margaret Carnegie; Miss Mary Carnegie; Miss P. Home; Miss P. Stephens; Mrs. D. Foster-Tuck. **CHICHESTER.**—Miss J. Lawson; E. W. Lawrence; W. T. Holmes; C. Richardson; F. Richardson; Mrs. S. Chappell; Miss W. Hilder. **BROMLEY.**—P. H. Puske Knight; Miss E. S. Stafford; Miss M. Orr; Mrs. M. E. de Greeff; Miss O. Bostell; Mrs. M. Brughton; Miss E. Croft; Miss U. Dow. **CANTERBURY.**—Miss D. Ostrer; A. M. Ostrer; G. W. Beckley; Miss R. Grant; Miss E. R. Silverlock; A. G. Bazzard; Miss B. Hinchin; Mrs. R. Rudge. **TUNBRIDGE WELLS.**—Miss M. R. Woodwork; Miss A. V. Sinclair; G. S. Woodwork; Miss P. Carrington; C. Newfield; T. S. Foster; Miss E. K. Lemon; Miss R. Mabey; Miss M. Poole; Miss G. Rich-Clarke; Miss N. Reed; Miss D. E. Penhouse; Miss C. M. Ingram. **EASTBOURNE.**—Miss F. Daw; Miss B. Phillips; Miss M. E. Williams; Miss C. F. Atkin; P. Wilson; Miss M. A. O'Brien; Miss R. O'Brien; M. Beoney; Mrs. L. Orr; Mrs. A. de Winton; Miss E. Garner; Miss S. Mappin; Miss P. Glessing; J. Crenolly; Miss J. A. Dellagana; E. P. Stebbins; Miss M. C. Tuomey; E. L. Thompson; E. Holden; F. Brown.

