



## Wildwood Farm CLIPS & CLOPS Oak Harbor

September 2024

YOUR NEIGH-BORHOOD HULLABALOO

CREATED & EDITED BY HEATHER CARDER

**Inside the wild 'Man vs Horse' race that made a small Welsh town legend Once a year.** By Will Coldwell, *Financial Times Magazine July 2023*

**Hundreds of athletes and riders from across the world descend on Llanwrtyd Wells, mid-Wales. Why?**

Llanwrtyd Wells, in mid-Wales, is known as Britain's smallest town. In the center, just off the main road, is a Victorian pub, the Neuadd Arms. As well as being a hotel and a brewery, it's the official HQ of Green Events, a volunteer organization manned by a loose collective of greying locals, mainly retirees, who gather there to plot and plan hare-brained schemes to keep Llanwrtyd Wells alive. They've been doing so since the 1980s, when Gordon Green, the pub's former landlord, decided the time to think big had arrived.

One night at the Neuadd, Green found himself debating with Glyn Jones, a local huntsman, over the question of whether a man could beat a horse in a race. Jones was adamantly "team horse" but Green felt that, over a long distance with lots of climbs and descents, two legs stood a

chance. Things escalated and the men agreed to put it to the test. The idea of a spectacle excited Green. Nearly two decades earlier he'd visited Pamplona, in Spain, and run with the bulls through its cobbled streets. He'd seen the throngs of people watching this centuries-old tradition, felt the electricity in the atmosphere. Perhaps, he thought, a novelty race was the answer to reviving Llanwrtyd Wells.

The first man vs horse marathon took place on a rainy day in 1980. On the starting line were 50 runners and eight horses, after Green persuaded a dozen Gurkhas from the local military base to take part to boost turnout. Jones, who knew the area well, shot around the 22-mile course on his horse, Solomon, in 1h 26 minutes, nearly an hour ahead of the fastest human. As Green recalls, only one of the Gurkhas finished. Word about the race spread gradually. It picked up sponsorship from Bulmers Cider then William Hill, the bookmakers, which offered £1,000 to the first runner to beat the horses, promising to add to the prize pot each year until someone won it.

It took 25 years for a man to finally beat the horse, Green reflects, referring to when 27-year-old runner Huw Lobb completed the race in 2h 5m 19s (two minutes faster than the first rider). By

then, the number of competitors had swelled to 556 runners and 47 horses. Lobb collected a £25,000 cheque. Three years later it happened again, when Florian Holzinger beat the horse, earning £3,000.

**One grey day in April** I travel to Llanwrtyd Wells to meet the Green Events team as they prepare for a new season. At the entrance of the Neuadd I'm greeted by Bob Greenough, 78, a director of Green Events. In a side room, the man vs horse committee is gathered. Lindsay Ketteringham, the chairman, is there, sporting a technicolor shirt, head topped with a floppy mullet. He adopted the role when he and his wife Catherine took over the running of the Neuadd Arms 21 years ago. Then there's Mike Thomas, 72, race director, who wears the stony look of a man who has seen too many organizational disasters. There's the horse secretary in charge of, "trying to keep the horses under control". Also present is Eifon Lloyd, a Welsh-speaking local with the arduous job of preparing the route, sweet-talking landowners, and clearing roots and other hazards. Countless volunteers help with the smooth running of the day. "It's the lifeblood of the place, really," says Ketteringham.

*continued on page 11*

## WHAT'S TRENDING NOW

### Over-sized Eco Rocking Horse for Adults!

Celery Furniture's eco-friendly, giant rocking horse is big enough for moms and dads to go along for the ride or to go it alone. Even if this horse doesn't have a head, looks like rocking good fun!

The horse is a customizable item that is part of Celery's Lullaboo line of kid-approved furniture. Made from bamboo and/or formaldehyde-free medium density fiberboard, as well as low-volatile-organic-compound (VOC) paint and finishes, the products are entirely designed and fabricated in Bozeman, Montana by local craftspeople. This should be somewhat comforting considering the \$725-\$1165 price tag.

If Little Darling asks why you didn't buy a real pony for all that money, just point out that a real pony can bite.



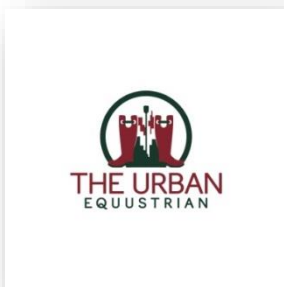
Celery furniture was founded by Dan Harding, Eliza Eddy and Kristin Harding. Both Dan and Kristin have degrees in architecture and together co-founded Intrinsic Architecture.

The firm's emphasis on construction capitalizes on Kristin's business project management experience and Dan's talents of building, woodworking and steel fabrication. Bringing their collective experience to Celery, they strive to offer an environment that fosters progressive design derived from hands-on creativity. This husband-and-wife team finds daily inspiration as new parents of their daughter, Alexandra.

[www.inhabitat.com](http://www.inhabitat.com)

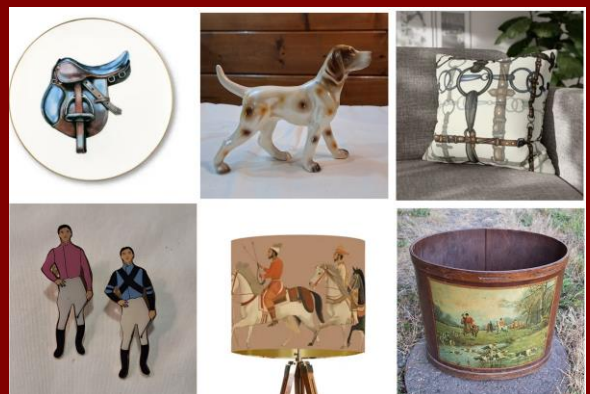


Our Store is currently open by Appointment



Shop Online!  
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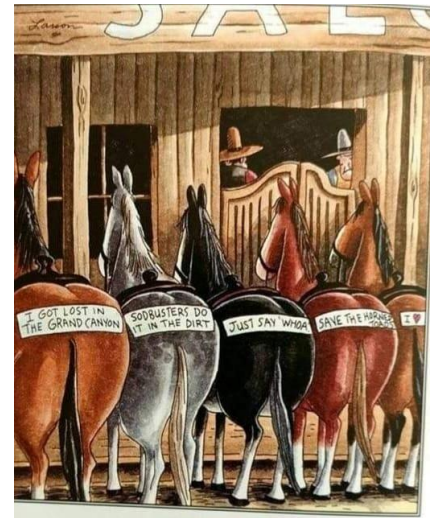
## New Items for September







My advice to little girls: Never settle for the hamster....



LOOK! I FOUND A HALF-HALT!!



Common bumper stickers of the Old West

Gabriella Paiella @GMPaiella

In retrospect, I should've developed more hobbies beyond "going out to eat" and horses

**THE BRAIN IS THE MOST AMAZING ORGAN. IT WORKS 24 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS A YEAR FROM BIRTH UNTIL YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH A HORSE.**

#HOLDMYCARROT



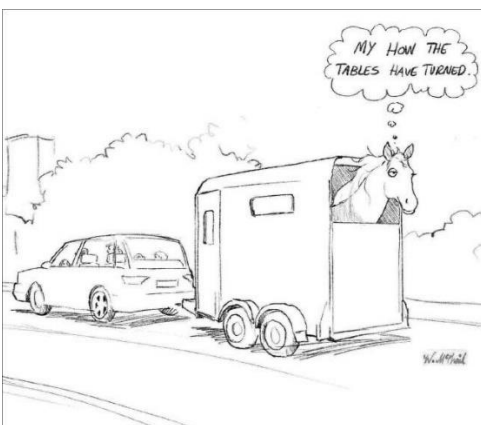
Sometimes I just want someone to hug me and say, "It's going to be okay, here's a horse and two million dollars."



the holes in this hay net are getting smaller! what are you trying to say buddy!



A visual representation of me trying to get on top of my bills



Here's to Autumn... the only time when the words "RIDING" and "FALL" sound good together.

someecards EquineSite.com



## WILDWOOD FARM B&B



### This is your moment.

Today at Wildwood Farm B&B



A Mechanic learned...

*Standing on the street corner waiting for no one is Power.*

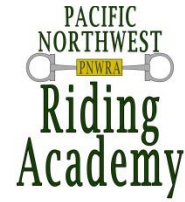
Immerse yourself in the equestrian world at Wildwood Farm B&B located on beautiful Whidbey Island.

Our ranch has a long history of igniting the spark between horses and humans, whether you want a small introduction or total immersion.

Come experience the power of possibility with these magnificent creatures and explore the abundance of silent repose.

[www.wildwoodfarmbandb.com](http://www.wildwoodfarmbandb.com)

WILDWOOD FARM HAS IT ALL!



“Ride with me and I will teach you what you need, for I am gentle and humble, and it’s here that you will find rest for your soul.”

-Matthew 11:29



“In Riding a horse, we borrow freedom.”

-Helen Thompson



[WWW.PNWRiding.com](http://WWW.PNWRiding.com)

PACIFIC NORTHWEST RIDING ACADEMY



# After deaths of as many as 70 horses, owner of Oklahoma rodeo company suspects feed was tainted

CBS News MoneyWatch August 30, 2024

Rhett Beutler, the co-owner of a nearly century-old Oklahoma company that supplies stock for rodeos, says he suspects tainted feed is to blame after as many as 70 horses died a week ago.

Beutler, co-owner of Beutler and Son Rodeo Co. near Elk City, told KFOR-TV that the horses died shortly after being fed.

"We didn't know what was going on, we just got the feed and started feeding it like always," Beutler told KFOR-TV. "Then all of a sudden I looked up and there was horses just falling over, dying."

The feed originated in Kansas, according to a statement from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, which has collected a sample of the feed to analyze in two state-certified laboratories. The agency said in a statement that it is also working with the Kansas Department of Agriculture to investigate.

Beutler and Son officials did not immediately return messages seeking comment Friday.

"All them horses are kind of like my kids; I've raised them from time they were born," Beutler told KOKH-TV, "Once you lose one, that's one too many."

The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture said an inspector visited the Beutler and Son site on August 26.

"We have initiated an investigation which includes labeling procedures, operating procedures and a review of their records to ensure the appropriate protocols were followed" in producing and shipping the feed to Oklahoma, said Kansas agriculture spokesperson Jamie Stewart.

While the source of the issue hasn't been identified, an equine specialist told KFOR that it's possible a mill that also produces cattle feed could have included Monensin, an additive that is used to control parasites and which is given often to cattle. It's deadly to horses, however. "It affects their heart and so it causes necrosis of the heart tissue, essentially and so in essence, they kind of have heart attacks and so it tends to be pretty rapid onset," said Kris Hiney, equine extension specialist for Oklahoma State University.

The company that provided the feed has not been identified because of the ongoing investigation, Stewart said.

Dr. Gregg VeneKlasen, of the Timber Creek Veterinary Hospital, the Beutlers' veterinarian, declined to comment on the deaths other than to call it a "tragedy."

Beutler and Son was founded in 1929 as Beutler Brothers near Elk City, about 105 miles (169 kilometers) west of Oklahoma City, and provides stock for rodeos, including the National Finals Rodeo. The company is providing the majority of stock for the Elk City Rodeo starting Friday night, according to Elk City Rodeo board member Randy Hargis, who said the events include bareback horse riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding and steer wrestling.

# Nutrition Corner

## TRIPLE CROWN FEEDS INTRODUCE FUNCTIONAL WAFERS!

Functional Wafers are specially formulated with ingredients that boost overall equine health. They are made to support common issues your horse may face such as digestive health, coat and skin condition, and hoof integrity. Intentionally designed as a healthier snack or reward – something you and your horse will feel good about.

### Coat Functional Wafers

Triple Crown Coat Functional Wafers offer an additional way to support your horse. Our nutritional wafers are crafted with key ingredients that promote coat and skin health, including organic forms of zinc and manganese which have been shown to promote hair growth, color and sheen. In addition, the inclusion of natural Vitamin E helps protect against oxidative damage.

### Gut Functional Wafers

Triple crown Gut Functional Wafers offer an

Additional way to support your horse. These nutritional wafers are also crafted with key ingredients that promote digestive and gastric health, including a unique source of 1,3-beta glucans (from algae) that are known to support proper immune response by fortifying the gut during times of stress or exposure to disease. In addition, these wafers include a marine-derived calcium and calcium bicarbonate which are buffers known to help maintain a normal gastric ph.

### Hoof Functional Wafers

Triple Crown Hoof Functional wafers offer an additional way to support your horse. These nutritional wafers are also crafted with key ingredients that promote hoof health, including biotin which is known to support hoof pliability by helping the cells of the hoof bind together. In addition, our formula contains organic forms of zinc and copper which have been shown to promote sole depth and hoof integrity.

Coat is Cherry-flavored, Gut is Banana-flavored and Hoof is Rosemary- Flavored!

## WILDWOOD FARM AND TRIPLE CROWN FEEDS.

Our partnership with Triple Crown began in 2014 through a promotion with the USEF encouraging farm members to compare their current feeding programs with Triple Crown products. We have found the TC products to be superior to other products primarily because of the EquiMix technology and the research support of a leading-edge team including independent representatives of Equine Universities, Medical clinics and top level riders and trainers

## Meet

## ZIPPOS FLASHY ASSET

Affectionately known as Mara around the barn, this little mare came to Wildwood Farm in May of 2023 to be evaluated for our lesson program.

Her coming to our farm was a long process, as we had been contacted by her owner in 2022 asking if we would be willing to provide a home for her horses when the family moved to Montana, they did not want to subject their horses to such a change in environment at their older age.

We went and looked at Mara in the fall of 2022 and she was a cute little mare, a little bossy and pudgy, but charming all the same. And her pasture-mate, Comet, adored her and gave her full run of the pasture and barn.

With a delay in plans and various other things that took priority, we did not get to see Mara until May of the following year. But she was worth the wait! Today she is a valued school horse and shares her skills with our more intermediate students.



Mara was born on January 26, 2001, in Ohio, but her owner lived in Paris, Texas and her trainer was in Lebanon, Indiana. She was bred to be a performance and halter horse, and her beautiful buckskin color and lovely conformation pretty much sealed her career.

When she was 2, she won a futurity in Indiana, and when she was 3, she was regional champion at Western Pleasure and the Snaffle Bit Futurity. That year she was sold to a family in Redmond, Washington as a show horse for their daughter; she did very well in the local shows and 2 years later was sold to another show home in the same vicinity. She competed at various local shows for the next 8 years, then when her owner left for college, she found a home with her previous owner in Arlington who enjoyed trail riding with her, until an injury in 2018. Mara was semi-retired when we met her, but definitely likes to have a job again!

# THE PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE

**With Nancy Arend  
(Jac & Zip's Mom)**

**What is your Idea of Perfect Happiness?**

*Being at peace with life.*

**What is your Greatest Fear?**

*The people around me being hurt..*

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

*Procrastination and overindulgence.*

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

*Meanness -People that are mean to other people.*

**What Living Person do you Most Admire?**

*Jimmy Carter and Taylor Swift.*

**What is your greatest extravagance?**

*Wine!*

**What is your current state of mind?**

*Happy...but frustrated*

**What do you consider the most over-rated virtue?**

*Good looks*

**On what occasion do you lie?**

*When I think I am protecting somebody.*

**What do you most dislike about your appearance?**

*Too pudgy!*

**What is the quality you most like in a man?**

*Sense of Humor; Light in life and love; Honesty.*

**Which living person do you most despise?**

*Putin.*

**What is the quality you most like in a woman?**

*Willingness to support others*

**What words or phrases do you most over-use?**

*"ummm" and "Really?"*

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

*Ken, my husband, Hands down.*

**When and where were you the happiest?**

*When I was first promoted to VP at the company I worked for. I shattered the glass ceiling. Women came to tell me how important that was to the work, they felt really empowered.*

**Which talent would you most like to have?**

*Critical thinking.*

**If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?**

*To eat and drink in moderation; to learn to savor it more.*

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

*My career. Lots of things people said women could not do, I did.*

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what would it be?**

*One of my horses.*

**Where would you most like to live?**

*Hawaii*

**What is your most treasured possession?**

*My Horses*

**What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?**

*Constant physical pain*

**What is your favorite occupation?**

*Professional/Olympic Level rider*

**What is your most marked characteristic?**

*My laughter*

**What do you most value in your friends?**

*Diversity. A good variety weird friends*

**Who are your favorite writers?**

*Mitchner and Kurt Vonnegut*

**Who is your hero of fiction?**

*Jack Reacher*

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?**

*Hilary Clinton*

**Who are your heroes in real life?**

*My husband Ken. He's interesting, supportive, I like what he knows. An amazing man.*

**What are your favorite names?**

*Zippity Doo Dah and Weyerhaeuser.*

**What is it that you most dislike?**

*Evil people doing harm to others*

**What is your greatest regret?**

*That I didn't take more time to be loser to my parents while they were alive.*

**How would you like to die?**

*Heart attack in my sleep. Or with a little head's up – like 2 weeks so I can get my affairs in order.*

**What is your motto?**

*Enjoy life.*



# MOST FABULOUS HORSE QUILTS!





# General Sheridan's Horse Rienzi Winchester

## Washington, D.C.

This taxidermy horse was a Civil War hero.



**UNION GENERAL PHIL SHERIDAN LOVED** his horse so much, he had the animal stuffed when it finally died, after heroically fighting in over a dozen battles and surviving multiple wounds during the U.S. Civil War.

The most famous was the crucial battle for the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, 1864. General Sheridan was 12 miles away in a small town of Winchester when the battle broke out, but thanks to the strength and power of his trusty horse, Rienzi, he was able to make the famous ride from Winchester to Cedar Creek in time to ride to the front, rally the Union troops, and win the day.

Cedar Creek was one of 45 engagements including 19 pitched battles that Sheridan and Rienzi fought together. The horse was wounded several times in battle, but lived nearly 20 years, and became famous throughout the course of the war, even helping campaign for Lincoln's reelection.

When the horse died, Sheridan had it stuffed, and renamed it Winchester as a (politically strategic) reminder of the heroic victory. The taxidermy animal was originally donated to the US First Army Museum in New York City, but the museum burned down in 1922. Yet again, the horse managed to survive, and it was then that it made the trip—under military escort—to its permanent home at the Smithsonian's Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

### Know Before You Go

The horse is located in the Hall of Armed Forces History exhibit at the Smithsonian.

# The Carolina Marsh Tacky



The **Carolina Marsh Tacky** or **Marsh Tacky** is a critically endangered breed of horse, native to South Carolina. It is a member of the Colonial Spanish group of horse breeds, which also include the Florida Cracker Horse and the Banker horse of North Carolina. It is a small horse, well-adapted for use in the lowland swamps of its native South Carolina. The Marsh Tacky developed from Spanish horses brought to the South Carolina coast by Spanish explorers, settlers and traders as early as the 16th century. The horses were used by the colonists during the American Revolution, and by settlers for farm work, herding cattle and hunting throughout the breed's history.

The breed is considered to be critically endangered by both the Livestock Conservancy and the Equus Survival Trust, and there are only around 400 Marsh Tackies in existence today. In 2006 and 2007, the two organizations worked together to complete DNA testing on the breed, with the goals of mapping the Marsh Tacky's place among other horse breeds, and starting a stud book. In 2007, an association was begun with the objective of preserving and promoting the Marsh Tacky; and in 2010, a closed stud book was created.

On June 11, 2010, a bill was signed into law that made the Carolina Marsh Tacky the official state horse of South Carolina.

The Marsh Tacky generally stands between 14 and 14.2 hands high, although the acceptable range is between 13 and 15 hands. Today, the breed comes in a wide variety of colors, including dun, bay, roan, chestnut, black and grullo. Historically, multi-colored patterns such as pinto were found, but they were not selected for when breeding, and today are not seen. The colors today are consistent with those of other Colonial Spanish horses. The profile of the breed's head is usually flat or somewhat concave, becoming slightly convex from the nasal region to the top of the muzzle. The forehead is wide and the eyes set well apart. The breed typically has a slight ewe neck, and the neck is attached low on the chest compared to many other breeds. The withers are pronounced, the back short and strong, and the croup steeply angled. The chest is deep but narrow and the shoulder long and angled. The legs have long, tapering muscling, with in general no feathering on the lower legs. The Marsh Tacky exhibits a four-beat ambling gait, most similar to the *marcha batida* of the Brazilian Mangalarga Marchador, another breed with Spanish heritage, although also compared to the fox trot of the Missouri Fox Trotter. However, the Marsh Tacky's gait shows a period of quadrupedal support where all four feet are planted and diagonal foot pairings, whereas the Fox Trotter shows tripedal support and the Mangalarga Marchador lacks the diagonal foot pairings.

The Marsh Tacky is known by owners for its stamina and ability to work in water and swamps without panicking. They tend to be sure-footed, sturdy, smart, and able to survive in challenging coastal environments, as well as being easy keepers. Their small size and gentle nature made them the historically preferred mount for children and women, but they were also used as working animals due to their abilities in the field. Today, they are used in endurance riding, as well as continuing their traditional work assisting humans with hunting wild game and herding cattle.



*Cont'd from page 1*

This year's race is the biggest ever. Over 1,000 runners and 64 horses. The organizers like to boast that it's the biggest horse race in Europe. The Grand National only has 40. Something about the race seems to capture people's imagination, the challenge, the absurdity, the simplicity. It was conceived at the end of the 1970s but feels as if it has been around forever. I mumble this thought out loud and Ketteringham nods, his face locked in a serious expression: "It's medieval."

On Friday June 9, the day before the big race, I return to Llanwrtyd Wells. This time the sun is beaming, the sky blue and I arrive ahead of schedule and wander up to the town, past the grand detached Victorian houses to the community hall where registration is taking place. At the entrance I find Greenough shuffling about in a V-neck cricket jumper and a marshal's jacket. The hall is filling up with participants collecting their race numbers, T-shirts and free jelly babies from bowls set out on the trestle tables. On the wall is handwritten information for the relay racers, who run in teams of three. Tea towels are on sale, printed with dramatic photos of runners and horses side-by-side in the fray. It's like a village fête for adrenaline junkies.

The race draws regulars as well as newcomers, reflecting the growing appetite for endurance running and extreme sporting activities. I meet one young woman from Bristol who only started running 12 months ago and has been training intensively since reading about the marathon in a book. Then there's serious runners from afar, like Carnie Cullen, 58, from Pretoria, who has forsaken a place in the Comrades Ultramarathon in South Africa for the chance to join the madness in Llanwrtyd. Googling top 10 iconic races, she stumbled across this one.

As the evening draws in, I head to the Neuadd, where the pre-race "pasta party" is in full flow. Green pulls over Ken Jones, 74, a farmer whose daughter won as a rider in 2010. "I'm the only person who's bred the winning horse and the rider," he says, proudly. "No one else has done that in 43 years." Everyone here has a legend of their own.

The beauty of the man vs horse marathon is that although it seems like a clear win for the quadrupeds, it can be a much more even match. Around the time Green was embarking on his first race, the academic consensus was that humans were inferior runners on account of their poor sprinting ability, relative to other animals. Then, in 1984, a graduate student named David Carrier published a paper arguing that, over long distances, in the heat, humans could outrun mammals such as antelopes — a phenomenon known as "persistence hunting". The Harvard academic Daniel Lieberman, along with biologist Dennis Bramble, pursued this theory. They gathered evidence to illustrate how — and why — humans have evolved to perform so well in endurance running. As Lieberman points out in his 2020 book *Exercised*, few animals will run more than a 100 yards without being forced to, while "millions of run-of-the-mill people like my mother lace on shoes and jog five miles a day, several days a week".

Horses will always outperform humans in a sprint or gallop, but they can only sustain this for a short distance. At an endurance pace — for horses, a trot — Lieberman points out that even "some middle-aged professors" can run a marathon well above the speed of a thoroughbred. One physical adaptation that aids humans is our relatively long legs and tendons. When running, these act like springs, returning energy back into the body, catapulting us forward. We can balance well when we run too, thanks to our large glutes and the way we pump our arms and rotate our trunk as we move. A horse has to slow down on hills or uneven terrain. More nimble, humans can maintain their pace.

**It's 10am on race day.** Running shoes patter around the town; horse dung steams on the street. A short walk away, the horses and riders are prepping in a field. The gorpcore fell-running aesthetic gives way to helmets and jods, support teams with polo shirts printed with "Sh\*t shoveller" and "Hot to trot". To avoid a stampede in the town center, the runners get a 15–20-minute head start on the horses. This allows the humans to reach a wider stretch of track before horses can overtake them, and the head start is then deducted from their finishing time to determine the winner. The horses also have to pass a number of vet inspections at the start, middle and end of the race. They're checked for lameness, hydration and their heart rate, which needs to fall below 60 before they can continue.

There are seasoned endurance riders, some of whom drop out of more serious competitions to take part. Others are just here to enjoy the scenery, "and not run over any runners", as Celina Carlile, 32, puts it. She's with her horse, Nala, husband, Adam, and daughter, Harriet, six, who has a tie-dye T-shirt with a horse's face on the front. A gangly runner jogs past doing a warm-up lap of the field, prompting eyerolls from the riders. Twenty-two miles on horseback is tough going, but I get the feeling that they think the runners are the bonkers ones.

Back at the Neuadd, the courtyard is full. Spectators line the streets as the start time looms. Then, after a countdown, they're off. The runners pour over the starting line. About 20 minutes later, the horses canter past to whoops and cheers and disappear up the road behind them. It's a tough route, starting with a big hill. Many of the runners describe the surreal feeling of hearing the thunder of hooves coming up behind them.

Along the track, relay runners and spectators gaze over fields and hedgerows for signs of life. Then, at about 12.30, Daniel Connolly, one of the solo runners, comes streaming down the track. There's not a horse in sight.

# WILDWOOD FARM Clips & Clops Newsletter

2326 Happy Valley Rd  
Oak Harbor WA 98277

At the finish line, beer is drunk, ice creams melt, and the commentator informs the 1,000-odd spectators lounging in a sunny field that the leader is two miles away. There's a digital clock set to 22:11 — the head start time given to the runners. Barely 10 minutes later Connolly crosses the line: 2:24:38. That's fast. Another countdown starts. Still no horses. A couple of other runners cross the line, the clock runs down, and: "5,4,3,2,1 . . . that's it! Man beats horse!"

I find Connolly, a 27-year-old running coach from Shropshire, who is sponsored by Salomon, grinning. He has a slightly wild look in his eyes and laughs between sentences. "I was running like a fox," he says. To a runner of his caliber, the novelty of the race is almost irrelevant — he didn't encounter a single horse.

Another 10 minutes pass before the first horses arrive, three of them galloping head-to-head to the finish. First by a nose is Kate Atkinson on DNS Ronaldo. Atkinson, as well as Beth Langley and Tissy, who finish second, are Team GB endurance competitors. They're used to 100-milers, so this is relatively lightweight. But it shows how much the horses are limited by the heat. Langley says today was one of the toughest races she's run.

Then more horses, charging home dramatically alongside runners, and the field is starting to bustle. One man is carried over by the line by two medics. Another saunters about smoking a cigar. Competitors swarm around the Merched y Wawr marquee for their free tea and pick from a range of sandwiches that includes cheese and jam. I find Peter Wirtzfeld and Dawn Cobbett. He's wondering if that will be the last time he runs it; she ended up head-to-head with a horse that decided, with the finish in sight, simply to shove its front legs out and stop running. "The course definitely got harder," she says. "We're 30 years older than when we first started, but still . . ."

"OK, so this all started from a conversation around a bar?" "Yes," says Green, leaning on his stick. It's well-rehearsed, but he doesn't tire of the story. "More people should be going to bars and having conversations."

