

Endurance ride at Cullinagh Stables



After huge success last month at the annual Red Dragon Festival of Endurance at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells, Wales, members of the Irish Long Distance Riding Association travelled to County Waterford on Sunday, 15th November to participate in the ILDRA's End of Year Ride at Cullinagh Stables, Kilmeaden.

The Irish Long Distance Riding Association (ILDRA) is the governing body for Endurance Riding in Ireland and it is affiliated to Horse Sport Ireland. There are two regional groups based in Ulster and Leinster.

The association organises endurance events throughout the country, many of which are 'pleasure rides'. These rides normally cover distances of about eight miles and are open to members and non-members.

Competitive Trail Rides and Endurance Races are also regular features of the ILDRA calendar and these events cover distances of 50 miles and upwards.

Endurance riding is growing in popularity in Munster as was clearly evident from the large turnout at last week's pleasure ride at Cullinagh Stables.

Participants from across the south followed pre-marked trails, taking them through woodland and along the River Dawn, flanked by historic sites such as the old cotton mill and chimney at Fairbrook, the Queen Anne Way and the Spa Fields at Gortnacloche.

Endurance riding isn't a long pony trek, ambling through lanes nor is it for the faint hearted. It is a unique competitive challenge and a supreme sport for learning about equine fitness and the strong relationship forged between horse and rider, one built on mutual trust. It is also a test of the horse's and rider's endurance skills across sometimes very challenging terrain.

The toughest challenges are presented by the endurance races, where riders are competing against each other rather than the clock. The highest level of competition is the 160km (100 mile) endurance ride, the International Senior Championship distance.

Ireland's top endurance riders are among the best in the world, with Hilda Donahue currently ranked first in the Open Combination World Endurance Ranking on Cheryl Van Deusen's half-Arabian mare, Spotless Summer Magic.

ILDRA is the internationally recognised body for the sport of endurance riding in the Ireland. Each year, the organisation puts together young rider, intermediate and senior teams and arranges for them to compete in international endurance riding events.

Due to the interest shown at last week's pleasure ride, a competitive ride is being planned for early spring at Cullinagh Stables.

For further information on endurance riding in Ireland, please visit the ILRDA website: www.enduranceridingireland.com