



### **EPIC MAN V HORSE RACE ACROSS SOMERSET'S QUANTOCK HILLS ENDS IN HISTORIC TIE**

A man and a horse and rider crossed the finish line together on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October, in the first event of its kind on English soil. The race has been run in Wales 41 times since 1980 with just four human winners in that time. On every other occasion a horse and rider has crossed the finish line first. The Quantock Hills event was the first time the race had ever ended in a dead heat.

28 horses and their riders, and 46 runners took on the gruelling 23-mile course. It started and finished in the parish of Over Stowey, and included forest tracks, open moor land and steep hills, taking competitors to the highest point on the Quantocks and out as far as Holford Combe. Across the whole course, competitors climbed and descended over 1000m in total. For many, Dowsborough Hill - which came late in the course and was described as "brutal" and "emotional" by some - proved its the toughest feature.

The competitors came from as far afield as the Lake District, Cornwall, Cambridge and, of course, Wales. Some were taking part in an event of this kind for the first time - others were veterans of the Welsh event. The youngest rider and runner were both 24, the oldest equestrian was 64 and the oldest runner was 67. Various breeds of horse took part including Arabs (traditionally used for endurance events), cobs, Irish Sports Horses, thoroughbreds, warmbloods and of course, local Quantock Hill ponies.

Animal welfare was paramount – especially on an unseasonably hot October day - and the horses were assessed by a vet at the beginning of the race and again at the midpoint. Two horses were retired on course as they weren't considered fit enough to continue, one pulled up early in the event, one pulled off a shoe and also had to retire and one went off course and had to be recovered by the event team. The other 25 horses and all runners made it across the finish line.

The race was started by 88-year-old Gordon Green, who founded the original Welsh Man V Horse some 40 years ago. His son Andy reached out to the organisers who were thrilled to have him at the inaugural MvH (England).

The joint winners completed the course in an impressive 3 hours and 11 minutes with the last runner / rider crossing 2 hours / 44 minutes later, just inside the cut off time of 6 hours.

The winners were horse and rider Glenda Smith, 54, and her 17-year-old Arab gelding, Boysey, from Cornwall and runner Robin Fieldhouse, 29, from Bristol. Glenda said afterwards that it was a challenging race with a great atmosphere.

The event was organised to raise awareness of men's mental health and suicide prevention in young people. Over £1000 was raised for mental health charity STEVE, and the winner's trophy was named in honour of local Over Stowey resident, Gabby Treharne who sadly passed away aged just 17 in March 2021.

Gabby's father Jago Treharne, and grandmother Judy Treharne presented the trophy to the winners and spoke about how had Gabby still been alive, she would have been the first to sign up for the event, as riding over the Quantocks was what she loved.

Organisers plan to make the event an annual one. This year's event had a reserve list and with many competitors already saying they'll be back to compete again, it's set to become a popular fixture in the endurance calendar.

Jon Dolphin, one of the organisers, said: "We wanted the course to show off the best of the Quantocks and to really challenge the riders and runners. We talked to the Welsh event in the early stages of our planning to learn from their experience and even though we tested the course rigorously on horseback and on foot, I couldn't have predicted that we would get a draw on the inaugural event. By luck or judgement, it looks like we got the balance just about right."

Philip King, fellow organiser, said: "From the outset we wanted an event that had the principles of friendly competition, compassion and community running through it. We are a small community with a huge, welcoming heart. We were delighted that not just our competitors but our friends, neighbours, our amazing volunteers, landowners and supporters embraced the spirit of the event. Everybody who took part has been full of

praise for everything from the weather, which we can't take credit for, to the organisation, the friendly welcome and the sheer joy of competing that makes you happy to be alive. We are concerned to help people improve their mental health and we think this idea fits perfectly with this intention."

For further information, including photographs and video content, please contact: