

Hacking Horrors

by Angie Jones-Moore

Too many close encounters with local traffic for one horse rider!

IOWN A 15'3 THOROUGHBRED, Mr Basil Brush, we live in Wiltshire and our main purpose is to be the happiest hackers that there are and generally enjoy our life together. However, the increase in traffic and sadly the attitude of some drivers is turning our riding into hacking horrors more often than we would like.

Basil and I ride on country lanes, some of which are only wide enough for one car at a time. I ride out of rush hour, and avoid school run times to prevent being a nuisance to motorists as much as I can. I have no issue with local drivers, they are so polite and we often interact as we pass each other. The local farmers in their huge tractors and farm machinery always stop and often turn off the engine allowing us to ride by safely, for this I am very grateful.

The issue remains with those who use the lanes as a short cut from one town to another, hoping to shave 5 minutes off their commute time; which of course is all that matters when the driver has somewhere to go. I have had cars speed by at over 40 mph and so closely I have had to squeeze my leg in to prevent the stirrup iron damaging the passing car. At what point did it become acceptable to drive so recklessly and not to experience any consequences? I am sure there would be outcry if I did damage to their car!

I am fortunate Basil and I are experienced and know the area we ride, enabling us to duck into gateways and junctions when we hear a fast car approaching. Of course there are times this isn't possible and we have to take a deep breath and hope we don't get hit! I wear all the correct attire, a high visibility body warmer and an exercise sheet for Basil when it's the poorer weather. You really can't miss us – half a ton of fluorescent yellow is quite a sight to behold!

I was feeling cantankerous and positively fed up after returning from yet another horror hack which we spent more time dodging low flying cars than actually enjoying ourselves. I headed off to the local print shop and had a rugby shirt made, 'KILL YOUR SPEED NOT MY HORSE' in a red warning circle with bold black letters, positioned in the middle of my back on a white shirt. Feeling enlightened I set off on my next hack, wearing my new shirt. I felt sure to receive some abuse of some description the usual 'Get off the road!' 'You horsey women think you own the place!' but, as the first driver approached they slowed, to my surprise my shirt worked!



Drivers approached slower from behind, with me waving and smiling as always and Basil and I had a thoroughly pleasant hack! Hooray! It really did work! My shirt proved as a reminder of the consequence, which is all that was needed. I'm not saying one rugby shirt has changed all drivers, but it has certainly made a few of them think!