

Hi There Peter, Thought this might be of some interest to you.  
Regards Gary

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NEWS FOCUS

Gary Davies lived a childhood dream to become the Edgware Cowboy. Here he tells reporter **Elizabeth Pears** about his life in the saddle.

THE doors of the drinking house swung open. The sound of cowboy boots and metal spurs clicked against the wooden floor as their moustachioed owner strode towards the bar where he ordered a half pint of Guinness.

There was a hushed silence. For this was not the Great Plains or the Rocky Mountains. This was the Elan Valley of Wales. And he was not the Sundance Kid. He was 33-year-old Barnet man Gary Davies.

Mr Davies, the "Edgware Cowboy", now 72, laughs as he remembers the incident: "The whole bar went silent and they just stared at me. Then one of them stood up and went outside. He came back in and said in Welsh: 'You won't believe this boys, but he's actually got a horse.'"

"The funniest thing was that out of all the bars I had been in, that was the one that most looked as though it belonged in a Western."

Having first heard the "call of the prairie" when he was just a young boy fascinated by Westerns, it wasn't until he was an adult that Mr Davies, of Oakwood Drive, first mounted a horse.

# Edgware cowboy rides into town



Saddling up: the self-styled 'Edgware cowboy' with Times reporter Elizabeth Pears NL11819

And three years later, in 1972, he fulfilled his childhood ambition of becoming a bonafide cowboy by completing a 1000-mile journey across 22 counties, earning him a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for long-distance riding.

He said: "My neighbour bought a horse and he invit-

ed me to come and take a look. He spent one minute teaching me how to hold the reins. And that was the only lesson I ever had. Three months later I bought my own horse. And I haven't looked back since."

Welsh-born Mr Davies, who moved to Edgware when he was six months old,

became a regular sight as he galloped around the borough in between jobs such as running his family's greengrocers in Kilburn and selling paraffin.

He worked through the winter and used the summer months to go trekking. He said: "I made good money, so I was able to take time off to

pursue my hobby. I had made plans to visit my mother who had recently returned to Wales and I thought I would ride there on horseback. Then I thought, why not give myself a proper challenge?"

He extended the journey to include a tour of England and Wales, passing through the Cotswolds and the Black Mountain of Glamorganshire en route to his mother's home near in Green Gables, St Dogmaels. He vowed to do the return journey in 50 days.

Mr Davies said: "My wife Terry did not want me to go. Because Dandi was quite a wild horse she always worried that when I went out riding I might never come back. We often argued about it. One morning she woke up and said she had dreamt about the three of us tucked up in bed together with his head on the pillow and his front teeth over the blankets."

So with just the shadow of the sun and a compass to

guide him, Mr Davies and his faithful but free-spirited horse set off on the journey of a lifetime. There was no planned route — instead he followed a mixture of roads and bridle paths, sheep tracks in the mountains and old Roman roads.

Sometimes he would have nowhere to sleep but in fields and would wake up drenched and shivering in the morning dew. Sometimes he'd sleep with Dandi in farm stables. But, occasionally, he would be invited in by the people he met along the way to spend the night.

"I was overwhelmed by the generosity shown to me", Mr Davies said.

"There I was, a stranger, and families would make up a bed in their home for me."

Mr Davies stopped riding after fracturing his spine in an accident. He had been on one of his rides and had stopped off outside a pub when a dog bit his horse on the leg causing him to rear up — throwing Mr Davies off.

He said: "Sometimes things happen in life which you may wish never happened, but you can't dwell on them. As sad as it may sound, it really isn't something I spend my time thinking about because I have so many other happy memories."

Mr Davies is now writing a detailed account of his life as a cowboy.