

Animal Sacrifice

In a move certain to cause equestrian concern, The Adventurists tour company hired the controversial Benedict Allen to provide a pep talk to some of the would-be endurance riders.

Allen, who began his career as a British travel writer, hosts a Big Brother style reality show where he oversees contestants being taken into the Amazon jungle, where they are bitten by ants and whipped by bamboo.

Allen's television antics have not gone unnoticed. In November, 2006 Tom Stacy, in The London Times Literary Review described Allen thus. *"He is not an explorer. He is a stuntman in remote places, a latter-day Munchausen with satellite phone and a video camera."*

Nevertheless, the television presenter agreed to share tales of his Mongolian equine adventures with the would-be endurance riders.

"Arising to a somewhat groggy morn," the Adventurists website reported, "the gin-soaked adventure chasers joined with fellow Adventurists at St George, Bristol to continue the weekend's festivities over a spot of tea, a few rather nice pieces of cake and a splendid talk from Benedict."

What wasn't discussed was Allen's tarnished reputation with animals.

While searching for "El Dorado" in South America, Allen reported how he used "a machete to kill my dog and eat him."

In a similar South American episode, Allen once again used the death of his animal companion as a juicy story for a subsequent book.

"I once had a terrible mishap with my pet monkey, Mono, who used to sit on my shoulder, when I visited an Indian village in South America. I tried to ask them if they could rustle up something to eat and I rubbed my stomach. Mono disappeared. Half an hour later, the smell of cooked monkey came floating across the air and I was presented with a wooden platter. I'm afraid to say he was delicious."

Yet it was Allen's bungled ride in Mongolia which prompted the Adventurists to hire him for their pep talk, as in 1997 he made a controversial ride in that country which resulted in his horses being devoured by insects.

Having left his horses unguarded, Allen met a Mongolian who warned him that in his absence the animals were being slowly slain by stinging black flies. He returned and found the rumour true. Yet instead of removing the animals from danger, Allen decided, *"there was nothing I could do today."*

He decided instead to go with Mongolians to celebrate the Nadaam carnival instead. *"I agreed to go along to the festival and try to forget the dying friends on the hills."*

After the party, Allen returned to find his horses had been killed by the carnivorous pests.

"They had been dead since morning. What a waste," he lamented, as the saddle sore on one of his now dead horses *"was healing nicely."*

Because of this incident, Benedict Allen is prohibited from joining the Long Riders' Guild.