

EXMOOR PONY STAR 2008

NOMINATIONS

APHIDE A/295 (Mounsey)

A Very Wise Old Pony

As I look out of my window there is a little brown hairy creature all covered in mud sunning herself in her favourite morning spot in the corner of her field. She will be 25 this year and I have owned her since she was 4.

When many would be well into retirement, Mounsey is still going strong and passing on her “mealie” wisdom to all those she carries. She is currently teaching Imogen, aged 8, my daughter Kizzy aged 4 and her cousin Matthew aged 5. I still ride her occasionally myself.

Imogen says this about her:

“ I think she should be pony of the year because she is wonderful, sweet and once saved me. I was cantering on the lunge and she tripped then she put her head up to prevent me from falling over her neck. She is the nicest pony ever, she may be cheeky now and then but she is loved a lot by my school. Every year she dresses up as a reindeer and she doesn't like it that much but she does it and all the children love it. She is good at shows and is very good at helping people to ride. Sometimes she teaches a three year old girl and is always trying her hardest to be good, she is just the best”

2008 saw Mounsey return to the show ring after several years absence, proving she can still come home with a good quota of rosettes and do the breed proud. She had two visits to our local school, one as a reindeer accompanying Santa to the children's Christmas party and once on more formal business to talk to the children about endangered species. In early September she visited our local pub entirely on her own having been spooked by something in our field and jumped out!

Throughout her life Mounsey has touched the hearts of many, many people; converted several into Exmoor owners themselves, taught countless children and adults to ride and taken part in most equestrian disciplines, her favourite being hunting and her nemesis being gymkhana games!

She has a wisdom about her that is indefinable and a kindness of spirit that is truly special. She is an absolute SUPER star!!

ARIEL (H12/5)

Ariel and I have been competing in the equestrian sport 'TREC' for a couple of years now and 2008 has been a great year.

TREC is a two day event and Ariel being an Exmoor copes really well with demands of a long POR (orienteering) phase on the first day, and is ever so patient when I have to stop and check the map or do compass bearings.

On the second day, her canter in the COP (control of paces) phase is excellent. We nearly always get 30/30 and our walk is improving. We can get 15/30 but it's difficult to walk quickly with little legs!!!

But best of all Ariel loves doing the PTV (cross country obstacle) phase. She is an absolute star at absolutely everything. She rein backs perfectly, stands still for her immobility and remounts, never refuses a jump, ditch, step up or drop off and perfectly picks her way between the S bend and corridor. Gates and bending are no problem too. I don't think we have ever come across an obstacle that she can't do. The intelligence of the Exmoor breed at such obstacles really makes her stand out from the crowd. And because you're performing against the clock Ariel loves the gallops between obstacles. She's never had a time fault yet!

Everyone at competitions is amazed at what such a small pony can do. She is by far the smallest competitor and she certainly 'flies the flag' at events for the Exmoor pony breed.

In 2008, our achievements have been,

- Hamley Hagg Trec May 08 - 1st level 2 individual
- Dukeries Trec May 08 - 1st level 2 individual
- Epperstone June 08 - 2nd level 2 individual
- Scottish Championships June 08 - 8th level 2 individual (my fault not Ariel's. I made a boob in the orienteering)
- Welsh championships July 08 - 2nd level 2 individual
- British Championships August 08 - 3rd level 2 individual
- Derbyshire Dales September 08 - 4th level 2 pairs

But best of all I have just found out we have finished 2nd in the UK in the BHS TREC league in the individual class. Check us out on the BHS web site.

TREC has brought Ariel and I really close together. It has been such fun working with her and teaching how to perform at obstacles and I know she really enjoys it too.

I am so proud of Ariel. She is a real '**star**' and I love her to bits.

B'ELLANA 309/2

B'Elanna is a very special pony with a complicated past and a bright future. As a 3 year old B'Elanna's mother sadly died, leaving an 8 week old filly foal – Ezri – without the maternal protection necessary to survive the harsh Scottish winter. B'Elanna immediately stepped in to look after her little sister. In fact, at first it was assumed the dead pony must be B'Elanna because all the foals were paired up to mares in the field for shelter. Although Ezri was hand reared once it was discovered she had been orphaned, B'Elanna continued to act as a foster-mum and protected her sibling, showing maturity far beyond her years.

B'Elanna's early maternal instincts predicted correctly that she would make a fantastic brood mare. She produced two lovely foals – Helix, who will hopefully have her own foal soon, and Innis, who sadly died as a yearling. She was then sold, along with her sister Ezri, to a family hoping to learn how to ride and have fun with the girls.

Sadly quite early in her training B'Elanna received a fright while on a hack, and her owner fell off and was injured. This put a halt to training, and caused a loss of confidence for the rider. B'Elanna and Ezri then spent a while living a life of leisure, and in doing so put on massive amounts of weight. Soon B'Elanna's owner contacted the Edinburgh University Exmoor Pony Trekking Section and asked if we would like to work with the girls with a view to buying them. At first B'Elanna was very nervous of everything – it was obvious her confidence had also taken a knock. However, she responded well to gentle reintroduction to work and after a few months we bought the girls and moved them to our herd.

In the short time we have owned B'Elanna she has completely transformed. At first she was very shy and nervous, spent all her time glued to Ezri, was unfit, and hugely obese. Now she is a completely integrated member of the herd, fit enough to easily take trekkers out all day, and one of our most sensible "beginner" standard ponies. She regularly deals with excitable and noisy kids, and this year had a very complex fancy dress outfit, winning first prize at the EPS Scottish Area Show as "(M)AIR AMBULANCE". It was quite a sight - flappy and shiny enough to test the nerve of even the most bomb proof pony!

B'Elanna truly is a star. Her sweet nature and ability to overcome set-backs show true Exmoor qualities. Her sensible, fun and cheeky attitude make her that extra bit special, and perfect as a trekking pony. She has transformed over the last year: from a nervous and shy pony to an indispensable beginner-rider's dream. We couldn't ask for a better pony in the herd!

BILBO BAGGINS 23/260

I would like to put Bilbo Baggins forward for the Exmoor Pony Star 2009 award. Bilbo is not particularly good at anything but he is one of those special ponies that just seem to get under your skin. He is not a show pony; he is particularly unimpressed by the whole showing scene and it shows in his face. Bilbo doesn't do dressage or show jumping either; anything involving working in an arena is also not very high on his list, unless it is when he is giving a lesson to a young rider when he will plod round like the best of them. Bilbo has very strong opinions as to what he is prepared to do. Bilbo, however, is a fantastic, genuine, "good egg" family pony and my best buddy. He and I have ridden many wonderful miles together round the countryside; doing over 100KM of endurance rides this year, both competitive and pleasure rides. He cheerfully puts up with young riders bumping and bouncing on his back and has been giving lessons to several youngsters in the village. He is a patient "uncle" to young Frodo who is a typical cheeky boy, especially when we go out "ride and lead" with Frodo grabbing Bilbo's reins or stopping dead with no notice while Bilbo and I are trotting on. When Frodo gets too much he is firmly put in his place. My highlights of 2009 are: seeing the Baker girls all taking turns to ride him at the Northern Exmoor Pony Show over the little cross country jumps behind the parking area which he did with greatest of humour, despite the fact that none of them had jumped him before; taking him to the Happy Hackers camp in August where he couldn't have behaved better and the pleasure he gave to my daughter Rachel and her friend Isobelle; completing our first 20 mile endurance ride with flying colours; competing in our first competitive endurance ride and coming second, riding with someone on a beautiful Arab who commented that she was worried that she wouldn't be able to keep the pace Bilbo set when we set off; Galloping over the moors on springy turf on a fantastic autumn day on a hunt ride, keeping up with the horses; Seeing him as Mr September in the Exmoor Pony Calendar 2009 looking fantastic on the Mary Towneley Loop ride; Next year I want to teach him the joys of cross country jumping so that we can go hunting properly and I want to do another long distance ride. He has come along way from the practically unhandled seven year old "yokel" I bought 3 years ago. He has always been a gentleman and when he shows his stubborn streak it is always in a quiet but very determined way.

What more can I say? A pony in a million and he is mine.

BRINDLE MOGS 180/1

My life with an Exmoor pony began eighteen years ago when I asked my mum for a pony, she replied yes but very firmly it would only be an Exmoor pony.

Brindle Mogs 180/1 arrived to us from Preston at the age of four and looked like an ugly duckling. After a couple of months he turned into an amazing pony. We took him to his first showing show and he gained a reserve championship, from there he excelled in the show ring.

Mogs was however always unpredictable and we never knew when he came off the lorry if today was a good day or a very naughty day.

Mogs also proved to be a very good jumping pony, maybe enjoying it a little too much and on the one occasion we had a try at gymkhana he didn't quite know what to do with himself.

One of my best memories was representing the breed at Stoneleigh where Mogs appeared not to be phased by his surroundings and was given the important job of being lead pony in the musical display.

It's very tricky to put into words how incredible I think my pony is, he's now 22 and I've accomplished more with him than I could ever have imagined. I feel very lucky to have had him for eighteen years and grown up with him, I remember disappearing for hours in the woods taking him for picnics as a child and sharing my cheese and pickle sandwiches with him and when he used to escape from his field and bring his friends home at 5am and mum would get a phone call from the milkman to say the ponies are on their way and she'd be outside rounding them up in her dressing gown and slippers. He just seems to have a very likeable cheeky character and when we took him to shows developed his very own fan club.

I keep saying I'm going to retire him from showing but every now and then I get the urge and took him to a local show a couple of years ago to a Veteran Horse Society qualifier and to my amazement qualified for the championships at Addington Equestrian Centre and in a very strong class of horses and ponies from around the country and gained a very creditable 6th.

Even now as a veteran he keeps me on my toes and pops a buck or two in when we go for a canter across the stubble fields as I'm sure he will still do in years to come and I have a feeling he maybe out to one or two shows in the future showing these young ponies a thing or two.

CHALKYWOOD MERLIN 196/1

I would like to nominate Chalkywood Merlin 196/1, 17 year old gelding

Over the years Merlin has succeeded and tried his best at everything that was asked of him, ranging from representing the breed at Olympia, qualifying for HOYS to being part of Jennie Lauriston-Clarke's native pony team appearing at Essen Equitana in Germany. He also performed with the Side Saddle Association's display team.

Needless to say after a busy ridden career he was given the opportunity to wind down over the last few years. However, he is now on loan and as busy as ever teaching seven year old Georgie Bird to ride. They have formed a special bond over the year, he sometimes decides not to be caught but as soon as Georgie appears he'll go straight up to her. Merlin stands stock still while she grooms him, not moving a muscle while she is clambering between his legs to get at the last bit of mud. He is always well mannered on the roads although he still hasn't got over his dislike of tractors. Georgie just tells him that he is old enough to know better!

Georgie has been learning to jump this year and is beginning to retain her balance. There have been times when she has 'eaten dirt' but Merlin just waits patiently for her to get back on. It is lovely to see the trust that they have in each other. Georgie's confidence grows daily and we all know that she and Merlin are safe together.

However, when Sue, Georgie's mum, rides him it is a totally different story! He knows the difference between a nervous child and an experienced rider and Sue can have an interesting forward going ride. In the shorter winter days Merlin is often led from a Warmblood to keep him fit when Georgie is unable to ride, he easily keeps up.

Sue says that Merlin could have been sold ten times over as he impresses everyone he meets around the lanes and villages. When bumping into the hunt recently the Master said he could join them as he looked such a sensible pony. In my eyes Merlin has always been a star but he has now won over the hearts of Georgie and Sue. He is kept at a small yard where he has a stable just by the back door of the farm. Needless to say he is also the favourite of Jo and her mother who own the farm and is spoilt by them all but this hasn't changed the manners and temperament that was always part of Merlin's charm.

COED-Y-WERN ZEPHERINE 49/51

Coed-Y-Wern Zepherine (49/51) is my first ever Exmoor and first ever pony. It took me till I was 26 but I couldn't have asked for a lovelier introduction to pony ownership. I also believe she is personally responsible for converting several other people to the breed....

I fell in love with her very pretty head over a stable door in Shropshire and knew she was coming home with me. She had a brief spell with the Dick Vet Trekking Section where she was affectionately known as 'the tack shed pony' because she enjoyed human company so much! In 2005 she left the trekking section and spent winter at the base of Arthurs Seat in Edinburgh. She had lots of fun hacking out with my friend Tasha, learnt how to climb stairs and was the subject of many tourists' holiday snaps. She even starred in short film made by a local film student for her dissertation, Zephy was the only pony I could think of who would turn her hoof to performing for the camera, take after take, with only polos for reward! The following summer she came with me to a vets where I was seeing practice and was hijacked by said vet, who after saying 'you don't ride that do you?? It's tiny!!' promptly hogged her for the whole two weeks and couldn't believe how much fun she was.

She had her first foal with me in 2007 (do other foals have waiting lists?) and when Bugatti was born he was gifted to Tasha who figured if she couldn't have Zephy her foal would be the next best thing. We were all very proud when he won Best Foal at the Scottish Area Show that year, and I think it is a tribute to Zephys lovely nature and calming influence that he travelled incredibly well and didn't bat an eyelid at the whole experience. She had a year off this year but I'm hoping she will go back to the stallion in the spring and have another lovely baby in 2010. It's hard to put into words what makes her so special, there are so many things. She does 'the lip' when scratched in the right place, and often scares newcomers by presenting them with her backside...for a scratch! She is steady, loving and catchable one day and then completely the opposite on others, but she knows when you REALLY need her she is incredibly reliable. She is a great influence on the youngsters in my herd and a fantastic travel companion for nervous babies. I think the moment I knew I had my star was when a partition collapsed onto a friends pony in a hired lorry. Zephy stood like a statue in the other side and provided reassurance while I squeezed behind her (I know, I know...I wouldn't have done it with any other pony!) to sort it out. She's a special girl, plain and simple, and she'll be with me for the rest of her days.

KNIGHTONCOMBE BRAMBLING H8/134

I would like to nominate my pony Knightoncombe Brambling or Wuwu to her friends, for the Exmoor Pony Star of 2008.

I have had so much fun with her, Exmoor pony style of course. There is nothing that she doesn't do or will at least have a go at doing; polo, cross-country, showing, le Trec to name just a few!, although she is now on maternity leave! Wuwu is also my very best friend. When I am fed up with the world, my 'angry bumblebee' as she is sometimes known! will always listen to me and not judge me.

She has taught me so much since I have had her, not least of all humility. I will never take an Exmoor pony for granted again!

She has not done one specific thing that makes her the special pony that she is.

Wuwu is the best thing that has ever happened to me.

She is quite simply, Wuwu, my own personal Star of 2008.

Abbie Westcott

13 1/2 yrs.

KNIGHTONCOMBE RUDDY HIGH FLYER H8/16

Archie came for his holidays at the riding school where I had learnt to ride since I was 8 years old. He fascinated us all & captured our hearts immediately. When he was due to go back his owner decided to sell Archie as he was getting on a bit for gymkhana games, 16 years young. I discussed this with the lady who ran the riding school & between us we bought him home. That was summer 1997 & what fun we have had with him! I showed Archie locally in M & M classes & veteran classes where he was always placed in the top six.

In April 1999 he qualified for the PUK Kingsford Ridden M & M & that same August came 3rd in the Kingsford Ridden class for Exmoors, Dartmoors & Shetlands, just missing out. Not bad for a 19 year old! In August 2002 at PUK we took part in the Small Breeds Ridden pairs with the final judging taking place in the Evening Performance in the main arena at night. What a privilege that was to ride in top hat & under the spotlights, I often watch the video of us.

In May 2004 Archie came 1st in his VHS Qualifier (20-29yrs) at the College of West Anglia. The Regional Finals were at Weston Country Fayre in Beccles, a long way from home. We went & he came 4th with 88 points out of 100, a great day out.

In May 2005 at Milton Show when collecting my number there was a note attached from the Show Secretary "If there was a class for the smallest pony with the longest name, I think you would win. Love the name!"

In September 2007 we retired Archie from showing, the travelling was getting just that bit too much for his legs. We took him to the Herts & Eastern Exmoor Show where he came 1st in the child handler, 1st in the lead rein & 1st in the junior ridden with my friend's two daughters. He then retired in style by being placed as Reserve Ridden Champion. As he did his lap of honour the tears were flowing all around. The judge for the show was Mandy Hill & she very kindly wrote in the Spring 2008 Newsletter "I have to mention one very special pony that ended up as my reserve ridden champion at the Herts & Eastern Show – Knightoncombe Ruddy Highflyer, he is 27 years of age, he went perfectly all day, light in the hand & responsive from the leg for several small jockeys, he is a credit to his owners & riders."

I have been places & done things I have only dreamt of with Archie, my only regret is that I never met him sooner. At the age of 28 he is still educating my friend's daughters. I have bought my next Exmoor, Muffin will never replace Archie, he will always be our number one!!

STOWBROOK WIZARD 262/7

We would like to nominate stowbrook wizard as the star of 2008, he has taken a small 5yo to first ridden, hunting, hacking and fun rides and this year when his tiny rider is just seven he has now taught her how to ride WHP classes and Showjumping.

If you were to ask the judge at the NPS summer champs about the Exmoor who carried the smallest rider down the bank and over the wall fence at the bottom with great care and security she would say stowbrook wizard, however this was not without a run out at the top of the hill just to keep her on her toes. He has taught her some much and if she doesn't ride a fence then he will just reminder her what she should be doing. He is the star of the pony club being on the mounted games team and all other mums want him and is much adored by the junior training leader. In 2008 this same 7 yo took place in her first ever ODE and he completed and looked after her over some large fences, two weeks later he carried the same ride around a course in the Cotswolds 4th place after dressage and clear x country finishing 9th place out of 28 other rider with ages up to 14.

In our eyes he is a true star in fact the only star and is very much loved.

Saffron aged 7 says this about him

“stowbrook wizard is a true love, as he has done x country,dressage,show jumping and eventing and even walked under a horses head.

I have done WHP classes and he has been a little chekey.

This exmoor has been a little chekey as all exmoors are!

I have really got on and one a cuople of worker classes ya-heah!!!!

I am realy delited to have stowbrook wizard and will never want to sell him.”

TAWBITTS MYSTIC MAGGIE 117/30

Maggie is our nomination for Pony Star 2008.

In 1998, Maggie was born to Golden Mystery, and ran, for a year as part of the Tawbitts Herd .Then purchased by Mrs Jan Price, joined her group of Exmoor's in East Devon. Maggie had a filly foal, Woodmans Sheena, in the summer of 2001. And in 2002 she arrived at our home for backing as she was proving a little difficult! She was a very nervy and strong willed character and Jan's parting words to me were "Please don't get hurt, if we can't ride her it doesn't matter".

I fell in love with this little mare at first sight.

Maggie is adorable and complicated, she is unpredictable but she has star quality!

I have always ridden her myself at home but as much as I love the homework I don't enjoy the spotlight so Alice Saunders became her "ring jockey" and they got on very well, a love affair that continues to this day. It was obvious that Maggie was a bit special. She began her first proper showing year in 2003, was 2nd in the HOYS class at Royal Cornwall and dabbled her toes as a working hunter pony. She went to Peterborough and was well placed in all her classes and was top Exmoor in the Summer Heritage Championship.

In 2004 Maggie won at Devon County Show, Supreme Ridden Pony at Honiton Show, was Champion Ridden at the Breed Show, Exford.

In 2005 Maggie came out in the spring, to contest not only the flat classes but the WHP too! She loves to jump and once we had sorted out the brakes (!!!!) she began indoors and progressed through the season culminating at the BSPS Summer

Champs with a win and a 2nd place in open M & M WHP Classes. In April she qualified for RIHS and finished 4th in the final at Hickstead. We were so thrilled! She qualified for HOYS at Moreton in Marsh and went well at the final - getting there was enough for me!!

IN 2006 Maggie won the Performance Award the Cinderella Trophy.

2006 would be a worker year, with just a few flat classes along the way workers are She qualified at Winter Shows and went to the BSPS Winter Champs where she amazed us yet again and not only did she win the Novice Heritage WHP class but then went Heritage WHP Champion! Tears of joy were shed as she soaked up her moment in the spotlight, as cool as a cucumber, with crowd cheering and clapping our hairy little Exmoor.

Her year got better and better, gaining a RIHS Small Breeds ticket in April, a HOYS Small Breeds ticket at Royal Cornwall and a RIHS WHP ticket 2 days later! She made us all proud going beautifully at HOYS AND RIHS, jumping a lovely round and showing just how Exmoor's deal with spooky water splashes, they just gallop through them!

In 2007 Maggie was due to time out and perhaps have a foal until my daughter Jessica was big enough to ride her, however all the best laid plans and all that. Her prospective husband decided to have time off too and then Jess surprised us by picking up the reins and bringing her out at the end of the summer. They won the Olympia class at Royal Berks and took the 2008 qualifier for RIHS Top Spec WHP. she completed her short season with the Res Champion Open Heritage at BSPS Heritage Champs.

Well, on with 2008, what a year it was to be. Sadly it began with Jess having a fall and badly breaking her femur. After 4 months on crutches she managed to get Maggie out for a couple of Olympia classes and a few flat classes before the Royal International. It was a very nerve wracking but exhilarating day on the 25th of July when the very best of the countries WHP gathered at Hickstead. Maggie showed her worth and jumped a marvellous clear round to enable her to win the small breeds final and ultimately take the supreme championship. The year continued with Maggie winning 3 Olympia classes, qualifying for HOYS as an Open Ridden and a WHP. We were proud to finish 5th in the Ridden. We have all enjoyed our journey so far with Maggie. We struggle to believe, that our little pony, who was afraid of her own shadow, has grown into such a star.

Maggie is a pony of a lifetime;

WARREN ESAU H52/16

“Eeyore,” or “Mr E” as he is known, is a true star. At twenty one years young he is the oldest herd-member of the Edinburgh University Exmoor Pony Trekking Section. He has earned his place as the boss, and teaches all the younger boys how to behave like gentlemen in true exmoor style. He has been part of our herd since he was young, and has been a firm favourite for many generations of students. Easily recognisable by his impressive height, stocky build, and greyish colouring (earning him his stable-name), you would never guess his advancing years watching him gallop freely around the fields.

Eeyore represents the perfect trekking pony. He is big and strong – easily carrying adults weighing upwards of 12 and a half stone on all day rides at any pace, often along with lunch-laden saddle bags. He is a true “family pony” – responsive, bold and fun for the experienced rider; gentle, steady and kind to encourage even the most nervous beginner. He loves his work, especially leading treks to explore new routes and interesting pathways. He also possesses the all important “trekking pony Sat Nav” – meaning if you ever get lost, you can trust him to bring you home safely.

Mr E epitomises the exmoor cheek that we all know and love. He will only be caught under his own terms, and will not be fooled by treats, buckets or persistence. His favourite trick is to wait until you are thoroughly exasperated, give up trying to catch him and walk away with another pony in tow. Nine times out of ten he will follow you to the hitching rail and slot himself between two others - waiting expectantly to be tacked up, as if it was your slowness holding things up, not his naughtiness!!

This year in addition to his trekking duties, Eeyore impressed the judge at the EPS Scottish Area Show with his lovely free flowing movement and enthusiasm for work. He won the Veteran Pony class; was placed in the Senior Geldings, Novice Ridden and Young Handler; and had a good bash at Working Hunter Pony. Mr E has been a star to us for many years; but now it is time for him to retire to warmer climes away from the harsh Scottish winter. He has been a pleasure to know over the years, and I can only hope that we continue to produce such perfect ambassadors for the breed.