

**EXMOOR PONY STAR**

**2010 NOMINATIONS**

## **FRITHESDEN FLINT 9/139**

Flint is my first pony. I had been riding for just two years when I bought him in July 2008. There was so much for me to learn as a first-time pony owner, not least starting to understand the Exmoor personality! Fortunately I had the support of good friends and Flint was very patient with me.

I worked hard on improving my riding but in early 2009 I was injured in a car accident and shortly afterwards I had a bad fall when Flint was frightened by low-flying aircraft. These incidents affected my confidence and I became very nervous when riding - I was afraid to canter even in the school.

In 2009 we enjoyed in-hand showing but riding remained difficult. I watched my friends riding their ponies at shows and wished we could join them. Friends occasionally rode Flint at shows but he was often tense and unsettled. I was advised to find a more suitable pony but I couldn't bear to part with Flint because I knew my anxiety was causing the problems. Over time I learned to relax and ride more positively. As Flint regained his trust in me, so I became increasingly confident with him and we have built a strong partnership.

This spring I finally achieved my dream of competing in ridden showing. I felt so proud to be riding my lovely pony in the ring at last. Initially I was very nervous but our performances have gradually improved as Flint and I have grown in confidence. Having started the year in novice classes at local shows, we were placed in two ridden classes at Equifest this summer and finished the season winning an Open Ridden M&M class.

This year we have also started dressage with good results and I have started jumping, something I had not done before but which Flint loves. With confident riders he is a speedy jumper, but he seems to understand I am cautious and goes steadily for me. Flint has also begun a new career as a lead-rein pony, winning three classes and his first sash. He has given his little rider so much confidence that they have just done their first First Ridden – a new experience for pony and rider.

Flint is a delight to take out and about. I can take him on my own knowing he will load happily, stand quietly on the lorry and I can get on him by myself if there's no-one around to help. People regularly comment on his excellent behaviour – he is a great ambassador for the breed.

Flint is my pony of a lifetime. He has inspired me to work through my confidence issues and now I find spending time with him is the best way to relax and unwind. We have achieved more this year than I ever expected, not just in terms of results but in everything I have learned with him and everything we do together. Flint is my Exmoor Pony Star.

## HEATHPOOL YEW 93/41

I have had the pleasure of knowing this very special boy his whole life, in fact I have a picture of him in all his goryness as he hit the ground! He was bred on Heathpool Farm in Peebles, by Alec Copland. I suppose it helped that I adore his mum, Quickthorn, but as he grew I realised he was going to be something special and got my offer in quick! Yew became officially mine just after I finished my finals in 2006, and shortly after moved to Turriff with me when I started my first job. He was my pony to cry on, my pony to laugh with (and at!) and a whole lot of potential for me to get excited about. He met his match early in 2010 in the form of Catrin Williams, who has done a phenomenal amount of work with him and started him off on his ridden career. He is by no means a perfect pony, when I was writing this we laughed about all the silly things he's done this year (including the odd bronking fit for no apparent reason, the bicycle incident, the not catching for Catrin but straight away for me, the stable door jumping, I could go on) but he is an incredibly honest boy, his confidence has increased massively, he has gone from dreadful to, ahem, reasonable in traffic, and given absolutely everything thrown at him his best shot. He showed me what a star he was at the Northern Show this year, when Catrin had to pull out at the last minute, I drafted in some friends to help and he had a go at the childrens ridden with Jen Wisdom and the novice ridden with my friend Nicola Evans, coming in 2nd and 5th respectively.

All this for a pony who had first been sat on only four months previously and who had never met either of the riders until they entered the ring. I suppose its testament to his honesty and good nature that I had the confidence in him to even attempt this! My proudest moment so far was seeing him pulled from 9th to 3rd in a very strong novice ridden class at the Midlands Show. Yew went to pony camp this summer, and despite refusing all offers of stabling in his own unique way, made lots of friends, endured a spray painted sparkly gold heart on his bottom, and jumped his heart out. I had to ask 'is that really my pony?' when I arrived to find him all decked out in dressage bandages looking every inch the show pony. He is quite simply a lovely boy and I wouldn't change a thing about him. Thank Yew!

## PHOEBE

Composing this nomination has proved to be considerably harder than one had imagined. Both emotionally and in the sense that there is no word in the dictionary to explain the effect Phoebe has left on us, but. I am sure people will be able to understand the magic a foal can bring and the devastation when Mother Nature decides that a pony is just too special for this world. Phoebe is a prime example of this, a factor which simply enhances why this dear little foal, in her short time with us, exhibited the entire essence of what an Exmoor Pony REALLY is, and why she really was a true Exmoor Pony Star.

Born on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2010, a daughter to Knightoncombe Puffin and Hawkwell Versuvias, life was never going to be easy for Phoebe. At over a month premature her delicate, but perfectly formed little body was, without a doubt, most certainly that of an Exmoor, even her mealy markings were visible. Phoebe fought off the wrath of death when only a few hours old. Being born so early her energy reserves were not substantial enough to give her the first 'boost' she needed.

A Glucose and Saline drip worked miracles as it coursed through her veins you could visibly see her muscles twitching bringing her back to life, within an hour she was back on her feet and suckling from a bottle, by the end of the day she was refusing the bottle and only wanted to suckle from her mum, Puffin, not an overly easy task for a very wobbly foal off of a semi feral pony! Her stubborn persistence and will to live saw her grow much stronger over the following five days. She became much more assertive, you could literally watch her focus her sight on objects, such as birds in the hedge, and take action, such as going to investigate.... typical Exmoor! I will never forget the lovely sunny morning when I went to give them their breakfast, Phoebe was flat out sunning herself but as soon as Puffin' behaviour changed (noting my presence) Phoebe was quickly onto her feet, Puffin must have realised her baby was stronger as she proceeded to take Phoebe for a canter and frolic around the field, everything was looking bright.

At six days old I noticed fluid dripping from her navel, already on antibiotics, I sprayed it with a terramycin spray and consulted the vets. It was decided that there was little else we could do as Phoebe was still suckling well and appeared happy, healthy and most definitely did NOT want to be caught! The evening came and Phoebe took a turn for the worse, gradually becoming weaker and back to being fed from the bottle, several trips from the vet followed and we persevered, Phoebe was battling internal complications due to being premature. Puffin somehow knew that although she wanted to protect her foal she had to trust me. I spent all night with them both, milking Puffin, then helping Phoebe to her feet to suckle the bottle. As the sun began to rise Phoebe's battle began to end. Sat with her head propped on my knee, stroking her little ears, dense whiskers on her mealy little muzzle against a mouse brown coat, it was time to leave a mother with her foal, as mother nature had intended. Exactly a week to the hour after her birth, Phoebe left us. Puffin, clearly so confused, remained stood over her foal.

## **PORRIDGE A237-B**

Porridge is my star and pony of a lifetime and here's why..... Back in April 2005 a trailer arrived on my yard, with an Exmoor coming in for breaking. This was the 1st time I had worked with an Exmoor pony before and had been told he would take time and just to do the best I could as he was very nervous. He walked out the trailer and it was love at 1st sight, I thought he was adorable. Little did I know, at this point, how much this pony was going to teach me, what fun times we would have together and what an amazing pony he would turn out to be.... But not one step was easy.....

First problem was catching him! I couldn't even catch him in the stable, let alone the field!!! I spent hours just playing with him, trying all different things just for him to gain my trust, Slowly I started to see improvements, but these were very little signs! I could start to read what he was thinking and knew we were starting to bond. I started to lunge him and long rein him, which to my surprise, he accepted and understood very quickly. He was odd with the saddle, one day fine, the next a different pony and even to this day I have a special 'porridge' way of putting it on!

Then was accepting me on board. He didn't like many people around him, so my step mum had come up to help. I had been sitting on him but not moving. I asked her to step away so he didn't feel threatened by her, and to just stand as if she were lunging, oh how I wish I had had her closer!! The next minute, with no warning, I was thrown up and through the air, so high that my foot left a foot print on the saddle!

Next step, I moved him to a friend's yard, she had a ménage and a barn, great for breaking. We went back to basics, worked him twice a day and just lent over him for 3 solid weeks. We never missed a day! Then, was the day to sit on. Again, after what had happened, we took it slow, still doing him twice a day. Since this day, he has never looked back... And, as a team, we went from strength to strength. I lightly competed him in 2005, took him to the Midland Show and his owner said she wanted to sell him. I couldn't let him go, so decided I would buy him.

He started to get noticed out showing. At first, I was told, he was too small and the wrong colour to do any good, but I didn't care as just couldn't believe we had got this far as to get him out on the show circuit.

The next year he won the NPS Picton novice final. I was so proud and cried my little heart out. From that moment, we never looked back. Since 2007 he has qualified for hoys every year, twice on the flat and twice working hunter. I always said, the 1st pony I own that gets me to HOYS, I wont sell, and I will never part with my Porridge. He is a true super star as the bigger the show, the better he performs, the more cheers, the faster he gallops, he soaks it all in, a real showman and we both love every minute!

He has taught me so much about how important it is to take things at the ponies pace and gain their trust before anything else. He knows me inside out and I know him. And I have never had such a special bond with a pony and nothing will beat the one I have with him!

I hope that you like his story so far, I have really enjoyed writing it. And sure Porridge and I will have many more stories to tell.

## **SALLY 116/1**

Sally came to us midway through a varied career. Bred in Scotland by Bracken Curlew 85/34 out of Netherwood Zara 153/1 and foaled in 1986, she was later owned by Anne Robinson who showed her successfully in the Northern Area and who then sent her to Ann Poulsen to be covered by Pan A/237. In 1992 Sally foaled Little Plum and two years later, when Sally was 8, she foaled Ariel 112/5, now a very successful (and always forward going) Le Trec pony.

After her maternal duties, Sally was sold to the Ormerods from Sowerby Bridge as a riding pony for their daughter Elizabeth, on the condition that she would be broken to ride first. Lizzie called her pony Wal, as in Walzer, to rhyme with Sal.

The two novices learnt about this riding business together! Part of that learning process included three very enjoyable and successful pony club camps and a mock pony club camp organised by a friend where Sally and Liz took part in a musical ride to "Greased Lightning" from the musical "Grease". It was when Elizabeth had really outgrown Sally, that a chance conversation with Ann put us in touch with Jennie, Eric and Elizabeth and it was agreed that she would come to us on loan. I had only waited 34 years to get an Exmoor Pony! The joke was that by then Chris and I had four girls ranging in age from 2 to 8, and Sally was not at all keen on little children! Trusting little soul that she was, she taught all four to ride, including how to stop a pony that REALLY wants to go home NOW (with great difficulty), or how to get a pony to stop eating the grass beneath her feet (use grass reins, duh!).

An absolute poppet to handle, all six of us had great fun on her, entering every available class at the showing highlight of our year – the Northern Area Show. One memorable year she was Performance Champion, having entered every ridden class with a different jockey. Giving the vicar a ride at the local church fete, acting as Nanny across country, hacking and jumping as well as keeping the other horses in check where all in a days work. Her speciality was cow herding when it was time to get her in from the field. She would charge right through the middle of the bunch of bull calves – scattering them in all directions, but always keeping one or two between herself and the unfortunate small child.

As the field was large and rather lush, a constant watch had to be kept on her waist line and we were very proud when we were able to buy a shorter girth. To allow Sally to be out for longer, she wore a muzzle which she adapted to very quickly. I often wondered whether it actually slowed her intake of grass! Eventually she succumbed to early signs of navicular, so she was retired in '06 and returned to Sowerby Bridge as a companion. After several contented years, she suddenly developed colic symptoms and despite strong medication failed to respond. Rather than put her through the stress of travelling to Liverpool for an operation, the decision was made to put her to sleep on the lawn in the sunshine.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the naughty as well as the nice bits, she was a fantastic pony and we are so lucky to have shared part of her life. Sally will never be forgotten!

## **SWETCOMBE SUNLIGHT 215/12**

I am nominating one of my Exmoor ponies: **Sweetcombe Sunlight (215/12) aka Jasper** for this award for the following reasons.

### JASPER, THE PERFECT PENSIONERS PONY!

Jasper came to live with me in July 2009. He was my first Exmoor and having ridden Arabs and Thoroughbreds all my life the prospect of riding and competing a 12.1 pony was daunting to say the least. In 2000, at the age of 50, I had a catastrophic riding accident preceding my team selection for an International ride in France with what was then British Endurance (now Endurance GB) Three fractured vertebrae and mastoid bone left me subsequently with balance problems precluding me from riding bigger horses anymore. Finding an appropriate mount was proving to be very difficult. I had tried several ponies that were all too steady for my needs I wanted something safe and sensible, 100% on the roads, sure footed, mannerly and kind.

Trawling the Exmoor pony website I discovered 11 year old Jasper who had hunted for several seasons with Scarlet Glasper from childhood into her teens and looked to be everything I wanted...bar the size!

At 5' 3" and weighing less than 9 stone I was assured that this little chap would be perfect for my needs. He arrived unseen and untried but after my first hack on him the only word was.. WOW!

Since then, Jasper has allowed me to return to Endurance with confidence and security. He has completed over 200 miles of competitive rides so far and progressed from Novice level to Open level in 2010. He has also tried his hand at dressage, been shown, brought in cattle and sheep and been a total gentleman with his 2 Exmoor companions.(You can never stop at one!)

He has a wicked sense of humour and enjoys every minute of his work. In endurance, the "ah" factor on arrival changes to the "ooh" factor during the ride as other competitors see he can indeed keep pace with an Arab and skips over the ground, avoiding rocks and hazards as cleverly as a cat.

He is my soul mate, my confidante and one of the greatest loves of my life. We trust each other implicitly. Just the thought of prospect of life without him can reduce me to tears.

Much admired in our locality and frequently stopped by interested admirers when out hacking and on the endurance circuit he now gives a sigh when someone on foot approaches, expecting to be fussed and talked about! He knows he is a minor celebrity...a true Pony Star.