

EXMOOR PONY STAR

2012 NOMINATIONS

ANNASACH BUGATTI 419/2

By Tasha Anderson

I first met Bugatti, aka Bug, when he was about 4 hours old. He marched across the field with his mum and begun to chew on me. From that moment I knew he was going to be a character - for better or for worse!

The first thing you need to know about Bug is that he is not scared of anything. As a foal he was a dream - I could take him anywhere, and do anything with him, alone or in company. After that we had 3 years of teenager strops! He had so much energy but nothing to do with it - shows resulted in bucking round the ring, standing still was near-impossible and any opportunity to bite you he was there!

But all that changed when I backed him in summer 2011. Finally he had a way to express himself without being naughty! Within a couple of months of backing him we were out riding the roads alone, with no fear of anything we might meet. We did a few pleasure rides to end the year and he enjoyed them so much I started to think that maybe he might make a good wee endurance pony, following in his uncle, Heathpool Zeno's, hoofprints. Little did I know what 2012 would bring!

What Bug has accomplished this year has far exceeded anything I could have hoped for. By May he had completed his Bronze Shamrock (2 x 20 mile CTRs and 1 x 30 mile CTR). He was selected to ride for Ireland on the Home International/Celtic Challenge team - and successfully completed his 25 mile CTR, as part of the winning Irish Celtic Challenge team! He was so fit and enjoying endurance so much we tried for our Silver Shamrock at the end of the year (2 x 40mile CTRs). He flew round them on his way to becoming the smallest ever pony to achieve this award in Northern Ireland! To top off the year he completed his first ever 2 day ride - a 2 day 50 mile CTR at the Red Dragon Festival of Endurance in Wales. This was his first trip competing overseas but he didn't bat an eyelid with all the extra pressure, passing on both days. The reaction we got throughout the weekend from other riders, vets and marshals was incredible - my wee 12hh Exmoor pony definitely stood out from all the Arabs and Sport Horses and gained quite a few followers! I have to admit I shed a little tear as he passed the final vetting - I can't actually describe how proud of my Bugman I am!

At the end of the year he won a total of 6 trophies, including Top Horse in Ulster and Top Pony in Ireland. Not bad for his first year at this endurance lark! So that is why I think Bug deserves to be Exmoor Pony Star 2012.

COSMIC DORIS 271/4

By Emily Orrin (aged 12)

In January 2012 I decided to look for another pony. I had owned my 12.1hh mare, Tinkerbelle, for 14 months, and although I loved her, I wasn't enjoying the struggle we were having to keep all four legs on the ground when I was riding her, or her extremely nappy behaviour when we took her out to shows. We had tried everything but my confidence had taken a nose dive.

We came across an advert for Doris, who was offered on loan by Lizzie Raspin. Early one Saturday morning we drove 100 miles up the motorway and I had my first experience of meeting a little brown mealie. I thought Doris was just adorable! I was still very nervous about riding, so just walked and trotted her round the field. Somehow we convinced Lizzie that we would be really good owners and give Doris a 5* home and that my confidence would grow over time. Well, what a year 2012 has been. Within two weeks of loaning Doris, I felt confident enough to take her on a hack with a friend. We joined the Grafton Hunt Branch of the Pony Club and started our badge and test training, passing the D test with flying colours. I've been to some shows, firstly trying some ridden classes. We were placed 3rd first time out!! We've progressed from tiny 9" jumping classes to now feeling far more confident over bigger fences. We've been placed 2nd in a dressage test, against adults, and 1st in combined training. I had the best time of my life in the summer holidays at my first Pony Club Camp. Doris looked after me so well and gave me the confidence to try things I had never done before – cross country for the first time, through water, over logs and ditches. By the end of the week we had achieved so much I was awarded the trophy for Most Improved Rider at Camp! Unbelievable!

Doris is not only excellent to ride, but fantastic to handle on the ground. I love setting up handy pony type courses in the ménage and seeing Doris enjoy following me round them. We are getting pretty good – we won the Midlands Exmoor Pony Show handy pony class. I'm going to try some Le Trec with Doris next year – Lizzie told me she loves it.

Doris has taught me a huge amount. She loves her jumping and now I feel happier at jumping at Doris' speedy competition pace I am looking forward to 2013 and enjoying competing at more shows and events. Doris is not just my loan pony, she is my best friend who I love so very, very much. She is and will always be my Exmoor Pony Star. I cannot thank owner Lizzie enough for loaning her to me.

P.S. Doris has been so awesome and such an ambassador for the breed that in November we bought a yearling, Dunkery Sunbird. Lizzie did warn us that Exmoors come in herds!!!

DUNKERY TAWNY OWL 78/142

By Jenna Payne

8 year old Stallion (Liqueur x Dunkery Corn Bunting)

Owly Payne was runner up in the 2011 awards and I never thought that I would be sat here writing another entry, but in 2012 this pony amazed and delighted every member of our family more than we could ever imagine. The year began with a selection trial for a riding club quadrille team and he impressed the panel to secure a place on the team, the first time Cornwall has ever been represented by a team at the Dressage to Music Championships. Training was intense and so it left little time for much else, but on the few outings we had together in the show ring he was no less than reserve champion locally and 2nd at Devon County under a new young jockey - her first time riding at county level. Days after Devon County I broke my arm and so Owly's only riders were my two children. They adore Owly, my 2 year old daughter, Lowenna, not only loved to ride but often just spends time with him, brushing and sitting on him in the stable. My son, Harry, has learnt to trot and loves hacking adventures in the woods and valleys. As I was unable drive, on wet days I was even known to take them to school on Owly!

I'd entered Owly in the HOYS qualifier at Exford and with only a short few weeks from coming out of cast to prepare him I thought our chances were slim. However, he certainly delivered on the day with a performance that not only secured him a trip to HOYS but the greatest honour for any Exmoor Pony; Supreme at the Breed Show. For the rest of the summer holiday we prepared Owly for HOYS, continued his quadrille training and taught the children and their school friends to ride.

Owly is very easy going and I hoped the atmosphere at HOYS would buzz him up, but he put a big smile on my face when he entered the ring and simply glanced at the audience before quietly carrying on. He put in a tremendous a performance that brought a tear to my eye. We went straight from HOYS to Aintree for the quadrille finals, he was the smallest pony performing at the whole of the championships and dressed as 'Baby Bear' in the Teddy Bears Picnic he got rather a large number of young admirers. He even got to have a gallop on the famous racecourse!

The highlight of my year is our first Le TREC event where Harry had his first competition. Owly didn't falter and they completed every obstacle to finish 6th overall and Harry was simply over the moon with his rosette. Harry even enjoyed his first time off the leading rein in the warm up arena!

Owly Payne is now training for a new career in harness, in particular ploughing with a very keen young Harry! He truly is one in a million and will be a member of our family forever.

HAWKWELL VALENTINE 12/219

By Rachael Fear

I bought this little mare February 2010 as unbroken, unhandled and very handy with both her front and back end. We did a few in hand shows to get her out and she was 2nd at Bath and West in her Mare class in 2011!!

I started backing her in 2011 but true to form, she was tricky, difficult and a right madam about it all. Her 1st ridden show was the Somerset show in July 2011 and she was 4th Novice, 4th Working Hunter which was also her 1st attempt at a course of jumps. Surprisingly she was a poppet and didn't buck me off!!

At Exford she was 6th in the Novice and the pairs with Waltersgay Juniper. We also did our 1st dressage tests and were 1st and 2nd.

2012. We went to the Winter Woolies and was top 2 and at the finals , came 5th. At Bath and West she was 4th in hand. At NPS Easter Show she won her Lead Rein class with her new jockey Georgina and went on to be reserve champion! Next outing was 3 Counties and in awful weather she was 5th in the workers and 4th in the Open. At the 2012 Somerset Exmoor Show we entered the Picton Novice Class and she was no 1 pony!! All the hard work had paid off and we qualified!!!! We didn't make the finals as she got poorly and i didn't want to make her worse!! We did make it to Dunster before she was ill...she won the Novice !!!

That was the end to our season as she was off for 3 months but is now getting better. I was told to put her to sleep so many times but she has always tried her heart out for me at shows. She is still a handful to hack out but she's my mate and even after huge rows, she still loves cuddles!!

HEATHPOOL CARLINA 93/45

By Rosie MacDiarmid

Carlina has a funny story to tell. I 'bought' her from her previous owner in Feb 2012, however there was a bit of confusion and her cousin ended up getting on the lorry instead. Half sister to my lovely Heathpool Yew, she'd always been on my wish list - however space was at a premium and I thought that was the end of that. I was not willing to give up so easily though and after some discussion with a friend, Hazel, in Edinburgh - she became pony number eight and a half. Before coming to us at age 4, Carlina had had only patchy handling: Hazel halter-broke her when she was a foal and worked with her regularly for several months to produce her for her first show when she was 6 months old, but after that time Carlina was pretty much left to grow up in her field with her friends. She was always one of the first to come up to anyone and say hello – whether they wanted their pockets chewed or not! When she was 3 her previous owner decided it was time someone got on her, so Hazel and some of her friends brought Carlina in from her field, put a halter on her and jumped on. Carlina didn't even notice. She walked round in circles in the wee shed, hoping that her leader would soon produce a polo from their pocket. For the next year, Carlina sporadically received attention and took it all in her stride. In June of 2012, Hazel and I bought Carlina from her owner and Hazel moved her to her new home near Edinburgh. After some time to settle in to her new surroundings, in September Hazel returned to Edinburgh and the hard work began! Carlina was now in a field with three other geldings – and the first time Hazel went to handle her it was pouring rain and gale force winds. The three geldings ran around in circles with the wind in their tails pretending everything (including Hazel's jacket hood) was terrifying. Carlina did not. She was quite happy to be caught and led around her field, she had her feet picked up for the first time in months (if not years), with her mind fixed firmly on the green polo wrapper! She has gone from strength to strength ever since.

Carlina soon progressed to going out for walks with her Exmoor friend Ranger, then accepted being sat on while out on walks with someone holding the lead rein, then she would lead off the back of Ranger. Soon she no longer needed the lead rope. Two months after Hazel returned from Bristol, Carlina went out for her first hack in full tack with Ranger – and led the whole way home.

She is the bravest, most unflappable pony, who takes everything in her stride. She learns quickly and always tries her hardest to please. Whenever you go into the field, Carlina sticks her head in the head collar first, whether she's being caught or not! She follows you to the gate, keeping her nose at your shoulder. She loves being muddy and hates having baths. She doesn't seem to see the point of going round in circles in the school and always tries to head for the door, as if to say 'Are you lost? This is the way out!' Carlina is a super star because she was almost abandoned on a hill but now she has a long and exciting life ahead of her.

ROSSMILL BOREAS 77/7

by Sue Burger and Dianne Whittington

Rossmill Boreas was only born because I had nowhere else for his dam Knightoncombe Willow Beauty to go while stallion Kebroyd MacDuff was visiting. I was unsure about breeding from that particular combination as MacDuff was out of Willow's full sister. As it turned out both my other mares lost their foals that year along with a friend's Highland mare who was staying with us while they moved house, so Boris was always going to be a bit special.

Boris was shown as a youngster, never placed lower than second and with championships and reserves to boot. His wins even included the youngstock Exmoor class at Great Yorkshire Show. As a three year old he was gelded. Later that year he was sold to a family who planned on producing him under saddle with the aim of taking him to Olympia and HOYS. Sadly things did not work out. They had never had an Exmoor before and Boris being a particularly Exmoorish specimen took a strong dislike to his training and became unrideable. He was returned to me and had a winter chilling out in the Pennine snow.

The following spring I attempted to ride him with the result that I hit the deck far harder than is good for someone of my age. I recalled that Dianne Whittington's Rossmill Cranesbill also had some ridden issues that she had overcome so rang her for some advice. Her immediate response was "Send him over" which I duly did. (Sue)

On arrival at the end of May we thought Boris had been stuffed – absolutely rigid- but this was because he was terrified of anyone he didn't know! His eyes would stand out like organ stops and he would plaster himself firmly against the stable wall – and that was just when you went to turn him out or feed him! We decided the best thing to do was to allow him to be just a pony and turned him out with his two brothers and my two bigger horses. The fact that my 16.2 gelding accepted him without trying to kill him first showed that he was definitely not considered a threat!

Slowly we managed to get Boris to accept us handling him and started taking him for walks alongside the children riding their ponies. At our local Halifax show he relaxed enough to win his class and Small M&M Champion. The following year, I showed him locally and at the Great Yorkshire Show. I stood and cried as he actually won the GYS senior class. More successes followed at riding club level, and he was now beautifully settled with our family, but had absolutely no intention of becoming a ridden pony. This year we have managed to sit the children on Boris in the stable but that is as far as he is prepared to go. I believe there is no point in pushing him to the point of no return, and this is already a huge step forward for him. He is not being naughty; he is genuinely scared of being ridden and has many issues which he will deal with in his own time. This has been a fantastic year for him at shows; culminating in taking Ultimate Champion at the Ultimate Showcase of Champions in August. It felt like winning our very own Olympic gold medal as he beat at least two hundred other horses to the prize! He even got a judge to admit that "I don't like Exmoors, but he is something special"! Many spectators were wowed by his movement, attitude and the fact that he is "really sweet"! I am sure that we will eventually ride Boris, but there is no rush, he will let us know when he is ready. For now he is a very special pony to everyone who meets him, and he has a home with us for life. (Dianne)