

EXMOOR PONY STAR 2017

NOMINATIONS

ANCHOR GODIVA

17/10/14 I was given a once in a lifetime opportunity of experiencing the Anchor Exmoor Pony round up. Although a grey wet day, everyone I met was welcoming and inviting. I was mesmerized watching the ponies coming off the moors – little did I know that was exactly where my future best friend had just come from.

Anchor Godiva, (Lady), arrived 30/11/14. At 3½, she was older than most being sold off the moor, but I had instantly fallen in love with her kind eye, and beautiful face. It took me weeks to begin to get close to her, and she even jumped out of her stable. I honestly thought I had taken on more than I was capable of, but then literally overnight we clicked, she was a different pony, the trust had established, and our journey began.

I brought her on slowly – never rushed, and my little superstar has given me the best ever year.

I decided early on to concentrate on dressage, due to wanting her totally balanced before attempting other disciplines. Also having recently been diagnosed with Chiari Malformation and awaiting brain surgery, anything else was out of the question.

Reaseheath run an annual dressage championship, so our quest began. Lady completed eleven tests, achieving an average score of 77%, with many of the Judge's comments congratulating us on our harmonious partnership, of which I am very proud.

The morning of March 5th we competed, managing to come first and secure six more championship points, but that afternoon I had to go to North Staffs for the dreaded brain surgery. Not being one to stay in bed too long, I managed to persuade them to let me home 2 days later, and was back sat in Lady's stable on the Thursday. It was like she knew there was something different, she was so gentle, and when I was back in the saddle 4 weeks later she really looked after me, sadly we missed Aprils Dressage - but she was back on winning form in May. June bought Cheshire Show - I was so proud coming 4th in the in hand, with the Judge's comments of what a fab obviously ridden, fit pony! Then the following day the Ridden Novice Small Breeds. Lady was the only Exmoor; I was elated when it came over the tannoy she was second! I have never felt so happy. The final cherry for the year - yes my amazing Exmoor was Champion for her section in the Reaseheath Dressage.

Lady is the most amazing, brave, honest and trustworthy pony I have ever had the privilege to ride, and we have now started jumping, which I never thought we would be able to do.

Our goal for the future - HOYS! We are going to start qualifiers next season so watch this space - one day, my amazing Anchor Godiva will fly the Exmoor flag, and show the world just how amazing our Native Exmoor ponies really are.

BANDERLOG FALLON

We got Fallon nearly three years ago, Charlotte had just turned 8 and was desperate for her 'own' Exmoor pony. It was love at first sight. Fallon is the most adored Exmoor pony ever, Charlotte absolutely loves her, they have achieved so much together and learned loads along the way. They've been to Pony Club Camp (three times) they've done cross country schooling, Performance trials and recently went to Somerford Park where they jumped some impressive jumps on the farm ride and had great fun doing handy pony and clear round jumping. Fallon is the perfect child's pony, she allows Charlotte to do so much and as long as she's eating, she'll stand for hours while Charlotte brushes her, jumps on and off, sings dances and chats away. Due to lack of funds and transport, we don't go to many places though we have great fun at the farm where Fallon lives, Charlotte often takes her in the river or jumping in the field or school and they're always going out on adventures together galloping across open fields or trotting along country lanes. Every little girl should have a best friend, Charlotte's best friend is Fallon. We are so lucky to have her in our lives, she's made Charlotte into a cracking little rider and Charlotte's turned Fallon into a brilliant child's pony. I honestly couldn't have wished for a more perfect pony for my daughter. We are so lucky to have Fallon, and Fallon's lucky to have Charlotte, one things for sure, Fallons life's never boring, there's always something going on! Fallon is a star pony, one in a million.

BEINLIATH PROUD MARY

Born a late foal in 2012 she was a star from day 1. She represents some of the rarest lines in the breed through both her dam and sire. I don't think I've ever had such a laid back foal. She duly passed her inspection in November and stayed on her mum until spring. She then went conservation grazing as being a late foal she always looked younger and more immature than her peers but in the spring of her 3yr year she was starting to look the part, and went to a couple of shows and did quite well. A freak accident in early May put paid to that when she caught her bum on a gate hasp and slashed herself open = end of showing for some time. I needed a mare to run with Jack Sparrow so although I don't normally cover 3yr olds I made a decision to cover her whilst she healed. By early September her wound had healed so we headed off to our final show of the year and she trotted out to win youngstock Champion.

As a 4yr old she gave me a beautiful filly and was an amazingly calm and natural mother. So roll on 2017 as a 5yr old it was time to work. I started work with her in April by the beginning of June she was in the cart, and by end of August ready for the northern area camp, and was ridden away by a 9yr old child! Mary has never put a foot wrong has taken everything thrown at her in her stride, has driven out on the roads from week 2 never batting an eye at any traffic, has been solo and in company, has been ridden by 3 different riders including a very tiny child, and is just the easiest pony to do anything with. She also went to a few shows complete with scar and did amazingly well.

Mary is more than a star she is one in a million and a true versatile Exmoor with so much more to come.

So 2018 will see her in a new role in a new home as part of a team of driven exmoors and I feel sure she will feature in Exmoor pony news for many years to come, and watch this space for her daughter to follow in her footsteps (hopefully without the injury).

DAMASK

I expect you would all expect me to write about Wigeon but I had another exmoor who was very dear to me and her stable name was Maddie ,reg name Damask 260/1 . I came across her by accident but after seeing her we brought her , Maddie was unbroken and looked more like a hippo than a pony she was very much overweight ,how she never got laminitis I will never no . It took us 18 months of special care to get the weight of her so she looked like a pony . Maddie was well bred out of Blackthorn prudence by Murrayton Gallinago foaled in 1995 and we brought her in 2001. After 3 weeks work to back her we took her to her first show and did a dry mare class and she was 3rd out of 16 ponies and she won a lead rein class with a friends daughter on board and the week after I rode her along a very busy rode to a pony club show . As she was well bred we thought it would be lovely to have a foal from her so we took her to coedywern stud , unfortunately she did not take . We took her back to a different stallion there but again no luck . We then turned her out to run with coedywern Fagus who we had brought . I said to friends she looks in foal but I got laughed at and they said no , I went up the field one morning to check on the mares and the 3 foals , did a head count and there where four foals , Maddie had foaled ,I just gave her the biggest hug ever . The next year we took Maddie to do the novice ridden at Exford but the show was cancelled due to bad weather and Maddie was keeping a secret she was in foal again . We then later sent her to coedywern again and she then gave us another and her last foal. Maddie had 3 filly foals and my only regret is she did not have a Wigeon one. Maddie was not the prettiest of Exmoors but I loved her so very much ,we had a very special bond . At the beginning of this year she started loosing weight and we did feed her all sorts but it was no good and I had to make that terrible decision and say goodbye to her . She is one pony I will never forget and her legacy lives on in her daughters and a grand daughter . This is my little tribute to a very ,very special pony . My Maddie will always be a start in my eyes and I no its daft but tears are streaming down my face just writing this .

DARSHILL BANSHEE

I would like to Nominate Darshill Banshee aka Dave for the Exmoor Pony Star. In the last 2 years, we have come on in leaps & bounds.

In June of this year he went to my instructor's to be backed & did lots of desensitising, flags, big gym balls & finally ME on his back.

We went from work in the round pen, to the school & little hacks with other ponies & alone. He took this all in his stride, and really seemed to love having a job.

In July he came home & we carried on with his work. I took a moment of madness & booked us into the Exmoor Northern Group Pony Camp at Somerford & what a wonderful pony he was, he did pole work, walked out round the cross country course & even played Handy Pony (with one or two spectacular leaps!) Since then we have hacked out with friends a few times & he has been rock solid & never put a little foot wrong, even with rattly trailers & silent cyclists. All in all, he's really done his work this year, tried so hard & taken on his new role as a ridden pony & I really think he's going to be such a wonderful pony.

DASHLE

Copper, registered name Dashle, is a 15 year old 12.2 gelding and the Exmoorest Exmoor that ever lived! He flies the flag for ALL the negative traits of the breed - and I absolutely adore him for it. If Copper doesn't want to do something, he isn't doing it.

Loading: In the first month of loaning him I took him to a couple of local hacking spots in the trailer. He always took about 10 minutes but he'd go on for some cookies. Emboldened by my success, I took him to a fun ride further afield. He came off the trailer VERY excited but settled into the ride. We had an amazing time galloping around this gorgeous farm, even providing a guided bridge crossing service for several daft warmbloody types (this bridge was approximately 4 foot wide, metal floor, very low sides with a huge drop to an abandoned railway line underneath - no problem for a brave and clever Exmoor of course.) The problem was, Copper had had a lovely day. So he didn't want to go back on the trailer. AT ALL. Firstly, he took one look at the trailer, looked at me and legged it back up the bridlepath at top speed. I found him about a mile up it, having a light snack on some convenient brambles. Next, the lovely organiser tried bribing him. He was having none of it. He'd walk on just far enough to grab the food then back out at top speed before I could close him in. After several hours of this the organiser (bless her heart) gave up on the little monkey. I phoned every Intelligent Horsemanship person within an hours radius and left several tearful answerphone messages. Thankfully, one knight in shining Barbour came to my rescue. 5 hours, £200, the removal of my partition, 2 additional IH representatives, 4 fence panels and the muscle of the poor bloke who owned the farm later, Copper was on the trailer. I arrived back at the yard at midnight, in the rain, exhausted, hungry and vowing to NEVER take the little darling out again!

Hunting: Hurrah! The hunt was meeting at our yard! This is brilliant - I can take Copper out without having to load him (because we all know how that goes!). Tacked up, all good, walked to the field they met in, a little excited but okay. Stood beautifully, cantered off strong but controllable and then BAM sideways leap perfectly executed because of a funny looking piece of straw. I did not leap sideways and ended up flat on my back while the call of ' LOOSE HORSE' went up approximately 45 seconds after we'd set off. Luckily he's only little so I vaulted back on, off we went again. Had a wonderful morning and decided to head back a little early as he was tired. Copper disagreed. I tried it all - ridden, in hand,

cookie bribery, an escort - there were several more 'LOOSE HORSE' cries and all of them were Copper. Finally, the huntmaster took pity on us. 5 staff and 6 hounds were required to box us in and we had to canter back to the yard pretending Copper was now a crucial member of the hunt. I managed to persuade him through the gate using the last of my cookies and slammed it shut. As the huntmaster rode off Copper was on his back legs, screaming, determined to go back to his new friends. One of the whippers in shouted back to me - 'Make sure you get your subscription! That pony is hilarious!'. Needless to say I haven't been again.

Clipping: If I got him bib clipped, he could probably stay out all day hunting, and I wouldn't have to leave - so went the thought process. The lovely Davinia Johnson was employed to clip him and my nice sensible cob, Dinky. Dinky got a lovely trace clip. Copper got a small patch, approx 2" by 4", which would have been ideal had I wanted the vet for injections. Davinia nearly lost her head to Copper's waving hooves. We gave up... I have since managed, through some silent cordless dog trimmers, to give him a bib, and Davinia was brave enough to return whereupon he stood like a champion for her to do a lovely bib clip. Maybe he realised it was actually quite nice to not sweat when you're stood still in the field, or maybe he was just in a particularly benevolent mood. Either way, I still haven't been hunting again!

Pigs: Copper shares his field with three beautiful ladies: Henrietta, Peggy and Betty the kune kune pigs. Copper does NOT like pigs. At all. After several months of him leaping higher and higher fences, he finally learnt that he can just kick them and they'll stay out of his way. Now, his chief occupation is chasing the pigs out of his field. He takes his job very seriously and has taught his new friend Ralf how to do the same. The pigs now 'run the gauntlet' from their shelter to the 'safe' field next door while two Exmoors gallop flat out towards them, teeth bared and ears back!

Now, this might not sound like an Exmoor that deserves a star award. But I think he's perfect.

He has gone from being ambivalent and slightly nervous around new people to teaching my friend who is scared of horses to ride. I can run up to him in the field and vault on him for a cuddle. He will follow me ANYWHERE as long as I have cookies. He trots over for kisses when anyone stands at the field gate. He does a great ride and lead, and will canter along behind another pony out hacking for hours on a loose rein. He can be left for weeks and when you get back on he'll be just the same sweet pony. He's taught me to be spot on with my pressure and

release, how to read his mood, how to remain calm and consistent when I could cheerfully throttle him and, most importantly, he has been such an awesome little dude that I've gone and got another Exmoor (unregistered) from a rescue centre with an equally bad reputation - because apparently I hate myself! Copper is my little star, even if we never manage to get out competing, even if all we achieve together is staying in his comfort zone - I love the idiot with all my heart!

KIDNAP NYALA

aka Bert.

The story begins on a September day in 2004, whilst on holiday on Exmoor with my partner Lloyd. We were driving up out of Simonsbath when we got to Bluegate. There just inside the gate on the common were some Exmoor ponies. We pulled up, got out and lent on the gate. To my absolute amazement one of the ponies came up to the gate for a scratch and a cuddle. I had always wanted a pony, but now I knew what breed I wanted.

A look on the EPS website and there were yearlings for sale near Okehampton, bred by Miss F Bailey. On visiting we saw this un-handled gelding and new he was the one. A small riding school near where we lived in Malvern agreed he could stay there whilst we handled him. So, in the November off we went to get him. All went well until we got him back. At the unloading stage, Bert escaped and jumped through 4 lots of electric taping. Finally with some help we got him in the stable. Handling went okay and he moved to a field to share with 2 riding hacks.

It was at this time that my health started to go downhill. I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I struggled to climb the stairs at home. The one shining light was Bert. Every morning, Lloyd would take me to see him, and I am sure he knew I was ill. He would come bounding across the field to give me cuddles and mutual grooming. When I was able to drive again, I would spend hours in the field with him just messing around, it was great therapy. If I hadn't had Bert, I don't know how I would have coped with the illness.

Then came January 2017 and we had moved to Exmoor. We found a nice field for him to stay in for a while, so we brought him down a couple of weeks after. We needed to get him registered at the local vets. So the vet came to check him out and Bert took one look at him and cleared 3 foot of electric taping without a problem. The vet said he had no problem then.

Bert now needed a friend and a chance meeting with the late Hilary Williams led us to Tawbitts stud. Gill Langdon and two fillies for us to see, Ferny and Tessa. Of course, we had to have both. How would the three get on together, brilliantly was the answer. He has showed them how to play, and they taught him how to be caught and head collared in the field. We still have all three and are out pet ponies.

Even now, after showing either our own or team Tawbitts ponies or riding Rob and Ambrose we remind ourselves how it all started and how much he learn't us along the way.

He is a star.

SANGO

Sango is definitely my super star and best friend!

We have had Sango since 2014 when he was just 4. I was so nervous to get on him without people at his head and sides so I never really rode him much. I just watched my sister Megan ride and wished I could have the same fun. In 2016 I decided that I wanted to ride properly and when Megan got her new pony I got Sango as my own. I was really nervous riding him and even scared trotting over poles without someone walking with me. I really wanted to ride well and Sango was so kind and sweet to me, and after riding him for just a few months I was jumping 40-50 cm courses confidently! My confidence just grew without me noticing. That fab little pony really likes to take care of me and every time I ride him I feel great by the end. Even my bad days were fun with Sango, and there were lots of those! I have landed on the ground so many times but Megan says that's how I learn to stay on!!!

By the End of 2016 I had LOADS more confidence riding Sango and had even done a small Pony Club show!

Since being on Sango my confidence has just exploded and I feel so different now. Sango and I have done a lot more showing this year and I got my first ever Champion on him. I am so proud of him! We've also done cross country, show jumping, games and lots of pony club and riding club rallies. Everything we have done together, Sango has been a star. We even did our first 70cm course and didn't come last! Sango is the reason I am riding like I am, jumping the heights I am and most important enjoying riding as much as I am! Every time I am on Sango I feel so happy. He can be very cheeky at times and was terrible for refusing those scary jump fillers but that only made me more determined, and now we can jump anything and we get over it easily. He's helped me get confidence and now I am able to get on him without being the slightest bit nervous, not being scared in case I fall off him if he goes to fast or if we jump a big jump because I know that Sango won't do anything bad, and he will keep me safe. Hes great going out hacks and riding through wide, open fields because he won't get spooked by a car or take off, he will race through a field or gallop across the beach and we have the best fun together. Sango is the best pony I will ever have and he'll forever be my star.

By Charlotte Gillon, age 12.