

EXMOOR PONY STAR

2009 NOMINATIONS

BOURNEFIELD BRIAR ROSE (aka Star)

Blackthorn Blush Rose's first foal was born in the early hours of May 3rd. It took me some time to find them as Blush Rose had gone deep into the scrub to foal, it was a copybook foaling, the filly was up and bright and the afterbirth was laid out perfectly for me to examine.

All went well and a couple of weeks later Luca (Cranbrookpaddocks Sanlucar) had a filly as well so the foals were able to play together. Although young, Blush Rose proved to be an excellent mother, she has a lovely temperament which she has passed on to her foal.

In the middle of August I was due to judge at Ponies (UK) but my early morning check showed there was something wrong with 'Star'. I managed to get my judging duties covered. Star's eye was closed and there was a heavy discharge. The vet was called and both mare and foal had to be admitted into the clinic. The examination that followed suggested that a foreign body had penetrated the eye, a blackthorn, hawthorn, wire, who knows. There was an abscess forming and damage to the eye, if all went well Star might not regain full vision. They spent a couple of weeks in the clinic, a catheter was inserted so that antibiotic and steroid drops could be administered eight times a day into the eye. Throughout all this both mare and foal endured all the procedures with true stoicism. At the end of August the pair of them came home. They were to remain stabled, fortunately I have a large shelter, so Star had room for a buck and a kick when she felt the need. The treatment continued until early October when after a check it was decided that the improvement was satisfactory and the catheter could be removed and the drops could be replaced with a daily dollop of ointment.

Sadly, within a couple of days the eye started to discharge and swell again. The decision had to be made, Star had to have the eye removed. We had thought that all was going well but the drugs had obviously been masking more severe problems.

Star spent another week stabled until the stitches were removed and then they were allowed to be turned out. To say my heart was in my mouth was an understatement as I watched this plucky little foal gallop from one end of the field to the other, would she see the fence?

Star has adapted well, along with Blush Rose she has been turned out in all my paddocks in turn so she can become accustomed to the habitat before she was weaned.

My granddaughter has taken a shine to Star and maybe she will be a pony for her to ride at Pony Club in the future.

BOY

I bought Boy when he was four and this year Boy is twenty and we have helped each other through good and bad times and covered, it must be, many thousands of miles. He has been run into twice by cars on the road and been present as the worst of anti-hunt demonstrations proving himself bombproof. He has carried children to hounds from the age of 6 upwards, carries me all day and on occasions my partner Len.

As Boy is not registered he has not been eligible for the shows where most Exmoors become famous. The first year we had Boy we took him to shows each week and at the last show he won the Open Handy Pony and a bag of pony nuts!! Even this year Boy was placed 1st and 2nd in the two Handy Pony classes he entered. I use him for any sort of task; for cutting holly for Christmas, picking elderflowers to make cordial, even standing up on his rump to see over the hedge (I have photographic evidence!)

The second winter we had Boy there was heavy snow and what a wonderful week we had – me riding Boy and pulling the toboggan for my children Lucy and Tom. We all remember it well, especially Boy who, when we had snow in January this year was playing in it and quite plainly asked me, where are the children?

In 2008 Boy acquired the name of “the ditch pony”. Whilst at a staghound meet the ground gave way beneath Boy’s hind legs – under the brambles was a ditch as deep as Boy was tall. I wriggled off thinking nothing of it, I would just lead him down the ditch and climb out further down. Unfortunately the ditch was too narrow so Boy ate brambles while everyone assembled discussed what to do. The saddle was removed, a rope put under one hind leg and Boy was hitched up ‘wheelbarrowed’ down the ditch until he could scramble out. Stirrups were found in the water in the ditch and we continued to have a long day staghunting.

This year Boy and I went for a ride on the beach but he was not impressed, it was so boring on all that sand. Another day I took Boy for a ride on Exmoor leaving the trailer above Lanacre Bridge. Cricky Lad and his mares were there. After our ride I led Boy over to them. Cricky Lad came up first, almost touched noses with Boy, didn’t feel threatened so stood back while the young mares came close hardly able to believe their eyes then followed some way as we returned to the trailer.

In October when gathering ponies on Dunkery Beacon we were having trouble locating the ponies. Boy and I were a short distance from the other riders and Boy neighed. An Exmoor reply came from across the combe but the ponies were not visible. The neighing continued back and forth until we located the ponies camouflaged against the hillside.

On another gathering when two mares and foals were held up at Dunkery Gate and there was much congestion, the mares were unable to get through to road and down to the farm, so I positioned Boy where they could see him through a space between cars, and on cue, Boy neighed, the ponies came through the gap and away down the road. I couldn’t believe how wonderful Boy had been.

Boy took part in the EPS 75th Year week-end celebrations and afterwards took me swimming bareback in the River Barle. In 1998 he took part in the Native Pony Pilgrimage and the EPS display ride at the Royal Show at Stoneleigh. He also took part in the Golden Horseshoe EPS display this year carrying Charlotte age 10 and myself. Boy was EPS Southern Area Reserve Champion Performance Pony in 2008.

What can I say, Boy continues to be my Exmoor pony star on who I can always depend.

COED-Y-WERN HONEYSUCKLE

49/77 Coed-y-Wern Honeysuckle came into my life (officially) on 31st March 2007. She was 2 months short of her 4th Birthday and including her breeders I was her fifth owner. The only problem she has is a tendency to itch during the Summer. The vet ruled out Sweet Itch but I keep her rugged and manage to keep it under some sort of control.

I had been going to the Christmas Show for years before I got Honey and always wanted to have a pony to show there, well, I made it eventually only to be told by the judge that she looked like a Dartmoor, I felt like giving up there and then but due in no small part to my granddaughter who does all the lead rein and M&M classes I carried on.

Our first season was spent propping everyone else up (ie we were always last, or so it seemed), last year was slightly better, but this year 2009, we excelled ourselves.

Charlotte won 'our' first red rosette on April 10th 2 years and 10 days after getting Honey (and I cried). My season came to an end on 17th May when I fell in the garden and broke my ankle. Pete took over the showing and the general consensus was 'Honey goes better for Pete' The two of them with me now acting as groom won at the New Forest & Hants County show, not only that, Honey was also Champion, something I never expected. Charlotte also managed to do her first class off the lead rein (a class where the children can have an assistant but no lead rein) and they won! The judge loved Honey, fortunately I've only come across one judge who thinks Exmoors are the Devil Incarnate, she nearly fainted when I told her that Charlotte does everything with her including catching. I can't imagine life without Honey now, she's easy to keep, she lives out all year round, no rugs, I can literally take her out of the field and on to the trailer for shows, if the weather is bad she's down in the yard with access to a small barn the night before a show, but generally she's shown straight from the field. Honey is working wonders with my confidence, she is the kindest pony you could wish for, she is the most unmareish mare, she's never done anything to make me worry, but it has taken me longer to get used to her I'm sure than for Honey to get used to us!

I had the feeling that after 18 months she had her suitcase packed ready to move on again but I think she has now got her feet firmly under the table and is going nowhere. Next year Sarah my daughter (Charlotte's mum) is hopefully going to do some 'proper' ridden classes, it may be a case of 'all the gear, no idea' but we'll give it a go and if nothing else we'll be flying the flag for Exmoors. I'll hopefully be sound enough to do some inhand classes but if it really is true that Honey goes better for Pete then I just might become Honey's official photographer! I would love another Exmoor but could I love another one as much as Honey? Perhaps the only thing to do is breed one, that will hopefully happen in 2011, we've had a couple of false starts & then we were enjoying the showing so much plans changed.

We are all now looking forward to our 4th year with Honey and trust she will be with us for a long time, after all, her g.g.granddam (I think that's right) Hawkwell Rowan lived until she was 41. If Honey manages such a great age I'll be a mere 93 years old!!

FREOD PEREGRINE FALCON

Perry is just a young pony at 4 years old but I would like to nominate him for Exmoor pony star as he had been a special conservation grazing pony for the Yorkshire Exmoor Pony Trust this year.

Perry is a much loved pony in Yorkshire and has a large fan club! His main asset is his friendly nature and outgoing personality, he is definitely a person pony. Perry has grazed numerous sites this summer and is always the pony site owners and checker would like to keep. He will come over when called and encourages the other ponies down with him (this is very useful!). He is very good to catch, lead and most importantly load!

Perry has helped the younger ponies learn the ropes and also being a companion and good influence for some of the more nervous ponies.

He does have a cheeky side and on one occasion escaped through the fence and across a newly turfed lawn with his friend Skylark.

It would be great to have a whole herd of ponies like Perry! Thank you Perry!!

HAWKWELL VERSUVIUS 'Bear'

Our five year old stallion, Hawkwell Versuvius, 'Bear', is a very special friend and ambassador for his breed. In March, he saw the birth of his first foal – quite literally - as we woke to find Maisie and him complete with newborn Jenny. Bear embraced the role of 'Dad' with gusto. In May, they were joined by visiting mares (some with foal at foot) and Bear happily took on his new extended family. In July, we welcomed Bear's own colt foal, Monty, who arrived with his mother at just 2 months old. It was love at first sight and Bear was often seen standing over Monty, head lowered, as his son slept. When his dam returned home in October, Bear took Monty under his wing and spends hours with his foals, showing them the ropes. Throughout all these new experiences, we have been able to bring Bear out of the field for work. He is being ridden again and enjoys leisurely hacks out in the forest and moorland with the other horses. Bear is wonderful to ride and totally tunes in to his rider. He attended a clinic with the Portuguese classical maestro, Rodrigo da Costa Matos, and is continuing training with Rodrigo in 2010.

Bear has a lovely temperament, as he showed when seven horses and ponies unexpectedly visited his barn one night! There had clearly been quite a party but Bear's area, with just a simple gate between them, was undisturbed. He must have calmly looked on, accompanied by his foals and mares, without getting agitated!

Bear was shown lightly this year and enjoyed success in the ring. However, the day before the Devon County, he managed to take his family to a luscious haylage field down the lane, where he acquired an impressive grass belly just in time for the show – he was still placed 2nd and best stallion in a strong class. At Royal Cornwall a few weeks later, he was back to his streamlined self and stood Champion Exmoor. He stood Reserve Champion of Show at Porlock and then Champion Exmoor; Res Small Breeds Champion; and Champion Stallion of Show at the NPA Cornwall Breed Show. He qualified for the NPA Cornwall Champion of Champions Final where he stood in the final three stallions selection. Bear also appeared on BBC1's Countryfile programme, and he was chosen to feature as 'July' in the Dodson & Horrell 2010 Calendar.

Bear has gracious manners and, although very capable of producing spectacular *'airs above the ground'* when exuberant, he is careful, kind and considerate with us. Bear is an adorable, generous stallion, and such a delight that we are looking forward to running on his lovely son Monty and seeing how he develops too. We'd like to nominate Bear for these awards as not only is he a consistent top show performer, having won over 16 championships, but everything about his day to day temperament and all-round 'goodness' implies that he deserves to be an Exmoor Pony Star!

HEATHPOOL ZENO

I first met Zeno an unhandled yearling, scared of absolutely everyone and everything. Usually I would run a mile from a pony so nervous, yet for some reason (I still don't know exactly why) I decided that he would be mine. Having never really handled youngstock, I'd bought my first pony. The next year was a huge learning curve. Catching in the field was a problem, loading onto a horsebox was as bad. I backed him and we were starting to make real progress: then my worst nightmare happened.

Three days after he was castrated the phone rang. Zeno was stuck in a 240v electric fence. Somehow he managed to get his legs caught (we think he might have been trying to jump it) ending up in a tangled mess with the electricity still coursing through him. At a guess, he was stuck for 45 minutes. Alec Copland, who bred and kept him at Heathpool farm for me, managed to free him before I arrived. He had cuts all over him, and was very weak. We didn't know if he was going to make it through the night - he could hardly move, eat or drink. That night was honestly one of the longest of my life.

I couldn't even stay at Heathpool as I was in the middle of my finals (as usual with Exmoors, the timing couldn't have been worse!). To say the call the next morning saying Zeno was still alive, eating and drinking was a relief would be an understatement. After a lot of TLC he made a full recovery; I am forever grateful to Alec for saving him. Without Alec, Zeno would not be here today.

After University and getting married we moved to Northern Ireland in September 2008. Now I had two friends for Zeno – Annasach Bugatti and Heathpool Stilbe, all of them travelled together. After five failed attempts to sail (beware of ponies and boats in Autumn: any sign of a wave they will be denied boarding), and the longest month ever they arrived and promptly settled into their new home.

Once relocated the real work for Zeno and I began. In the space of six months he became a different pony. He started catching, loading, wore his first saddle; we even started riding on the roads. Cars were very scary at first, but not anymore. In the summer of 2009 we started Pleasure Riding, and now plan to start our Endurance CTRs. Zeno has taken to endurance riding like he has been at it all his life, becoming a firm favourite in the Irish endurance riding community. We can't wait to show what Exmoors' are really capable of in 2010!

Over the past four years Zeno and I have developed a trust, a bond that I don't think I'll ever have with another pony. He has been through a lot in four years, but always bounces back. I am amazed at his attitude to life, Zeno is a real superstar!

PENBRYNDUU SPARKIE

I would like to nominate Sparkie. He is a star and a genuine ambassador for Exmoors. You cannot help but love Sparkie, he wins everyone round and he has that certain something, he's special.

Sparkie came to us early in the summer and we all fell in love. At his previous home he was a little unsettled, he'd never had shoes on, worn a rug, a pelham or had a tail bandage on.

When Sparkie joined our yard he bonded instantly with Amelia his 13 year old jockey who adored him from the first, they get on so well that Amelia does all the schooling and work with Sparkie. Given an option Amelia wants to take Sparkie to shows and is always so excited to do classes on him. Under Amelia's guidance Sparkie has done lead rein and even fancy dress classes most notably as a Werewolf. He will literally do anything for her giving 100%.

With Amelia's younger brother Samuel, Sparkie has done wonders encouraging a not-too-keen boy to ride and winning him many prizes (which boys always adore)! At Exford show Sparkie won the junior handler class and the huge trophy he was awarded for 'The Pony Most Suitable to be Handled by a Child' dates back to 1955, the judge even said she'd won it in 1964!

Sparkie has won us over to Exmoors, a breed we had previously not favored. He always has a smile on his face, is eager to please and gives his best. He has the loveliest, kindest eyes (and has a trophy to prove it), and amuses us all by blowing bubbles whenever his bridle is on. He has a lovely unflappable nature and is a sweetheart with any pony he's turned out with, never being aggressive or nasty.

Sparkie has taken on jumping – something he has discovered he loves rather too enthusiastically and has been placed in all his working hunter classes. He tackles any fence he is pointed at, never showing any sign of stopping.

Overall Sparkie is the genuine article and all round family pony that is safe and reliable so that children can safely be left to take care of him, school him and hack him out on their own. He can also hold his own in the show ring and has won many prizes in his time with us. He has safely taken his first ridden jockey into the show ring, in fact the first time he did an evening performance we realised was also the first time he'd been in an indoor arena. True to form Sparkie behaved impeccably with hardly any working in and no preparation such as ear plugs!

Whatever is thrown at him, Sparkie always does it to the best of his ability and with a smile on his face. He has that special something, there is something about him that you can't quite put your finger on, but maybe it is just because he is a little Exmoor Pony Star.

PORPOISE

We first met Porpoise (or Treacle to her friends or Streaky to her intimate circle) in 1983 when we were looking for a replacement for one of our Gowanbrae Exmoors (which we bought in 1975).

She was a feisty five year old when we went to Devizes to see her where she promptly bucked my sister off! Her feistiness would last until her final days; she definitely had her own ideas on when to be caught and when and if she would load into a trailer!

Showing and schooling were a no-no as far as Treacle was concerned but jumping and going fast were a different kettle of fish; sponsored rides were always a great day out for us!

I did, though, manage to break her to harness and we were able to trundle around the farm. In the early '90's we decided to put Treacle in foal.

Our first attempt ended in tragedy as she had a dead filly foal but, very kindly, Alison Kershaw (who owned Blackthorn Priceless who we covered Treacle with) offered us a free return and in 1992 Treacle became a very proud mum to Barley (H28/3 Coxmoor Maid of Barle). This was Treacles forte!

Barley definitely inherited her mum's lovely temperament and independent spirit.

Treacle went on to have another lovely foal - a colt by Domitian although we nearly lost her to a bad bout of colic when she was about half way through her pregnancy.

Both Treacle and Barley taught my two boys and my niece the rudiments of riding and horsemanship.

For the past few years Treacle has been a companion to my (naughty) Highland X Shire mare.

Still a real character, she hated being in a stable and would bash the door for her food and whicker in that Exmoor way when she wanted attention.

Clad in her purple-plaid rug and neck cover during the worst weather she would still go cantering off when I turned her out-a bit stiff but head in the air and tail up!

Last year she had a party to celebrate her 30th birthday, complete with fibre-pencil cake!

Sadly, this October, I made the tough decision to have my little Exmoor lady put down as, at the age of 31, I felt that she would struggle through another wet winter on our heavy clay.

As a true child of the Moor I nominate Porpoise as Exmoor Pony Star 2009.

She was no showing star but she was independent, tough, sometimes naughty, sometimes VERY frustrating but gentle, kind, a great character and she taught us Kenward girls so much about patience and handling a recalcitrant pony but above all she gave us so much Exmoor fun.

THISTLE

Thistle has proved himself to be the pony of a lifetime.

While at Pony Camp with Debbie Harrison in the summer of 2008, my daughter Xj fell in love with Thistle, I failed to see the attraction! Debbie assured me he had a huge future. I thought him 'hideous', but as long as 'he did the job' I was willing to go with the flow. Debbie's Mum Fiona reminds me constantly of those words, and boy has Thistle done his job, what a star he turned out to be! Xj and Thistle began to campaign first ridden (F/R) classes. Standing in the collecting ring with dainty Welsh A's, pretty Dartmoors and cute Shetlands you feel a bit out of place with an Exmoor but in he went and he didn't just hold his own he beat them. Consistently he won and was champion.

We headed for the P(UK) Winter Championships and again in he went as the underdog and came out of the Novice F/R victorious as the Champion! Later that day he went into the Open F/R, I could not believe it again he was pulled top! That meant the evening performance, his first! He behaved impeccably just popping two strides of canter when the photographers flash went off in his face. Thistle was First Reserve Champion, the judge told Xj he was her Champion but for that little mistake.

At the NPS Summer Championships Thistle again rose to the challenge. In the HOYS F/R they finished 3rd out of 33 ponies, the only non-welsh pony in the line up! Thistle also won the non-welsh F/R junior class out of about 30 ponies, and the Open F/R Non-welsh Final and went Reserve Champion to the welsh pony that had won the RIHS. Then in the Mini Championship he went above the F/R Champion to stand Reserve Mini Champion to the L/R pony. He also won the mis-matched pairs with his stable mate a pretty show pony.

Thistle has been placed in most of his HOYS F/R classes and won an Olympia section, he qualified HOYS open ridden at his first attempt, but his success as a F/R is truly amazing. He has flown the flag for his breed, keeping up a lonely vigil as the only Exmoor in those classes on the county circuit – you can almost see some judges getting out the rulebook to check he's allowed to exhibit!

We've had the most amazing year with a pony who's gone from unknown to superstar. He is now very handsome in my eyes! Thistle is a true child's pony – safe and kind needing hardly any working-in and worked in by a child! He's a complete treasure, with a fan club! The people from the Moorland Mouse Trust, who previously owned him, always come to see Thistle at shows they attend, there's no friendlier crowd than Exmoor people. We've met some lovely people through Thistle, and he's won us over to Exmoors – we bought another! He's our star!

TODDY

Toddy or Exie as she is known to her friends came into our lives just over five years ago. It was a grey, wet November Saturday and we were looking round the pens of ponies and horses at a local Horse Sale when we came across a pen of poor, sickly young ponies among them was an Exmoor Filly. The pen of ponies was withdrawn from the sale by the animal welfare Officer as they were too sick to be put forward.

We made enquiries and a local dealer had taken them as he had room to keep them isolated just in case they had something worse than bad colds. We kept in touch with the dealer and once the ponies were on the mend went to visit them. The Exmoor filly was looking a lot better and her full brand mark could be identified. Exie was as wild as the wind but we decided to buy her. She arrived in a lorry with a long twenty-foot, thick rope attached to a headcollar, the lorry reversed up to the stable door the ramp was lowered and out charged Exie. In the days that followed we managed to remove the rope and encouraged her to eat from a bucket and to venture out of the stable into an enclosed yard. She had and still has to a certain extent, a fear of walking on concrete, however eventually she progressed to a paddock.

She is now the most beautiful pony still a little nervy amongst a lot of horses but worth her weight in gold as a companion to another rescue pony. She also acts as a nanny/auntie to the brood mare ponies, keeping them company but never interfering with the way they bring up their foals.

I would like to nominate Exie to the star of 2009 as she has overcome the most awful start to life. No-one seems to know how such a beautifully bred pony as we subsequently found out came to be in such a sad state. She is now the sweetest pony you could wish to meet and hopefully one day she will have her own foal as it is so important to keep this ancient intelligent breed going.

YARROW

Yarrow joined the Edinburgh University Exmoor Pony Trekking Section in autumn 2007 aged 4. He took everything we threw at him in his stride, and quickly learnt what life in a trekking herd was all about. The following summer he came with us to Glendevon, and his confidence grew every day he was with us. He started learning how to canter and steadily became more and more reliable, and it wasn't long before the trek leaders started fighting over him – after all, who could resist that cheeky face?

At the end of the summer, Yarrow was entered in his first show (Scottish area EPS show). We didn't expect him to do brilliantly, but thought it would be a good opportunity for him to gain some more experience. He behaved beautifully, and came 4th out of a large class in the Novice ridden – and even cantered perfectly on both legs! We were so pleased with him; he exceeded all our expectations and more!

In 2009, aged 6, Yarrow progressed to taking trekkers and quickly became a firm favourite of many of our regulars. He has perfect ground manners, is a lovely forward going ride and is so eager to please. All the members of the trekking section are delighted with the progress he has made, he has come so far and we have never had any problems with him. For this reason we think Yarrow should be recognised for his hard work, and should be awarded Exmoor Pony Star 2009!