

# EXMOOR PONY STAR

## 2009 WINNERS



WINNER

**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 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 75<sup>th</sup> 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.



## **RUNNER-UP**

### **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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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!