

EXMOOR PONY STAR

2010 WINNERS

WINNER

PHOTOGRAPH COMING SOON

SWEETCOMBE 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.



RUNNER UP

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.