

EXMOOR PONY STAR

2014 NOMINATIONS

ARIEL H12/5

Ariel came to our family in 1999, firstly as a pony for my daughter and loved all the fun pony club type things she did with her. But as my daughter moved on up in the 'horsey' world, we just had to keep Ariel. She became my pony and I spent much time hacking her out up on the North York Moors. I did take her to a few shows, but rarely got the best out of her, so I have to find an equine discipline she could do well at and we could both enjoy. And someone suggested TREC. Well we both loved it. We got a great ride out on the Orienteering side of the competition and then Ariel came into her own on the PTV and excelled at every obstacle. We went from strength to strength here and over the 10 years we competed we were selected twice for England in the nations cup, won many championships and spent the last two years competing at level 4, the highest level. This involved a 40km POR and many big ditches, drop offs and step ups for such a small pony to negotiate in the PTV. Many people often gasped as she went up, down and over such obstacles. But we were a partnership with such trust in each other!

But my life was turned upside down last November, when it was discovered I had a serious back problem. An operation was needed and I was told to stop all contact and high impact sport, which included riding. Well I think I cried non-stop for a week. How could life ever go on without riding Ariel! Eventually I pulled myself together, knowing that there were people far worse than me and at my next meeting with my consultant asked if I could drive my pony. Yes, was the reply and so I was straight on the Internet finding out what to do. I had never driven before nor had no friend who knew what to do. But with the help of the you tube and friends I managed to break Ariel to harness. She was so good and took it all in her stride even when I got it wrong through lack of knowledge/experience.

So now I drive her, as many of you know. We have completed many BDS pleasure rides this year, a show as well as a BDS TREC, which we won! I couldn't of managed this without the help of my good friend Kat Evans and much help from the Faulkner family who gave me loads of advice - so thank you all.

I also have a new young rider and Ariel is doing a good job of teaching her how to ride 'properly'. She's been competing in local shows, dressage etc and has joined pony club. And Ariel is back in her element 'pony club games = fun!' So as you can see Ariel, now 20, is such an amazing pony and my 'Exmoor Star'

BEINNLIATH DHUGHAILL 224/3

I got Dhughail for my 25th Christmas, and he remains, to this day, the best Christmas present ever. I first saw him at 6 weeks and fell in love immediately. He was my first pony and loved by everyone who met him. I still remember the day we went to collect him. As he had only been loaded onto a lorry, we left the jockey door open to give him light. Well on he went quite the thing, under the front barrier and right out the jockey door and that was just the start of his cheekiness.

He spent the first two years of his life having fun with the sheep and cattle in his field and my friend's children. He has always preferred people to other ponies. He was shown successfully in hand until he was a three year old. He experienced everything he could, either through being led out or being long reined through the streets and loved working and playing before spending time back with his breeder where he started his riding career then spent a winter running with his herd, while I had my first child.

He became a general ridden pony and also compete in endurance riding, which he loved as did I. He taught my son to love and trust ponies and my daughter to get over her fear of them. He then went on loan to Riding for the Disabled in Dundee when my friend started to run the place as she thought he would be the perfect pony for the job. This he did for two years, making lots of new friends, many who started their riding careers with him and, many of whom, even now ask after him, he made such an influence on them.

He then came home to carry on his ridden career and taught my daughter to ride.

At the age of 18, after two previous check ligament injuries, he had to undergo surgery on both hind legs, he was diagnosed with DJD and cartilage problems. This was repaired the best possible and he was expected to make a 75—80% recovery after 6 months. Dhughail being his usual self made it easy for us to put all the hard work into helping him recover to the best of his ability and after only 12 weeks had made a 99.9% recovery, amazing everybody, including the vet. He has now gone back to doing pony club with a young girl and hacking out on an almost daily basis and loving every minute of it. The only thing he can't do is jumping. Everyone on the yard loves him and he is well in demand for being ridden out as he is so much fun (he can even outrun the thoroughbreds on the yard). Since his operation he has won Performance Champion at the Area Show and also Veteran Champion at a local show. He is now almost 20 and has never lost any of his character or his cheek.

FRITHESDEN FLUTE 9/150

Flute has exceeded all expectations! He was originally bought as a companion pony and came from a lovely family who had outgrown him and said that whilst he was fabulous on the lead rein he was not a first pony as he could be strong and at times, wilful too!

He came and he settled well and we realised pretty quickly that actually he could be so much more than just a companion. We found a wonderful and experienced handler in Christina Brooks and she took us under her wing – we were new to the world of showing and had never owned a mini M&M before either. It was going to be a fun and at times, a somewhat hairy journey!

Flute has been the perfect learn to ride pony for my God daughter who had her first ever canter and jump on him (on the lead rein!) and has also jumped XC with great gusto with my own daughter who reported it as being one of the more scary but exhilarating moments of her riding career to date!

In the show ring he has done well at various local County Shows and much to our delight we got to meet Mr and Mrs Partridge-Keane who knew him well when he was growing up in Hertfordshire. We took him to the Rare Breeds Show at Houghton Hall which was great fun meeting so many Exmoor experts and enthusiasts who were very friendly and kind and generous with their knowledge and advice too.

Our proudest moment with Flute however was when he and Christina were well placed at the Royal Windsor Horse Show this Summer - it was such a thrill to be a competitor at such a big event and Flute showed superstar quality in dealing with all the razzmatazz of the occasion. Curiously for one who thinks bicycles are completely terrifying he thought the Kings Troop are magnificent!

We love Flute for his kind and loving nature, his great enthusiasm for life and that fact that he will turn his hoof to anything asked of him. For my part, I love him as my own companion and for the pleasure he brings to others whether in the show ring, being ridden or simply just being Himself!

Flute is much more than we ever expected and has exceeded far more than we ever hoped for – but he still hates bicycles.....!

HADDON LUCKY H42/37

Haddon Lucky H42/37 is known to everyone who cares for her, as Maimie. This was my grandmother's name and seemed appropriate as she (my grandmother that is) adored Exmoor ponies and Maimie is a very special one.

She was separated from her mother, a pony in one of the free living herds, a few weeks after birth during a very hot summer, and was close to death when she was found. The Mansells did an amazing job of bottle feeding her and ensured that she lived with other ponies to learn the rules of the herd. David recalls that, on going out after dark with her bottle, he would call and out of the blackness would appear the mealy muzzle of a true Exmoor pony! She would down her bottle in record time and then charge back to her friends.

I met the Mansells in 2001 in order to buy an Exmoor pony, the theory being that it was closer to the ground to fall as my family were tired of my near disasters off 16 handers! Sandra and David took me out on the moor where their herd was grazing and called them. What a magical sight! 'You can have that one' they said pointing at the now galloping line of ponies, all looking identical to my untrained eye. 'Oh fine' I said 'she seems lovely'. And that was that.

I have lived with Maimie for 13 years (she is 19 now) and I can truly say that she is the greatest ambassador for the breed that I have ever met. She has introduced so many of my friends to riding Exmoors, she is gentle with the nervous and inexperienced, but woe betide the rider who thinks they know it all! She is fast, fun and feisty if things are not done right. But she is reliable and a true lady to handle.

I have taken Maimie back to Exmoor for several holidays over the moor and also up to the Pennines where she took me over a sizeable chunk of the Pennine Way. She has done the Badminton ride twice and other fun rides. She has participated in more shows than I care to remember and is now gracing the Veterans Classes.

Add to the above testimonial, the kindest face and the most gentle eye, and the fact that my farrier and vet remark that 'she is always good' and you have the perfect pony.

HEATHPOOL YEW 93/41

I would like to share, to the best of my ability, the love shared between me and my loan pony Heathpool Yew. I first came across this pony in October 2014, as soon as I saw him I fell in love. Within 1 week of me first becoming aware of his existence, my family and I were on our way to Wales to bring him back to our home in central Scotland.

My first time riding Yew was daunting as a few months previous my confidence had been knocked severely, however he was a superstar and looked after me with such care. This boy has done nothing but care for me since the day he walked out of that horse box into sunny Scotland. Although I've only had little Yewy for a short time, he's already changing who I am. Once again, I love am in love - with yet another Exmoor - and wake up every day excited about the thought of continuing our adventures. I would like to think that Yewy loves us as much as we love him.

Although for the first few weeks of his Scottish experience, he didn't settle well, he is now opening up to us and has become the cuddliest pony you could ever imagine. He never stops surprising us with his quirky character and funny little habits. Nothing in this world makes me happier than seeing his fluffy little face appearing over the stable wall with his beautiful nostrils flared and alert. He is the most beautiful creature I have ever laid eyes on. I could write for hours just describing his big kind eyes and immeasurable nostrils. He has the most distinctive features, which really helps when trying to tell the difference between him and his best friend, Beinnliath Dhughail – who I'm sure everyone will have heard of.

On the ground, Yew is a remarkable boy and he's even better when I'm on his back. As a pair we have come on so much in such a short space of time and we intend to go out competing very soon, where I'm positive he will win almost everything.

Yewy has not only stolen my heart, but also a piece of my mums and my little sisters, who both love him to the moon and back. Even they, who have little riding experience, are always asking when it is their turn to ride the beast. I have never heard of anyone who doesn't love this pony. He deserves so much; I hope I can give him all the love he ought to have. His owner, Rosie MacDairmid has done the most wonderful job raising him as well as all her other Exmoor's and I can't thank her enough for giving me the opportunity to love such a boy. He is my biggest joy and I don't think I will ever stop loving this special little man, I can't wait to spend my future with Heathpool Yew.

LITTLE BINSEY 14/85

AKA BORIS Born 1989

I would like to nominate my pony Boris for the Exmoor Star award. Not for Boris the glamour & rosettes of the show ring, but for his amazing service in improving the lives of children with special needs.

He has been the mainstay of Eden RDA Group for 21 years, the only longer serving member being me & I don't have a fan club!

It is hard to describe what this special pony means & has meant to so many children

Both within & out of the group. He is patient (yes he is pure Exmoor!) gentle, extremely comfortable & loves having his photo taken.

As well as the weekly group sessions I use him for several riders at home & on picnic rides. For example, what other way can a child with cerebral palsy ride across the fell or round the beautiful countryside.

Like all the group ponies he is happy with all manner of exercises and games that enable the children to develop skills and have fun. The most nervous or disabled child soon falls in love with Boris. He loves attention and always returns their affection.

For his long and unflinching service to our group and other children I wish to nominate him for a star.

BORIS by Ben Currie.

Hi, my name is Ben Currie, I am 12 years old and have cerebral palsy.

So far I have been riding with Eve for about 6 great years & have always ridden the same pony. His name is Boris and he is an Exmoor.

Over time I have learned many things about the pony and the equipment.

I ride on a very fleecy saddle as it helps my muscles and gives me a good stretch.

We ride round the countryside & in the Summer do long picnic rides.

Boris is a lovely pony to ride I have really enjoyed horse riding and hope I can keep doing it for a long time

MURRAYTON NYMPH H7/31

I would like to nominate Murrayton Nymph – Fifi to us – for the Exmoor Pony Star award, because she has been an absolute star since she arrived here three months ago.

My six year old son Charlie was desperate to start riding on his own, but our lead-rein pony was too sharp and had given him a few real confidence-knocking frights. I was determined to find the perfect pony this time and was not at all convinced that an Exmoor mare would fit the bill – the only things I “knew” about Exmoors were that that they could be stubborn and too heavily built for little riders. I couldn’t have been more wrong.

Fifi has been a saint from the moment we got her. We picked her up in the trailer and took her straight to a Pony Club rally, where Charlie rode off the lead rein for the first time and got his road safety badge too. She rounded off her first week with us by attending a memorial service for the horses who served in World War One. Fifi not only wore her poppy with pride, she stood like a little rock for two hours whilst 17hh hunters cavorted around her, flags fluttered and brass bands played.

Since then, Fifi’s done many more Pony Club rallies and behaved impeccably at all of them. And yesterday, she carried Charlie in a massive indoor arena at a branch Mounted Games practice, where she remained her wonderful, unflappable self, despite a bit of inexpert flag-wielding by Charlie and the senior team’s games ponies galloping either side of her.

Although Fifi is so sensible and steady, she’s also responsive – the ideal pony to learn to ride on. As Charlie says, “I just think what I want to do and she does it! She’s the best pony in the world. I love Fifi very much”. I love her too – she takes real care of Charlie and she lives out without a rug, but never needs more than a quick flick over with a dandy brush to make her look perfect (Exmoors’ coats are amazing.) A true “mother’s dream” pony!

Fifi will be twenty two in a couple of months’ time, but she looks ten years younger and is a really beautiful pony, with a glossy dark brown coat, big, kind eyes and, of course, the Exmoor mealy muzzle. Wherever we go, she’s greeted with “Oooo, isn’t she gorgeous! Is she an Exmoor?” (usually followed by “I’ve never seen one of those round here before”). She’s got fans all over now, including our farrier, who is fascinated by her wonderfully designed, self-cleaning Exmoor hooves (it’s very rare to find anything to pick out of Fifi’s feet).

All in all, Fifi is a great ambassador for her breed and incontrovertible proof that Exmoors make fantastic children’s ponies. And, needless to say, after her long career as a brood mare, county-level first-ridden, companion and riding school pony, she’s got a home for life with us.

SANGO 21/117

I'm Megan. I am 14 years old and started off as a pretty normal kid who loved to ride. In the year 2010 I got very sick and was very close to not being here. Sounds scary but here I am, recovering quickly and still smiling because of an amazing Star called Sango.

I was forced to stop riding, I was wheelchair bound and very sore. And to top it all I had to see a psychologist for the mental damage. But earlier this year a real miracle happened. He is my 4 year old Exmoor Pony called Sango, my shining star.

It sounds a bit like a Disney movie but its very real; my physiotherapy has stopped, my wheelchair is in the spare room and I have just sacked my psychologist. The proof that my Star cure really works? Me!Sangos is unlike most youngsters. He accepts my condition and never pushes me. He smiles at me when I feel down and there's a real glint there. A real genuine understanding. When I bring out the bridle he puts his head straight in, bit and all. When dad tries, it's a 'catch me' game. Funny to me but probably not so much for him! When I try to walk a bit further he holds me up, when I'm tired he rests with me. And, when we feel pretty good we gallop so fast through the fields and it feels awesome! I never want to stop. I think it's trust. The proper kind of trust and a feeling a being completely looked after that makes everything so wonderful with Sango.

He fell when we were going over a jump. Not his fault, he's still learning and hit his head on the ground as we landed. He held his position, dropped me gently on the ground near mum and then landed with a thud. Thankfully he was OK; My instructor said he did that so he wouldn't hurt me.

Last month we were all down at the burn. Dad was digging, I was on Sango and mum was playing with the dog, Jazz. Jazz fell head first down a deep drain. I screamed hysterically (of course!) and dad ran to save my dog. He managed to pull her out by the collar and she was fine. The whole time I was throwing a real panicky fit (in the words of mum!) and Sango never flinched. Statue pose: That's my boy!

I have many stories and I know it all sounds far fetched but here I am with my walking stick in one hand and a beautiful pony in the other. My best friend. People told me he's only 4 and we were daft to buy such a young inexperienced pony when I obviously don't have the strength to train him. People don't know the bond we have. He makes my life worth living again. Sango is my star and I'm his.

SETTERAH 14/35

Our star Setterah, stable name toffee, has been a member of our family since 2007, Abby was also 7.

Toffee came to us a very nervous but friendly pony, but soon accepted Abby as her rider. Owning toffee was Abby's first experience with riding and caring for a pony. Abby spent time bonding with Toffee, the first couple of years were spent hacking out in the local area. Toffee then attended a number of sponsored rides run by the bridleways associations.

The next step was learning to jump together , and are proving to show they are a great team, as this year has shown.

Toffee has shown this year that she is an all-round family pony that will turn her hoof to anything. Toffee has done well in the show ring, competing locally under saddle and in hand, coming home with numerous rosettes and trophies.

Toffee attended the northern Exmoor show, where she won the Whittington family trophy and the withy pool trophy. She has competed locally at show jumping up to 75cm, and is showing promise in the working hunter ring.

Also this year toffee has qualified for pony of the year 2015, won the northern area performance award, competed in handy pony, barrel racing, cross country, and has spent many afternoons galloping down the beach.

To top the year of toffee has attended various hunts with the Holcombe hunt.

My 5 year old niece is showing interest in ponies and toffee is giving her the confidence to go further.

Setterah is the star for us as 2014 is the year were it has all come together for both pony and rider.