



The Moorland Mousie Trust

To promote and conserve the Exmoor pony
Registered charity no. 1080504
Website: www.moorlandmousietrust.org.uk

JUNE 2005

VERY IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR YOU TO NOTE

Apologies to everyone for the very long delay in getting this newsletter together, but we have been extremely busy over the last couple of months. We have a very important change of contact details with immediate effect. Please make a note that all correspondences now need to come to the following address: **Draydon Cottages, Dulverton, Somerset. TA22 9QE.** There is also a new telephone number: **01398 323185.** The email address remains the same: moorland.mousie.trust@ntlworld.com. Juliet's contact details in Northumberland remain the same. These changes are already having a positive impact on the work that the Trust is doing, and we are making great steps forward to realise the dream of having a fully operational centre on Exmoor for our treasured Exmoor pony. So, now over to the important part – the ponies.....



Maria Daley's "Yorrick", one of the original Trust ponies, with jockey Natalie. All three have enjoyed a super relationship over his first, formative years and Yorrick has now moved on to a new family home. Many thanks to Maria and Natalie for giving him such a wonderful start.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE RE: FINANCES.

Over the last few years, many of you have sent in small donations, but haven't completed a gift aid form. These small amounts have added up to a total reclaim of £1000 from Inland Revenue. If you have made a donation, however small you may think it is, and you are a tax payer, please fill in the enclosed gift aid and return it to us. For every £1 you have given to us, we can claim 28p. If you are not sure that you have sent a donation, please fill one in anyway and send it back – we keep a record of everyone who has donated! It's a simple thing to do and the Trust can benefit to the tune of £1000!

HELP NEEDED! TACK APPEAL

We are very proud of ponies like Yorrick (see front page). The Trust is now in a position where we have a number of ridden ponies and several who are ready to be backed. We urgently need to purchase tack to continue the education of these ponies. Each pony costs a minimum of £500 to kit out. If you can help out, please send a donation along a completed gift aid form. Alternatively you may have unused tack which could be donated – either by selling in your local tack shop, or by sending to us, which may not be as impractical as it sounds. Perhaps your local tack shop has unwanted items which they would be happy to donate, or they may be happy to help if you provided them with an “unwanted tack bin” for customers to dispose of their bits and pieces for a good cause.

FOAL FOSTERERS NEEDED.

We have had a small number of late arrivals at the centre. We have unwanted yearling colts, who will be gelded shortly, and will then be looking for foster homes for the Summer. These boys urgently need handling experience before they become much older. If you feel you have the experience to help out, or you have fostered previously and would like to help again, please get in touch. We urgently need these ponies to start their education. We do rely heavily on the generosity of the fosterers, some of whom have been providing this service on a purely voluntary basis since we began the scheme.



Yearling colts awaiting fosterers/new homes.

IF YOUR INTEREST IS IN BREEDING AND PEDIGREES, Peter Dean has put together some useful information on <http://www.exmoor-pony-breeding.info> The information can be downloaded, and Peter can be contacted via the website. He suggests that if you are looking at a serious breeding programme, it is wise to consult a qualified geneticist. The Exmoor pony is very fortunate in having enthusiasts who are well qualified in this field.

Rosefinch and Redstart

Both these Moorland Mousie ponies are doing their bit for the Exmoor breed in the show ring, promoting the Exmoor and at no cost at all to the Trust. Redstart (A/244) has gone to Richard Holt of the SRS show team. She has had a very successful season so far and qualified for the Picton Final (Novice Ridden) at Malvern.



Redstart

Rosefinch (A/256) who is with Pamela Brown in Scotland was Reserve Champion at NPS Scotland and got a nice write up in Horse and Hound.



She then went to Dalry Show and was Champion M&M and Reserve Supreme and qualified for the Silver Medal Championship at Malvern. The lovely thing is they both attract comment wherever they go and everyone wants one!



Rosefinch jumping

FOR ANYONE THINKING OF TAKING ON A MOORLAND BRED PONY,

this is a lovely success story. Like Yorrick, Button was one of our first Moorland Mousie ponies. I remember well the many phone calls we received that first Autumn, and can still recall all of those lovely colts and their new, very proud owners. Here is Jane Andrews and Button's story.....

"During the autumn of 1999 while looking for a pony to live with my native cross mare Honey, I read an article about Exmoor ponies and the Moorland Mousie Trust. I didn't need to think about it for long to decide that a foal from Exmoor would be a better proposition than a very elderly horse from a rescue AND it was still sort of rescuing a pony. Val was so helpful. We had a couple of long phone conversations – it still seems odd that I don't know what she looks like – and it was game on. I had only just started an Open University degree and could no way get to any gather or sale so Val said she could choose me a colt. My only criterion was that he should be going to be on the big side as I am not a lightweight. Even the travelling went well as a family in the next village was getting one too and agreed to fetch mine for me for half the cost of the journey. So – a whole new pony for £100 including delivery! I insisted on his having the head collar taken off while I had lots of hands to help and then he was put away in our biggest box with the door open and a sheep hurdle across it – airy and lots to see. He stood to attention at the back of the stable and looked at us so intelligently that we christened him 'Button' as in 'bright as a Button'! He then had ten days respite while I took my first year exams (and got a distinction).

What I hadn't thought of was that he had no idea about what buckets were for and even having some in with him with water in did not make him lose his suspicion enough to drink so Honey had to spend ages tied up outside his stable with food etc in colour matched buckets until he got the idea. His first action was to untie Honey and then watch in amazement as she wandered off! He can undo anything, actually taking honey's head collar off once and lately managing to undo the clip from his head collar to get to the sheep feed.

After my exams I spent four weeks sitting with coffee and crossword on a milk crate in his stable moving gradually nearer the hay pile until he got used to me. Mucking out tended to be quite exciting however slowly I moved. But when he realised I was not going to approach him he got quite good at watching me work. By six weeks from arrival I was able to scratch him along his neck and back – he was very lousy so that was a good approach, two tubs of louse powder to kill them all – and get him to accept his head collar. At this point I decided he had to go out with the others (Honey, an anglo-arab mare and an aged warmblood) in our big field. Unfortunately they decided to corner him and teach him who was boss straight away so I charged in shrieking and waving my arms to get them away from him thinking 'this is where I undo all that careful handling' only to find that as I rushed up he whipped round behind me and thumbed his nose at the bigger horses – great result.

All my ideas about taking him for long walks to get him used to traffic etc while he was little enough to handle easily fell by the wayside because he was so scared of people he didn't know, especially tall men, and then OU started again and he got basic lessons, mostly from Honey. Add in Foot and Mouth in his first spring and the 60 ewes who lambed here and couldn't go anywhere for months and you will see that he did not have it easy, but he is good with sheep now – we managed to teach him not to try to play with them though he and the rams have an interesting relationship due to his being entire until over a year old (F&M again).

He then did very little apart from learning to stand, reasonably still when tied up, be washed (all parts) have feet done (though he does nibble the farrier) and lead. My friend Becky's father spent a lot of time encouraging him to come to him to help cure Button of his fear of tall men. He adores attention and I have had to do join up with him a couple of times to teach him not to be too pushy especially in the field when poo picking! He has had various friends but his favourite is a 23 year old anglo gelding who will play with him, though the length of the games is strictly controlled by the old man. He has found living with only mares very boring as even

young mares will not play properly. Honey likes him better than solitude but that's about as far as it goes. They share a field and are together in a large pen at night and so long as he does what she tells him they get on OK

Meanwhile every winter after exams over my three months off, I meant to do lots of things, from painting the house to horsey things, but never really got everything done so I began to get quite apprehensive about backing Button. In October 2004 I did my final exams and ordered a saddle. I had tried various saddles on him and found none that I could get to stay central when pulled sideways, most sliding over very easily which did not inspire confidence, so I still had not backed him. I ordered a Bareback treeless saddle from Horse and Harmony in Aberdeenshire. I wanted black as it looks lovely on him but they couldn't do it until after Christmas so Katya Creighton lent me a brown one to begin with. Finally, no excuse left I got fed up with trying to sort out assistance and just put on the saddle, added two ropes to his head collar, put his head against a bale of hay (no chance of movement then!) and got on! Great anticlimax as he just went on eating. After that the main difficulty was getting him to go forward when he KNEW I was behind him. Got over this with a little lunging and a lot of discussion with him and then had to find a way of stopping reliably. The saddle is terrific, staying in place and giving a great sense of security, I have used it on Honey and found that she goes much freer in front in it than in a treed saddle. Still bitless but now in an English hackamore (£5 from a horse table top sale) and stopping is achieved by aids, the word stop and (don't follow my example please) a mint as soon as he stops. Whoa was no good as he could not tell the difference between whoa and walk. I've obviously shouted too much in the yard and deafened him!

We have been up the lane twice with his gelding friend and only had one hairy moment when he saw a horse he hadn't met across a field and tried to take the shortest route to it – that was when I changed to the hackamore. Otherwise he is surprisingly good about cars, when you consider that he has hardly seen any, and I only walk and trot because I have seen him buck in the field!

My best Christmas present was getting my degree in Natural Sciences with Chemistry, a 2.1, which I collect in June. And being so chuffed about it a friend and I have started a laboratory doing worm egg counts. We will do any animal, within reason, but obviously specialise in horses. This is going back to what I qualified to do before I was married and worked at Cambridge Vet School lab. We decided to call ourselves Church Farm Faecal Egg Counting and work from a lab in what was a milking parlour! Just a short plug – our charges start at £5 per sample for 15+ samples up to £7 per sample for 1-8 samples. Moorland Mousie friends and 'owners' can have "mates rates" of max £6 per sample even for singles. Call 01728 685638 or email churchfarmfec@hotmail.co.uk. Amazing what a small thing like passing exams can do for your confidence!

Hopefully Button and I will continue well and all in one piece. We do not aim to do anything special, just hack and play like I do with Honey, though I hope that my learning with Hon will rub off on Button and he WILL be better schooled than she is.

When people worry about whether they can handle a foal off the moor I laugh – that was the easy bit, the difficult part is from now on."

Note from Val: Unfortunately Jane hasn't sent a photo of herself or Button, and she did mention that she still hasn't got a clue what I look like. My stock answer when people ask for photos of me is that the ponies are far more beautiful! However, I will break this habit of a lifetime for once, and here is a photo of Fleeter and myself enjoying a quiet moment together.....



VISITORS TO ASHWICK

Despite the fact that facilities are still not as we should like, we continue to get regular visitors to Ashwick.

In the last few months, we have welcomed Helena Ahier back, and had first visits from several pony adopters. Some of you may well remember the story of Izzy Todd and her friend baking for the school cake stall last year – she brought her family along to meet Abbi. Abbi proved very popular, as Marion Coates also paid her a visit. Dylan continued to have a string of visitors, which included Marion Sweet and young Liam and family from Cirencester (sorry no surname). Liam was particularly disappointed when he was told that he couldn't take Dylan home – I'm sure that Lesley was more than a little relieved!

The Price family visited a few weeks back. We are particularly grateful to Rachel and Kevin for their offer of help. They are at present sending out begging letters to several firms in the hope of getting some much needed equipment. Daughter Chelsea was quite taken with Fleeter, or maybe it was the other way around, we're not sure.....



If you would like to visit, we love to see people – and the ponies enjoy the treats that usually accompany a visit! Please give us as much notice as possible and we shall be happy to accommodate you if we possibly can. Facilities are still very basic, but the ponies more than make up for it!

DAWN WILLIAMS



Dawn is continuing to give us support through her website www.equinetourism.co.uk, as well as more practical help. She has been fostering three colts over the Winter months, and is making excellent progress. Harry is riding out well and also gives the youngsters much needed confidence.

He never ceases to amaze Dawn. Having said that, I really feel that Dawn doesn't give herself enough praise for doing such a wonderful job with Harry. Were it not for her patience and understanding, I'm sure that it would have been a different story. Dawn has become seriously hooked on the breed – pretty amazing when you see that until now her yard only housed Arabs!! She can be seen out with her trade stand at major events, not only promoting her website, but also handing out "Adopt a pony" leaflets and generally singing the praises of the Moorland Mousie Trust. On her recent stint at Badminton it think it's fair to say that she actually talked more about Exmoor ponies than about equine tourism!! We mustn't forget to also mention her partner Neil, who has been showing his own natural flair by helping out with the youngsters. Many congratulations to them both on their recent engagement. Do look out for Dawn if you are at the shows this summer.

HOLIDAYS ON EXMOOR – Don't forget that we have several accommodation providers amongst our supporters. I would also like to take advantage and plug our own holiday cottages next to the Ashwick estate. You can call Karen on 01404 812859 or look up www.draydoncottages.co.uk

SPONSORED PONIES

Each Autumn we run a “Sponsor a Foal” scheme. This is a great opportunity if someone would like to hear more about a specific foal as it goes through its initial education. Judith Weatherburn runs the scheme, as well as the “Adopt an Exmoor Pony” project. A tireless worker for the Trust, she distributes the leaflets and coordinates the quarterly updates, as well as matching ponies to people. This year, we have several sponsored ponies, four of whom deserve a special mention. The Learning for life group had quite a list of chosen names, including “Carrot”, but finally settled on Sandy. Also, many thanks to Janet Harris, Pat Arnold,, who is one of our regular Northern supporters, and Katherine Stokes, who chose “Robin”.

SHOW PONIES

Some of you are aware that the Moorland Mousie Trust has had ponies in the show-ring for the last two years. Can we please reiterate what we have said in the past. The ponies are out there promoting their own breed. The people who show them do so at their own expense. The Moorland Mousie Trust does not spend any of its funds on producing show ponies. The people concerned do it all for their own pleasure. We are very grateful for what they do, but are also very aware that rumours are that donated money is used for this purpose. We can assure you that it is not, and this can be seen in the accounts.

FOSTER PONIES – In praise of Penny and Michael Taylor-Young!



Thanks again to Penny and Michael for taking on another two foals in the Autumn. They are both very experienced Exmoor pony owners, and I was delighted when they got in touch to say that they would like to help. Last year, both ponies and fosterers became T.V. celebrities when the BBC contacted us to say that they would like to film the work of the Trust as part of a special feature on Exmoor for Countryfile. This year, Penny contacted me in October and said that they would be happy to help out again, particularly if we had any youngsters who could perhaps do with a little TLC. When these two little chaps turned up I knew exactly what to do with them. In March we had to call on their filming prowess yet again, when the Exmoor Pony Society needed to film the fosterers at work. Penny and Michael have certainly had their work cut out for them this year – both foals proving to be quite a handful. Looking at them here, they look so angelic!



Both ponies are coming on well and will be looking for homes within the next couple of months. These pictures were both taken in March, when they were still in their Winter coats. Penny says that they have come on so much since they were taken. We shall look forward to showing you how well they have come on in a few months time.

Exmoors and Gateshead Council

If you think of Gateshead you think of the Metro Centre (apparently better known than Hadrian's Wall); once the largest shopping centre in Europe. You think of its new cultural venues; the Baltic and the Sage. You think of the Angel of the North. You certainly do not think about its green spaces, or how much effort Gateshead is now putting into the environment.

The Moorland Mousie Trust and Gateshead Council got together a couple of years ago to graze small sites. Tunny and Yarrow went on to Shibdon Pond right next to the motorway, the Metro Centre and a railway line, and crossed by several public footpaths. Initially I had huge anxieties about them escaping or being attacked. However, they settled well and happily and did a marvellous job clearing all the rough vegetation. The public loved them, the ponies moved quietly away when approached and would hide in the hawthorn scrub just like deer.



Tunny and Yarrow grazing near the Metro Centre

Mocha, Barn Owl, Tigger and QC went on a site next to the main Newcastle to Carlisle railway line which hadn't been grazed for several years. They were between Tyne Golf Course and the railway and seemed oblivious to both. When the water supply to a spring fed pond suddenly vanished they were moved to Lamesley meadows, a water meadow in the shadow of the Angel of the North, where they spent last winter. Despite the site being wet, (I once found the ponies on an island surrounded by water!) they did wonderfully well. None of them had any hay or hard feed and ended the winter still round and gleaming. They always had somewhere dry to lie up and now cross any water and ditches.

Jayne Calvert at Gateshead Council came up with the most perfect summer site for really as many ponies as needed to go there. High up, looking over Beamish Open Air Museum,

the site is over 100 acres of flowers and rough grass, skylarks singing everywhere, completely enclosed with no public access; it is the ideal location for summering colts before they are gelded. The wind blows all the time and it is high enough to avoid midges and therefore sweetitch. The ponies love it.



Summer grazing site at Gateshead

We have devised a handling pen method for moving them, which avoids any stress and because they all know and love hard food they follow the bucket (and me) into the pen and then in Exmoor pony time i.e. their time, they walk quietly into the trailer. We have learned never to hurry them as it has to be done at their speed or not at all! On one famous occasion 18 people took 2 hours not to catch 2 ponies! Now we find it takes half an hour and 2 people to load them.

Interestingly, when we turned them out, they have split into 2 groups and the 4 that have been together now for 4 years have chosen to separate. Tunny, Yarrow, Tigger and QC are together and Barn Owl, Mocha and a new yearling colt Joe are a team.



Barn Owl and Joe at Gateshead

Gateshead council are also responsible for the reintroduction of the Red Kite to the North East and it is possible to see these magnificent birds when visiting the ponies. Last week, when I was there, a Short-eared Owl was hunting down the far boundary. If you are in the North East it's worth going to see the Exmoor boys and how well they look.