

PONIES OF THE LOWER EPPYNT

I was given a foal when aged one and a half and I have never been without – now seventy-four and I have been showing for the past sixty years. I hope you enjoy this account of my memories of these wonderful ponies. *(The picture below is of the Rhydgvillim mares on the Lower Eppynt in the 1950's)*



The Welsh Mountain pony is very good at breeding and was used with great success during the forties. The main use of the Mountain ponies was being ridden to do shepherding because of their sure-footedness on the steep hills. They were also good for children to ride. When they crossed the ponies with other horses they bred strong ponies that were called 'half-legs' or 'vanners' and were used to do many of the light jobs on the farm taking the milk floats to the milk stands and taking the family to do shopping twice a week. The smaller and stronger ones – up to 11 hands high, were used in large numbers in the mines, and played their part in providing coal to help win the war. I remember my father was chain harrowing with a 'half-leg'. I went to take him some lunch – he stopped and said to me – 'you have a go'. I was twelve at the time. I went once around the field. The horse was too fast; I had to run to keep up with him, one round was quite enough!

The Mountain ponies were used to cross with racing lines to make very good riding ponies, both trotting and galloping ponies that were able to do the

shepherding during the week and to compete at the local sports on the Saturdays. When I was young and still going to school, at the weekends my cousin and friends taught ponies to lead and be ridden, ready to sell at the sales later in the year. In later years I continued to break horses for other people. The one I will always remember was a dun stallion for Mr Griffiths, Blaenfirmant; he was very difficult! He would buck and buck until he got tired and then lie down and not get up for a long time! It took three weeks to persuade him to be ridden. I rode my first race at the age of twelve with success. We rode one horse and lead another to the shows and sports at this time. The 'walk, trot and gallop' was a favourite race. I had a pony and rode to town every Saturday, and back.



At the Cwmowen sales – a photograph by Dr Wynne Davies

The war started and things changed. Tractors and cars came to take the place of horses and a lot were sold. During the wartime, the Mountain ponies that were in foal were 'bled' at Cwmowen and other places to help the war effort. The racing stopped and showing started to take over so we showed at Cwmowen and others in the area. On Cwmowen sale day, we gathered the hill ponies off Lower Eppynt into the yard at Cwmowen and sorted the ones that were for sale into pens and numbered them. After the sale the ones that were not sold were driven back to their

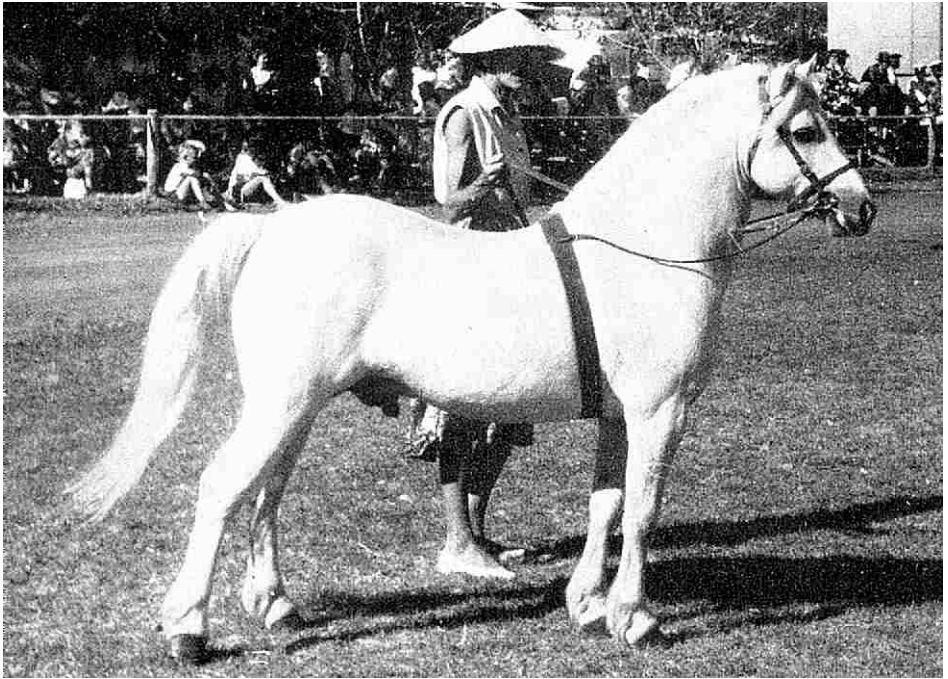


Judging the Welsh Mountain Pony Premium Stallions for the Eppynt Hills in 1954. From right Cui Hailstone, Ceulan Revolt (equal first) Bolgoed Pippin, Dyrin Athlete and Criban Trilby (equal third) – Photograph by T W Lansdell

part of the mountain. There were over 500 ponies sold at Cwmowen sales and another two hundred sold at Llanafan, maybe more.

At the start of the 1900's it was the fashion to have grey stallions. Lord Swansea was one of the first purchasing Caer Beris King Cole 940 and Grove ap Telltale 860, both sons of Grove King Cole II 565. They bred many good colts out of Fairwood and Mathrafal mares. Some offspring, Llangynog Star by Grove ap Telltale and Duhonw Emperor by Grove King Cole II, both premium stallions on the Lower Eppynt for many years siring many good ponies. Duhonw Emperor was sold on and ended his days at Twyford. Other stallions on the Lower Eppynt at the time included Criban Monty.

In the fifties, the following stallions were used on the Lower Eppynt: Cui Hailstone (1954), Ceulan Reveller (1955), Cenarth Blueboy (1956), Gaerstone Brilliant, Caedowen Socks, Dyrin Double Diamond, Gaerstone Viscount and Vanog Lookout in later years. *(ed. Cui Hailstone f1945 by Criban Snow Ball out of Cui June was exported to Mrs R Lasbrey of Badgemore Stud in South Africa in 1957 while Vanog Lookout f1956 by Dyrin Twrog out of Eppynt Katie was exported to Mrs Newton of the Wrekin Stud, also in South Africa in 1964)* Ceulan Reveller was purchased by my father at the Cui sale for thirty six guineas. He was a champion in harness and in-hand. He was a premium stallion in 1955 at Merthyr



Cui Hailstone shown by Mrs Rose Lasbrey at the Beaufort West Show in 1960

Cynog, I took him over in an open trailer behind a Fergie T20 with sheep sides, only about three feet high. He was very quiet and no problem to travel. On the way back one of the floorboards broke when he put his foot through. I happened to be looking at him at the time so I stopped and moved him to the other side of the trailer. He never turned a hair! Lovely horse. When it came to the autumn we gathered the ponies from the hill into Cwmowen for the sale. The breeder E.S.Davies was there with an American gentleman and offered my father double what he gave for him, so sadly my father sold him.

Leena Kahisaari 2007



Mr Reg Bowen, 74 years old, showing Rhydgwillim Diamond at the 2007 Royal Welsh Show – Photo: Leena Kahisaari

**A Reg Bowen 2007
Rhydgwillim Stud**