

SHOW BUSINESS

'You must write an article for the Journal' he said, fixing me with a dominant Welsh eye. Oh yes, I thought, I can just see that going down well 'How to breed Welsh Cobs by an English breeder with all of six years' experience'. It wouldn't be safe to cross the Severn Bridge.

'It would encourage other English people who, like you, are just starting in Cobs,' he persisted, and as usual, I gave in, and so here willy-nilly, for those who are interested, are the show experiences of two beginners. For you, more erudite members, just skip these pages.

He really was rather sweet, a blue roan cob colt foal with four white socks, our first venture into Cob buying, bought at the Llanarth Sale. All winter he remained rather sweet, and, as is so often the case with no other animals to compare with, we thought rather good; in fact, outstanding, really, Dorset's answer to Pentre Eiddwen Comet and Cahn Dafydd rolled into one – so, show we must.

We read the books, listened to advice, bought the tack, bandages, dog chalk, Vaseline, etc., and prepared to launch ourselves on the unsuspecting show world at a breed show at the end of May. I forgot to mention that during the spring Bambi had become rather less sweet, in fact, he had developed one of two quite alarming habits which we, in our ignorance, did nothing to check.

We prepared him early, bright red bandages on his four immaculate white socks, coat glistening, we boxed him and arrived at the showgrounds in torrential rain. As he appeared to be taking the box apart, nail by nail, we thought a walk round would calm him. So we removed the bandages and, disaster, pale pink socks – quite effective really with his blue roan coat. Angus walked, Bambi rampaged to anything female as long as it had four legs (and even then I don't think he would have been fussy) he generously offered his services, and stallions, he said that he would beat the lot of them with one hoof tied behind his back. As a final gesture, just as we were called into the ring, he reared up, placed both his front hooves firmly into the pockets of Angus's black oilskin coat and ripped it down to the hem. As Bambi and Angus hurtled past the judge for the sixth time (his brakes weren't too good) I kept thinking what it reminded me of – finally it dawned – Batman!

'Never no more' Angus said 'that was it,' showing was not his thing. So the following week we were off to our next show. We haunted the bottom of the line for the remainder of the season until it occurred to us that although our showing technique left a lot to be desired, our cob also had his faults. So we decided to go to the major shows and just look, and we began to see an emergence of a type, quality and substance and above all 'Welshness' that we wanted. We asked questions, I hope listened, and toured the Welsh studs where we received nothing but kindness, courtesy, and lots of teas. Finally, thanks to the help of a kind stud owner who had

heard of a mare for sale (incidentally not owned or bred by him) we obtained our foundation mare who was due to foal in early Spring.

Three years later saw us, feeling extremely nervous, at the Big One – The Royal Welsh, our mare's black foal now a sleek two-year-old in the horse lines. Angus sat in the herdsman's tent with a cup of black coffee and said he couldn't face breakfast. I must say most of the other occupants didn't look too good either at that hour of the morning, but that apparently was due to the night before. Angus said he knew just how the early Christians felt when being flung to the lions, but I thought that this was much worse; lions don't hold post-mortems, just lick their paws, and there was the Welsh Pony and Cob tent to be faced afterwards.

Well, we didn't take the show by storm, bring the crowds to their feet in a standing ovation for a performance equalled only by that of Tom Evans and Sprightly, or win the Lloyds Bank in Hand; this is fact, not fiction, but the filly was fourth in her class, and second two-year-old, and that should be encouragement enough for anyone.

Next year? – we haven't anything to show really, well apart from this little black colt – he really is rather sweet.

CHRISTINE TOMBS 1978

HENGWIMSTUD

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