

WELSH PONIES IN SOUTH AFRICA - 1980

I left England on 27th August to South Africa to judge Welsh Ponies at Pretoria Show. Having never been there before, I arrived at Johannesburg with a Horse and Hound propped on the front of my airport luggage trolley for identification. After being identified by the Williamson, I was made very welcome. I must have carried more in my suitcase than I realised in the shape of our English rain God, for nearly everywhere I went it rained and after a near drought for two years everyone was delighted.

Not only did I judge A and B's at Pretoria but a month later I judge part-breds at Vaal. The supreme champion at Pretoria was Torbry Rusty, a Section A stallion, but not only was he champion in-hand, he followed this by being ridden champion and the following day crowned it by being driven champion as well, a record that very few ponies can boast of. Rusty lives in a stable in the cool end of the garage with his chicken which insists on perching in his mane.

It was very hot the day I judged at Pretoria. I was allotted one-quarter of a huge arena, the long half of it in front of an enormous grandstand; at the opposite side from me was where the gymkhana took place.



Pretoria Supremes: Torbry Rusty (A) and Moddervlei Honeysuckle (B)

This was a deadly serious affair for adults, with tent pegging at full gallop most of the morning, and all the afternoon a mounted self-defence contest which required much firing of pistols. This was not conducive to peace and quiet for the ridden Welsh classes and from time to time caused for some excitement, but on the whole ponies and children managed very well which says much for the temperament of the Welsh. My champion Torbry Rusty never batted an eyelid. I must mention the reserve supreme champion in-hand pony, the filly Section B Moddervlei Honeysuckle by the imported stallion Firby Cronos. Cronos is half-brother to that lovely 12.2 show pony in England, Firby Fleur de Lye.

After judging at Pretoria, I flew with Pat Moore to Durban to stay with her and her husband Derek, who is a vet. They have the Hydown Stud and have wisely bought a share in Revel Vada. Their house has a thatched roof and in my bedroom, right over my bed was a bird's nest in the thatch. . . I was told that I would be alright until they hatched; fortunately for me they had the good sense to stay in their shells while I was there. Pat is the publicity officer for the Society and is an artist of no mean talent, having exhibited in London and Paris. From there I went to Cherry



Revel Vada

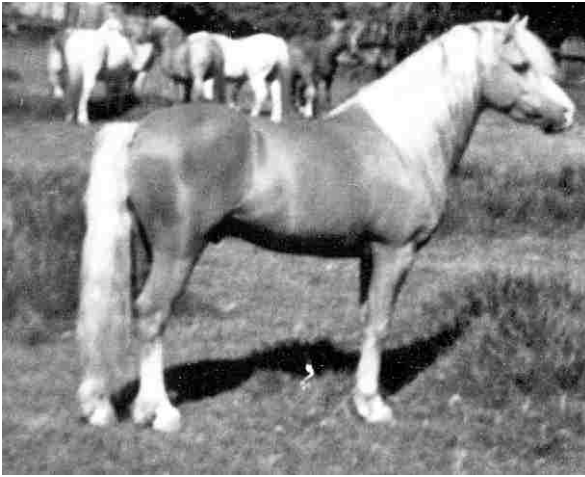
Garland and the Bowles family at Mooi River. I then flew from Durban to East London with Pat to attend the sale of ponies belonging to the late Dr Hofmeyr; this was only the second sale ever of Welsh ponies in South Africa and the first for ten years. Top prices were the Section A stallion Revel Vada who made R7,050, and Foresyte Valiant Prince Llewellyn, a Section B stallion for R1,050.

Revel Vada was bought by a partnership of four people, Piet Wiese, Derek Moore, Ds Schalk du Toit and Geoff Torr. Geoff Torr is the son of the late Bobby Torr who founded the Torbry Stud, now the home of Revel Society. After the sale I travelled all the way to Ulco near Kimberley by car, leaving at 6.30pm and arriving 8.30am the following morning. We followed Revel Vada and a Section B mare who were travelling in the back of a bakkie (a large pick-up truck); it was railed round and had a leaning bar between the two ponies. Vada wore what looked like a nice line of motor bike goggles to protect his eyes from the wind, the mare wore a travelling hood and both were snug in rugs. To English eyes a strange sight but the ponies didn't seem to mind and travelled very well.

At Ulco I stayed with Marlene and Winston Frost and family on a Karoo farm, completely different from anything I had seen before. Winston has the Frosty Stud. To start with, I had some small problem sorting out the sheep from the goats as both are the same size and black and white. Winston was having trouble with jackal killing his sheep. I rode Frosty Friday, one of the most kind and amenable ponies I have ever met, to help find the sheep in the veld at dusk so they could be rounded up and put safely in pens for the night. It was a lovely experience. After penning the sheep with the boys we rode on to see the springbok, then rode back in the African twilight listening to the birds and insects settling down for the night. The last I heard of Friday he had discovered swimming!

From Kimberley I flew to Cape Town where I was met by Myburgh Streicher who has the Bukkenburg Stud. After staying overnight in Cape Town, I was taken to visit Mrs Lasbrey who imported the first Welsh ponies into South Africa. Sadly she did not put any of her lovely mares in foal last year but this season is using the Streicher's Twyford Splendour. The journey from Cape Town to Albertinia is one of the most interesting I have ever had; the scenery is very beautiful and varied. As it was spring everything was green and fresh in spite of very little rain. The road from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth is very aptly named 'the garden route'.

Mr Streicher started his stud in 1966 importing many fine ponies, amongst them Coed Coch Nerog, who I saw happily running with his mares. What was most interesting to me was the Bukkenburg young stock. It is relatively easy to buy the best but not so easy to breed it. Here, I saw some very promising youngsters



especially a chestnut yearling colt and a filly. I also saw the foals of Lottesmore Super Star who clicks very well with the mares if the foals are anything to go by.

Mention must be made here of a visit to the Cango Caves in Oudtshoorn. The new caves were discovered only two years ago and it was to this section that I was taken; it is not open to the general

public. The main feature is the remarkable Wonder cave. To get there one has to crawl on one's hands and knees for quite a way. Before going down I had to change



Coed Coch Nerog



into overalls and industrial boots and gloves, safety helmet and lamp. We spent a fascinating few hours underground after which I was given a certificate that states I qualified as a caveman! Having grunted and groaned my way along with complete disregard for the kilogrammes and centimetres shed in the process and displaying enthusiasm above and beyond the call of duty, it was well worth it (it's a good job I did not suffer from claustrophobia). After this eventful morning, I was driven to Plettenberg Bay (to recover) where I stayed for a most enjoyable ten days with Mrs Torr and Margie, two very hard working secretaries of the Society. Feeling very fit, I flew back to Johannesburg to judge

part-breds at Vaal Show. My next stay was to be at Philippolis in the Orange Free State for the first ever Welsh conference weekend to be held in South Africa.

I flew to Bloemfontein where I was met by Piet Wiese, who is the President of the Society. It was mainly due to the organisation of Piet and his wife Hetty that the weekend was a great success and members attended from most parts of South Africa, several new members joined and some ponies changed hands. The lecturers were Mrs Cecily Norden who is a very well-known judge and author in South Africa, and Theresa McLaughlan, who owns the successful Section B stallion Firby Cronos and a large riding school outside Pretoria. As far as possible, all subjects relating to Welsh ponies were covered and some of the children had brought their ponies along for instruction and really enjoyed themselves.

Section A ponies are well established in South Africa with excellent mares and stallions. The Section B, C and D's are in their early days but will, I feel sure in the near future, make their mark. Welsh ponies adapt well to the conditions and give a great deal of pleasure to a great many people.

MIDGE MORRISON 1980
PROSPECT STUD, YORKSHIRE