

WELSH COB DISEASE

As a nurse I have met many diseases, but none so lasting as the Cob Disease. I now know that it predominated in West Wales, and there are many outbreaks in England, a few in Scotland ... and of course the 'London Boys' are in a class of their own. Anyone who has been to Regents Park on Easter Monday can vouch for that. What show offs, in the nicest possible way.

My 'illness' started when I went to work in Sussex and saw the rolling Downs just waiting to be explored on horseback. I was browsing through the For Sale columns of a certain magazine on the train coming back from a day-trip to London, and there it was – my solution. Welsh Cob, dark bay gelding, four years old. From that moment on 'Shep' dominated almost twenty years of my life.

Oh, those poor patients, how long suffering they were, having to listen to my cob ramblings. They were stuck in the bed with no escape, A captive audience.

Shep was a son of Pentre Eiddwen Comet, out of a mare called Gwlith, who was used for log hauling near Caio. He proved to be an ideal travelling companion and friend. Together we did a lot of exploring, a bit of hunting and he even found me a husband.

We fetched him in a converted furniture van – not really converted enough a friend said, 'if he survives that he will survive anything'. We were stopped by the police, 'Licence in the post, honestly constable', such a nice man, he took our word, or maybe it was Shep squealing in the back that made him wave us on.

He was ideal in every way, undemanding and always ready to please, cheap to keep, no expensive food or rugs needed. He had to be shod of course, but then I married the blacksmith's brother so . . . Anyone could ride him, toddlers could be toddled with, riders he would give a good ride, although cowboys he would 'dump' if at all possible.

Then, as he and I got longer in the tooth, thoughts went to producing more Sheps. After a lot of studying pedigrees and finance, I bought a yearling filly by Hewid Dafydd, she in turn produced a filly. They did not quite measure up to the old boy, so they were sold. Another yearling was purchased by Llanarth Math Ap Braint out of the old mare Chancerie Rai by Mathrafal. Maybe not a show cob, but as a brood mare, excellent (and she was a Shep colour). She produced two fine daughters who have been retained and formed the nucleus of the small stud today. Grand-daughters are now being produced, all little Sheps, girl Sheps that is – no colts here. Or, dare I say it, little female Pentre Eiddwen Comets? He is my target.

I was fortunate to visit him a year or two before he died. Never has an animal so impressed me. It was his quarter I think, shown to advantage in this case by his docked tail. I didn't see him move, he just stood there, rather cross at being disturbed and showing to me what a Welsh Cob was and should be. A showman and a workman combined.

Now comes confession time. Measles have crept into the well-planned programme. Senior mare Bess, has completely gone off producing pure-bred offspring. After two years of introductions to suitable stallions, in desperation, she was allowed to run with a spotted gent, called Bill Boy. Gloria was born (blanket spotted). Good we thought, now we can try her with a cob again, but no, so back came old Bill. It looks as if it will be spots again this year? I wonder if she will notice that the stallion's spots are only white paint?



PS Dear Gloria, In the 'British Spotted Pony Society' information sheet, there is reference to a Spotted Welsh Cob in the year 1298. So don't be sad about those spots. Your loving Dad Bill Boy.

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