

ASTLEY FILM STAR A WONDERFUL MOUNTAIN PONY AND PAL

It is a real shame that so many of the wonderful tributes which are printed in our Journal are written and published after the person, or pony, has left for heavenly pastures.



Astley Film Star may not be with us an awful lot longer as she was born in 1963, and has just lived through her thirtieth winter, some 26 of them with the Moore family, in Sussex, Devon and the Natal Midlands of South Africa. No oil painting, and yet surely the epitome of a Mountain Pony. She has lived outside nearly all her life, and only last week when pressed into service to help entice a reluctant cob colt into a trailer she was thrilled when she saw the vehicle, and all set to jump aboard for a jaunt. She potters in a small fenced off back lawn, separated from her great-granddaughter, great-great-granddaughter and great-great-great-granddaughter by a wire fence that prevents them from stealing her fodder, but come spring, she'll be off, a little stiffly now unfortunately, across the meadows as though thirty winters had hardly touched

her. Torrential rain in Devonshire, sleet and snow from the Drakensberg Mountains and the blasting heat of Natal's summers are dealt with in the way of her ancestors. She's the herd boss and knows how to and when to find shelter. Let the hailstorm threaten, Grannie's the leader as the herd races for shelter. I have to say that shelter of some sort is always available, and it breaks my heart to see stock without any, huddled despairingly against the wire fence of a flat field without so much as a tree, or even dip in the ground to deflect the elements.

Film Star was bred in Gloucestershire, the daughter of Linacre, a light chestnut, who was the first Welsh pony bred by Ann Wheatcroft of the Sydenham Stud. Linacre (by Revel Sentry) and her Mom, Merddwyn Penwen (by Revel Wampus) went to America (Oregon). Film Star's sire was Rhyd-y-Felin Caradog, who was by Coed Coch Madog, and out of Sirius. Thus superbly bred, but when we purchased Film Star from the Knighton Stud when it was in Sussex we knew nothing of Welsh pedigrees, only that we liked this little black pony with the proud attitude and floating action

Not long after she came, we entered her for a show with her pretty filly foal by



Astley Film Star with 3 year-old William. Film Star is rising 31 to William just turned 28!

Rowfant Santiago. She was also pressed into service by our 3 year old son to show in the leadrein class. She got a new little saddle and a bridle, did a few practice runs, and toddled into the ring, to be pulled in first, much to the amazement of the very professional trio standing second. She didn't dare trot with the child on her back though, so her gorgeous action was masked by her maternal concern for her rider and we lost the position, but to this day nobody can recall breaking her in! Years later when asked to pull a cart her attitude was equally obliging.

She has bred prize winners in both Section A and B, and a prizewinning harness Section C. Her grandchildren have won championships in all major shows in South Africa. They jump far in excess of their height, and have been in all manner of teams. She is no beauty. Her face, today, would not win her a prize (but I fancy her action still could). She was our first Welsh broodmare, and I can honestly say that she converted us to Welsh ponies. She is game for anything, fed her grandson when his Mom was sick, showed in-hand until her late teens, bossed everyone without mercy and is the most wonderful tribute to her breed. Her grandchildren and beyond have proved over and over again the courage and charm of their Welsh ancestors. They jump C.A.; they win in lead rein; they have won pony races; first pony and working hunter; open classes; Welsh Pony of the Year; National Championships; one got the highest price ever paid for a Section B stallion in South Africa; then Pony Club; they are in different teams and they have achieved success in every sphere possible. She is not a famous name, but she did turn out to be a winner in every way, and to be a tribute to the famous names in her ancestry. We were lucky to have found her and we owe her hours of happiness. I must finish now as she's staring fixedly in the kitchen window asking for lunch. A member of the family, which surely is what it is all about. I hope she'll make it for many more winters.



Astley Film Star with Hydown Popstar

I hope that the Welsh pony and Cob breeders will still try to breed this kind of animal and not just get carried away by the show ring success, and pretty heads. It's not easy to breed ponies, really good ones that is, even though it might seem easy. Having a foundation mare like Astley Film Star has certainly been a help. I hope this old-fashioned sort hasn't vanished forever. Maybe I'm old fashioned too. Maybe nobody wants them anymore, and we need to specialize in showing points. I hope not, or how are we going to find the family friends, and performance ponies of tomorrow?

Are we still going to be able to find these treasures thirty years from now? Ideally we need to improve the plain Jane mare, but hopefully we won't improve her to the extent we lose all her other attributes as well



Astley Film Star with Hydown Hostess

PAT MOORE: HYDOWN STUD: 1993

First published in the Journal of the WPCS UK in 1994

Astley Film Star had three foals in the UK, all three having been brought to South Africa when the family moved here – Hydown Popstar by Rowfant Santiago (Twyford Grenadier x Coed Coch Sianw) in 1970, Hydown Hostess by Gwersyllt Sculptor (Solway Master Bronze x Weston Sophia) in 1973 and Hydown Huckleberry by Knighton Brownberry (Coed Coch Saled x Fayre

