

INTERNATIONAL SPORT PONY BREEDERS POPLAR LANE FARM - CANADA

Submitted by Jane Southgate—Stud Principal

I would like to thank the Australian Sports Pony Registry for giving me this opportunity to write about our sport and welsh ponies. As your members will see, I have been involved with ponies for a long time.

When I was about 4-5 years old, my first ponies were two imported Shetlands, Smokey Jo and Gunsmoke (obviously this was the era of the TV series, 'Gunsmoke'!) By the time I was 10, I had a large black and white pony mare called Tippy. I believe she was about 2-3 when my parents purchased her and we learned to jump together. Eventually I outgrew her ability and the next large pony that was purchased for me was a grey Welsh Arab called Stormy Weather. (Ardmore breeding) Stormy got his name because my grandmother who was coming to see the new pony, had to stop under a highway bridge because it was raining so hard.

Stormy was a great large hunter pony and took me to a year end CEF (Canadian Equestrian Federation) award. I rode this pony until I was 18 (there was no age limit for pony riders at that time) and earned my hunt colors with the Eglinton Caledon Hunt Club. I am very proud of this pony as I was the first junior for that hunt club to be awarded my hunt colors. Stormy was eventually sold and took several riders to various championships in the Maritimes and Eastern USA. He looked just like a miniature version of a heavy weight conformation hunter and easily jumped 4 feet. In fact I showed him in the 14-18 y.o. equitation over fences against the horses and we usually placed very well.

After Stormy Weather, I graduated to the big horses. For the next 30 years I bred and showed sport horses in Calgary, Alberta and Cambridge, Ontario. We only bred on a small scale but I tried to get the best quality possible that we could afford. My grand father was a strong believer that the mare was the most important ingredient when breeding and I always tried to have a very good quality mare. In fact, I was one of the first small breeders using transported semen. We bred a mare to Abdullah when we were in Calgary before he was approved by the Trakehner stud book, so I never could register the foal. However this foal, called Millcroft, went on to become the Reserve Canadian Dressage Champion in basic level dressage. Over the years other home bred horses have won on the line, over fences and in upper level dressage.

In 1995 I saw a small Welsh stallion, Kemurs Zeus (*pictured top right*) and purchased him on a whim. I thought he would make a good pony to use for teasing, instead of using our Oldenburg stallion, Nederburg. Zeus had been shown in harness years before so one Sunday afternoon for fun we hitched him and I have been hooked on driving ponies since then.

I showed Zeus at several large Pleasure Driving Shows in Ontario and quickly realised that we had a lot to learn in this discipline. After Zeus, I had the chance to drive a Morgan stallion that was also pony height. Delview's Ebony Fox was



approximately 20 years old when Doug Lillycrop of Summitview Carriages loaned him to me. Ebony was an old pro at pleasure driving and we quickly formed a great relationship that brought us numerous successes in pleasure and cross country driving.

I was in love with driving and to this day feel more comfortable with the size of ponies than horses. After Ebony we found a wonderful driving pony in the USA – Mapleshade Baccarat. (Welsh Arab by the outstanding welsh stallion Cymraeg Rain Beau). In the meantime, Christian Garweg, a dressage coach I rode with for 10 years returned to Germany. I had seen pictures of the German Sport ponies and wanted to bring in a stallion. We were thrilled when he located the German Riding Pony, Benno's Hit for us. He had purchased other horses for us so I trusted his judgment and I bought the pony from a photo he emailed me.

Since then we have acquired three large pony mares for breeding to Benno's Hit. We decided to have our ponies approved and registered with the American Sport Pony Registry as they do an excellent job marketing sport ponies and their inspection process adds credibility to the quality of the foals and mature ponies. Our first foal by Benno's Hit out of our mare Dancing til Dawn was the top ASPR futurity winner in Canada in 2005 and tied for second top score in North America. The previous year, a foal by Benno's Hit was reserve foal futurity winner and he was out of a test quarantine grade mare. Benno's Hit has been extremely well received by the pony breeders in Ontario and the USA and he crosses well with all types of pony mares. In fact, most of the pony mares have been unregistered grade mares.

In 2005 we showed ponies in hand, dressage and pleasure/combined driving. Mapleshade Baccarat was Champion pleasure driving pony at several large shows and placed in the top three in combined driving events such as Bromont International. My small pony, Alderdale Black Magic was small pony champion at the top American pleasure driving show, Walnut Hill in New York. Our new Welsh stallion Alderdale Nighthawk was the Reserve Champion, Section A stallion or gelding at the Toronto Royal Winter. Bennos Hit was invited to Lendon Gray's dressage pony clinic hosted in New Jersey.



Bennington x Benno's Hit

In 2006 we had another successful year showing ponies and horses in hand and Pleasure/ Combined driving. We purchased a young large pony mare, Natalma, to replace Mapleshade Baccarat who we sold. Natalma placed at several American pleasure driving shows and participated in the Carriage Racing Derbies at the local Ontario fairs. Another ASPR large pony I was planning on driving was sold to Helene Benoit in Ormstown Quebec. Helene is very excited about Toby and is hoping to compete in combined driving at Bromont in 2007. Our small driving ponies continued to be very successful at the American pleasure driving shows. We also showed our young ponies to numerous wins on the line and Bennos Hit qualified and made the top four in the Sport Pony Star Search held at the RWF. We also were proud that all Bennos Hit's foals presented at the ASPR Inspection were recorded First Premium. We had several very happy pony owners. The only shadow in 2006 was that we lost our small section A welsh pony, Kemurs Zeus.

We raise a few ponies each year and Benno and Nighthawk breed about 10-15 outside mares. Our main concentration is still on showing at pleasure and combined driving events. Hopefully in the next couple of years, I will be showing more homebred ponies similar to our past success with our horses. I realized very early with the horses that I couldn't afford to purchase the quality I wanted so I had to breed them. I still feel the same about the ponies. We are lucky to have several pony registries in North America that are following the European standards for ponies. Ponies will only improve in the future and more adults are looking for smaller animals to ride. I think there will be more interest in large ponies and small horses in the immediate future from discussions that I have with purchasers. Also many former riders are looking at driving for various reasons such as time constraints, health and expense.

Jane Southgate, Owner, Poplar Lane Farm, Glen Morris, Ontario Canada Email poplarlanefarm@sympatico.ca
Web page www.poplarlanefarm.ca

Star Search Pony Challenge at the 2006 Royal - Top 4 finisher

BENNO'S HIT



2000 German Riding Pony - Chestnut - 14.1hh

Benno's Hit, an exceptional German Sport Pony stallion, was winner of 'Best of Year' at the 2002 pony stallion inspections at Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany. In 2004 he was awarded First Premium with the American Sport Pony Registry and is an ASPR licensed pony stallion.

Benno's Hit has a great disposition, excellent conformation, wonderful paces and form over fences. He received a score of 8 for his scope over fences at the ASPR inspection in April, 2004.

Benno's Hit is adding class, athleticism and substance when crossed with pony mares. He also crosses well with horse mares for owners who want to breed smaller horses but retain the warmblood appearance, disposition and movement.

For more information :
Jane Southgate, Poplar Lane Farm
Email : poplarlanefarm@sympatico.ca
www.poplarlanefarm.ca