

KAREN SLIGHT

Originally from a non horsey family my late paternal Grandmother first sat me on a horse as a toddler at a local Galadai - I guess I caught the horsey bug from that day over 50 years ago.

I desperately wanted a horse from around 5 years old although my parents couldn't really afford to give me that luxury. I was around 10 years old when I started saving my school dinner money and it was not long before I paid 5 shillings (around 25p) to enjoy my first of many half hour lessons. The local riding stables were within an easy walk from the family home and my closest friend at primary school, Carol, had an interest also - an older sibling worked at the stables and it so happened that Carol lived en route to the stables.

The first pony I rode was called Wee Beauty - a black Fell type pony of about 138 cms. What fun I had.

Of course my parents eventually found out and naturally were not at all happy about me skipping school meals. Thankfully I made many friends at the local stables, some of whom stabled their own pony there over the winter months. During the summer months we would cycle to the summer grazing fields and I was asked by the land owner if I would like to ride and compete her 138 cm pony, Cindy, a 10 yr old. Naturally Pony Club and ponies became a huge part of my life. I also was introduced to the hunting field which I adored.

Sadly 2 years later the landowner decided to sell up however I was asked by a neighbour if I would like to help her break and school several ponies her mother had bred. Before long I was competing in Working Hunter Pony classes and Show Pony classes and during the winter months had fun Show Jumping.

Upon leaving school I went to work in a showing yard in the South of England for a short while before returning home to ride a Welsh Section B Stallion called Bonkyl Mr Chips who won many championships under saddle and also qualified for Olympia. Around that time I enjoyed being a member of the local Young Farmer's Club.

I married Douglas in my mid twenties and as a wedding present from him received a Section B filly, foal, Barkway Charisma, who I successfully showed in hand including wins and placings at The Royal Highland, Royal Welsh, The Royal of England and Great Yorkshire Shows.

From 1986 - 1990 I worked in an Enterprise Trust (providing help and assistance to small businesses) and within a year was promoted to Assistant Director.

I successfully sat an assessment to judge BSPS Working Hunter Ponies in 1989 and subsequently applied for Show Hunter Pony panel, Show Pony panel all of which I was awarded a star (this enables me to judge HOYS and RIHS qualifiers) and laterally Mountain and Moorland ponies. I have judged all BSPS sections as well as Hunters, Riding Horses and Working Hunter Horses over the UK and Ireland including Working Hunter Ponies at HOYS in 2007 and have been invited to judge Show Hunter Ponies at HOYS this year as well as judging at New Zealand HOYS both of which I am find a great honour.

When the children came along I started to breed Welsh Sec Bs from 3 mares, Barkway Charisma, Bemersye Allouette and later, Caraway Anemone and Caraway Amethyst until 2010 and Sport Horses until 2016. A new face on the showing circuit this year will be the 5 year old Caraway Anchor Man in large Riding Horse Classes.

I have 2 children - James (now a Captain in the British Army - Yorkshire Regiment) became severely allergic to horses around 12 years old although he did ride successfully until he was 8 years old giving up the reins for Rugby and Quad Biking. Jill is 3.5 years younger (Real Estate is her chosen career) and successfully competed on Show Hunter ponies and Show ponies at County level, winning and being placed at the Royal international Horse Show and many times placed at HOYS. In 2011/12, aged 17, Jill was desperate for a Worker and we were fortunate to find Mystery Morn (Maisie) a 158cm Intermediate worker upon which Jill was very successful riding winning many prestigious awards and jumping clear in the BSPS Summer Championships Desert Orchid (a track of 28 fences up to 1m 20 cm, coming 5th and the Gold Cup - Dressage, which the pair won individual, Show Jumping and Working Hunter fences of a similar height gaining 5th overall. She was also a superstar out hunting - jumping everything. Tragically following retirement we lost Maisie aged 17 in 2016 at the Edinburgh Veterinary College along with the term filly foal she was carrying. It transpired the foal had kicked out in utero and damaged Maisie's cecum. The very first mare or foal I had ever lost foaling.

I have been very fortunate to own and breed many successful horses and ponies which Jill and James successfully competed which include - Princess Fiji (SP LR), Roseisle Bewidered (M & M LR,) Llanarth Ballerina (M & M LR/FR), Cnapaton Georgie Girl (FR Show Pony) Linksbury Jester (122cm SHP), Caraway Snapdragon (Sec B) Mount Pleasant Stardust (133cm SHP), Moorhall Muscial (133 SP/Nursery Stakes), Caraway Diamond Smuggler (143cm SHP), Seatshill Little Rogue (153cm SHP), Stanley Grange City Lights (PBA/Intermediate Show Riding Type) ,(Poppyfield Pirouette (148 SP/Small Intermediate Show Riding Type), Mystery Morn (intermediate Worker) and Love Actually (Large Show hack/ Large Intermediate Show Riding Type).

I also served had great fun serving on the Board of Directors of the BSPS Scottish Branch for many years until quite recently.

In 2008 I became entangled in an Intermediate's hind legs (a freak accident) and broke both my legs badly and which took a year to recover from. I continue to ride out hacking but sadly no longer hunt which is unfortunate as I live in the beautiful Scottish Borders which has perfect land for hunting and 4 four hunts on my doorstep - Duke of Buccleuch, Berwickshire, Jed Forest and Lauderdale. However, when time allows I do follow the hounds especially when Jill is hunting.

I have also traveled to many beautiful destinations - the West Coast of Scotland is a particular favourite- as well as enjoying super fun sailing and motor boating (however I will admit the kids water ski much better than me) and more recently shooting clays, but my love of horses dominates and I have been so fortunate to have made many life long friends through horses. I very much look forward to making new friends on my trip to New Zealand and Australia.