



SMALL WONDERS

When photographer Emma Campbell fell in love with Lakeland's fell ponies she decided to raise their profile with a special project

WORDS: ROGER BORRELL ♦ PHOTOGRAPHY: EMMA CAMPBELL

EMMA Campbell has a burning ambition and the fact that she'll probably never achieve it certainly won't make her any less determined.

'I love Herdwicks,' says the Liverpool-born photographer. 'But one day, I'd like the Lake District to become as famous for its fell ponies as its sheep. They are wonderful, rare, captivating animals.'

As a girl, Emma was taken to a riding school in Formby by her mother, who was working as a journalist. 'She was there to write a story and I just fell in love with the horses,' said Emma, now a professional photographer based at Shap. 'I just didn't



Emma Campbell fell in love with horses when her mother took her to riding school

want to leave. Eventually, I was lucky enough to get a very hairy highland pony.'

From school, Emma took an equine business degree but had always maintained a strong

interest in photography, starting off back in the days of film. She ended up taking pictures of horses for magazines and was selected to stage a shoot with Lesley Law, the great Olympian rider.

After a couple of years, the digital revolution kicked in and she became involved in web design and marketing, but photography remained a powerful draw.

'Then I started taking pictures of cyclists and won a national photography competition,' said Emma. 'That led me down the path of freelance cycling photography, something that lasted ten years and involved shoots with the likes of Mark

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Cavendish and Bradley Wiggins.'

The next turning point came after she attended an inspirational presentation by internationally known photographer Tim Wallace. 'His talk got me thinking about going back to my roots and being true to myself. And the truth was I missed equine photography.'

She moved up to Cumbria with her husband, a head teacher, and started taking pictures for friends – many of them with fell ponies, the native breed for this part of the world. 'I didn't know much about them at the time but saw more at the Dalemian Fell Pony Show,' said Emma. 'They started to get under my skin – they have



ABOVE:
One of Emma's shots of fell ponies in the wild

LEFT:
Fell ponies basking in the sunshine

BELOW:
Emma was captivated by the cheeky faces of the ponies

such amazing, cheeky faces.'

The ponies, which have their own society, are mostly found in Westmorland and Cumberland and they could have been roaming the fells since prehistoric times. Vikings used them for ploughing and over the centuries they have been pack animals, carrying anything from metal ore to wool and food. Today, they are regarded as an ideal mount for youngsters and disabled riders because of their gentle disposition. Small numbers can

be found on the fells but the majority are kept as pets. 'They are not at risk but they are rare so I wanted to do something to highlight the fact they need our support,' added Emma.

She wanted to launch a photographic project to help to raise the profile of the ponies and appealed for volunteers. Within 12 hours she had 20 takers. 'I've studied them as pets or as driving ponies and the next phase is to capture them in their wild state on the fells,' she said. 'They take some finding because there aren't that many out there.'

Emma is hoping to show some of the work at her stand at Rheged's Northern Camera Show this May and at the Lowther Show in August. She will also be exhibiting at a gallery in Shap.

With such a large project and a successful photography business to run, does Emma have much time to ride? 'To be honest, I don't even have a horse of my own at the moment,' she said. 'But I have warned my husband that two fell ponies will be appearing some day soon!' ♦

You can see more of Emma's work at ejcampbell.photography/equestrian-photography. You can also find out more about the ponies at www.fellponysociety.org.uk

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