



CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF CONSERVING FELL PONIES

The Fell Pony Society Display Team showcases the logo banner developed for the Centenary celebration. The Fell Pony Society was founded in 1922 to keep pure the old breed of pony that roamed the hills of the Fells in the United Kingdom. Photo by Ruth Eastwood.

By Melissa R. Kreuzer

A special celebration is uniting the Fell Pony breed around the world, with the Fell Pony Society (FPS) reaching 100 years since its founding and offering Centenary events far and wide.

In October 1922, a meeting was held at the Crown Hotel in Penrith, England, where it was resolved and carried unanimously that a Fell Pony Society should be formed, and that the annual subscription should be five shillings. The new society aimed "to foster and keep pure the old breed of pony that roamed the fells for years."

PLATINUM JUBILEE

It is a wonderful coincidence that the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II also took place this year. Her Royal Highness, a patron of the FPS since 1982, has bred Fell Ponies since 1962 using the Balmoral prefix. Her husband, the late Duke of Edinburgh, competed for many years at the national level in the Pony Teams class with a four-in-hand of Fells.

The FPS was honored to participate

in the Royal Windsor Horse Show (RWHS) Platinum Jubilee celebrations of Her Majesty the Queen, and the official launch of the FPS Centenary celebrations. A Fell Pony Parade took place in Windsor's main ring, following the Mountain and Moorland In-Hand Championship. With her grandparents long standing influence on the breed, it is entirely fitting that their granddaughter Lady Louise Windsor led The RWHS Fell Pony parade, driving a pair. More than 30 Fell Ponies traveled from across the UK to take part in the parade.

A photograph was also released the week of RWHS of Her Majesty with two of her grey Fell Ponies, Bybeck Katie and Bybeck Nightingale, bred by Colin and Heather Roberts of Bybeck Stud near Tebay, Cumbria; both ponies are hill-bred stock. Katie had 7 foals at Bybeck and was bought at the dispersal sale last July, and Nightingale was bought by the Queen about 5 years ago and was trained to saddle for her.

CONTINUING THE CELEBRATION

The Stallion and Colt Show at Dalemain, Cumbria, launched the

Northern FPS Centenary. Celebrations featured a performance by the FPS Display Team, a Parade of former Supreme Champion Stallions, and the winners on the day.

Other celebratory events are centered around its Annual Breed Show on August 7, 2022 in Cumbria. Visits to breeders, a nearly month-long exhibition, and an official Centenary Ball will commemorate this historic year.

CELEBRATING ACROSS THE POND

The Fell Pony Society of North America (FPSNA) is celebrating its own small milestone. Founded in 2002, the society seeks to preserve and promote this "rare British treasure." FPSNA offers members an informative newsletter, breeder and stallion owner marketing opportunities, and several continent-wide chances to showcase this beautiful breed, including the sponsorship of the USDF All Breeds Award since 2008.

For two decades, this all volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit has worked tirelessly to grow the breed. It is also the only North American Overseas branch to offer liaison services for help in working

with the FPS, in addition to processing memberships, international payments, and more.

The FPSNA is celebrating the dual milestones of both societies with a membership drive and 100 Mile Challenge. Find more information on their website at www.fpsna.org.

THE STANDARD

The Fell Pony Breed Standard was developed by the FPS, and has remained much unchanged over the years. Ponies are not to exceed 14 HH in height, and should have a small head, well chiseled in outline. Eyes should be prominent and bright, with ears neatly set. Shoulders are quite important, to be well laid back and sloping. The body should be thick through the heart and round-ribbed, with feet of good size, round and open at the heels with the characteristic "blue horn," and plenty of good flat bone below the knee. Mane and tail are always left to grow long, and should have plenty of fine hair at the heel, known as feather. Action at the trot should be well balanced all around, bringing the hind legs well under the body when going.

Bay and brown ponies were very common at the time FPS was formed. Black became a predominant color, followed by brown, bay, and grey the second half of the 20th century. White markings, in the form of stars and small amounts of white on the hind pasterns, have remained fairly constant over the decades. More than half the breed population has no white markings.

The accompanying Scale of Points for the breed, also developed by the FPS, takes the above standard and distributes them for a possible 200 points. General characteristics and breed type are allowed 100 points alone, emphasizing the Fell Pony Society's desire that the breed stay true to type. Stallions, no matter where in the world, must pass a licensing exam to produce FPS registerable foals.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

It is estimated that the official global population of Fell Ponies is near 6,500, with slightly more than 800 in North America. The Livestock Conservancy lists the Fell Pony as Critical on its 2022 Conservation Priority List. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust in the U.K. also lists the Fell Pony as At Risk on their 2022-



Heltondale Prince V, who was the Supreme Champion at the FPS Stallion Show this year. He also participated in the Parade of Champions showcasing prior stallion show winners. Photo by Ruth Eastwood.

2023 conservation Watchlist.

THE IDEAL FAMILY PONY

The Fell Pony has excelled at everything from dressage, to carriage driving, to ridden competitive trail and everything in between. They are a very popular choice for families because often both parents and children can enjoy riding the same animal. A Fell Pony's fast walk and easy paces make it a pleasant and comfortable ride, and its sure footedness ensures a safe passage over rough terrain.

Fell Ponies are generally creditable jumpers, particularly across country, being both agile and clever on their feet. Although most lack the scope to make top-class jumping ponies, their abilities are well up to local shows or Pony Club events where they prove their worth.

Fell Ponies are considered a light draft animal and have a temperament that is confident and reliable. The rediscovery of driving as a recreational sport has given the Fell Pony the means to continue in a job which it has traditionally done for centuries. They are well suited to this work, having great stamina. The fact that the Fell Ponies breed very true to type

makes it very easy to find matched pairs. Their main limitation in competitive work is their lack of speed, but their tireless energy compensates amply and several acquit themselves well in combined driving events.

With so much to offer, Fell Ponies make an ideal family pony.

Information for this article was provided in part by the Fell Pony Society and compiled by Melissa R. Kreuzer, Chairperson and Zone 3 Representative of the Fell Pony Society of North America.

The FPSNA's mission is to promote and preserve the Fell Pony breed in North America in ways that are consistent with the rules and regulations of the Fell Pony Society in the UK. If you would like to learn more about this endangered breed, visit their website at <https://www.fpsna.org> or email info@fpsna.org.

To learn more about the Fell Pony in the UK, visit the FPS website at <http://www.fellponysociety.org.uk/index.html>.

Follow all Centenary Celebrations in the U.S. and the U.K. online at <http://www.fellponysociety.org.uk/centenary.htm>