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Littletree Bessie Bell at the FPS Breed Show in 2007 where she headed a very strong 2-year-old fillies class

## The Littletree Fell Pony Stud

### *Jane Woolley* tells *The Native Pony* about their family-run Stud

The Woolley Family started showing Fell Ponies in 1999. They acquired their first broodmare, Lunesdale Gypsy Rose, the following year as well as two 3-year-old Fell-reared fillies, Lunesdale White Heather and Lunesdale Mountain Princess.

Heather and Princess were then prepared for a ridden showing career, which they carried out with much success. Highlights of Princess' career include winning the Ponies (UK) Confined Novice Kingsford National Championship and Ridden Champion at the Fell Pony Society Breed Show in 2002. After their showing careers, these two mares have been bred from.

In 2002, Gypsy Rose gave birth to the first Littletree Pony, a brown colt which we named Littletree Bodini, who was by Rylstone Black Knight. Bodini was kept entire and started a whole dynasty of Littletree ponies. This stallion was extremely athletic and a real 'riding type', being built very uphill and possessing a huge jump.

Heather gave birth to Littletree Bessie Bell (so called after Jane Woolley's Grandmother!) in 2005. Bessie is by Bodini and we feel that she is our best filly to date. She is extremely typey, with good joints and an ideal amount of straight feather. As a yearling she won Reserve Champion Fell Pony at The Royal Show, which was her first ever show! She was next shown as a 3-year-old in 2008 at Westmorland County Show where she won her class.

Bodini was used for three seasons at Littletree before moving on to new owner Nicky Musson, who hit the show circuit with him and took him to HOYS in 2007. We do not breed a huge number of ponies compared to

the breeders with semi-feral herds, we raise between six and ten foals a year and don't like to keep more than two mature stallions at a time. For this reason we decided to sell him, and also because we intend to keep all four of his fillies and what we feel is an exceptional colt by him. Bodini has since moved on again and now stands at Melissa Kreuzer's Dream Hayven Stud in America.

Bodini's colt I mentioned is the rising 2-year-old Littletree Limited Edition, and he is out of a super mare named Greenholme Veronica. He is everything that we could have hoped to have bred- and still relatively early in our breeding enterprise! We feel that he is both a good example of the breed by way of conformation, but also he looks set to be a fabulous riding pony. We promote our ponies through performance, and are very excited to have a stallion that possesses excellent type, combined with uphill conformation and a lot of action.

Over the years, we have added new blood to our breeding stock. Living in Cumbria we are in the heart of where many Fell Pony Studs are, and so we have been able to identify which type of ponies could be introduced to complement our existing stock. For example, heavier-boned ponies could be bought in to breed with good moving ponies that could perhaps benefit from having more bone.

We have much experience in breaking and schooling Fells, and for the ridden ponies earmarked for showing, we look for a variety of things. We feel that type is important, and we are quite particular about the ponies having good quality joints and flat bone. A well-set neck is very important, one that is quite long

and not set too low. Necks that are too thick underneath are difficult to flex, both longitudinally and laterally, which can cause problems to arise during schooling.

We also pay close attention to the ponies' natural paces. The ideal walk for riding purposes would have a slight over-track, or at least track up, which indicates a carrying capacity of the hindquarters. The trot is the Fell Pony's best pace and what it is known for, and so longer strides are much preferred to shorter ones. We like to see the ponies 'ping off all fours' with a sufficient amount of action, with good use of the forearm and hocks. The trot is important, but of all the paces it is the easiest to improve with training.

In the showing, the ponies are expected to canter for long periods of time, and often some set individual shows just consist of a canter figure of eight and extension. For this reason, we feel it is very important to assess the quality of a pony's natural canter before deciding on whether it is suitable for a ridden career or not.

We look for them to have adequate balance with good use of the inside hindleg. This suggests to us that the pony will have enough power and strength to canter round large showrings for a few laps! Canters that are rushed and un-coordinated are very difficult to improve.

We have been lucky enough to have had some wonderful ponies to ride and show, both our own and other peoples. Lunesdale Evening Star shown in 2005 for Mr and Mrs Morland is one of a very small number of ponies to win Supreme Champion at the Fell Pony Society Breed Show under saddle as opposed to in-hand.



Mrs D Slack's Raisbeck Casino, who was second at HOYS in 2006 and went to Olympia the same year, had an excellent canter. She was very ride-able, and won affiliated dressage competitions at elementary level. Currently on the show circuit we have our own Stennerskeugh Frances II, the first grey Fell to have ever gone to Olympia, where she was Best of Breed last year. Frances is a true family pony, she has qualified for the Winter National Dressage Championships held at Hartpury on 12 April, and also frequently attends endurance rides.

We purposefully sell some of our best ponies, as we want people to see good Littletree ponies out and about as, after all, they are the best advertisement for us. We want people to know that they can come to us for a top quality showing or breeding prospect, where we will be honest about a pony's true potential.

Successful ponies we have sold include Viv Morris's Littletree Rhianna. Viv has had numerous wins with her as a yearling, including winning her class at the Great Yorkshire and standing Supreme Champion Yearling at the Blue Chip Festival of Champions.

Kerrie Price and her grandfather Terry are enjoying much success with their grey mare, Littletree Crystal Water, picking up many prizes at local shows last year, including Reserve Champion at Osmotherly Show and qualifying for the Ponies (UK) Keston Royal Occasion Championship.

Yvonne Watson and Littletree Born Identity are embarking upon their dressage career, and have already had excellent comments from one of the country's top trainers, Pammy Hutton.

In America, Heather Kyle is having an amazing time with former Royal Show Fell Youngstock Champion Littletree Tia Maria. Last September Maria stood as the Supreme Champion Horse or Pony out of all of the rare breeds that competed at the Kentucky Horse Park.

Also in America, Alison Wolf is enjoying competing her stallion Littletree Born Supremacy in dressage competitions.

We have sold ponies to people in England, America, Denmark, Germany and France. As breeders, it is just as rewarding to hear how our ponies are getting on with their new owners, as it is to go out and compete with them ourselves. For this year, we hope to have a successful foaling season and we look forward to hearing more about our ponies from around the world.



A heavily pregnant Stennerskeugh Frances II in 2006. The resulting foal, by Littletree Bodini, is now a 3-year-old colt owned by Miss Layla Killoran in Derbyshire



Littletree Tia Maria winning best 2-year-old Fell Pony at the Royal Show in 2006



Lunesdale Gypsy Rose with newborn foal Littletree Matador (by Guards Jester) taken in 2006. Matador is now in the USA



The 2-year-old colt Littletree Limited Edition