

Press releases – VHS Champs.

Angie Jones-Moore

Record numbers 'Turn-out' for the 2018 National Veteran Championships and Veteran Horse of the Year.

The Veteran Horse Society Championships took place from the 28th to the 30th of September at Arena UK in Grantham, Lincolnshire, and was the most successful championships to date.

The Veteran Horse Society was founded by Julianne Aston over 20 years ago and is the original society dedicated to horses and ponies aged 15 and over. It is at this age that historically the Society introduced that a horse or pony is then to be considered a veteran.

The National Veteran Championships is the very pinnacle of the veteran showing season. With a record number of entries, the Veteran Horse Society showing team had their work cut out this year to keep up with the constant flow of competitors wanting to take part in this popular and friendly event and showing series.

Veteran horse owners travelled from all over the country to attend the event in Grantham, bringing with them their veteran horses and ponies to take part in the many classes available to them. The championships hosts a wide variety of classes including dressage, jumping, fun classes, the popular 'lorry dog' competition, as well as traditional showing classes and of course the Supreme Finals where Veteran of the Year is crowned.

The main show series classes are divided into age categories as is traditional in VHS showing, with Diamond Veterans being those aged 25 and over. There were horses of all shapes, sizes and breeds that attended the show and joined in the fun.

Helen Kitchen, the proud owner of Shetland pony Zebedee (23), says *'Zebedee, was probably one of the smallest ponies competing at the Veteran Horse Society championships, but it didn't faze him! It was our first time competing at the VHS Champs, having qualified for the regional final at the Royal Norfolk show.'* Zebedee took third place in the regional final and went on to claim eighth place in the Supreme Final on the Sunday. Helen said, *'We loved the whole show; it was well run and very friendly. We can't wait to be back next year!'*

The atmosphere during the whole weekend at Arena UK was electric! The buzz of excitement generated by competitors and their loyal supporters, coupled with the overall friendly approach made for an enjoyable weekend for all, whether taking part or attending as a groom/spectator.

A beautiful array of rosettes and trophies were presented to winners across the three days for their achievements, alongside the many special prizes kindly donated by individuals and companies who have supported and sponsored the VHS event again this year.

Laura Taylor was a very happy and proud owner when her 33 year old horse 'Lady Penelope', one of the oldest horses at the show, came second in the dressage Intro B and took home sixth place in Prelim 17A, competing against much younger horses. Laura told us *'My daughter also took part in her first ever show here, on Penny and did the fancy dress coming second! This mare is one*

in a million. I have owned her for 19 years and we have done everything together and now she has even given me the pleasure to be able to lead my daughter round the ring!

Crowds gathered in the main arena on Friday evening for the Strictly Dress-Age classes which is always one of the main highlights of the weekend and very popular with competitors and spectators alike. Combinations each complete in a freestyle dressage test to music, with a theme and costume to match – such a huge amount of effort is put into these displays which are so enjoyable to watch. Madeline and Nick Taig with Madeline's 25 year old Lankhurst Jeeves were the talk of the night as they wowed the crowd with their incredible 'Top Gun' costume and expertly choreographed routine – the video of which has since been viewed by hundreds on social media!

Madeline who has owned 'Jeeves' for 19 years spoke to us about him afterwards *'He is a legend! He has turned his hoof to a multitude of disciplines across this time, but he is an out and out showman at heart. Strictly really is 'his' class, he loves the music, the atmosphere and the crowd, the more they cheer the more he enjoys his time in the spotlight. There aren't many horses out there that would tolerate the costumes he has worn but he loves it!'*

Saturday afternoon saw the first of the Supreme Finals with the M&Ms taking to the main arena, which ranged from Highlands to traditional Welsh Cobs, they looked absolutely stunning going around the arena.

The M&M Supreme Final Championship went to Beth Proctor riding her 26 year old Fleurs Flight. This combination are no strangers to the Veteran Horse Society showing scene having bagged the Champion of Champions accolade and the Achievement Award in previous years here. 'Gilbert', as he is known at home, was certainly on top form this weekend, also going on to win The Diamond Ridden Supreme Final on the Sunday too!

We spoke to Beth's Mum, Becky Proctor after the show and she said *'Beth and Gilbert missed the 2017 Championships as Gilbert was unwell, so we felt extremely happy just to be at Arena UK this year! The hot summer had stopped us competing altogether so they did their whole show season in 3 days! To win the Mountain and Moorland Supreme with such lovely ponies in the classes made me feel extremely proud of them both. He's definitely a pony of a lifetime for Beth and my 'moment of madness' that changed our lives forever.'*

The six foundations Supreme Finals then followed on the Sunday (the traditional three age categories for In Hand and the same for the Ridden sections).

Hundreds of veteran horses and ponies compete in the qualifying shows around the country, each vying for a spot in these Supreme Finals. The overall showing series and Supreme Finals are sponsored and supported by Allen & Page who were in attendance at the show.

Allen & Page have been working with the Veteran Horse Society now for 5 years and are the first feed company to introduce a complete 'Veteran Range', recognising that not all veteran's nutritional needs are the same. It appears that the majority of veterans at the Championships are fed Allen & Page products and the Society is truly grateful for not only their support but for continually working with the Society to improve the lives of older horses - seeing certainly is believing!

Saturday night produced another spectacular evening performance full of glitz and glamour with no less than sixteen Championships up for grabs followed by the crowning of the much coveted Champion of Champions which was awarded this year to Alice Stratton with the 17 year old Laithehill Pasha.

The quality of horses forward into the evening was outstanding and of no surprise considering how well attended the qualifying day time classes had been. The judges had their work cut out to pick out their champions in front of a captivated audience.

15 year old Nanteglwys Roscoe, Welsh section D ridden by Kirsty Ruston were another combination who had a weekend to remember with placings in the Style and Performance jumping and ridden M&M classes. Their second place in the costume concours d'elegance also earned them reserve champion under the lights of the Saturday evening performance.

One veteran who really sparkled in the limelight was Laura Kenyon-Brodie's 21 year old Maysong who floated effortlessly around the main arena on Saturday evening adding both the Riding Club Championship and the Ridden Show Horse Championship to her tally. The judge spoke highly of Maysong *'She has real presence and just seemed to say 'look at me' from the moment she entered the arena'.*

A thrilled Laura spoke to us afterwards *'My weekend at the VHS championships has been absolutely fantastic, from the friendly atmosphere created by competitors, judges & organisers alike; to the beautiful veteran horses that were competing and the stunning ribbons that where up for grabs. Masie really rose to the occasion and just loved the evening performances and being under the spotlight. Roll on 2019 championships!'*

Leanne Emms and her daughter Abbie attended the champs with the 21 year old Welsh Section C 'Carlgate Mar-y-Brigadier', otherwise known as Tommy. Leanne told us *'Abbie is 13 years old and this was her first time at the VHS Champs. Abbie and Tommy have been together nearly 6 years, and achieved so much. He is the pony of a lifetime, doing anything from showing and dressage to show jumping, ODE's and pleasure rides.'* Tommy was not out of the top 5 placings all weekend, going on to take the Grass Roots Championship in the evening before claiming Reserve Champion of Champions. A thrilled Leanne said *'Abbie [and Tommy] had the best weekend, and created a bond that will never be broken.'*

Sunday's Supreme Final classes were exceptionally well attended with every veteran forward in peak condition and gleaming. Judges Christine Senior and Lady Elizabeth Taylor were delighted with the quality of veterans forward before them, recognising what a challenge this gave them as judges.

One veteran popular with the judges was Millie Bowles' 21 year old Cottrell Riverdance. This beautifully turned out combination produced a foot perfect performance to claim Reserve Champion in their Ridden Veteran Supreme Final on Sunday, adding to their ridden pony championship successes from Saturday evening.

Huge congratulations goes to Tim Northcott with 21 year old Landside Music Lord who topped their age category, going on to take the Supreme Title of Allen & Page Veteran of the Year 2018. We managed to catch up with Tim after winning and he told us *'Winning at the Veteran Horse Society National Championships means the world to me and to Lord - as was evident in his victory*

lap! He has this Morgan horse ability to make himself look 2 hands taller' laughed Tim. 'I was absolutely thrilled for Anne James, Lord's owner and breeder who has let me treat him as my own for the past 12 years. This is a wonderful, friendly show that is run very professionally. Thank you to all involved. I'm super proud to raise the profile of the magical Morgan breed.'

Reserve Veteran Horse of the Year went to the Ridden Champion Kelsey Bishop and 18 year old Shemika Snip. Kelsey and her family were over the moon with being pulled in as Reserve and we chatted with them after the event. *'Seeing all the beautiful horses at champs is so special. The atmosphere and friendliness is like no other' Kelsey's told us. 'I had no expectations so was totally shocked at winning reserve veteran of the year, I could hear people cheering and shouting especially my Mum who was crying! It was a total dream come true as all the horses deserved to win, but myself and Snippy had done it! I'm so proud of how far Snip has come and was so emotional and overwhelmed. I just want to say that if we can do it, so can everyone else - never give up on your dreams! Thank you VHS for a fantastic show and for giving me memories to cherish for ever'.*

Clare Cameron, the National Show Secretary was overwhelmed by the success of this year's Championships. Catching up with her after the show, she said *'What a show this year has been! A huge amount of work goes on behind the scenes and everybody plays their part in making this such a success. I would like to thank all the volunteers, sponsors, judges and stewards who have each given generously both with sponsorship, prizes and their time and help. A big thanks also goes to the competitors and supporters themselves who make this one of the friendliest and welcoming shows on the circuit.'*

Julianne Aston, Founder of the Society, also spoke to us from their Head Office in West Wales. *'The standard of veterans this year is astounding and I must thank Clare and her team for making this the most successful Championships yet. We are getting some fabulous feedback and are just so grateful for the support of everyone. Already we are planning next year's event and will need to have to increase our Team to cope with the number of competitors, as we have nearly doubled this year'.*

The event was an overwhelming success, reinforcing how important and prevalent veteran horses are within the showing and competitive world. The Veteran Horse Society is dependent on volunteers to continue the work they do in this sphere. Should you wish to become a member with your veteran horse or pony, or as an associate, please take a look at the website: www.veteran-horse-society.co.uk for more information.

Already sponsorship is being snapped up for classes, championships and rings for next year's event, which will once again be held at **Arena UK in Lincolnshire on 27th-29th September 2019.**

If you could help support us by becoming a sponsor, please contact us directly. Volunteers are always welcomed and information on how to take part in future events can also be found on the website or by contacting Head Office info@veteran-horse-society.co.uk or calling 01239 881300.

Charity Auction

Saturday evening always creates lots of fun and laughter with the charity auction which is held in the bar, after the evening performance has finished. Supporters are always so generous with their gifts, donations and prizes for this good cause. This beautiful cake, made by Tia Huise, was among one of the beautiful prizes donated and auctioned to raise money for the charity Veteran Equine Trust.

For Immediate release

Further information available from the Veteran Horse Society Show Office

01239 881300

info@veteran-horse-society.co.uk

Photographs courtesy of Equipics Limited.

Overall Results for Supreme Finals

M&M SUPREME FINALS

M&M In-Hand

Champion: Philippa Dawson Coates and Lynard the Menace (18)

Reserve: Amy Harris and Bureside Autumn Mist (20)

Second Reserve: Gary Snaith and Shivas Victoria (19)

M&M Ridden

Champion: Beth Proctor and Fleurs Flight (26)

Reserve: Vanessa Etches and Wexland Dafydd Du (15)

Second Reserve: Kirsty Ruston and Nanteglwys Roscoe (15)

Overall M&M Supreme Champion

Champion: Beth Proctor and Fleurs Flight (26)

Reserve: Philippa Dawson Coates and Lynard the Menace (18)

FOUNDATION SUPREME FINALS

Diamond In-Hand

Champion: Laura Oughton Auken and Hot Fuss (31)

Reserve: Donna Taylor and Wylie (33)

Second Reserve: Rachael Woolsey and Mojohn Spring Romulus (27)

Veteran In-Hand

Champion: Tim Northcott and Landside Music Lord (21)

Reserve: Lucy Ashworth and Randall II (20)

Second Reserve: Sarah Tucker and Olanta (22)

Pre-Veteran In-Hand

Champion: Alice Stratton and Laithehill Pasha (17)

Reserve: Aaron Foster and Millennium Cruiser (18)

Second reserve: Kelsey Bishop and Shemika Snip (18)

OVERALL IN-HAND CHAMPIONSHIP

Champion: Tim Northcott and Landside Music Lord (21)
Reserve Champion: Alice Stratton and Laithehill Pasha (17)

Diamond Ridden

Champion: Beth Proctor and Fleurs Flight (26)
Reserve Champion: April O'Driscoll and Silverlea Scandal (27)
Second Reserve: Madeline Taig and Lankhurst Jeeves (25)

Veteran Ridden

Champion: Jane Harper and Crimewave II (21)
Reserve Champion: Millie Bowles and Cottrell Riverdance (21)
Second Reserve: Abbie Emms and Carlgate Mab-y- Brigadier (21)

Pre-Veteran Ridden

Champion: Kelsey Bishop and Shemika Snip (18)
Reserve: Alice Stratton and Laithehill Pasha (17)
Second Reserve: Georgina Lewis-Roberts and Waverhead Dazzler II (16)

OVERALL RIDDEN CHAMPIONSHIP

Champion: Kelsey Bishop and Shemika Snip (18)
Reserve: Jane Harper and Crimewave II (21)

VETERAN OF THE YEAR 2018

Champion: Tim Northcott and Landside Music Lord (21)
Reserve Champion: Kelsey Bishop and Shemika Snip (18)

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