

The Return of Bridgelea Ponies

The Bridgelea Stud was founded in the early 60s by Bill Eastmond, a semi-retired farmer and agricultural contractor from Exeter. Bill had always had a love for the New Forest pony and had made many trips from Devon to the Beaulieu Road Sales where he bought foals that were turned away until they were ready to be broken and schooled by his daughter Jill. Bill decided to sell his farm in Devon and move to the New Forest and establish his own stud of forest ponies. Bridge Farm in Brockenhurst was the perfect location for the stud and had the added bonus of having direct access to the forest making it ideal for hacking out...the family relocated and shortly thereafter the Bridgelea Stud was established.



Niggerstep Of Bridgelea was purchased by Bill as a yearling from Miss Brook's Gosden Stud to be a future stallion at Bridge Farm and was a winner of many championships including The Ponies Of Britain Show and Ascot when shown both in hand by Bill and later under saddle with Jill. Corin a grey Arab was another stallion that Bill stood at the stud and like Niggerstep sired many top winners including the first winner of The Golden Horseshoe Endurance Ride.

Jill began taking in ponies to break, school and produce

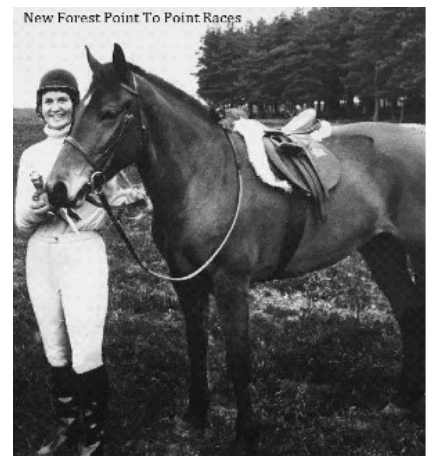
for clients and started acquiring her own mares for breeding which included the purchase of Leighclose Candytuft who as a three year old competed at her first open show, she won her class and then took the championship with Niggerstep in reserve, she was later put in foal to Knightwood Spitfire producing Bridgelea Candy Cane.



A group of Dutch buyers on a trip to England visited the stud, although initially not being for sale there was great interest shown towards Candy Cane and a offer was made for his purchase, after much deliberation Jill finally accepted the offer and he was exported to Holland. The sudden death of his owner resulted in Candy Cane being eventually purchased by Mrs Tetley-Jones who returned him back to England and stood him at stud. Jill also purchased Candytuft's dam Diana of Leighclose eventually selling her to Michael Saunders where he used her as a brood mare.

Stud mares include:

Merrie Maud of Bridgelea: dam of Bridgelea Charm Step who after winning at The Royal Show as a yearling was sold to New Zealand and Bridgelea Heather Belle who went on to have an incredible career in ride and drive competitions ridden by Jill and driven by her owners Chris and Helen Beale. Oknell Laughing Daughter: dam of Bridgelea Silver Play, Bridgelea Blue Haze and of the New Forest Performance of the Year winner Bridgelea Gaytime to name but a few.





By the early 70s due to bad health Bill decided that it was time to slow down and retire, Bridge Farm was sold and Niggerstep was subsequently sold to stand at stud in Germany. Jill retained a few of the stud mares and relocated them to her new premises at Wooton where she continued breeding but on a much smaller scale, included was Merrie Maud who Jill put in foal to Silverlea Merrydown producing amongst others Bridgelea Buccaneer, as a yearling he was sold to The Hon Mrs Rhys who later stood him at her stud, he was the sire of Beechwood Comet who was extremely successful for the Ashley Stud. Jill continued breaking, riding and producing for clients as well as competing with her own ponies.

When Bridgelea Gaytime was retired from competition she was put in foal to another Performance Pony of the Year winner Frank of Crabbswood and produced Bridgelea Playtime, Playtime would eventually become one of the foundation mares at Simon and Shirley Young's hugely successful Farriers Stud and was the dam of Shirley's stallion Farriers Fair Chance and also of another Performance Pony of the Year winner Farriers Brown Bear.



In 1992 Jill retired from the pony world and settled down to a new life in France. In late 2013 whilst on a trip back to England Jill visited Shirley Young at Farriers Stud, Jill had known Shirley from when Shirley had helped Bill in the early days of the stud at Bridge Farm, during the visit she fell in love with a black home bred mare Farriers Vanity Fair and was excited to learn that she was a descendant of both Niggerstep and Candy Cane, Jill purchased the mare and her interest in breeding was quickly re-ignited. Vanity was put in foal to Farriers Fingerprint and produced a black colt Bridgelea Nextstep, the following year before joining Jill in France Vanity was put in foal to Wayland Cranberry and produced a filly Bridgelea Gaystep. This year Jill is sending Vanity to the young stallion Joystick des Marroniers, as he is a descendant of Bridgelea Buccaneer Jill will again be reintroducing more Bridgelea bloodlines into her future foals.



Jill's latest acquisition is a bay mare named Olympe du Garon, who before retiring from competing was a successful performance pony in France. Last year Jill sent her to the promising performance newcomer Berlioz de Gascogne and is eagerly awaiting her foal.

Bridgelea bloodlines can be found in the breeding of many of today's top ponies worldwide.

After a break of thirty years the Bridgelea prefix is again up and running....

