

# THE EXMOOR PONY CHRONICLES

Sue Baker

*'Finding out about Exmoor ponies and the people involved in their world at various times in the past has been like panning for gold – I've had to examine a lot of material, sometimes without result, but when a small nugget of the ponies' story first sparkles, that is so exciting.'*

Sue Baker has spent many years searching through long-forgotten documents and photographs and listening to the stories passed down through Exmoor families. Her 'prospecting' has resulted in this intimate portrayal of the ponies and the community of people who over the years have ensured their well-being.

This book is a miscellany of all things Exmoor pony: turning its pages may bring the reader to ponies harnessed for warfare; to meetings with a literary legend and a famous cowboy; to paintings by Britain's greatest equestrian artists; to stories of Exmoors travelling to the Antipodes; to pony sales from central London to deepest Exmoor; to the Exmoor Pony Society secretary who became a horse trainer for Her Majesty the Queen; to lyrical poems; to how one Exmoor pony lived with bison; to threats from pony-rustling; to pony sculpting; to tales of ponies being a shepherd's pillow or transport for the rabbit-catcher.

Within *The Exmoor Pony Chronicles* are answers to questions such as: Did the Aclands truly conserve Exmoor's indigenous pony? Where were Exmoor foals hidden upstairs in a pub? Who crossed an Exmoor pony with a wild ass? Can Exmoor ponies see pixies? And, once and for all, did soldiers really use Exmoor's ponies for target practice in WWII?

All this and more can be found in this fascinating and generously illustrated compendium.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sue Baker (née Gates) was born in London in 1953 and moved with her family to Somerset at the age of nine. Educated at Ilminster Girls' Grammar School, she then went to Leeds University where she gained a First Class Honours degree in Botany and Zoology. This was followed by a three-year research study of the ecology of free-living Exmoor Ponies for which she was awarded a Doctorate in Biological Sciences in 1980. With a complete change of career, she spent the next ten years as a marketing manager, continuing her studies of the history and origins of Exmoor ponies and writing in her spare time. Her first book *Survival of the Fittest* was published in 1993 with a revised second edition *Exmoor Ponies – Survival of the Fittest* in 2008.

In 1994 Sue and husband Ian moved from the New Forest to Exmoor, near East Anstey. In 2014 they moved to Dulverton and, at the time of writing, they have four Exmoor Ponies living free on Exmoor and a local nature reserve. Sue joined the Exmoor Pony Society in 1974 and has been a Committee member many times. She was Chairman for several years and has also served as President. She wrote the script for the Society's DVD *Discovering Exmoor Ponies* and edited the newsletter for a long period. Sue was a joint founder of 'Friends of Exmoor Ponies' in 1980 from which she retired in 2014. In 2001, she was awarded the Helen Dashwood Rose Bowl for outstanding service to the Exmoor Pony Society and 2016 made an Honorary Vic- President for life.

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Left: Sir Alfred Munnings riding on Exmoor during the 1940s. Photo: Richard Kingsley Tayler.



Right: The Reverend Robin Ray, reading the prayer and blessing that he wrote especially for the departure of the Native Pony Pilgrimage in 1998. His 'mobile pulpit' was pulled by Merlin and driven by Peter Farmer.



Above: Sid Westcott selling a sucker at Bampton Fair in the 1940s. Photo: courtesy of Linda Westcott.

Example of a double page spread



Below: Exmoor ponies on Langeland in 2008. Photo: John Theilgaard.

