



Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust

The spirit of Dartmoor

Upcoming Events

Members are invited to:

- **Spring Members Walk 26th April**

The day will commence at 10am at the Postbridge Car Park for the start of the guided walk which will be approximately two and a half hours long.

Following which there will be a hosted lunch at the East Dart Inn, Postbridge

Please wear appropriate footwear and clothing for the moor

If you are a member and would like to attend please contact Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust at admin@dpht.co.uk

Spring at Bellever

Our heritage ponies at Bellever are hard at work all year round but in Spring conservation grazing is particularly important, late spring to early summer is when the invasive purple moor grass or Molinia is at its most palatable. Ponies are selective grazers, they consume and trample coarse vegetation like the Molinia, preventing the grass from dominating over other species by reducing the height and density of the aggressive grass. This enables sunlight to reach smaller, native plants and wildflowers, encouraging their growth. At Bellever we see lots of dry heath vegetation like heather and bilberry which creates wonderful habitat diversity for other wildlife. By creating patches of shorter grass and bare ground, it provides ideal nesting and feeding areas for birds and habitat for insects like butterflies and bees.

Versatility of Dartmoor Ponies

The Dartmoor Pony is one of the oldest native pony breeds in Britain, the breed has a rich history of living and working on the moors and they play a significant role in the regions culture. Dartmoor Ponies are a vital part of the moorland's ecosystem, helping to manage vegetation and preserve the landscape. They continue to be an iconic symbol of the region, admired for their resilience and beauty.



Timeline:

- Bronze Age – Evidence suggests the Dartmoor ponies were used for both farming and transport
- Medieval Times – The Dartmoor Pony was used to plough farmland and carry heavy loads of tin from the mines across the moor, so they had to be sturdy and strong
- 18th Century - The breed was affected by an infusion of Shetland Pony blood as breeders were trying to create smaller ponies for use in the mines
- Early 1900's – The breed was highly valued for its strength, endurance and gentle nature leading to its use in World War One
- Mid-20th Century – With new machinery the need for working ponies reduced, leading to a decline in numbers
- Today's Ponies – Despite conservation efforts the Dartmoor Pony is classified as endangered, there are approximately 1500 ponies on Dartmoor but only a handful are the true native Dartmoor Pony

What makes the Dartmoor Pony Special? They are one of the most adaptable and versatile breeds. They are hardy enough thrive in harsh conditions which makes them ideal for conservation grazing where they can maintain landscapes and keep them diverse for other wildlife. Yet this small breed has made a name for itself as a sure-footed and dependable riding pony, today they are frequently seen in show rings and driving competitions. Overall, the breed continues to excel in both traditional and modern roles, proving their enduring value.

News

- National Heritage Lottery Fund

The Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust has secured funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to support the conservation of the endangered Heritage Pony Breed. Today there are fewer than one thousand pedigree Dartmoor breeding mares and only 300 Heritage Dartmoor Ponies remaining, without intervention and support they will continue to decrease in numbers, making our work more important than ever.

Heritage ponies are 'true to type' Dartmoor ponies that may be registered with the Dartmoor Pony Society on their Supplementary Register – i.e. they have been bred in the Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme, which enables breeders on Dartmoor to run their high-quality mares with a Pedigree Dartmoor stallion. Over four generations their female progeny will be eligible for full Pedigree registration, which significantly increases the limited gene pool of the breed.

This generous grant will help to take our conservation efforts to the next level, ensuring the long-term survival of the breed that is an integral part of Dartmoor

National Park. Thanks to this funding we will be able to; increase the population of Heritage Dartmoor Ponies, develop educational programs to raise awareness, create an online resource centre for the breed, strengthen partnerships with local communities and conservation organisations.

- Pan and Florence

Here we have an update from two of our Bellever Ponies pan and Florence who have gone to live in Shropshire with their new owner Charlotte. Charlotte says they are both very much loved and adored and they have settled in wonderfully!

Pan has started walking out on the lanes with Charlotte, which he loves! He's had a roller on and a bridle and is really coming into his own. He loves to drink out of the ponds and he also adores his stable.

Charlotte has a pack saddle being made and she hope to be out on the hills over the summer with him. And in time do some pilgrimages - if he takes to be a 'pack pony' which she feels he will.

Florence has had a couple of shorter walks out on the lanes and was absolutely perfect! She is fondly known as 'sassy pants', she gives THE best cuddles and Charlotte hopes she will also be a pack pony too. She's also had the roller on. She just keeps giving and always greets everything asked of her. She is extremely sweet.

