



Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust

The spirit of Dartmoor

DPHT AGM 2025 – Key Updates for Members

On 29th August, members, trustees, and friends gathered for the 2025 AGM to reflect on an important year for the Trust and to look forward to the next chapter in our work protecting Dartmoor's Heritage Ponies.

Financial Stability

Thanks to legacies and major grants, DPHT is on a stronger footing, reducing last year's deficit and building reserves for the future.

Bellever Lease Secured

A new Conservation Grazing Tenancy covering 1,000 acres at Bellever is close to completion. Plans include new handling facilities, improved fencing, and expanding pony numbers.

Heritage Passport Returns

In partnership with the DPS, the Heritage Passport has been reintroduced, helping keepers showcase the quality of their ponies and boost sales.

Supporting Pony Keepers

Over £8,000 in direct grants supported handling, castration, and breeding. Grants will be prioritised for Heritage Ponies most in need, with urgent support available for rare bloodlines.

Education Focus

New Key Stage 2 pilot walks at Bellever will help schools link ponies into the curriculum, strengthening the case for school visits despite funding challenges.

Trustees & Governance

Michael Lithgow was re-elected as Trustee and Chair. A recruitment campaign is underway to expand the Board with new expertise. Members supported raising a Special Resolution to update DPHT's charitable objectives for clarity.

Looking Ahead

With Bellever secured, stronger finances, and new partnerships, DPHT is entering a new phase of stability and growth – all thanks to the continued support of members.



Heritage Pony Register

Over the past few months, DPHT has been working closely with the Dartmoor Pony Society to reintroduce the Heritage Passport, which was discontinued some years ago.

The reintroduction of the **Heritage Passport** is an important milestone for DPHT and all who care about Dartmoor's ponies.

For many years, keepers and supporters have expressed concern that true-to-type Dartmoor ponies were being undervalued, overlooked, or lost in the marketplace. By bringing back the Heritage Passport, we can:

- **Recognise quality:** Heritage Ponies that meet the standard will be clearly identified, giving credit to the keepers who have worked for generations to maintain type and temperament.
- **Strengthen the market:** Differentiating Heritage Ponies makes them more attractive for conservation grazing and private sales, helping to secure their future.
- **Protect bloodlines:** The Passport ensures that funding and support from DPHT is directed to ponies that embody the charity's purpose – safeguarding the Heritage Dartmoor Pony.

How it works

DPHT members can apply to have their ponies inspected by two DPS judges. If graded true-to-type, ponies will be issued or upgraded to a Heritage Passport, with all costs (including vet and chipping fees) covered by DPHT. Keepers will also receive a one-off payment per herd in recognition of their time and effort.

The scheme is voluntary, but DPHT hopes it will become central to marketing Heritage Ponies and demonstrating their vital role in conservation grazing. By adding visibility and value, the Heritage Passport will help ensure that these ponies – and the keepers who dedicate their time to them – are properly recognised and supported.



Widcombe Fair – 2025

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who popped over to say hello at this year's Widcombe Fair! It was a fantastic day, and we were thrilled to meet so many new faces, as well as reconnect with lots of friends and supporters of the Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust.

Our tombola proved a big hit, and we're incredibly grateful to our generous supporters, including Flapjackery and Dartmoor Soap, for their wonderful contributions. It brought plenty of fun and smiles throughout the day!

We did have a dramatic moment or two, particularly when we found ourselves clinging to the sides of the gazebo as strong gusts of wind swept across the green! The rain held off until about 2pm, and then it came down in true Dartmoor style, but even that didn't dampen spirits.

Having a stand at the fair was a really valuable experience. We were delighted by the genuine interest so many people showed in the work of our charity, and most importantly, in the beautiful, true-to-type Dartmoor ponies that are such an iconic part of the moor.



This lovely write-up of our day at Widcombe Fair was written by Lucy Johnson – thank you, Lucy, for capturing the spirit of the event so beautifully.





Margaret Rogers leads one of her home bred Dartmoor Heritage Ponies

Margaret's enduring legacy for the Dartmoor Heritage Pony

At Higher Venton Farm, near Widecombe-in-the-Moor, lives Margaret Rogers, a respected farmer and pony breeder who lives there with her partner, Michael Lamb. With a lifelong connection to Dartmoor, Margaret is also a passionate supporter of the Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT), and her dedication is evident in her own herd of roughly 20 ponies, each bearing the Chinkwell prefix. They roam freely on the moorland above Widecombe, a part of the landscape Margaret's family has worked for generations.

Margaret's love for the ponies is deeply personal and emotional. She views them as the very soul of the moor. She says, "They're not just a symbol; they are a part of our history, our identity, and to see them thrive on the moor is to see a piece of Dartmoor's heart beating."

She finds their very appearance to be an embodiment of the moor itself. As she describes, "They are the very essence of Dartmoor – the mane, the small ears, the dished nose, the beautiful profile of the body. They are sturdy, resilient, and they tolerate so much."

Her appreciation also extends to their historical significance. Margaret points out that these ponies have been part of the land since the Bronze Age and played a crucial role in Britain's Industrial Revolution, working tirelessly in the mines. To her, preserving the ponies is a way of "honouring their contribution to our shared history."

Looking to the future, Margaret is taking steps to ensure the ponies' legacy. She has decided to place her farm in a trust, which will provide a young farmer the opportunity to live and work there. This decision is directly linked to her hope that her beloved ponies will "continue to roam Dartmoor as they have for centuries." As she puts it, "They belong here, and we have a responsibility to ensure they remain a part of this landscape."

Thank you to Malcolm Snelgrove for photographing this image and to Lucy Johnson for writing this piece.