

INSIGHTS

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EVENTING SIRES THAT SHAPED TEAM GBR

BEN FAERIE



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The stallion Ben Faerie

THE LITTLE LEGEND WHO MADE THE MOST ENORMOUS IMPACT ON TEAM GBR EVENTING: BEN FAERIE

The full Thoroughbred Ben Faerie was foaled in 1968 having been bred in the UK by William Hatton. He was bought at Ascot Sales by Diana Scott for the sum of £250 to stand at her stud to breed hunters initially and then sports horses.

Ben Fairie was small and stood at just 15.3hh. His size was considered useful for a variety of mares and many sports horse breeders as producers believe smaller horses are more intelligent and agile than their larger counterparts.

His first progeny were seen regularly on the hunting field,

he then made his name as a sire of eventers. By the end of his career as a stallion at stud he had sired over 800 offspring. Unlike most sires of Championship level horses today he never actually competed himself.

Ben Faerie sired several of Great Britain's most cherished

championship level medal winning horses including both the European Championship gold medal winners Priceless and Nightcap II ridden by Ginny Leng. It is key to point out that at this time the European Championships were 4-star three day events, rather than in the 3-star format they are today. In 1985 Priceless and Night Cap II were first and third respectively at Burghley.

Ben Faerie had the ability to pass on not only speed, but courage, good jumping ability and a wonderful temperament; key traits for eventers at any level of the sport.

Seventeen years after his death he was still rated the fifth best event sire of all time.



Ginny Leng at the European Championships at Burghley in 1985. She was 1st on Priceless whom is on the left and 3rd on Night Cap II on the right



Ginny Leng and Priceless after winning the European Championships on home ground at Burghley in 1985

BEN FAERIE'S HISTORY MAKERS FOR TEAM GB EVENTING

Priceless

By Fen Faerie and out of the mare Reckless; Priceless was born in Somerset at the same stud where his sire was based. Priceless never had a stop in the whole of his career and was never out of the top twelve in any of his three-day events.

The 16hh gelding was bred by Diana Scott and named Priceless by Diana's sister who said he was a "*Priceless little*

thing" as a foal. Later in his life he was known simply as "P" at home by his Olympic partner Ginny Leng. Ginny's mother bought him directly from Diana his breeder.

Priceless' early eventing career clearly set him up for championship level in the sport. He won Bramham as a 6-year old and was sixth at his first Burghley age 7. He took Ginny to her first European Championship at Horsens in

Denmark in 1981 and then to the World Championships at Luhmühlen in Germany in 1982.

Priceless won eight medals at International Championships: four team golds (1981 and 1985 European Championships and the 1982 and 1986 World Championships), one team silver (1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles), two individual golds (1985 European Championships and 1986 World Championships in Gawler) and one individual bronze (1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles).



Ginny Leng and Priceless at The European Championships at Horsens (Denmark) on the Steeplechase phase in 1985



Ginny Leng and Priceless at Burghley in 1980. This photo shows how brave Priceless was as he stands off at this enormous table on the XC

PRICELESS' INTERNATIONAL EVENTING RECORD

	Dressage	Speed and Endurance		Show Jumping	Place
		Jumping	Time		
1980 Burghley	44.2	0	27.2	0.5	6th
1981 Badmington	53.2	0	34.8	5.25	8th
1981 Horsens <i>European</i>	84.6	0	16.8	0	6th (Team 1st)
1982 Badmington	45.4	0	0	5	4th
1982 Lumhuhlen <i>World</i>	51.6	0	8.8	0	7th (Team 1st)
1983 Burghley	25.6	0	0	0	1st
1984 Los Angeles <i>Olympics</i>	56.4	0	0.8	0	3rd (Team 2nd)
1985 Badmington	59.75	0	0	0	1st
1985 Burghley <i>European</i>	49.0	0	0	0	1st (Team 1st)
1986 Gawler <i>World</i>	53.8	0	17.6	0	1st (Team 1st)



- Jumped clear across country in every three-day event in which he competed
- Never had a stop in the whole of his career
- Held both World and European team and individual titles concurrently
- Was never out of the first 12 in any three-day event



Ginny Leng and Priceless in the Show Jumping Phase at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics



Ginny Leng and Priceless in the Show Jumping Phase at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. This photo shows how naturally balanced Priceless was and what a great canter he had to come to a fence on



Ginny Leng and Priceless after winning Badminton in 1985



Ginny Leng with her gold and silver medals from the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics

He is one of the rare horses to have held both European and World team and individual titles concurrently.

Said Ginny of her 1985 European Championship

Gold Medal win aboard Priceless *"My first individual gold medal was special, particularly because it was on home ground. It was also the first time I'd been last to go for the team, which was a totally*

different experience and meant a horribly long nervous wait".

Ginny described Priceless as *"brave, genuine as the day is long, and incredibly intelligent".* In the book she co-wrote with Genevieve Murphy she said: *"Priceless is the most intelligent horse that has ever looked through a bridle".*

Ginny referred to him as *"bossy at times"* later in his career and At Gawler in the World Championships where he won team Gold he famously bucked both before and during the dressage, and banked the first fence on the XC almost unseating Ginny, but still went on to win the team gold medal. His temperament was in fact so good that when he was at a three-day event and it was quiet in the stabling area, he would lie down and have a rest.

He retired from eventing after the World Championships at Gawler to go hunting with the Duke of Beaufort's Hounds with Ginny and then moved to Louise Bates's to enjoy hunting with The Pytchley.

Both Priceless and Nightcap appeared in numerous books about eventing and were considered to be the epitome of eventing royalty in their time.



Ginny Leng and Priceless after winning the European Championships at Burghley in 1985



Ginny Leng and Priceless after winning the European Championships at Burghley in 1985



Ginny Leng after winning the European Championships at Burghley in 1985



Ginny Leng and her fellow Team GB members Ian Stark, Lucinda Green and Tiny Clapham celebrating their team silver win at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Ginny and Priceless were also individual bronze medal winners



Ginny Leng and Priceless during their Dressage Test at the European Championships at Burghley in 1985



Ginny Leng and Priceless celebrating their individual bronze and team silver at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics



Priceless and Ginny Leng on their way to winning Badminton in 1985



Ginny Leng and Priceless after having won Badminton in 1985

Nightcap II

Ben Faerie's second most famous son was the 16.2½hh Nightcap II. He was bred by Sir Edward Mallett out of a mare called Gemini. Like Priceless he was also ridden by Ginny Leng, but the two horses were extremely different. Ginny described him as the *"the perfect gentlemen who was eager to please"*.

Nightcap took individual gold in the European Eventing Championships in at Luhmuhlen in 1987 with Ginny.

Nightcap's career highlights include, Winning Burghley CCI4* (having previously come 3rd and 5th at Burghley), winning Luhmulen CCI03*, winning Bialy Bor CCI03*. He was also 3rd and 11th at Badminton.

He had an astonishing 13 outright BE advanced wins at Gatcombe, Brigstock (twice), Weston Park, Brockenhurst Park, Tetbury, Thirlestane Castle, Locko Park, Holker Hall, Rushall, Thirlestane Castle, Castle Ashby and Dauntsey.

Nightcap II appears in the British eventing super league of horses with 1,000 points or more and ranks #75 in the list with a total of 1163 points.



Ginny Leng and Night Cap II jumping out of the lake at Badminton



Night Cap II and Ginny jumping into the water at Badminton



Night Cap II and Ginny Leng on the steeplechase at Badminton. He is showing how easily he found galloping and making the time in this phase



Ginny Leng and Night Cap II jumping off one of the enormous drop fences at Badminton



Ginny Leng and Night Cap II jumping the drop fence into the lake at Badminton



Bialy Bor Three Day Event , Ginny Leng and Night Cap II in their dressage test



Ginny Leng and Night Cap II at the Vets Inspection at Burghley

LUHMULEN – EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS 1987

Ginny Leng and Night Cap II at The European Championships at Luhmuhlen in 1987. Night Cap II showing how incredibly brave he was XC. He and Ginny won the Individual Gold Medal at Luhmuhlen.





Burghley 1984, Ginny Leng parading in the Show Jumping arena on Night Cap II wearing her individual bronze and team silver medals from the Los Angeles Olympics that she had won on Priceless

Walk On Star

This 16.2hh son of Ben Faerie out of a Master Spiritus mare was Pippa Funnell's European Championship individual bronze and team gold winning ride at Punchestown in 2003.

Bred by Barbara and Nick Walkinshaw he was their second foal by Ben Faerie out of the same mare. Walk On Star was the very last foal out of

the broodmare Mystery Spirit. When he was born, Barbara noted that he had such a pretty head she thought he must have been a filly so nicknamed him Magic – as she was so keen to have a filly out of her mare who had given her four foals in total; all colts.

Barbara described Magic as such a lovely horse to handle with an exceptional and

unassuming temperament. Pippa described him to Barbara as never strong, and always trying his heart out.

Walk on Star and Pippa Funnell had an exception eventing career with highlights including coming 8th at Beoekelo in the CCI3* in 2005, winning Saumur CCI3* in 2003, 2nd at Chatsworth CIC3* the same year.



Pippa Funnell and Walk on Star at the European Championships in Punchestown where the pair went on to win the bronze medal



Pippa Funnell and Walk on Star at the European Championships in Punchestown in 2003



Pippa Funnell and Walk on Star at the European Championships in Punchestown in 2003

In 2002 Pippa and Walk on Star won Bramham CCI3* and were 10th at Chatsworth CIC3*. In 2001 they were 3rd at Thirlestane Castler CIC** and 4th at Burgie CCI**. The pair also had three top five placings.

In 2003 Walk on Star was voted British Bred Horse of the Year with Horse and Hound magazine featuring a long article about him. He was retired following splint removal surgery after

Boekelo in 2005 and spent his retirement doing dressage.

At the end of his eventing career he had won 680 British Eventing points.



Cornish Faer

Owned by Bridget Parker and ridden by her daughter Katie, the 15.3hh bay mare by Ben Faerie out of Tregea was shortlisted for the Atlanta Olympics and had a very impressive career from advanced through to CCI4*.

She had no less than 7 top 10 placings at advanced level and was 11th at Burghley, 21st at Badminton, 11th at Blenheim CCI3* and 23rd at Compeigne CCI3*.

At the end of her career she boasted 307 British Eventing points along with her two 4-star runs and Olympic shortlisting.

She retired from eventing to become a broodmare and successfully had foals via embryo transfer from a range of different stallions.

BEN FAERIE'S OFFSPRING DOWN THE GENERATIONS

Ben Faerie's impact on eventing wasn't restricted to a single generation, his progeny and their progeny further down the line have had tremendous success at international level.

Primmore's Pride

Pippa Funnell's former Olympic partner Primmore's Pride is by Mayhill and out of the mare

Primmore's Hill who was by Ben Faerie. Primmore's Pride and Pippa Funnell represented Team GB at the Athens

Olympics in 2004, taking the bronze medal individually along with the Team Silver.

Outside of the Olympics but still at International Level, Primmore's Pride and Pippa's career was exceptional. The pair won Badminton CCI4*, and were sixth at Burghley in 2002. Primmore's Pride and Pippa won Kentucky CCI4* in 2003, and by the end of his career he had won a total of 1,283 British



Pippa Funnell and Primmore's Pride jumping into one of the water fences at Burghley



Pippa Funnell and Primmores Pride
after winning Badminton in 2005

In 1998 Primmores Pride and Pippa Funnell won the 5-year old Burghley Young Event Horse Final.

Primmores Pride stood at 17hh, making him one of only 12 horses with 1,000 B.E. points or more in this elite group of 113 eventing super heroes having achieved this feat (data correct as of autumn of 2018).



The 2004 Athens Olympics, Primmores Pride and Pippa Funnell jump into the water on their way to an individual bronze medal and team silver medal



Luhmühlen Three Day Event 2018, Jonelle Price (NZ) and the grey Faerie Dianimo parading after their CCI4* win

Faerie Dianimo

Faerie Dianimo whose grand dam Clayton Mudlark is by Ben Faerie won Luhmühlen in 2018 with New Zealand's Jonelle Price, was 2nd at Tattersalls CIC3*, won the Blenheim CIC3* 8 and 9 year old class, and was also a Burghley Young

Event Horse five year old final winner in 2010. Faerie Dianimo can also boast winning both the Burghley Young Event Horse 4 and 5-year-old finals.

Faerie Diadem

Team GB's William Fox-Pitt successfully evented the 16.1hh

mare Faerie Diadem by Ben Faerie. William and Faerie Diadem were 5th at Boekelo CCI3* and had top 15 places in two international CCI2* events at Waregem and Compeigne.

At the end of her career she had gained a total of 238 points.



Jonelle Price (NZ) jumping into the water at the 2016 Rio Olympics



Faerie Dianimo and Jonelle Price (NZ) looking very bold on the XC at the 2016 Rio Olympics



Faerie Diadem on the XC with Jonelle Price (NZ) at Luhmuhlen



Jonelle Price (NZ) and Faerie Dianimo parading after winning Luhmuhlen Three Day Event in 2018



Faerie Dianimo after winning the BYEH 5 year old class at Burghley



Rio Olympics 2016, Faerie Dianimo and Jonelle Price (NZ) in their dressage test

Its Without Doubt

The 16.2hh chestnut stallion out of a Ben Faerie mare sired some exceptional event and dressage horses including:

- **Sir Toby** - competed for Germany in the Sydney Olympic Team
- **Doubtless William** - successfully competed to CCI* 4*.
- **Spirit of Mae** - the successful advanced mare
- **Walter** - this gelding by Its Without Doubt and out of a shire mare, was ridden to Grand Prix level with Carol Parsons.



Ginny Leng and Night Cap II going XC in Ginnys famous purple XC colours

BEN FAERIE'S LEGACY: HIS STALLION SONS

Ben Faerie had a number of stallion sons in Hot Rumour Bens Affaere and Tinsley Faerie Legend. He also has a grandson stallion in the advanced eventer Primitive Faerie Tale who is by Primitive Rising and out of a Ben Faerie mare called Faerie Glen. His stallion sons include:

Tinsley Faerie Legend – he was bigger than his sire at 16.1hh and out of a Welton Louis/Master Spiritus Mare. He competed at British eventing novice level with Spencer

Sturmey gaining top five places at novice Level.

Hot Rumour – was also bigger than his sire Ben Faerie, standing

at 16.2hh he was popular with the event horse breeders straight after grading. He competed at BE novice level at Shipley Park and won. His dam was a top class show hunter mare.

Bens Affaere – was the same size as his sire, standing at 15.3h and out of the Thoroughbred mare Regal Lock. There doesn't appear to be a record of him at British Eventing level.



Tinsley Faerie Legend

SUMMARY

At Ben Faerie's peak as Britain's leading sire of event horses, the sport of eventing was very different to the one that we know today.

Back then, three-day eventing was a far greater test of speed and endurance as it included both the steeple chase and roads and tracks phases. As a result, the need for speed and the demand for eventing sires that could gallop was critical. This makes the phenomenal impact on Team GBR's performance at championship level by Ben Faerie as a sire all the more special.

What is clear from speaking to those who bred, owned and rode his progeny, is that they all had lovely temperaments with positive attitudes which made them exceptionally brave

XC. It is also clear that whilst Ben Faerie was only 15.3hh his stock were true to his genetics and were nearly always bigger than him. Whilst he was small in size, his impact on our sport of eventing has been huge; and he still has a legacy today with the likes of Faerie Diadem winning international events.

Above all, we have to be utterly inspired by Diana Scott for taking the risk at Ascot Sales and buying Ben Faerie. Diana was not influenced by using the latest fashionable bloodline or having any particular preference for a particular Stud Book or Breed Society; just the

requirement for outstanding conformation, a kind eye and selecting the right stamp of stallion to pass on good genes to his stock.

Diana's investment in Ben Faerie is all the more special in that he never actually evented himself and yet is still today considered one of the most influential sires on Team GBR at championship level today. Ben Faerie's impact on Team GBR was more than just medals, it inspired a whole generation of young people to be motivated by Ginny Leng as one of the most successful event riders of our time and of Diana's ability as a British Breeder to outperform her continental and Irish counterparts in the breeding of sports horses; for these reasons we simply cannot thank her enough.





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About the Author

Georgie Belton comes from a family of eventing, racing and showing breeders in the Midlands. Her grandfather has bred a 4-star horse and she has bred horses up to CCI*** and B.E Advanced Level.

Her own stud Gemini Stud has won the British Eventing Breeding In Hand Championship with a grandson of Primitive Rising under the judging of Henrietta Knight along with the British Equestrian Federation Futurity National Championship.

Georgie has had multiple Badminton CCI4* and Burghley CCI4* mare owners as customers, Gemini Stud stands a stallion grandson of the Holstein Jump stallion Chicos Boy who won a BE Event as a five year old on his dressage score and was a Horse of the Year Show Cuddy In Hand Finalist as a three year old.

Georgie has written articles on breeding and more specifically event horse breeding for Eventing Worldwide and British Breeding. Georgie also has a BSc Hons from the department of Agriculture at Newcastle University and is a Director of several property related businesses.



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