

## PEGGY PACEY 1918–2013



Peggy Pacey had lived in Deddington for around 70 years when she died in August this year. She was born in 1918 near Rugby, to Cyril and May. May was accomplished in the world of dog showing, and still holds the world record for breeding the greatest number of champion West Highland Terriers. May and Peggy were very close, and May, having also a brilliant eye for horses, inspired and enabled Peggy to enter the world of horse showing. Peggy was unstoppable, winning from the age of four, at increasingly high-level competition. By the age of 10, she was selected for the English team and went to compete in France. In classes most similar today as showing hacks, hunters and show jumping, she won at Horse of the Year Show, Olympia, Royal Highland, Bath and West, Richmond and the Three Counties.

One pony was a 14.2 named Snap Dragon, bought from Banbury Market under guidance of family friend Jack Bletsoe, of Deddington. Snap Dragon and Peggy went on to play polo together outside the show ring, and in 1938 Peggy and three Balding sisters won the British Ladies Open Polo Championship.

Peggy joined the war-effort and in 1939 became a dispatch rider for the WAAFs. She received personal thanks from Winston Churchill, having driven her bike nearly the length of the country on a vile February night to deliver a package. Peggy also tested machinery, including amphibious personnel carriers on the River Severn.

After the war, she came to Park Farm, Deddington to work for Jack Bletsoe, a prolific horse dealer, supplying hunters to the (then) Prince of Wales, amongst many others. On Jack's death, Peggy bought the farm in 1961 and began her independent career with 'one large mortgage and one small cow'. She frequently judged throughout the world at all the shows she had previously won, Royal Dublin, and the dog show, Crufts. Her talents brought her attention despite her modesty; the Queen invited Peggy to Balmoral to her Highland Pony Stud. The Queen asked Peggy to consider whether she might stand one of her stallions here in Deddington, to help promote the breed and make it accessible. After much consideration, however, Peggy had to decline.

She successfully bred racehorses and was awarded 'Leading National Hunt Breeder' in 1983. She also won Best Pen of Cattle in Banbury Market – an accomplishment that almost gave her more pleasure than any other, considering what a male-dominated industry it was.

Peggy continued to farm in Deddington for the rest of her life; her warmth, charm and quick wit remained with her, and are as sorely missed as her expert guidance.

*Beatrice Bathe*