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Native horses and ponies celebrated at Blenheim

A unique parade of native rare breed horses and ponies ranging in size from huge Shire horses to a small Welsh Mountain Section A pony lined up at the Blenheim International Horse Trials on 9 September.

The RBST (Rare Breeds Survival Trust) was the official charity supported by the Horse Trials, and put on the Parade of Native Rare Breeds as part of the Main Arena entertainment.

Leading the parade were Champion National Harness Hackney horse Brookeborough Flash Jack produced by Brian and Georgina Turner, with the prize-winning Hackney pony Sunbeam Venture produced by Craig Purver and Sue Barraclough. The audience loved the high-stepping fast-moving Hackneys, which are Endangered on the RBST Watchlist.

Commentators Adam Henson from Cotswold Farm Park and Lawrence Alderson described all the breeds as they paraded.

The Welsh Mountain Section A (semi-feral), which is Vulnerable on the RBST Watchlist was represented by Blaenau Va Va Voom a four-year-old palomino filly produced by Michelle Plummer from Buckinghamshire.

The Exmoor breed, listed as Endangered on the Watchlist, was represented by Elsinore Simon Sparrow, a prize-winning pony ridden by Lucy Larkman, and Dunkery Royal Tern, a three-year-old stallion produced by Lynn Larkman from Oxfordshire.

A pair of ridden Dartmoor ponies, Shilstone Rocks Panache, a 27 year-old gelding, and Shilstone Rocks Champagne a three-year-old filly were produced by Sue Williams from Warwickshire. The Dartmoor is Vulnerable on the RBST Watchlist.

The Highland breed, listed At Risk on the RBST Watchlist were represented by three ponies: Celia of Dykes, a mouse dun, produced by Judy Harwood from Berkshire, Brungrange Toby a dapple grey ridden side-saddle by Ginny Duncan from Oxfordshire, and Gordon Highlander of Armoury a grey produced by Lynn Larkman also from Oxfordshire.

The Dales ponies, which are Critical on the RBST Watchlist, were represented by Sunglow Sovereign ridden by Jessica Hobday and Sunglow Sterling ridden by Sue Hobday from Surrey. Sunglow Sovereign is the sire of the Champion Mountain and Moorland filly at this year's Royal International Horse Show.

The Fell breed was represented by the nine-year-old stallion Bracklinn MacIver, ridden by Kerry Mitchener, which represents two of the older and influential bloodlines in Fell breeding. The Fell pony is At Risk on the RBST Watchlist.

A pair of Cleveland Bays from the Folds stud in Hampshire represented this breed which is Critical on the RBST Watchlist. Folds Veronica, a champion mare, was ridden by Cecilia Delville-Lindsay. Folds Jewell was ridden by Rona Parry. The Cleveland Bays were produced by Sue Cutts who was interviewed by Adam Henson as part of the parade commentary.

The heavy horse breeds also took part in the parade and attracted warm applause. A pair of Suffolk horses, Donhead Florin and Donhead Constance, were driven in a GWR wagon by Randy Hiscocks from Dorset. Randy also gave a demonstration of braiding the manes and tails of these chesnut horses, which is done traditionally with raffia and yellow and green ribbons. The Suffolk is Critical on the RBST Watchlist.

Wadworth of Devizes produced two of their magnificent Shire horses with a show dray. The Shires, Max and Royal, regularly deliver beer to Wadworth houses in Devizes, but enjoyed their chance to be in the show-ring. The Shire is At Risk on the RBST Watchlist.

Ted the Clydesdale ridden by his owner Sally Anne Oultram completed the parade. Ted was at the Horse Trials for four days attracting a lot of attention from visitors keen to meet one of the gentle giants of the horse world. The Clydesdale is Vulnerable on the RBST Watchlist.

RBST Chief Executive Richard Clarke paid tribute to the exhibitors: "Being the official charity supported at Blenheim Horse Trials gave us the opportunity to showcase the diversity and vulnerability of the UK's native horses and ponies.

"The Eriskay pony, which is one of the most Critical on the Watchlist, was missing from the parade. This goes to show how important it is to continue the genetic conservation of the native breeds."

In addition to the Parade, the RBST held a fund-raising auction, received many donations and recruited new members to the charity.

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Notes for editor

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) is a charity established in 1973. It works to conserve more than 70 breeds of native farm livestock. The charity is funded by membership subscriptions, donations and legacies.

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