



Caigwyn Fanfare of the Van Niekerk family of Bloemfontein

# Fifty years of SA Welsh

by Theresa Odendaal

**T**his year the Welsh Pony and Cob Society of South Africa celebrates its 50th anniversary. We at *SA Horseman* wish to use this opportunity to wish all the Welsh fanatics a happy fiftieth! But where did it all start? And how did this breed establish itself in South Africa?

It all started in 1948 when Mrs Rosalie Lasbrey, on an extended visit to the United Kingdom, took the opportunity to look at different breeds of Mountain and Moorland Ponies with the idea of starting a small stud for breeding children's ponies in South Africa. She was very impressed by Tan-y-Bwylch Berwyn at the horse of the year show, and set out to buy some in-foal Section A mares and a stallion.

## Vital imports

She eventually bought five mares, including the mare she considered her best foundation mare, Criban Sara. She also managed to buy the stallion Coed Coch Seryddwr, a son of Coed Coch Glyndwr, and father of the famous Coed Coch Madog.

In 1956, Ida Illingworth, also with the idea of improving children's ponies in South Africa, went in search of a suitable stallion, not necessarily Welsh. She was fortunate enough to be able to purchase Valiant, a superb stallion, who had won the Section B stallion class at Royal Welsh in 1955. This was another vital import into South Africa, laying the basis for some of the most important Welsh bloodlines in the country.

Thus South Africa started its Welsh Pony breeding with the best possible Section A and B lines. Among the first Cobs to be imported were Mrs Kinnersley-Browne's Sinton Gilbert, and Mrs Moore's Section C Filkins Kernel.

The Welsh pony was becoming increasingly popular as a children's pony in South Africa and on 4 March 1957, the Welsh Pony Society of South Africa was formed at a meeting held in Middelburg in the Cape. The Society held its first annual general meeting (AGM) on 5 September 1957 with eleven registered members. By 1958, 50 purebreds had been

registered and eleven part-breds recorded with the Society.

At the AGM in 1960, the Society was affiliated to the SA Studbook Association and its Constitution accepted. By the tenth anniversary in 1967, there were 55 members with 192 purebred and 214 part-bred ponies.

In 1978 there were some major changes – the classification of the Sections was brought into line with the UK Society and Section D Cobs were accepted. The name of the Society was changed to the Welsh Pony and Cob Society of South Africa.

### Successful interbreeding

Some of the most successful children's ponies have been developed in South Africa by using a three-way cross in much the same way as the British Riding Pony (now a recognised breed in its own right) was developed. The mixture is always Welsh (usually in this country Section B), Arab and Thoroughbred. For instance, Wendy Armitage used a Welsh/Arab cross stallion, Jamani Blue Magic, on Thoroughbred mares to produce the highly successful Weyden Magic ponies.

Ida Illingworth originally used her imported Section B stallion, Valiant, on part Arab mares and then crossed that progeny with a small

Thoroughbred stallion, Chivito, to produce the Foresyte part-breds – again producing highly successful children's ponies. Another highly successful line of children's ponies, is the Waterside ponies, which come from using Section B stallions (going back to Foresyte lines) onto mixed blood mares (again primarily Thoroughbred or part Arab).

There have been other crosses, but none have proved as successful as the three lines mentioned above, with the possible exception of Mr Stander in Darling, who is using a part-bred Welsh stallion onto Boerperd mares to produce some top children's show jumpers. SAH



The champion team, Marijani Sir Lancelot and Marijani Robin Barcklay, shown by Poena van Niekerk for the Marijani stud in Bloemfontein. This pair was also part of the champion team of four also shown by Poena