

Canterbury Park Banbury Cross

CONTINUING A STAR STUDDED FAMILY LEGACY...

WORDS: JENNIFER BOYES PHOTOS: WWW.KLPHOTOGRAPHY.CO.NZ

Eastdale Riding Pony Stud's Canterbury Park Banbury Cross certainly has a lot to live up to. The three year old 13.2hh chestnut riding pony colt is by one of the most prolific British riding pony sires of all time, Sandbourne Royal Ensign (Keston Royal Occasion x Cusop Anita). This legendary 12.1hh chestnut stallion produced numerous champions during his heyday, including a record-breaking three 12.2hh champion show ponies at the UK Horse of the Year Show. He also sired four different overall show pony champions at the same show, the 13.2hh Show Pony of the Year and In Hand Champion Pony of the Year. Ensign has progeny on the ground in England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Australia, the USA and now New Zealand.

On top of having a supremely famous father, Canterbury Park Banbury Cross, stable name Oliver, is now lead stallion at Eastdale, after the recent untimely passing of his stunning bright bay 13.1hh stable mate, Falconhurst Flashdance.

Fortunately, it looks like Banbury Cross, has every quality required to live up to his family reputation, as well as protect the reputation Eastdale Stud has developed for breeding riding ponies to the highest standard. When Julie Douglas, owner and founder of the Canterbury-based stud, first clapped her eyes on the colt foal on a trip to Australia three years ago, she couldn't tear her eyes away from him. He was exactly what she had been searching for.

"I really wanted a colt with those golden Sandbourne Royal Ensign bloodlines to cross over my Falconhurst Flashdance fillies," explains Julie. "Ensign's owner, Robert Cockram, who founded Radway Stud in the UK and Deanhills Stud in the UK and Australia, has been a friend of mine for many years and I followed Ensign throughout his stud career, until he died last year at the grand old age of 28.

"Ensign was born in the UK and spent most of his life there, but was relocated to Australia in his twilight years when Robert decided to emigrate. He only continued serving for a couple of seasons there, and very few mares were covered. I knew there was no better opportunity to get hold of those precious bloodlines than during those few years he was in Australia so I contacted Robert in 2007 and he told me about some Sandbourne Royal Ensign colts that were available."

Julie spent some time travelling around and visiting various studs but it took her a while to track down exactly what she wanted, with



Canterbury Park Banbury Cross.

the first foal she came across less than blowing her away.

"He was immaculately presented, gleaming and brushed to within an inch of his life, but he just didn't do it for me. He was missing the 'wow' factor and probably needed gelding!" says Julie. "However, when I went to have a look at Banbury Cross, we were talking the opposite end of the scale. He was scruffy and absolutely nothing had been done with him as far as lead training and grooming went. But

there was something about him. I kept standing back, staring at him and thinking, 'Wow, there's something special about this colt'. He was an extreme riding pony type, was very correctly put together and had a huge front, even at such a young age. The icing on the cake was his light, elevated movement and superb temperament. I knew almost immediately that he was the one that would come home with me.

"He finally arrived at Eastdale Stud as a yearling, after a lot of hassle to do with the E.I outbreak in Australia," adds Julie. "It turns out that I couldn't have purchased him at a better time, since before he had even landed on New Zealand soil, his sire had passed away..."

C.P. Banbury Cross, has a double dose of Sandbourne Royal Ensign blood through his dam, the big-moving Galloway, Canterbury Park Olivia which has done very well under saddle. She is by Syon Royal Portrait, himself by Sandbourne Royal Ensign, providing the much sought-after second cross.

"I'm so lucky to have found a colt with those famous bloodlines appearing twice," says Julie. "Ensign has left such a strong stamp on his progeny, they all look like him. In fact, I sent some photos of Canterbury Park Banbury Cross to Robert recently, and he was amazed at how similar Ensign looked at that age. Robert's first comment was "he has certainly inherited Dinky's exquisite head!"

On the few outings 'Canterbury Park Banbury Cross,' has been on since arriving in New Zealand, he has proven that he has that incredible mixture of presence and a calm, amenable nature required to produce champion children's riding ponies. His first event was

the South Island All Breeds Stallion Parade in September, where he impressed bystanders with his temperament, conformation, movement and show ring sparkle.

'He behaved absolutely impeccably and worked out a treat,' smiles Julie. 'He looked fantastic as well and really caught the eye. We received bucket loads of enquiries and bookings that day. This won't be his last public appearance either. I have three Flashdance fillies to show in-hand this year but I'm really looking forward to showing 'Canterbury Park Banbury Cross,' next year, as well as taking him to the Stallion Parade again. He is an absolute joy to handle.'

Julie is excited to see what the future holds for 'Canterbury Park Banbury Cross,' and believes that his bloodlines will bring something truly special to the New Zealand breeding scene.

'His first two foals are due shortly and he has already started covering mares this season,' says Julie. 'I am very keen to see what his progeny look like and how they perform when they are older. If his foals have even a fraction of the extravagant movement and intangible look at me quality that 'Canterbury Park Banbury Cross,' is blessed with, they will be little superstars.'

After the loss of 'Falconhurst Flashdance,' 'Canterbury Park Banbury Cross,' certainly has some big shoes to fill but with such a promising start in New Zealand, the future looks exceptionally bright for this up and coming young stallion. Keep your eyes peeled. If his progeny are anything like their sire and grandsire, they will be a force to be reckoned with in the show ring. 'Canterbury Park Banbury Cross,' is now available at public stud via either natural serving or A.I.

