

# DREAMS CAN COME TRUE...

WORDS: DEBBIE KNOWLES PHOTOS: MENDIP FARM PHOTOGRAPHY



**When Leesa Anderson from Regent Park in Albany tragically lost her beautiful two-year-old colt Burren Dah The Enchanter, never in a million years did she imagine just what this tragedy would evolve into.**

Leesa had imported Burren Dah The Enchanter (by Burren Dah The Wizard and out of one Australia's best ridden Arabian mares Ralvon Morning Star) at six months of age and he sadly died a week before his second birthday and what would have been his very first show. It was a massive blow to the stud and their future breeding programme but, more importantly, a devastating loss personally to Leesa as he was not only an amazing looking horse but had the nature to match – just what she had been searching for.

In sorrow, Leesa contacted Australians' Jill Gregson (Burren Dah Stud) and Kate Dertell (Future Farms) as she remembers "wanting to give up at the time but they were a huge help to make me get back up and carry on. Not long after, Jill offered me Burren Dah The Wizard and I just couldn't believe it - I was so lucky to get him, as he had not been for sale throughout his illustrious career. Jill had turned down numerous offers over the years but she said that he had won everything ten times over in Australia and she had frozen semen stored so she was happy if he could now make his mark in New Zealand. I have to pinch myself sometimes as I used to dream of using him over my mares let alone owning him! It just goes to show you that in bad times there is good and that dreams can come true. I believe Wizard will have a massive influence on the future of show horses in New Zealand not only for Regent Park but in general."

**Burren Dah The Wizard**, with his "wow factor" and first seen in NZ at the August Stallion Parade, has an impressive list of Australian titles including being multi-Australian Champion Led Anglo Stallion, multi-Australian Champion Ridden Derivative Stallion, multi-East Coast Champion Anglo Stallion & multi-East Coast Champion Ridden Stallion, Grand Champion of Champions East Coast Anglo Exhibit, Royal Show Champion & Jess Greihaigh Memorial Trophy Winner (led & ridden

combined points). Wizard has Champion and National Champion progeny in Australia and NZ including **Conherto FF** (Australian Champion Colt), **Geisha Girl FF** (Champion Filly Foal exhibit), **Burren Dah Eskimo Joe** (Champion Gelding led & ridden), **Burren Dah Narina** (Champion Led Mare in Aust & NZ), **Burren Dah Nashette** (Champion Mare led and ridden), **Whisper FF** (Champion Foal exhibit) and **Burren Dah Hocus Pocus** (Champion Filly).

Leesa Anderson (nee Adamson) is now 35yrs and NZ Operations Manager for Professional Salon Supplies. She started riding at about 6yrs old. Her father had been a rodeo rider and used break wild horses in as a teenager so Leesa says, "he made us learn the hard way, which I am now very grateful for. My first pony was an ex riding school pony called Cashmere that knew every trick in the book so, as the weeks went on and the tricks changed, I learned to stay on pretty fast. My father also made us break our own horses in from the age of 13, with his help of course, which has also helped me in latter years.

My first really successful pony was Ototoa Almira, a very striking chestnut pony and together we won a lot of Champions and Supreme Champions on the flat and Almira continued her winning ways for her new owner once I turned 17. Sadly, she was never bred from as she would have produced beautiful ponies or park hacks.

Apart from showing horses I worked with horses on the Xena and Hercules television shows as wrangler and riding double for Xena plus other actor doubles. This was a

great experience for me, seeing how everything worked behind the scenes, working with the different breeds that were used and how versatile they all were."

Asking Leesa what her hobbies are, apart from horses, she laughs, "HORSES - what else is there! No seriously, I don't really have a lot of time to do other things with full time work and running the stud. I used to do kickboxing which is very full on when you are training for a fight but had to make a decision to give it up in the end as we would train 5 to 6 days a week."

Regent Park's current good horses are Burren Dah Marietta who is Leesa's first import from Australia. Marietta has been an East Coast and Led Champion in Australia. She was undefeated in NZ in the 08/09 show season and is also NZ National Champion Led Mare winning this consecutively. Burren Dah Narnia (by Wizard) has been a Champion led horse in Australia; National Champion & Supreme Royal Champion led horse in NZ. She is a beautiful mare - a female version of her sire. And, of course, the main man himself - Burren Dah The Wizard - now king pin at Regent Park and keen to show NZ just how eye-catching he is. Leesa says "we have a lot of good broodmares at home, that have been imported or bought over the years and they have all been very successful horses in their day. We believe our mares are like diamonds - very precious and so influential."

In keeping up with overseas breeding trends, Leesa went to the East Coasts and Australian Championships at the beginning of this year - "Australia has some beautiful horses - immaculately turned out and beautifully conditioned. I am going to the Australian National Stud Show this year and hope to go to a couple of others in the 09/10 season.

This season we are only showing three horses of our own, with the focus on Wizard and the breeding side at home. Wizard has a full book of mares that is keeping us extremely busy with all the outside mares as well as AI. We are breeding six mares to him ourselves and three to Mahogany Black Ice our black Welsh Sec A stallion.



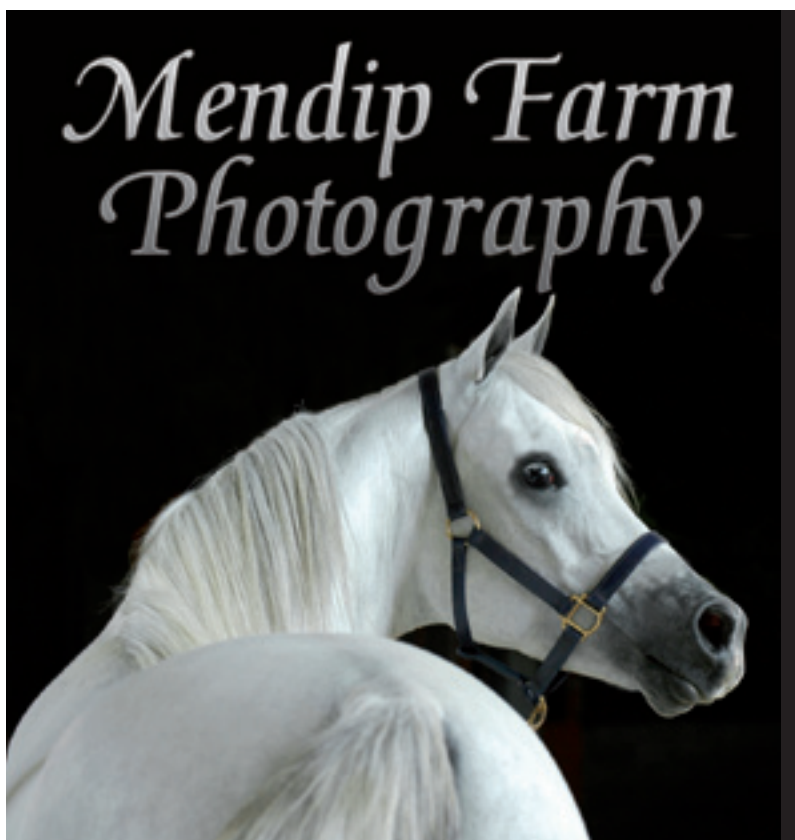
We also have big plans in the pipeline for some very successful overseas horses to come to Regent Park to do the New Zealand show circuit here for a season. Our aim overall, for the future with Regent Park, is to breed quality hacks, park hacks and large ponies which I believe is something lacking in NZ for the show ring market as it is not always easy to find that 'off the track' horse."

With a full time job and a stud to run, Leesa describes a typical day for herself - "I am lucky to have help with the horses with Ben Thomson working here and he is a massive help everyday but, a typical day is, get up 5.30am to feed the stabled horses; feed the rest of the farm, put horses out, clean boxes. Go to work - I normally get home at about 4.30-5pm to start working horses, box and feed them, breed mares and then feed the rest of the farm. We also condition and train horses for clients in NZ & Australia so there is always plenty to do before normally getting inside at about 8pm - thank god for daylight saving! Then, cook dinner, watch TV, emails, Facebook he he he and off to bed eventually."

With regard to the betterment of showing horses in NZ, Leesa would like to see that "people do not 'breed-discriminate' - no matter what breed it is, a good horse is a good horse and if it fits the 'type' of what ring or class you are competing in, that is all that should matter. Competitors can learn so much more by watching other people as to how they standup or present a horse/pony to the judge in a led class - it is an art in itself and can sometimes be the difference between winning and losing. Conditioning - NZ has come a long way with this and the bar has certainly been raised but we are still lacking the conditioning/polishing of our show horses like other countries and that means all the hard yards done with feeding and working them at home well before show day."

Leesa describes Jill Gregson, from Burren Dah Stud in Australia, as her mentor, "I have purchased four horses from Jill and they have all been very successful in the show ring for me. I believe they will also have a substantial influence on Regent Park's breeding programme in the future. Jill has been Australian Derivative Breeder of the Year and bred numerous Australian and East Coast Champions consistently for many years. She has helped me immensely with the success of Regent Park and has also become a very good friend along the way."

Look out for Burren Dah The Wizard at a show near you - he's worth the visit to see a spectacular moving, beautifully fronted stallion so brimming with charisma.



Due to publishing commitments, available for pre-booked commissions only. (This means you can pre-book for photos at an upcoming show and/or arrange on-site photos at home.) Photos are not available for public website viewing. Booking Fee may apply.

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