

INTERVIEW WITH SHOW HUNTER PONY RIDER LILY TOOTILL

At just twelve years old, Herne Bay based Lily Tootill has already achieved countless accolades in the show jumping and show hunter pony rings. We spoke to her about her past successes and her goals for the future.

Show Circuit: When did you start riding and can you remember your first pony?

Lily Tootill: I started riding when I was really young and got my first pony when I was five years old. Her name was *Twinkle* and she was a Shetland Pinto.

SC: When did you start jumping?

LT: I started competing in jumping classes when I was about seven on a 13.2hh schoolmistress called *Mystic Mint*. 'Minty' was about twenty years old so we never went to the Horse of the Year Show or anything like that. We did win quite a few things though and she was the perfect pony to get me started.

SC: You have done really well on your pony *Magpie* in the Show Hunter ring. What can you tell us about him?

LT: *Magpie* is a 146cm Pinto gelding and will be ten years old next February. He was broken in by Galaxy Equine who also own his full sister *Panda*. I would love to have her in our paddock as the two of

them look identical. *Magpie* is a real character and I love him to bits. He has a habit of jumping up and down when he's frustrated but he usually only does that when my mum rides him!

We have done really well together in Show Hunter classes. At the most recent Horse of the Year Show, we took the Category C Show Hunter Pony of the Year title. It was over a course not exceeding 90cm and competition was pretty tough. We were also placed 1st in the High Points at Horse of the Year and came 5th overall in the High Points competition for the 2008/2009 season.

We don't just stick to the Show Hunter ring either, we show jump as well. The biggest class we have placed in was over a 1.15m course.

SC: Why do you think *Magpie* has been so successful in the Show Hunter ring?

LT: I think he does well because he has a really good rhythm, a rolling canter and a beautiful jump. He's a perfect Show Hunter pony.

SC: What are the main mistakes you see people making in the Show Hunter ring?

LT: My pet hate is riders that let their horses and ponies get really flat and on the forehand. It is possible to produce an even rhythmical stride without them getting all strung out and losing all that impulsion from behind.

SC: Are you riding any other ponies this season?

LT: Yes, I also have a 14hh dun show jumping pony called *Taonga-Iti* or 'Barney' as he is known at home. He's got a real spring in him and we have jumped up to 1.20m in classes. I'm hoping to move on to Grand Prix with him soon.

SC: Do you have any trainers or mentors that particularly inspire you?

LT: I train with Grant Cashmore for my jumping and Bill Noble for dressage. I also receive a lot of guidance from Jackie Williams, who coaches the equestrian team at my school, St Cuthbert's.

SC: Do you represent St Cuthbert's in any equestrian discipline?

LT: I'm actually still too young to be on the school team! However, next



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year I am hoping to ride for them. I just need to decide whether I want to focus on show hunter, show jumping, eventing or dressage.

SC: What kind of schooling regime do you follow with your competition ponies?

LT: With *Magpie*, it's just a case of keeping him fit. We do a lot of hacking through the forest and schooling in the arena. We make sure his work is varied so he doesn't get bored.

Barney gets quite hot and fizzy so we do plenty of schooling to keep him calm. When he starts rushing fences, we go back to walking over poles on the ground. When he has quietened down, he is allowed to progress to trot and then to canter. It's a technique that Grant Cashmore taught me and it works really well.

SC: You have competed overseas as well. What international events have you taken part in?

LT: In October, I travelled to Noumea in New Caledonia with three other young Kiwi riders and Chef d'Equipe Alan Goodall to compete in the country's FEI Children's Challenge. My team mates were Rebekha Van Tiel, Paxton Condor and Hannah Bodle. We had to ride foreign horses over fences which was quite a challenge as we didn't have that much time to get used to them before competing.

Everyone on the team did amazingly and we ended up claiming gold, with New Caledonia taking silver and Australia bronze. We did pretty well individually as well. I was thrilled when it was announced that I was the CSI Children's Category C winner.

SC: So, what are your plans for this season?

LT: I have already qualified *Magpie* for Show Hunter Pony of the Year so I won't be doing many more Show Hunter classes with him before then. We will be back to defend our title at Horse of the Year and will hopefully do as well as we did last year!



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Nala Emblems Nicholette 1 x Supreme Champion title

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Brookfields Dream Maker 3 x Supreme Champion titles

Laurieston Royal Elegance 2 x Supreme Champion titles (Supreme Pony of the Year

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