



Nigel Baker

Three Suffolk brood mares in the snow at the Suffolk Punch Trust's centre at Hollesley Bay, Suffolk. Find more news on the trust on page 26.

## Beau becomes Animal Hero of the Year

Shire stallion Sandybank Beau who saved a mare's life after she became cast in her stable has been named Animal Hero of the Year in the 2018 Animal Hero Awards. In a remarkable story (told in **Heavy Horse World** Summer 2018 issue) Beau came to the aid of Shire mare Beatrice after owners Donald MacIntyre and Jane Lipington were unable to pull her to her feet. The couple called the vet and everything was used to try and move her until it was thought likely she would have to be put to sleep. Meanwhile Beau, who was in the next stable, had been watching the situation and when he was let out for some haylage marched straight over to Beatrice, put his head over the partition between them and started nibbling her neck and ears. As they watched Beau got hold of her headcollar and lifted her

head, eventually pulling her front end off the floor. Everyone helped and eventually she got up. "The vet couldn't believe it – she really didn't think Beatrice was going to survive, everything was closing down," Jane said. "We couldn't have got her out alive without Beau. For whatever reason Beau just knew she had to get off the floor." A month after the incident Beatrice was found to be in foal and a healthy colt, Angus, was born on 30 March. Jane and Donald attended the award ceremony in London. "People need to realise how intelligent these animals are," Jane said. "They just speak a different language and we need to learn their language. They have emotions, they feel compassion and all these things that we feel." Pictured are Beau, and Beatrice with her foal.



Joanne Exton founded her business 10 years ago. She tells us why . . .

## EXTREME horses and their needs for BIG stuff!

I set up The Big Horse Shop in 2009 in Blackburn after years struggling to find rugs to fit my own heavy horses. After months of research into the potential demand I embarked on a mission to create my own high quality brand of horse rugs designed for the broader, heavier horses and ponies that other manufacturers had forgotten about.

I spent much of that year travelling up and down the country measuring a variety of heavy horse and pony breeds. Once I had created a size chart the design followed – a rug which was much wider in the chest, deeper in the body and with enough room at the hind quarters to fit a big apple bottom!

With the Thwaites Brewery Shire Horse Team and Traditional Show Cobs right on my doorstep I had several horses close by to help test the rugs before the ideas were sent to the factory, and this helped to speed up production. Richard Green, head horseman at Thwaites, has been particularly helpful and played a large part in enabling us to get the business off the ground.

The first small batch of rugs arrived in Spring 2010. With the help and support of our customers and constructive feedback received, I was able to improve the design and fit ready for the Winter season that year. By then I had launched the in-house brand named 'Epic'.

Over the years we continued to improve the design and quality ensuring horses wearing Epic rugs are always



Thwaites Shire, Gunner, modelling (1) Epic Essential 200g Combo turnout rug; (2) Epic Essential 100g Standard neck turnout rug & detachable hood; (3) Epic Classic 100g Standard neck turnout rug & detachable hood; (4) Epic Classic 200g Standard neck turnout rug and detachable hood.

comfortable, whilst having full freedom to move and graze without feeling restricted.

Through the internet and via our own website [thebighorseshop.co.uk](http://thebighorseshop.co.uk) (not to mention advertising in **Heavy Horse World** magazine!), Epic rugs and hoods were soon becoming the best-selling heavy horse rugs worldwide. Epic rugs are only available from The Big Horse Shop. We took the decision to sell direct to the customer for a number of reasons: apart from keeping the selling price down, being able to talk to our customers and building longstanding relationships was equally as important and drives us to continually improve our products and services. The joy we hear from them when finally putting a rug on their horse that actually fits is priceless – and often quite emotional!

Keeping the business within the family, I was joined by my daughter Gemma after she graduated from university in textile design. With her help we introduced two new ranges in Autumn/Winter 2018/19, our new and improved Epic Classic and our brand new Epic Essential.

We've improved the fabrics, durability of the Epic Classic and incorporated a liner system. Rather than having several turnout rugs of various weights for the ever-changing weather, now you only need a couple along with our interchangeable new Epic liner rugs.

Epic Essential is our new affordable range, designed from the same size chart as the Classics and manufactured using quality materials. I want to ensure that we have a rug not just to fit your horses but also to suit your budget too.

2019 is going to be a very busy time for us, with lots of new designs and products arriving throughout the year – travel boots coming soon – watch this space!

**THE BIG HORSE SHOP**

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EPIC®



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*We spoke to Zoe Meek about how a conversation with a friend led to a complete change of direction*

## A chance in a lifetime . . .

**Q** You have been having some success working with Glen Cass and his heavy horses over the last few years: how did you get into heavy horses in the first place?

Growing up on a farm in Bedfordshire the outdoor life has always been for me. I learnt to ride at the age of four, and was lucky enough to have my own pony from the age of nine. I remember as a child going on a trip to the Shire Horse Show when it was at Peterborough with some other children from our village, and I absolutely adored them. I remember coming home and saying to my father: "I'd really like a Shire horse one day, a grey one?" His answer was 'how do you think we will afford to feed one of those!'

It's crazy how life moves you in different directions. I moved to Essex in December 2005, which was a huge step for me as I had always lived in the same area and it meant moving away from my friends and family. I had a part-time job three days a week as a nanny and was looking for more work. A friend of a friend said she knew someone who had got horses and might want some help with them, and that she would introduce us.

**Q** So what happened next?

A few days later one January afternoon off I went, and was introduced to Glenn Cass. He said: 'How many hours are you looking for?' To which I replied two days a week. He said: 'No, I don't think I can offer that'. Then he asked if I had any qualifications with horses? No, I said, but I have been involved with horses for years, to which he replied: 'Good'. He showed me round the yard and introduced me to the horses. At that time, Glenn owned two Suffolks, two Shires and a Welsh Cob. This was my first proper introduction to heavy horses. After lots of chat, I went to leave and he said: 'Ok, two days a week, starting next week?'

**Q** Wow, that was a great offer . . .

I loved it. It was so nice to be doing something different. Glenn was still learning to drive at this point, and breaking in some of the horses, and all of this we learnt together. In December that year Glenn bought some youngsters, to bring on from scratch, so as the work load increased, so did the hours, up to three days a week, then four, and then full-time.



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Kevin Wright

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**Q** So, you and Glenn have been involved in a wide variety of activities with heavies?

Yes, over the years, as a team we have taken part in many different disciplines with the horses. From in-hand, decorated harness and ploughing to turnout classes (singles and pairs), agricultural classes, two-wheeled cart classes and ridden. I've been given some amazing opportunities, having driven in turnout classes myself, and I especially enjoy driving the two-wheeled cart.



Kevin Wright

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**David & Liz Lambert beaver away on behalf of Shire horses, and especially at the Nottinghamshire County Show – how did it all start?**

**D**avid and Liz both grew up owning and showing light horses and ponies, but it was at a local show in 1979 while watching the heavy horse parade that David announced that he would like to buy a Shire. The following year he went to Lancashire to the dispersal sale of James Walker, but instead of buying a horse, he bought the show dray – giving a whole new meaning to ‘putting the cart before the horse’!

Growing up in Newark, David had always had strong connections to Newark Show but with no suitable horses to pull his new show dray, he asked Leslie Mills from Dedham to bring a pair of Shires to horse it at the 1981 Newark Show (now Nottinghamshire Show) and again the following year. David received a call from Frederic Robinsons’ Brewery to ask if he would be interested in selling them the dray, so it moved up to Stockport, and is still owned and showed by Robinsons, for many years being driven by John Walker from whose father David had bought the dray.

With a growing family and better facilities for horses the family moved to Highland Farm at Ossington, a village 10 miles from Newark. At first David continued to run his vehicle & tool hire and removals businesses from Newark. To feed the increasing number of horses, he was hiring in a mill & mix lorry to make chaff, but he soon realised that Highland Farm was the perfect location to start manufacturing his own chaff. He purchased some equipment and production started. A name for the product caused many family discussions until they all agreed on ‘Oss-I-Chaff’. Production increased when eldest son Michael left school and joined the business, followed a few years later by son John. Both are still involved, with John in charge of production and Michael the logistics.

From the beginning it was decided that only oat straw would be used, although this has sometimes been difficult to obtain; one year it had to be brought in from as far away as Northumberland. From just one type of chaff there is now a range of different chaffs to suit everything from small native ponies through to a mix formulated specially for heavier breeds. The natural progression from feed was to be able to produce



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## 40 years with Shires for the Lamberts

bedding and so new machinery was purchased to dust-extract and bale bedding and certain feed products. The company now has a bedding range including dust-extracted rape straw, straw pellets, newsbed and tissue bed which are sold nationally through merchants, wholesalers and now direct deliveries.

By 1982 really keen to buy their own Shire, David and Liz went to the Midlands foal sales at Bingley Hall, Staffordshire and returned home with a →



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(1) David Lambert driving his pair to the Oss-I-Chaff dray at Lincolnshire Show. (2) David and Liz with their Shires at Highland Farm, Ossington, near Newark. (3) Their original dray horsed by Leslie Mills on the way home from Newark Show on the bridge over the River Trent with Newark Castle in the background.

Jane Monte-Torres

William Castle *begins a two-part series on the technical skill of horse ploughing*

# Learning to plough – Part 1

**F**or many people, ploughing with horses is the epitome of working horses at their best. In the past, ploughing was also the main occupation of farm horsemen so many people were very good at it, but nowadays it can seem like a skill so complicated and mysterious that it is difficult to know where to start.

There are several prerequisites to plough successfully: you need a workable plough, somewhere suitable to plough, and horses which will walk where you want them to, at a slow to moderate pace. You also need to know the feel of the plough, how to adjust it, and how to control the horses. Once you can do all these things, then you can plough, but for each one that you cannot yet tick off your list the harder it will be to learn. Fortunately, some of these skills can be achieved before you ever get near a moving plough, and the more boxes you can tick before you start, the easier it will be.

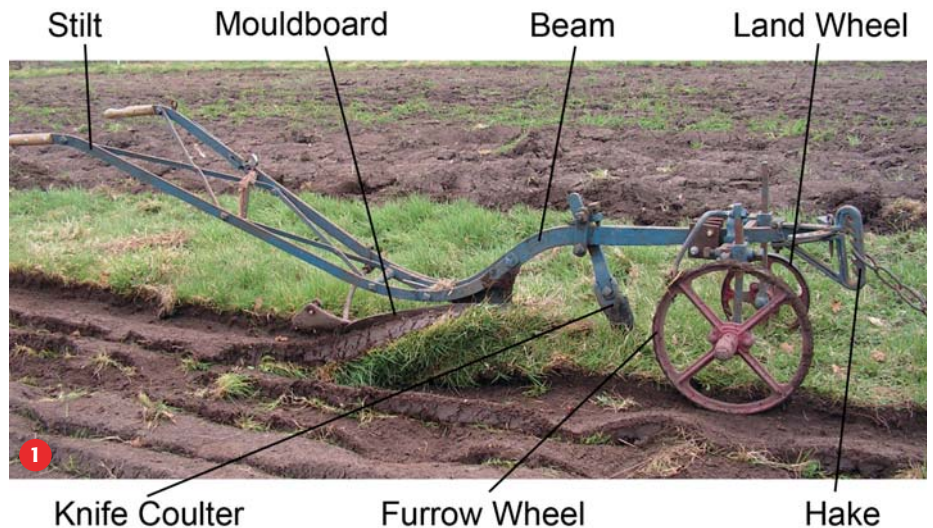
Let's start by breaking down the act of ploughing into its component parts.

## Handling the plough

Imagine you are standing on the headland of a partly ploughed field, ready to have a go, the plough handles in front of you, the plough in line with the next furrow to be cut. As the horses step forward, the big wheel, the furrow wheel, drops into the last furrow. As it does so, the point of the plough, the share, starts to cut into the soil and after a couple of feet the plough levels out, cutting the furrow to the correct depth and width.

Since you are supposed to be controlling the plough, you grab hold of the handles and follow the plough. Although a well-set plough doesn't need much steering, at first it still seems that you are going at 90 miles an hour, because there is so much happening, even if the horses are drawing steadily. To begin with you need to get used to walking in the furrow, and you can feel the plough's movement through the handles and see, hear and feel the soil being turned to the right. The turning furrow can be a bit mesmeric, so concentrate instead on steadying the plough handles, resisting any big movements.

As you get used to this, you will start to notice other things, the smaller land wheel up ahead to the left, travelling on the unploughed land, which helps to



(1) The plough halted mid-furrow. The knife coulter has cut the vertical cut of the furrow slice, which has been lifted and turned by the share and the mouldboard. The chain to the horse is in a central position on the hake, and just behind it you can see the pin which fixes the lateral adjustment of the hake. In this unusually shallow ploughing (2½ to 3in) the furrow is turned nearly 180 degrees, rather than the usual 130 degrees where the soil lies against the previous furrow.

control depth and keeps the plough stable, but don't worry about that for now. Pay attention instead to the furrow wheel in the corner of the furrow, next to the furrow wall.

At times this wheel may move away from the furrow wall, so the plough cuts a narrower furrow, or sometimes the furrow wheel may press hard against the furrow wall as the plough tries to cut a wider furrow. To avoid this happening, you need to push or lean sideways on the handles. Steering a plough is like steering a boat with a tiller; to go to the left, you push to the right. Push to the

right and you go to the left. The reason it works like this is because the plough pivots about its mid-point, so, for example, when you press to the left, you push the back of the landside (the 'angle iron' that runs in the corner of the furrow) against the furrow wall, pivoting the share away from the furrow wall, so it takes a narrower furrow. Unlike a boat, this topsy-turvy steering also works in the vertical direction, so as you press down on the handles, the plough pivots on the rear of the sole, the point is lifted, so the plough rises through the soil and the furrow becomes shallower. Lifting the

(2 & 3) In fig 2 the land wheel is raised to allow the share (shown in cross section) to sink deeper. This tips the whole plough over a little bit, so this furrow bottom is not level, but deeper on the land side. When you make the next furrow (fig 3), without further adjusting the plough, the furrow wheel now sits at this lower level, so the bottom of this new furrow is level, but a little deeper than the previous one.

