



Verity's ride at Belstone

Excited and not a little apprehensive, I loaded Pony (yep, that's his name!) at the Mendip Stud in Somerset and headed for Belstone early on Sunday 20 June. Pony rushed into the trailer, no doubt in the hope that wherever he was going would involve more grass than the starvation paddock he'd been in all week.

A couple of hours later we arrived at Verity's where around twelve others were getting ready for the off. The weather was perfect – warm and sunny but with a bit of a breeze. I had improvised a saddle bag where I stowed a fleece, a waterproof and a large bottle of water. This caused some mirth but I've not ventured into the wilds of Dartmoor before and I read Famous Five on Mystery Moor at an impressionable age!

At around 11.15am we set off up the lane into the village and then carried on up a track and onto the moor. At this point, I was still a little anxious that Pony would behave badly but with a little persuasion he stayed at the back with my mate Linda on Breeze. We headed down to the valley where we had to cross the first of several streams. All over safely although Katie on Prince, did it in pretty spectacular fashion.

After this point I lost my bearings, but I do remember going past Okehampton Camp, Rowtor and eventually arriving above Taw Marsh. The views here and at many points along the way were really fantastic – this is definitely the way to see the moor! From here, we descended into the valley where the horses all had a paddle to cool down before heading back into Belstone and arriving exactly three hours later – pretty impressive! The barbecue was already on the go so it wasn't long before we were all stuffing ourselves with goodies in what was now very warm sunshine. Yum!

Most of the route was on good tracks and though some were quite stony we were able to cope even with Pony's sensitive feet. I had never gone on a big ride like this but it hadn't taken long for me to feel completely relaxed - it was clear that no-one was going to charge off over the horizon and that the ride would wait for any stragglers. Both Linda and I are new to DWRC and we had a brilliant time. Tom, my partner, came along for the barbecue and was made very welcome too.

Thanks loads, Verity – we'll look forward to the next one.

Gill

