

My riding career, if you can call it that, now spans some 4 decades. Quite scary, as I remember thinking (some years ago) that no one could possibly ride once they turned 50!!

So here I am, now turned 50 and with a metal hip, and still throwing myself into the saddle on a very regular basis.

Having begun riding aged 9, and that meant everything and anything I could, I got my own pony at the age of 13, an Arab Cross called 'Nellie'. She taught me the hard way how to stay on and gave me years of fun and 2 foals. During my teenage years, I rode many horses for different people allowing me to gain a variety of experience that has served me well over the years.

After she died I got 'Fleur'. A 3 year old Dales Cross, just backed. She was 'simply the best' and together, with lots of hard work, we went Eventing all over the country, up to Intermediate level. What a fantastic time we had; hard work but worth it. She bred a foal to 'Welton Apollo' called 'Alfie' who I sold aged 4. Sadly, she died aged 22 from colic.

In my twenties, I passed BHS Stages 1, 2 and 3 and my Horsemastership examinations, but never really put them to any use.

Then along came 'Chelsie', another 3 year old, just backed. We had ten years of good all round fun, mainly hacking, a few events and it was at this point I was introduced to Pleasure Riding. What a great way to see the countryside. Chelsie was put down in 2010 having suffered a flexor tendon injury.

And now we have 'Sparky', a Section D Cross who is the most lovable character imaginable.

My daughter, Kate, and I share him – I do the work and she rides. Actually that is not quite true – I do get to ride sometimes as well. He is a great little all rounder and much nearer the ground if I fall off. An absolute must when you get to my age. We plan to do a bit of all sorts and I have just booked a weekend away with him in the Lakes this summer – can't wait.

Who knows where we will go from here? Hopefully a few more years in the saddle – may even make it to 60 – watch this space. What I can say, is that Horses have been the biggest part of my life since I can remember. I owe them an immense amount of gratitude for their long suffering patience and companionship and for getting me through some pretty tough times over the years.

I owe them all a very big THANK YOU!