



# Shires & Shetlands



# Shires

*Big is beautiful...*



*Shires were once a common sight across Britain, pulling brewers' drays, coal carts, ploughing fields and hauling timber.*

Unfortunately the introduction of tractors and other machinery meant that farmers stopped using horses for the work - after all, tractors were faster, got more done and needed less care. But it was a sad loss as tractors are much noisier and smellier and are far less beautiful than our furry friends!

The Shire is descended from the medieval warhorse known as the Great Horse or English black. It was developed by crossing black Friesian horses with native horses.

**?** *Did you know...* According to the Guinness Book of Records, the world's tallest horse ever was a Shire gelding named Sampson (later re-named Mammoth), which was born in 1846 in Toddington Mills, Bedfordshire. By the time he was a four-year old in 1850, he was 21.2 hh! Remembering that the withers on a horse is the tallest point at the shoulder, this horse stood 7 feet 2 and one-half inches at the shoulder! His weight was estimated at 3,000 lbs, which is the same as a small hippo!

**?** *Did you know...* The tallest horse in the UK at the moment is called Cracker. He is a massive 19.2hh Shire horse and he lives at the Northcote Heavy Horse Centre in Lincolnshire. This handsome beast stands at a massive 6ft 6in at the withers, so imagine how high his head must be!

**?** *Did you know...* Shire horses were originally bred in Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire - that is how they got their name!

**?** *Did you know...* Victor the Shire is the tallest horse we have at Redwings, at 18.1hh. In fact, it seems the Shires take all the honours, as they also have Bruno (18hh) on their team. Charlie Mac the ex-police horse is a Thoroughbred x Irish Draught who measures in at 18hh, while Callum Lad the Hanoverian Cross is just behind him at 17.3hh, but neither can knock our Shires off the top spot! Nice try guys!

*Meet Victor...*

*Victor came to Redwings as a stallion, at the tender age of just two. He joined us from another sanctuary as they could no longer cope with the demands*



*of looking after a Shire. They tried to rehome him but sadly no one wanted him so Redwings agreed to take him on. He has grown and grown and at over 18 hands he is now the tallest horse at the Sanctuary, and also one of the most handsome, or so he likes to tell us!*

# Shetlands

*...but little is lovely!*



*Meet Wensley...*

*One hot summer's day in 2004, Redwings rescued 72 horses and ponies from Lincolnshire. There were big stallions, tiny foals and just about everything in between. One of the group was Wensley, a tiny 7hh piebald Shetland who was then just a few weeks old.*

*Redwings made sure he stayed with his mum and friends as they were carefully brought back to Norfolk. The horses and ponies from Lincolnshire were quite wild so they lived at Redwings' special Training Yard at first where they learnt that it's good to be friends with people as well as horses. Wensley(dale) and his friends are all named after cheeses!*



*At the other end of the scale from our gigantic shires are these little chaps and 'chapesses' - Shetland ponies and Miniature Shetlands.*

*We currently have more than 150 Shetlands and Miniature Shetlands at Redwings.*

Named after the remote group of islands to the North-east of Scotland, the Shetland is the smallest of the British native breeds and definitely one of the cutest! However, despite their size, Shetland ponies are very strong. They are extremely tough and hardy and can usually cope with the harshest of weather and poor quality grazing.

Traditionally, the Shetland was used as a pack animal, carrying everything from grain to peat and was also a very popular choice for coal mining. Shetlands are strong willed and very intelligent but can make an excellent child's riding pony if trained and handled correctly.

**Did you know...** The Shetland pony grows a double coat in winter. The outer coat has 'guard hairs' which repel rain and keep the pony's skin completely dry.

**Did you know...** To be classified pure-bred, the Shetland pony can be any colour except spotted.

## *Rocky, one of our most famous Shetlands...*

Rocky had a very bad start in life. He was born on the Shetland Isles in 1991, got separated from his mother and was transported to Ireland at just four months old (foals shouldn't be separated from their mums until they are at least six months.) Once in Dublin, he was sold to a group of young boys who immediately tried to ride him and ended up dislocating his young back. When we rescued him, he had collapsed at a horse sale in Dublin and was unable to get up. Thankfully, he made a full recovery but could never be ridden. Rocky stayed with us until he recently passed away.

He was the friendliest little pony and completely trustworthy - we often used him when children wanted to come and groom one of our equines as he was so well-behaved and just loved all the cuddles and fuss!

