

## South Wales Carriage Driving Centre – Making Dreams Come True (Averina Snow)

**It began in January 2013.** I owned a young pair of Welsh Sec C ponies, Zu and Zila, which had been broken to drive, but were very inexperienced. I had a very busy job that involved a lot of international travel and was looking for someone who would produce the ponies for driving trials and, most importantly, teach me how to drive them. The long-term goal was to try tandem.

Rowena rose to the challenge and **it was the start of seven fun filled years** with South Wales Carriage Driving Centre (SWCDC).

Zu and Zila, although full brother and sister, were like chalk and cheese. Zu was tense and highly strung,



trying to do everything on his own at 100 miles an hour. Zila was much more laid back and quite happy for her brother to do all the work.

They were not an easy pair – as Rowena kept reminding me!

Rowena showed immense patience with both them and me and wisely advised that a summer of training would be much more beneficial than attempting to get them to any event.

It was time well spent.

**Our first indoor competition February 2014 - the smile says it all**

**2014 was focused on club events.** I needed to complete my competency assessment for British Carriage driving and we all needed the experience without pressure. The two nearest club venues were Windsor Great Park and the Brecon Beacons. What a privilege to drive in such wonderful surroundings.

It was not all plain sailing. The ponies were over exuberant at times. I was very grateful to have the experience of Rowena or Peter on the backstep. They gave me confidence to deal with every situation. Without their encouragement I may well have given up.



**Waiting to start the marathon near Brecon**

**Work nearly stopped play in 2015.** Rowena kept the ponies going and SWCDC transported them to the events I could make. Thanks to that I achieved that year's goal of progressing from club to regional. Qualifying for the National Championships was a bonus.

**And then I retired ...** so had all the time in the world. I considered taking the ponies back home to Surrey but, despite the 400-mile round trip to Gowerton, I was so happy with the support from Rowena and Peter that I decided to leave them there.

Two wonderfully successful seasons followed, winning every open event we entered. We finishing top of the points league in 2017 and Zu was the overall Supreme Champion at the WPCS performance awards, with Zila runner up on points.



**Winning at Catton (with Peter) and at Cricklands (with Rowena)**



Driving, for me, has always been about going to wonderful places with people you like and having fun with the ponies. I had no ambition to compete at a higher level.

**Bigger horizons.** Rowena and Peter were planning a road trip to either Ireland or France in 2018. I thought it would be fun to join them. To do so meant I had to progress from the open to advanced class and get permission to go abroad from British Carriagedriving. This was my only motivation for moving to advanced. So, when I was asked at the National Championships 2017 if I would like to be considered for team selection for the Pony World Championships in Hungary in 2019, I was completely shocked. But I was also very excited at the possibility **and a dream was born.**

**Then disaster struck...** Zila needed surgery and tragically reacted adversely to one of the drugs while at the hospital. There was nothing the vets could do and I sadly lost her. 25 November 2017 was a dark day.

The journey could so easily have ended at this point but, once again, the team at SWCDC stood alongside and over the following months together we looked to find another pair that might take me to the Worlds.

#### **New beginnings in 2018.**

I was incredibly fortunate to be able to buy a very experienced international pair. They knew their job but

they were much larger ponies and I found them very different to drive. Once again, I was helped immensely by Rowena's coaching and mentoring through the summer of 2018.



We topped the points league at the end of the season, well positioned to seek selection in 2019.

**Houdini and Ranger at the National Championships 2018**

There was still a missing link for the selectors. They wanted me to have a "spare" pony. Rowena kindly offered me one of hers that was a perfect match. Minstrel joined the team at the end of 2018 and became a top marathon and cones pony.

**2019 was simply the best driving year**



I had a very successful indoor season driving Zu single. There had been many times early on when we thought this might not be possible as Zu was such a reactive pony on his own. It is testament to Rowena's magic and patience with him that he turned into such a versatile pony.

**Winning the Indoor National Championships  
Veteran class with Zu.**

A double clear in cones (a miracle in itself) gave me a win in the final selection event at Sandringham. I was selected for Team GBR and **the dream became a reality.**

We then went on to be crowned National Champion Pony Pair before heading to Hungary for the World Championships.

**Minstrel in the line-up at the National Championships**



The experience of a World Championships was memorable and so was the 2,500-mile round trip to get there. The team came fifth and there were no medals. But what a huge honour to be part of it.



**Houdini and Ranger in the Dressage**

**Thank you to Rowena and Peter and all the team at SWCDC.  
You shared the dream and without you it would have been impossible to achieve it. And now for Tandem?**

**Minstrel and Houdini in the Cones**

