

COUNTRYSIDE CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS

WINNER SALLY ANNE OULTRAM

After a close-run final and many hundreds of votes, Sally Anne Oultram has been crowned Countryside Champion of Champions for 2013.

Sally works as an equine ambassador for the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST), working tirelessly throughout the year at agricultural and county shows across the UK.

She helps to educate people about heavy horses with her faithful sidekick, Ted, the Clydesdale. The former council member and RBST trustee also works to generate public support for the trust.

'When I was told that I had been voted the Countryside Champion of Champions, it reduced me to tears,' said Sally. 'It's been a lifetime's journey of dedication, passion and commitment to both my love of horses and the British countryside.'

'I hope that my role as ambassador for the RBST will get a new voice, and help raise awareness of a range of issues, such as the plight of the New Forest ponies, which are now fighting for survival.'

'As well as that, hopefully it will allow me to raise awareness of rural poverty, and the plight of people who are born and bred in the

countryside, but who are finding it difficult to remain in a rural home.'

For Sally Anne – who scoops £200 worth of Rayburn cookware after winning the title – failing to protect Britain's endangered livestock from extinction is the same as letting traditions, once held dear, die out.

As she points out, so much is done to preserve buildings for historic reasons, yet the breeds of yesteryear are allowed to die out, despite them having 'historic' significance.

But working to preserve rare breeds isn't the only vocation for Sally. Inspired by her own Clydesdale, she has penned a series of children's books entitled 'The Story of Ted'.

Set in the Cheshire countryside, the books follow Ted on adventures with his friends Dayson and Hewitt the Jack Russell terriers, Murphy the cat, Midnight Joker the Schnauzer puppy and Mischief the pony.

While the stories are magical for youngsters to read, Sally stresses that there is a serious reason for writing them.

'The places in the book actually exist, which means children who read the stories can then go and visit them,' she continues.

'This is something that encourages youngsters into the countryside and enables them to connect with it more.'



However, the story behind Ted is probably nothing short of a bestseller in its own right. Sally purchased the Clydesdale in October 1998, after falling in love with the young foal at an auction.

The farmer's daughter was particularly struck by the Clydesdale's 'kind' eyes, but once she bought him it wasn't long before Sally found herself fighting to save the foal's life.

With her daughter Camilla and vet Liz Gorse, Sally spent an anxious 48 hours working around the clock to save the horse after a blockage was found in Ted's stomach. While traumatic, adds Sally, it created a strong bond between her and Ted – who she named after her late father.

'Even with that bond though, I do not see myself as 'Ted's owner', she continues. 'Everyone loves Ted, and it's the public that really owns him, as they love to meet him over and over again.' 🌿

