

ROWENA'S STORY: A LONG WAY HOME

I am writing just a brief article for your magazine, but a longer version will be available later, with lots of piccies. I haven't lived with Pandora long, so our long trip was a bit of a surprise to me. Others tell me that she often does strange things with her Caspians, mentions of HOYs and worm-charming have been going around the stables.

Anyway it started on Sunday 20th September, when we went for a drive to the local pub. Pandora had put loads of stuff on the carriage, so it was heavier than usual and she had to get out and walk earlier than normal on the hills. After I'd spent an hour eating grass in the beer garden she harnessed me up and off we went - the wrong way! Silly her, she turned right instead of left, the way for home. I did try and tell her but she insisted she was right.



Leaving The George at Blackawton, going the wrong way!

Several hours later, we arrived at a big river and I had to get onto a strange piece of road that somehow moved across the river - very odd. At the other side we had to walk up a very long hill. Eventually, at about five o'clock, we arrived at a stable yard where there were lots of horses that moved in a very strange way. Pandora called them Paso Finos. I stayed that evening in a very nice grassy field next to a herd of these horses.

After an early breakfast, 6.00 am, we set off again, still in the wrong direction and went along roads with loads of cars and buses on. We stopped once in a car park for me to drink and graze and then at lunch time I was tied to a big post with a sign saying 'Torquay Station'. There was loads of grass and nice people came and gave me mints.

After lunch we walked uphill for a couple of hours till we reached a lovely grassy area at somewhere called Labrador Bay, I couldn't see any Labradors, although there were lots of people walking other dogs. We covered about 27 miles that day, from Brixham to Starcross via Paignton, Torquay, Babbacombe, Teignmouth and Dawlish. Just before dark, and quite tired, we turned into a lovely stableyard. Pandora gave me tea, put my rug on because it was a bit cold, and turned me out in a lovely paddock with loads of grass. I'd really earned my tea and rest that night.

Next day we travelled a few miles on a fairly flat road to somewhere called Exminster. Loads of people came out of this big building to greet us and I had my photo taken going in the gate, driving up the road and standing still. I was put into a little electric fenced paddock that Pandora made for me in front of the building and people fed me apples all day, it was loads of fun.



Arriving at Pandora's offices at Exminster

That afternoon we went about eight miles to a lovely cottage, where the whole family came out and fussed me. It was a lovely day and I didn't have to do very much before I was turned out in a paddock with a big feed and loads of hay.

We left very early on the Wednesday morning and both walked uphill for ages, past what Pandora said was Haldon Forest. Near the top we met a fox, who trotted out and was really surprised that we were walking along the road. He was most unconcerned and just walked across past us. We went through Chudleigh, then through an industrial estate where there were loads of really big lorries, to a car park outside somewhere called Mole Valley. How silly, as if moles would want to live in a tarmac car park! We stopped there for a couple of hours. My pen was made of hurdles, with some lovely haylage and carrots. Lots of people came and told me how clever I was.

A couple of miles after a village called Bickington, Pandora said we were going to go on a really big road and that I would have to be very brave. We drove out onto a really busy road with loads of cars, lorries and coaches all going really fast. I decided that I would move a bit too, so I decided to trot along this bit of road. Pandora had never asked me to trot so far, leaving it to me to decide if I felt like a trot. We soon got to our exit and travelled along nice lanes and through somewhere called Ashburton, to a big house by the river. We had done about twenty miles that day so I was glad when we stopped. I had a lot of pats and carrots before I was given my tea and a super patch of grass between two walls to graze for the night.

Next day Pandora asked the people if she could leave some of the heavy things at the house, which certainly made the load lighter. We had a lovely easy drive into Totnes and stopped for lunch at a pub by a little stream, where I was allowed to paddle and eat the delicious grass on the riverbank. Eric came to have lunch with us and said he'd go home and make my tea. "Home" - that sounded good!

Nearly two hours later, I recognised where I was, at the top of the lane to Hutterleigh. Pandora insisted on taking a picture at the sign, but then I squealed and danced all the way down the road and through the village. I was going home - after four days and eighty miles we had at last taken the right road!

Anyway must go back to my tea.
Love Rowena

P.S. Thanks to all the lovely people who helped on the way and to my farrier Mel, who fitted my super shoes with their road nails. And many thanks to the weather that stayed good for the whole trip.

Footnote by Pandora:

Rowena and I did the 80 mile drive to work and back to raise awareness about how much we take our cars for granted. We were grateful for all the support of the guesthouses and friends along the way, also for the manners of 99.9% of drivers, who treated us with care and courtesy. We are still counting the money raised for three worthy causes, Devon Air Ambulance, WaterAid and of course The Caspian Horse Society. Rowena's full story, with lots of pictures, will be available soon.