

Finding Flora (Ballantrae Flora – Toorigal Danny Boy/Aran Francesca)
By Peter Brown

The first time we saw Flora (Lucy, as she is known) was at a clinic in Port Fairy. An extremely pretty black mare that by all accounts was a bit of a handful. We saw no evidence of this at the clinic, only a young stubborn but gentle pony with an extremely nervous and inexperienced rider. We saw her now and again after that, locked up in a paddock, looking extremely bored and very overweight.

Lucy came to our attention again when her new owner was hospitalized after a fall. A friend of ours, Rebecca Tennant, purchased her when she suddenly came up for sale. Rebecca had a lot of faith in this black pony that was considered unsafe by a number of people. Sadly Rebecca was killed in a car accident only 6 weeks later. Lucy was offered to us and we took her mainly to justify Rebecca's faith in her but also to follow through with trying to find out her breeding and background.

The job of tracing her was not easy as all we knew was that she was apparently a purebred Connemara. After quite a few phone calls with no success, we were put in contact with Karen and Meaghan Ryan (Ballantrae Briar) who gave us the vital information that we needed. We then rang Vicki Plummer who went through her records and confirmed that Lucy was indeed Ballantrae Flora (one of the missing Ballantraes).

Despite her reputation, Lucy has proven to be everything we had hoped for and much more. My daughter, Melanie, who was 12 at the time, started her at pony club and has also commenced eventing with her, with considerable success. A lot has been achieved in only 18 months since Lucy came to us as a totally green, uneducated pony, for example, the first time she attempted hunter classes at the Boggy Creek Hunt Club show in Warrnambool, she was placed 2nd in Working Hunter, 1st in Junior Hunter over obstacles and 4th in showjumping.

Lucy is an exceptional pony with a superb temperament and easygoing nature; my very nervous wife has just started riding again after a 4-year break using Lucy. Lucy often attracts admiring looks and comments on how wonderful she is. We have become true Connemara converts and are proud to be out and about showing what these wonderful ponies can achieve.

Many thanks must go to Karen and Meaghan Ryan and Vicki Plummer for helping us 'find Flora'.