



Monday afternoon – I'm at Pony Camp!

We've just had lunch on my very first day at Pony Camp, and I thought I'd start writing in my fab new diary straight away. Jody, who runs Sunnyside Stables, gave us one each to write all our adventures in while we're here and I've had such an exciting time already! We had our assessment lesson this morning and I've been given the best pony ever. She's called Shine and she's absolutely gorgeous! I'll write more about her in a minute but I'm going to start right at the beginning so I don't miss anything out.

We were a bit late arriving because my baby brother Albie was screaming and Dad couldn't get him strapped into the car seat.

Plus, Mum had to pack all his stuff, like his bottles and nappies and pushchair, and





even with me helping it took ages. Albie needs as much for one car journey as I do for a week!

So by the time we got here everyone else was already unpacked and on the yard. Jody showed me upstairs and I had to quickly dump my stuff in the room where I'm staying. I took the top bunk, as someone's towel and nightie were already on the bottom one. There was also an unmade bed by the window covered in soft toy ponies, and Jody told me it belonged to her daughter, Millie.



I hurried down to the yard and Sally the head instructor gave us a welcome talk, and introduced all the yard staff. Then Jody told us



about bedtimes and meals and stuff, and said to come to her if we had any problems or questions. Jody's really nice and though she's Millie's actual mum, she's going to be like a mum to all of us while we're staying here.

Then Sally got us to introduce ourselves to each other and I found out that the other girl (on the bunk below me) is called Beth. She's my age but a bit smaller than me, and she's got lovely wavy hair (I'm always trying to get mine to go like that but it never does!). She looked a bit nervous and asked me if I'd done much riding before.



I explained that while I've been riding for quite a few years, I don't get to go very often any more because of Mum and Dad being so busy with Albie. "So I've done lots of flatwork and some jumping but I've probably forgotten loads of it," I told her. "Actually, that's one of the



things I'm most looking forward to on this holiday – working on my riding non-stop for a whole week!" Then I suddenly panicked thinking what if Millie and Beth are really good, but Beth said, "I've done way less than you – I only started a few months ago, when me and Dad moved down here."

We both turned to Millie at the exact same time and said, "I bet you're brilliant," which was so spooky it made all three of us collapse into giggles. Millie said, "I've been riding a long time, but if I can get my pony to do what I want it's a miracle." Her pony's called Tally and she says his main hobby is bombing off on hacks and dragging her through hedges.



The other girls are lovely too, and I especially like Shanice. She's really smiley and said she liked my new black cord jodhs (I had to get new ones because when I tried on my riding stuff last week I'd grown out of my old ones!). Shanice lives in London and she's hardly ridden at all, but she's so pony mad she saved up for a really nice grooming kit to use on her pony this week. She got given a cute piebald called Prince and she fell in love with him straight away.



The three older girls are really cool. Aneela has amazingly long shiny hair and Izzy's got a fab purple silk she bought specially for this week. Courtney's wearing make-up and when I said I liked her eyeshadow she offered to do a makeover on me one night! Her mum's





actually a beauty therapist so Courtney's learnt all about make-up and hair and face packs and stuff from her. Who haven't I mentioned yet?

Daisy & Grace



Oh, yes, Daisy and Grace are the youngest, they're identical twins and even their riding gear is exactly the same (I don't know how we'll ever tell them apart!).

After a quick tour round the yard, we were all given our ponies. It was so exciting waiting to hear who I'd got. Sally read our names off a list as Lydia brought the ponies out one by one, and that's when I met my gorgeous Shine! Lydia had tacked up the ponies for us this once but we'll be doing that ourselves for the rest of the week. It's so great that we get to do everything for them as well as all the riding. It's almost like actually owning one. I used to ask and ask and ask Mum and Dad if I could have my own pony,



but they kept saying no, so I stopped eventually. But it's still my number one dream and I secretly think about it a lot and imagine what it would be like.

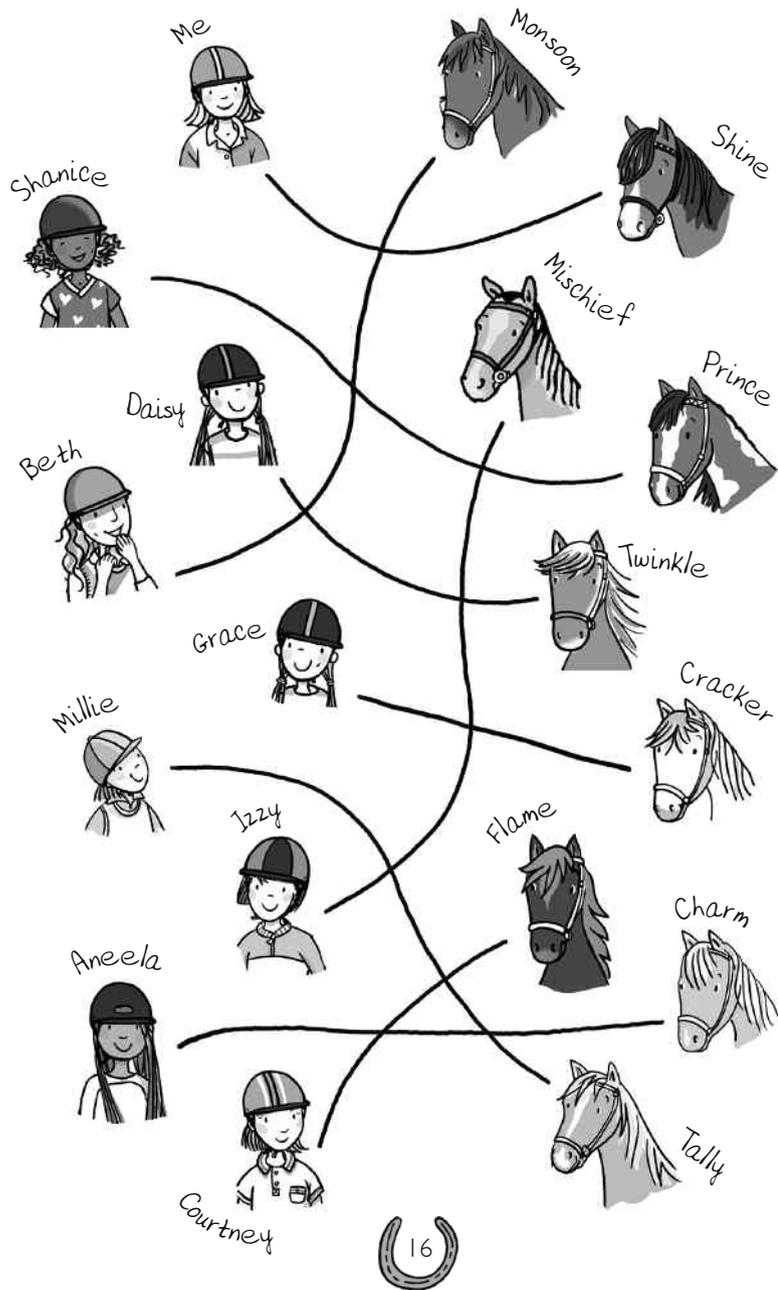
Shine's exactly the sort of pony I've been dreaming about! She's a really pretty bay and so sweet and friendly. At 13.2hh she's the perfect size for me too! She's got a beautiful glossy coat and I'm going to make it gleam for the gymkhana on Friday. I feel so lucky that I got her!

I've brought my digital camera and I've taken pix of everyone and their ponies, but there's nowhere here to print them off, so instead I'll have to do some drawings of us all. I know, I'll make it into a puzzle.





Sunnyside Stables

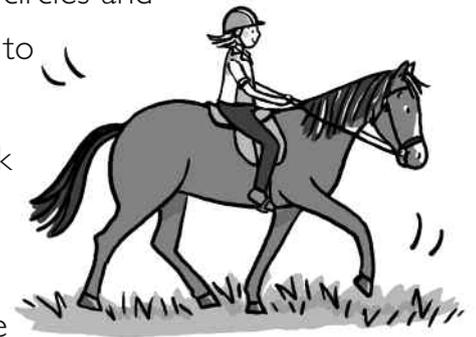


Sunnyside Stables



As we were given our ponies, we led them over to the mounting block and got on, ready for the assessment lesson. I had to walk Shine away from the crowd a bit before sorting out my stirrups. She wasn't that keen on standing right near the others and she kept on swishing her tail and shifting about.

It felt strange being back on a pony at first, but in the assessment lesson we had a good long walk round on each rein, so I had time to think about my position and get used to Shine. We did lots of halts, circles and changes of direction to get our ponies listening to us. It took me a while to remember to look around to see where



I was going, though! Shine is quite forward-going in trot so I could go rising in a



nice rhythm without nagging her all the time. Sally called out to me to change my trot diagonal, though, and I realized I'd forgotten to even check it!

When we had a canter I slid my outside leg back and Shine did as I asked straight away. I'd forgotten how fast it felt – but also how fun! Sally had to tell me to sit back and down, and stop clinging to the reins, but I didn't really mind her saying that because she yells things out to everyone. Shanice hasn't cantered before so she had a trot instead, and Sally said she'd be cantering by the end of the week, no worries. It's great that things are coming back to me already – and it helps that Shine's so lovely to ride! It was just so exciting – and to think, I've got loads more canters to go before the end of the week!



Afterwards we untacked (I helped Shanice with Prince as she hadn't done it before), and



then we all gathered back on the yard to hear what groups we'd be in. Sally said I was borderline but she's putting me in Group A to start off with (the beginners' group) so I can find my feet and brush up my skills. If I do well she's going to move me up to Group B. I'm really disappointed to be honest, and can't help thinking that if Mum and Dad hadn't been so busy with Albie. . . Still, I suppose moving groups can be a goal for me to work towards.

We then had a lecture about safety on the yard and Lydia showed us where everything was and how to put things away properly so nothing got tripped over or lost. It was fun because she pretended to do dangerous things like mounting without her chin strap done up, or tying up a pony without using a slip-knot, and we had to stop her by calling out "No!" and saying what was wrong.





Then at lunch Aneela was doing impressions of a teacher at her riding school at home who has this really snooty voice and we were all in stitches. She's so funny – in fact, all the girls here are nice. We've just been trying on each others' stuff. Daisy's blue fleece really suited

COURTNEY
wearing
IZZY'S silk



Shanice and Izzy's purple silk looked great on Courtney's hat, and she said she really wishes she'd bought a new one before she came, too. Grace insisted on trying on Aneela's jodhs and of course they were miles too long for her! I know I'm going

to have a fab week with them all!

Jody just gave us our welcome letters (I've stuck mine in the front of this diary) and we found out we're going carriage-driving this week – we're all really excited. It'll be great fun



going on a trip together and only Izzy has been in a carriage before, when she was a bridesmaid at her cousin's wedding, so it'll be a brand new horsey experience too!

We've got to go back on the yard again now for our first Pony Care lecture – it's on tack and tacking up. I'm going to pay extra special attention in the lectures because maybe if I show Mum and Dad how much I've learnt they'll understand how serious I am about getting my own pony, and then they might start to think about it at least.