

Blackdown

Hills

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Learning to appreciate a kinder pace of life

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FORMER show jumping champion Karen Ruggles has led a colourful life. From riding horses to trading coal and from organising international racing events to back packing around Africa, Karen has done it all.

Her latest venture is not only helping humans but also the animal world.

Karen is a qualified Reiki practitioner. Through her own experiences with ill health, Karen uses her energy healing skills to help traumatised racehorses that have been mistreated.

Karen has always had a passion for animals, especially horses and was able to ride from a very young age.

She was born in London and grew up in Kensington. Her passion for horses began in 1965 after her parents converted their garage into a stable.

Karen recalls: “At the age of two I was put on a Shire horse and that’s were my riding started. I became really serious about it when we moved to the New Forest when I was five-years-old.”

Karen’s mother, Alison Ruggles was a former international show jumper and her father John Ruggles was an Olympic yachtsman.

Karen’s riding began to take off and she represented Great Britain twice in junior under 21 championships.

Karen was looking

at a promising career when she sustained a serious injury and her future as a horsewoman became less certain.

Said Karen: “When I was 13 years old, the horse I was riding had a heart attack as we were taking off over a jump. I got very badly squashed underneath the horse and I ended up having to take a year off. I didn’t break anything but I twisted my pelvis so I had a lot of ligament damage.

“After that I was unable to do cross-country because as I could no longer lean forwards for long periods, so I was on a lot of painkillers. No one could work out why I was in so much pain but I kept going.

“I was about to be picked for the pony international team but the fall put paid to that.”

At 17-years-old, Karen had completed her second European International Championship and was on her way to the Olympics. But in another fall from her horse she badly damaged her back and her life changed forever.

After the second fall Karen was in hospital for almost four months. She was advised that if she had another fall, her back would permanently be damaged and she could be left paralysed.

“I was told that I would have an 80 per cent chance of being in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. As much as I was completely focused on getting to the Los Angeles Olympics, that scared me,” said Karen.

“After leaving hospital my spirit for going all out for the Olympics was broken. I became too frightened, I didn’t want to be paralysed.”

With only private tutoring and six O levels under her belt, Karen didn’t know what to do

next. She made the tough decision to leave the equestrian world she knew and loved behind.

“It was permanently reminding me that I had failed,” said Karen. “I was already mentally scarred from not being able to continue, so I decided that I had to shut that door and walk away completely.”

Karen trained as a secretary and her first job was with a commodity company. Her bosses soon realised that she was not being used to her full potential. Karen was soon promoted and she ended up trading in

coal.

“We were in Canterbury bringing in all this coal from Europe and America to get around the miners strikes,” she said. I was up slag heaps in Germany analysing coal, and I loved it,” Karen said.

After a few years of trading coal Karen found that another of her passions would lead to a new career.

As a child Karen was mad about cars and, in particular, Porsche 911s. Over the years she became a complete ‘anorak’ and knew all there was to know about Porsches.

It was her knowledge of cars that led a boyfriend to suggest she should make a career out of it.

By 1987 Karen was working for one of the country’s top second hand Porsche dealers.

After marrying a racing driver, Karen moved to Sydney in 1989 and was living a dream life.

“It was fabulous,” she said. “The Australians have the fantastic go-getting attitude and I was in my element out there.

“I had a fabulous life. I was very lucky. My career was going very well and everything should have been perfect but I was struggling because my marriage was beginning to suffer.”

View reporter LISA BRIGHT talks to animal and human Reiki practitioner KAREN RUGGLES about adapting to a different pace of life

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“It was when her husband took a position in Hong Kong that Karen decided it was the final straw. She became ill through stress and ended up in hospital.

She explained: “I couldn’t live up to the image anymore and I thought there is no point living like this. The pressure was too much.”

In 1994, after recovering from her illness, Karen made the decision to go travelling in Africa at the age of 32 years old.

After 18 months Karen returned to England and once more took on running the international sales operations for Porsche.

Pressure from work became too much and again Karen became ill through stress.

“I had to change the pace of my life and I decided to take the hard road,” Karen said. “I had to have the courage to go through the hardship to get the reward. As much as I was fighting having to sell my beautiful cottage, I had to clear my mortgage.”

After looking all over the country to find the perfect place to start a new life, Karen stumbled across the Blackdown Hills and she moved to Corfe near Taunton in 2004.

After her move down to Somerset Karen was beginning to get better, partly with the help of Reiki, a form of spiritual healing.

“It helped me see a way forward and that is one of the beautiful things about Reiki. I then decided was going to train to practice Reiki,” said Karen.

Karen qualified with a certificate in 2005 and since then she has helped many people and animals overcome their



problems.

She explains: “Reiki is basically a form of healing, which is natural. It encourages the animal or human energy system to re-balance.

“My big passion is animals, so I tried Reiki to see if I could apply it to them. That’s how I got into racehorse re-homing. I had so much wonderful feedback and

I wanted to put something back into the animal world. I have been giving them free treatments at the Racehorse Re-homing Centre near Chard.

“The horses at the re-homing centre are traumatised, injured, starved and quite a lot of them have had it tough.”

Karen has many other

hobbies in her life to keep her busy. As well as helping animals, Karen sells cut-price designer jewellery from Australia and she also dabbles in the stock market.

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the view profile