

## **Elaine interviews: Callum who has a horse-riding business**

Elaine: Well, Callum, thank you very much for um giving up some time for me today.

Callum: It's a pleasure.

Elaine: Um, I I've been really excited to find out what's been going on since my granddaughter came back full of beans, all about her ride, or her gallop, on was it Fernando?

Callum: Fernando.

Elaine: Fernando.

Callum: She's the horse from England.

Elaine: Oh, right. Well she's absolutely in love with him. OK. So anyway, when did you first come here and open up the stables?

Callum: So we moved here from England in 2006 and with my parents and my brother. And I actually stopped riding as I moved here, and then in 2014 when I decided to set up the stables, that's when we moved back to the area. And I thought, because the lake and the forest and the environment around here, there was nowhere better to set up a stables and to give the horses their best opportunity.

Elaine: How old were you at that time?

Callum: When I set up? I was 21.

Elaine: Okay, right. So that's quite a young age to start a business.

Callum: Yes. It was daunting and obviously we were just coming out of Covid and everything.

Elaine: Oh yes.

Callum: So it wasn't really the best time.

Elaine: No.

Callum: But um I'm very lucky. Both Mum and Dad have both had their own businesses.

Elaine: Right.

Callum: So it was um. They gave me the push and the encouragement that anything's do'able if we give it a bit of hope and a bit of work so.

Elaine: And there was no problem with paperwork and things like that?

Callum: I'm very lucky. Dad has um, is an old lawyer.

Elaine: Okay.

Callum: So Dad is very good with paperwork.

Elaine: Yes.

Callum: Because.

Elaine: Keep it in the family.

Callum: Yes. So it's very useful having a lawyer on your side.

Elaine: Absolutely. So how many horses and ponies do you have here at the moment?

Callum: So at the moment, with the new mare that's just arrived this week, we've had 22 in total. So a good half of them are mine. They are either used in the lessons or that I compete at quite a good level now. And then the rest are horses that are here either for work, to be ridden by me, or owners that have given here to be looked after and cared for by me.

Elaine: Do you use the ones that you're looking after as opposed to the ones that are actually yours, do you use those when you go, people go on riding or or?

Callum: Some of them, yeah, if the owner's happy for them to be ridden and worked a bit more if they're on, if they're working or in school or different things that then, yes, I do try, and I tend to use them as well. But then mostly the horses that are used in lessons and in hacking are mine. Because the advantage is I know them off by heart.

Elaine: I'd say, you would know their temperament.

Callum: I know their temperaments. I know who will be scared of what.

Elaine: Now, just thought here is um, considering that there are quite a few equestrian centres in the, well Brittany is very, very. Children are very into riding aren't they?

Callum: Yes definitely.

Elaine: Particularly the girls, I think.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: Um, how does it work with them? Do you work together? Or is it competitive?

Callum: I do believe it's important that we all work together, because it's obviously um, it's quite a, a sport that is a expensive sport, so if we all try and fight each other, I think it it's not helping ourselves to to build a a community around horse riding. So I do work very closely with er Guerlogoden at Kergrist, because Anne Solène is also my coach who trains me to, especially in dressage. And then I've worked and ridden for over 10 years at Pondi Equitation in on the road to Malguénac, between Pontivy and Malguénac. So them two stables I'm quite close to. And then I do believe, with all the other stables in the area, we all have our different ways, our different points of view, our different ways of riding, and different and different events we compete in. So it's always a an aim to each body does their own thing and slightly teaches differently. So I'm always known for having quite fiery horses and and building confidence. And so that people come to me when they lack a bit of confidence. And then it's different people do different things. I suppose it's, um.

Elaine: Well, that's good, because everybody, I mean, it's a thing with animals and people, is that a horse is gets ridden, maybe ridden by lots of people, some who maybe are not very good with them,.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: You know, pull on their bit er too much or just er, and the horse seems to know that. So it's almost, although a short ride, it's a bonding experience.

Callum: Yes, definitely it's a team sport. I always say it's the only Olympic sport, definitely that is a individual sport that is played in a team. We have to make a pair, and I take riders all the way to national level in mainly showjumping, but eventing as well. And it definitely, you have to, we build a bond, and we build a a team of rider and horse from from now, from the beginning of September, and then it, it, we take that team all the way through. And then that the final objective this season is the national championships. That's 10 days at Lamotte-Beuvron that is the other side of Orleans.

Elaine: Oh, wow.

Callum: So we take, um the aim this year, we'll be taking 12 horses to there. So it's obviously a lot of, we have to take the food, the water.

Elaine: Of course.

Callum: The hay, for 10 horses and for, obviously, 10 riders that go with it.

Elaine: Yeah.Yeah

Callum: So um.

Elaine: The riders don't sleep in, in the horse box with them. Do they?

Callum: We. No, we. No we tent. We have tents.

Elaine: Oh you have tents. Brilliant.

Callum: We um, as we get there, all the horses have stables, and we all sleep in tents, in a big group

Elaine: They get, they have the luxury end of it then.

Callum: Yes, the horses definitely as as I always say the horses have the best bit of this trip. They are the true athletes of the team.

Elaine: And they're groomed and fed and.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: The rest of you have to just make do.

Callum: Yes. Exactly, yes.

Elaine: Particularly if it starts raining.

Callum: Yes. Especially as where it is, it is either over 40 degrees heat or absolutely raining for the week. So no middle ground in the weather.

Elaine: No. Well, that's er that's France for you in a way, isn't it.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: So um how do you match a horse to a rider, or, you know, maybe a one-off ride?

Callum: So it's much harder when it's an off one-off ride, because obviously I don't know the ability or the um the character of that person who could be quite hot or calm, so it, that is more difficult. But then I, I rely on the the knowledge of my horses and the horses, the few horses I have that I know are are um absolute angels, and they're not going to move, and they don't care about if a tractor drives past them or or cyclists. So I know that they can go out on a hack and they're not going to move. And obviously, for the, the, the riders that are more competitive and more team, um then it's learning about the the good points and the bad points of the rider, and the same with the horse, and it's, and it's building a bondship and I do believe that you can have on paper, the best team in the world. If there isn't that, that extra little feeling, that, that that um inner emotion or something that bonds them together, it cannot work. And I have a I have a very good rider and horse that have been with me for two years now, and they're aiming now for this year the highest level, at club level, and on paper they shouldn't work. But there's, she loves him, and I think the horse truly loves her and it there's some, there's some magical bond that sometimes just works above everything else.

Elaine: Exactly. And also, well, it is, this is a soul mate,

Callum: Yes, definitely.

Elaine: Regard each other.

Callum: Yes, completely.

Elaine: So sometimes we have a feisty rider and a feisty little horse, and they say, Okay, we'll be quite good, but we will have a bit of fun too.

Callum: Yes, definitely.

Elaine: Because I know back in the day when I went to go riding er every week at a stables, and um I always had this, I've always given the same pony. I remember it now called Flicker. And she was quite frolicky, little Flicker. Um, and so we were, afterwards we always had to groom them and then feed them.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: For a bit. So we built up a relationship.

Callum: Yes, it's definitely. You can tell the riders that take the time at building that bond and come and look after them and er let them eat grass and just spend time with them. Definitely them bonds do work more. And then it is, there's horses for courses. As we always like to say. Is definitely each horse has their little attitude, and each rider is the same. And then it is just finding that, the little the bonds that match, and. Um.

Elaine: Fantastic. Oh, it's er. Well, I think it's a very, long lasting, very.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: Special relationship too, isn't it? I mean, all girls, little girls fall in love with a horse at some point. I think.

Callum: Yes, definitely, yes. I mean, I'm quite happy this year I've got two boys as well. I've got, yes, two boys that ride this year, and obviously me as the coach.

Elaine: Yeah.

Callum: But it's definitely more, I think, whether the girls have a more of a um a bond with the horses or not. But um there's definitely more girls in the sport than boys, sadly.

Elaine: Well, I notice that where I am when I'm out walking, because we've got the old railway.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: Track that runs from Saint Meen le Grand to er Carhaix and there's always horse riders. And I would say 75, 80% are girls.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: The boys are kicking a football round.

Callum: Yes. Sadly, yes.

Elaine: Start.

Callum: Yes. As I never could stand football, so. I was put on a horse at a very young age by my Grandad, so.

Elaine: Yes.

Callum: Even though Grandad was very football, loved Manchester United and Liverpool, so. But no, I definitely got the the horsey bug than the football bug.

Elaine: Well, I think that's the way to start it, when you're so little.

Callum: Yes

Elaine: You have no fear.

Callum: Yes, definitely.

Elaine: And then you just automatically grow as you grow, sort of adapt to.

Callum: Yes, definitely. And especially as it's a it's a um, it's a technical sport. It's not very physical. It's more technical, and the your brain works as much as your body. So it's everything that you learn. And you can tell at the Olympics, the riders are the of. The oldest Olympians at the Olympics are horse riders, and it's because it takes over 30, 40, years to to build up the knowledge and the

expertise to be able to ride. So definitely, the the earlier you start, the easier is is to.

Elaine: And the more you can, almost, in a way, say, relax into it.

Callum: Yes, definitely.

Elaine: Rather than be tense, because, I think an animal sense.

Callum: Yes,

Elaine: Tension.

Callum: There's definitely, there is definitely a um language that isn't spoken between horse and rider, that they can feel what we feel without us having to talk. And it's something special with a horse, you have that the'm they'll know what you're thinking without you having to say it, as with another human, we have to, "oh, I'm a bit worried or a bit scared", or "I'm happy". And I think with a horse, they'll they, they know what we feel before sometimes even we know what we feel.

Elaine: They're very clever.

Callum: Yes, extremely

Elaine: More clever than many humans.

Callum: Yes, definitely.

Elaine: So are you open all the year round? And and what is the busiest time?

Callum: We we open all year round. Um, the competition season goes, so, we compete from at at Pontivy this weekend, competing. I'm taking eight horses to Pontivy competing. Um and then we run until middle of December. And then we, we, we still do lessons every week, but the the competition season is quieter down until beginning of March, and that will run all the way up to Nationals. That is the last ten days of July. And then I hack out all year round. If people, I mean, I've taken hacks um holiday, holiday people out on hacks in the week of Christmas. Um.

Elaine: So no holiday for you.

Callum: No, I, my holidays have been, er the first year I opened I went skiing as a as a new experience. I absolutely adored. Obviously, um the adrenaline of skiing met with the horse riding definitely suited me. Um, but no, I think it's, I'm very lucky. It's a job that I maybe don't make a lot of money because it's, um it's a lot of hard work and stuff, but I think I'm very lucky to do a job that isn't really work as I, um I enjoy what I do and um spending time with the horses when I'm on my own on an evening riding is.

Elaine: Fantastic.

Callum: Is, is a holiday. So I don't, I'm not. I've been open now three and a half years. In 3rd January, will be four years and not really wanted to go on holiday, no,

Elaine: Not even think about it, no, no.

Callum: No.

Elaine: No. I think, well if you can wake up in the morning and get up, know that you're going to really enjoy what you're doing all day long.

Callum: Yes, definitely.

Elaine: And then in the end, the money, sort of side of it slips, can slip away.

Callum: Yes.

Elaine: Because, I mean, there's certain things. Yes, you obviously you need, one needs money for basic.

Callum: Yes that's right.

Elaine: Then you can manage without so much I think to.

Callum: Yes and.

Elaine: Love what you're doing.

Callum: Yes, I think definitely the money is a um, a um, I wouldn't say side effect, but obviously, because obviously, like you say, we need it to live on. But it's definitely a a less important thing, as long as you're enjoying what you do. And I mean, the advantage I have, obviously here, is I can go and ride in the arena when it it's the weather's not so bad. But yesterday was a lovely day, and I went and rode through all the forest, because I have access to all of the forest that's owned by Les Forges des Salles, because um my Mum was an English guide there, and I went to school with their their son, so um I have access to all the forest, and spending two hours on a horse riding through the forest and just seeing a few wild boar in the in the two hours.

Elaine: Wow.

Callum: Is definitely er relaxing and definitely a holiday for me, so.

Elaine: That's absolutely brilliant. So how many, do you have any other people working with you? Doing...

Callum: No, I um. All the lessons and the hacks are done by me because I'm a qualified instructor. From six years ago. I went to Larmor Plage to pass my qualification to be a a qualified instructor. And then I have, obviously, my riders when they're here on Wednesdays and Saturdays, mainly, they do help a lot. And then Mum and Dad help a lot. Obviously, Dad a lot more with the paperwork, because

Elaine: He's a lawyer.

Callum: That's the less interesting part, that's the moment I, I probably need a holiday from is the paperwork. But er no, I would say majority is done by me. And then I have a lot of people, I'm very lucky to have a very good support network and friends around me that help me as much as they can. So.

Elaine: Good.

Callum: I'm very lucky to have um very good friends and family around me.

Elaine: Well it sounds it. I mean, you sound just so happy, so thrilled with it all. I think that's brilliant.

Callum: I think, I think we, we, I opened here four years ago, on, on a on a dream and on a hope of maybe creating something. Never realising. I always joked I was, oh, in six months time, if it doesn't work, I'll go and do something else. And obviously now realised that I turned around, I think in January of this year, there was going to be those full three full years. And I think Dad said to me, you you do realise that's now three years you've been saying every six months that if it doesn't work out, you'll change. Maybe you might need to actually stick to it now. And I think um, yes, I think time flies, people have.

Elaine: Time flies especially when you're having fun doesn't it.

Callum: Yes, definitely. And I think people have realised what we're trying to create here, and we might not have the biggest and and the nicest stables, but I think they they see the love and the the work that goes into it. I think the importance is the um, the horses we have and the care we give to them is, I think, more important than having a fancy indoor school.

Elaine: Absolutely. Well, I mean, I know it's my granddaughter who came for that hack that time. And she goes to some very um say posh stables, probably, outside of Paris. Obviously.

Callum: Yes definitely.

Elaine: And also more expensive. And she was absolutely bowled over, as I said, and totally in love with er

Callum: I do believe my, um if there's something I've always wanted to do is to be able to give my my er passion and my love to horses, and try and give that to everybody that comes, and even if it's only for an hour or sometimes it's just to come and see them. But I work with disabled child'.... children, to to some people that have um of the older age, um and my aim is to be able to give everybody that the same the love and the passion that I have for the horses and to see what they've done for me over the years and the the times when I've not been in a great place, and they've helped me out to be able to transmit that into to other people, I think is incredible, what they can do to us.

Elaine: That's wonderful, great. Great philosophy to have Callum. And thank you very much for your time. We'll give your contact details in the links.

Callum: Thank you very much.

Elaine: Thank you.