

The Royal Stables in Jordan

Looking back to the future with HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein and Peter Upton.

On the last day of the WAHO Conference in Jordan, the participants were able to visit the Royal Arabian Stud. The day before, the conference had listened to a fascinating lecture on the history of the stud, by the English painter and horse connoisseur Peter Upton. He told the story from the beginning going back to the Bedouin tribes and from there to the 21st century. The history of the horses being closely linked to the Hashemite tribe of Jordan, the direct descendants of the Prophet Mohamed.

The director is Princess Alia, the eldest daughter of the late King Hussein of Jordan. She who is known for her commitment to breeding and keeping horses in a species-appropriate manner.

In 1987, Princess Alia organised the first Arabian horse show in Jordan - an event that inspired other Arabian countries to also organise horse shows.

On this day too, the Princess, her staff and the WAHO team put on a wonderful horse show. Peter Upton commented on the presentation and with the Princess talked about the horses, their breeding, pedigree and the preservation of the hugely important Jordanian bloodlines. The subsequent visit to the royal stables was another highlight for all present.

Monika Savier



HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein and Mr. Peter Upton



The Royal Stables in Jordan



Presentation of the noble mares from the Royal Stables of Jordan



Photo: K. Scherling

PETER UPTON at the WAHO Conference in Jordan 2022

War Horse to Show Horse

History of Royal Horses of Jordan

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1937 I was born with a twin who was seven minutes older than me, and and it was the Coronation year of King George VI, which takes us back a long way.

As you know the GSB (General Stud Book) and Weatherbys say that all Thoroughbreds are given the birthday of the first of January, so at least I share something important with our Thoroughbred.

It was a life in the country and inevitably with horses, also the time of the Second World War - not the First, I'm not that old! - and petrol rationing and all sorts of things like that. So, we went everywhere by pony and cart and I had an uncle who played polo and, in those days, they played on Arabs.

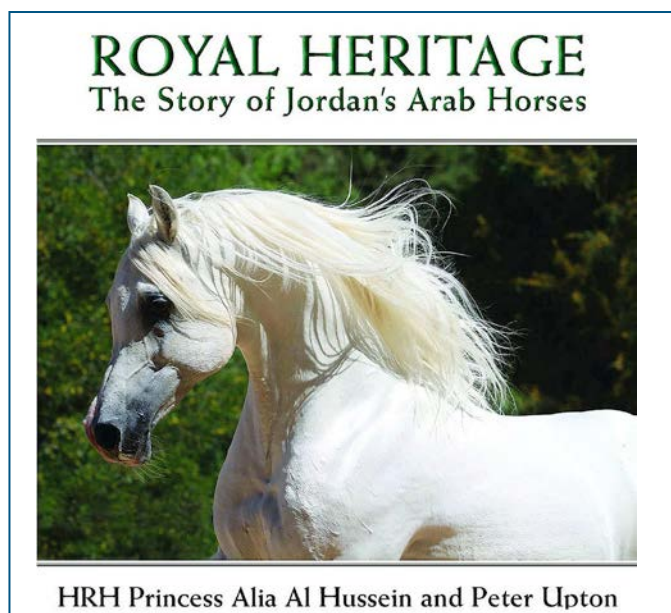
Much later in life I met the mazing Lady Anne Lytton. She was the granddaughter of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and she lived at Newbuildings, in fact I was there only two weeks ago. And she persuaded me that Arabs were the finest horses in the world. She also got me to join the British Arab Horse Society and pushed me to become a member of the committee and then a judge and then, heaven forbid, President! So, it's been ever since those Arab horses in many ways, along with my wife, have ruled my life. So that's something about me, but my talk is addressed to Princess Alia and ladies and gentlemen.

I've called my talk 'War Horse to Show Horse' and you may see why later!

In 1987, (being old I'm always looking backwards), the very first Arab horse show to be held in the Middle East took place in Jordan.



PETER UPTON studied art and art history, and after travelling for many years in the Middle East, he returned to England with his sketchbook to create fascinating watercolours and oil paintings. He is an international judge of Arabian horses and a recognised expert on their history and the Arabian desert culture. He has written several books on the subject. His most recent publication, co-authored with HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein, is entitled 'Royal Heritage: the story of Jordan's Arab Horses' (available from medinapublishing.com). Peter Upton's original paintings allow the participants of the international WAHO Conference in Jordan to also visually enjoy his interesting lecture.



Farha - the last Seglawieh of the Roala tribe. w/c

It was named, "The Arab Horse at Home". And home it is, for many of the horse-breeding tribes lived - and still live - in Jordan. To mention but a few: The Roala, one of the tribes of the Anazeh, is a powerful tribe, long renowned for its Arab horses. At least 183 known Arab horses, and probably as many unknown, were purchased between the 1830's and 1930's by such as Abbas Pasha I, Ali Pasha Sherif, Baron von Fechtig, Homer Davenport and the Blunts. Studs in Weil, Germany, Babolna, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Argentina, Spain and England were to visit the Roala in order to purchase Arab horses.

In 1854, Captain Nolan visited the Roala and Wuld Ali tribe, and purchased 72 horses, plus others from the towns, for the British Army for the Crimean War. Only a few of those horses

survived, as many didn't survive the battle in those days, some were Arabs, they were the tough ones and many of the British Army Officers were proud to bring their horse back to England and many are actually buried in the parks at some of the Stately homes.

Of the horses that the Roala sold certain ones stand out. Both Sueyd, a fleabitten grey Seglawi stallion, and Ghazieh, a grey mare also of the Seglawieh strain, were selected for Abbas Pasha I. Rodania, this is one of the very few old photographs of the old chestnut mare, was bought by Crabbet and proved to be, through two daughters, a major influence at the stud. I can remember Lady Anne Blunt noted: "I think I understand why she's sometimes a little bit aggressive because she has 13 spear wounds on her body". Colonel Bruderman bought Aghil-



Jilfeh Stam el Bulad of the Beni Sakhr tribe. w/c

Aga for Babolna from the Roala and many other mares and horses. Muson, a grey stallion, was one of many which Homer Davenport imported to America in 1906. The stallion, Tatar, was one of four Arabians who went to Argentina, all got from the Roala.

In 1977, my twin brother visited the Roala in order to purchase four camels for a long desert journey. At the Roala camp, he saw a superb grey mare, that's my painting of her, named Farha, said to be the last of the Roala Seglawiehs. Incidentally at that time the Emir of the tribe was Aurans Ibri Shalaan. Aurans being Laurence.

Another tribe, south of the Roala, is the Beni Sakhr who also provided many famous horses. Some, but not all, were of their breeding, others had been taken in Ghazus

or raids. An early export from the tribe was Dervish, a grey Kehilan, presented to the British King in 1773. Shagya, a grey of 1830 and of a Jilfan strain, went to Babolna where he established a breed named after him. A grey mare named Shakra IV was recorded as bred by Emir Beshir. When I questioned the Beni Sakhr about Emir Beshir, they explained to me that Shakra IV was indeed bred by 'Emir Bashir', but of the Druze. She had been taken in a raid along with two other horses including Faride, a bay Kehilet Ajuz and Emir Beszyr, a grey stallion. There are some who suggest, I'm not sure that I agree that Ibrahim, the sire of Skowronek, originally came from the Beni Sakhr.

In 1987, I was out in the desert where I saw a very fine fleabitten grey mare tethered. I



Al Hammama - a mare at the Royal Stud. oils

mentioned the mare to Princess Alia, for at that time I was assisting with the organization of the first "Arab Horse at Home". We both thought that it would be good to find out who owned her and to see whether we could have her for the Show. It took more than a week to discover who the mare was and to whom she belonged. One evening I was sitting in a tent having coffee with Sheykh Faisal al Faiz, head of the Beni Sakhr, looking at many horses brought before us, including an excellent Thoroughbred stallion, who had been purchased at the Newmarket Bloodstock sales. At last, in came two Arab mares, a chestnut Kehilet al Wa'ieh, quite nice, and the fleabitten grey I had been seeking. The old mare was exceptionally good and of the Jilfeh Stam el Buled strain, like Shagya. I asked the

Sheykh why he kept these two old mares, and his reply to me as: "I keep them in the memory of my forefathers".

Many other tribes are to be found in the deserts of Jordan: The Wuld Ali, the Howeitat, the Abu Tayah, Aduan, Da'aja and the Majali from Kerak.

In 1915, many of you will remember the Arab Revolt started, led by Sherif Hussein of Mecca. His sons, Emir Abdullah and Emir Feysul, led the Bedouin warriors northwards, driving back the Turkish army. With them was the legendary figure of "Lawrence of Arabia" who was instrumental in getting British support with weapons and finance for the Revolt. Incidentally Lawrence is still admired by many here for his part in the Revolt and today one can still meet Jordanian boys named "Aurans". Eventually,



Gazala - a grey mare of the Kehilet el Krush strain, only two generations from the foundation mare. oils

the Bedouin tribes led by Abdullah and Feysul, fighting all the way, reached Damascus, just before the British Army. With them the Arabs brought their camels and horses.

Many years ago, I was fortunate to meet this man, Sheykh Jweiber, who had been the Emir's Standard Bearer. When I met him, he was about 90 years old, quite a small dark man, immaculate in Arab robes. He spoke no English and did not read or write. Fortunately, I had with me a relative of Princess Alia's to translate for me. Jweiber's memory was truly amazing and he was able to tell me much about the Revolt and the horses that came with the Bedouin. He told me that when fourteen years old in 1915, he actually killed six Ottomans with his sword! He was also able to describe many

of the Arab horses and mares, for they used both in battle, he assured me. Jweibar could still remember the Keheileh mare, El Johara, who he was riding the day they besieged El Medina. Another he mentioned was Freiha, who, in the battle of Turba, carried two men to safety. Later, Freiha, was to become one of the original mares of The Royal Jordanian State Stud, which was founded by King Abdullah. It records in the Jordanian Stud Book Volume 1 that Freiha and Jamila were among the mares and horses which accompanied His Majesty King Abdullah north from the Hejaz. Five other mares were given to the King: two of which were gifts from the Sheykh of the Aduan tribe, Abd Al Majid, namely Faddah, a bay Managieh and Abaya of the Abaya Umm



Mehrez - the bloody-shouldered stallion.oils

Ejeres strain. A third mare named Selwa, a chestnut of the Hamdanieh Simrieh strain came from Abu Jamoud of the Da'aja tribe. The last two mares that makes the seven foundation mares of the Royal Stud, both bred by Dlewan Pasha Al Majali Sheikh of the Al Majali, were Al Hamama of the Kubeysha strain, and Naseeb of the Umm Argub strain. So, we have the seven foundation mares. Freiha was to establish the strongest line at the stud, and Bahadur and Baharein are two stallions of this family. Both of those are good examples of that strain. Jamila, the second one I have chosen her daughter Gazella, who was well into her 30's when I knew her and she was of the Keheilah Krushe strain and all but one of her children

were grey with a very dark pigmentation, beautiful, my favourite family group. The third group was Nasseb and she is beautifully represented by this famous stallion, called Bahar, who was in fact the sire of Baharein and the mare Huseima's family, such as Al Hamaama. Lovely head, lovely mare. Number four, Selwa's family is probably best remembered by a stupendous mare called Almasa. Then next of the Abayan line we have a mare who was called Chocolata who was by an imported Spanish stallion called Saameh. Her family included the daughter Lurbi II. Next, we come to Al Hamama not the Hamaama on Nasseb's line. Her family includes important mares such as Reema, Sabha and a mare



Kerak Castle where the Majali tribe is situated. w/c

called Petra, after a well-known place in the South.

Number 7 Faddah. Her great-grand-daughter was a mare called Aysha, now Aysha was of the Managhieh strain and I think it would be fair to say that Aysha was not the most beautiful mare in the world, but once you've seen that mare moving, you said to yourself, "She is a true Arab who covers the ground like a ballet dancer." Her family also include another great stallion called Thamin.

The stud also had six foundation stallions, some of whom came north from Mecca with Emir Abdullah. Others were horses he had bred. These include, Al Abjar was a grey of unknown strain, and Kuybeshan was another desert-bred stallion. There were possibly two

Kehilans, and one came North from the Hejaz. But it could be that there was only one Kehilan. The last stallion listed as a foundation stallion was the desert bred Mehrez, the bloody shouldered Mehrez, he was a superb horse and he has a superb story about him which you can read in a book. He was born in 1956 bred by Daoud Pasha Al Daghestani, it was down at Baghdad where King Feysul's grandson, who was the ruler at that time, and when the family was assassinated, that horse was saved by a groom and came to Jordan.

Later, King Abdullah added some new stallions, the first in 1940, a gift from Egypt. He was grey horse named El Fagr, but re named Selman. He was of the Dahman Shahwan strain, his sire Mansour and his dam Sabeh. He was very



Gazala, found pulling a plough. oils

important to the stud and produced some very good daughters. Some eight years later two more stallions arrived, a gift from Spain, one named Jabao, the other Almozabor. Again, their names were changed, Jabao became Saameh, a bay of the Mokladie strain, the other became Ushaahe, a grey by Ifni of the Duke of Veragua fame.

So, the Royal Jordanian State Stud flourished for thirty years until 1951 when tragedy struck. King Abdullah was assassinated in the Great Mosque in Jerusalem.

There was much to be done. Then, in 1952, Hussein, King Abdullah's 16-year-old grandson became King. He faced a tremendous task, for there were far more pressing matters to be dealt with and the stud was not a priority.

Fortunately, a man named Said Taha, a vet, a wonderful man, with the help of others worked to save the stud and its precious horses.

In 1962 King Hussein appointed Santiago Lopez to manage the Stud. During this difficult period, some horses were lost. They actually found Gazelle pulling a plough, being a special mare of the Krush strain they wanted her back and Santi had to pay £60 to get her back.

Under sound management the stud was again safe: all seemed well. But then on the 5th June 1967 the Six Day War began. The Stud which was then situated at Shuna, down by the river Jordan, was in the path of the advancing troops. So, Santi, his wife Ursula, Said Taha and the grooms including Radi and Attar, realising that they and the horses were in great



Mehrez - Rojal Jordanian Stud. w / c

danger had to get out, so riding the stallions, leading others and with the rest set loose, they got away just in time, climbing 3,000 feet up the mountains, and crossing deep wadis, they reached Amman after a 12-hour ordeal. The precious Arab horses were safe and new stud buildings and paddocks were built at Al-Hummar, north-west of Amman, where I believe we will go tomorrow.

One can't talk about the Stud without a word or two about Santiago Lopez who was called, "The Master of the King's Horse". He organised the first Stud Book which was published and The Royal Jordanian Stud was accepted by WAHO. It was felt that there was little need to widen the Stud's genetic pool, but ultimately in 1978 it was agreed to introduce two new stallions from England and Santi chose Akhbar and Magento. Akhbar in particular left many good offspring

before retiring to the Jordan Mounted Police. In 1980 Santi retired, only to return again in 1988. Princess Alia, known to us all as the "Princess of the Arab Horse" had from her earliest years been enamoured with horses. She spent much of her time at the Stud and was taught to ride by Ursula. Later, Princess Alia became Chair of the Stud's Council and then took over as Director, after the death of Santiago Lopez and she still remains as director.

In Jordan the influence of the State Stud soon encouraged others to found studs of their own, many with great success. Over the following years, many other horses and mares have been imported, and others exported. Horse Shows have been introduced in other Arab countries and the International Middle East Championships still take place in Jordan.



Attar riding - Baharein RJS. w / c

Marathons and Endurance Rides are very popular particularly in Wadi Rum.

I remember at one endurance event some time ago that one rider was an old Bedouin on a flea-bitten grey mare, with no shoes and they were up on the hard rock. He was placed, if I remember correctly, third. After receiving his prize, he climbed back on the mare and rode off. I asked one of the judges having just done a 26-mile marathon where he was off to and was told that he was riding back home and I thought well where was that and he said 'oh it's only about 2 hours away and he had ridden her there before the event began. So, I call that a true Bedouin on a true Bedouin horse. All state studs have the advantage of continuity, I think it is a worry in these days and so it is with the Royal Jordanian State Stud. It has always aimed to retain the lines of the original

foundation lines of the seven mares and the stallions but at the same time to improve the quality of the horses they breed.

Over the years I have visited Jordan, there are inevitably certain horses that hold a special place in my heart. I shall try not to mention them all. So, I would like to end with Mehrez, marvellous horse, a horse of the desert who I have always considered it an honour to have known. Yet for perfection, you can't get better than the mare Almasa. So, to end I chose Hlayyil Ramadan, who became a World Champion bred by Princess Alia and who sums up my talk, for his dam Haboub is only five generations from Freiha, the original war mare who took part in the 'Arab Revolt'. "A War Horse to a Show Horse".

Thank you.

Peter Upton