

THE IMPORTANCE OF CRABBET ARABIANS IN THE UK TODAY

By Caroline Sussex

Just for a moment imagine the Arabian in this country with the Crabbet blood excluded.

To put it more distinctly, eliminate the British National Champions, in hand and under saddle, Rusleem, Imad, PHA Silvern Risalm, OAS Panache, Aazari, Muzonomy to name but a few of the recent Champions. Eliminate also Aliha and her family who contain Indian Silver, the effervescent son of Indian Magic, in their pedigree

To add to this list, imagine the world without Carmargue (46.4%), and his son Camargue Too ((74.69%), Dhruv (56.69%), Monogramm (25%), Padrons Psyche (39.92%) and even Pilot who is Polish has 18.16% Crabbet blood.

Many people are now asking how much Crabbet blood is in their horse's pedigree. Why do they want to know? Partly because some of them want to compete in Crabbet classes and need to attain the required 75%. Others want to know out of interest and some to ensure they breed up to the 75% in the next generation.

What does Crabbet have to offer? Apart from a wonderful temperament, the Crabbet Arabian has strong sound limbs, good feet, good strong bodies and the movement that carries riders for long, long distances and good heart room from good depth in the chest. Real powerful movement comes from the back end together with a strong laid back shoulder. These essential conformation ingredients are fast disappearing. The head has become all important but it should be remembered that the Bedouin place more significance on the setting and size of the eye, large nostrils and the small muzzle rather than the dish, which is desirable but by no means essential. It is not the fault of those coming into Arabians today if they are confused.

Above all, the Crabbet Arabian has "natural" presence which any Arabian should do naturally, especially the stallions. That look at me presence and precocious style is there at birth and can be seen within a week or two. No amount of training can produce this. It is sad that this natural presence is hard to find in the Arabian today.

The other important reason for the success of Crabbet is that Lady Anne and Wilfrid Blunt were ruthless about their breeding policies. Not only did Lady Anne do such meticulous research into the pedigrees of all the horses they purchased so that anything that did not meet her criteria, however good it was, was eliminated from their prospective purchase list, but also the Blunts had a very strict breeding policy.

At Crabbet unless the produce of any mare however good individually, failed to produce a sire of the first class after three generations, the line was eliminated from the stud. The proof of this policy is surely that after 125 years since the first horses were imported to England, there are still mares of these bloodlines producing outstanding sires around the world. No other stud has had this influence.

Some people may say that someone else would have achieved what Crabbet did. Frankly, I doubt it. On a smaller scale perhaps but not the world domination and sales of horses to Russia, Poland, South Africa, Australia, America, Spain to name but a few. The importance of the Arabians bred at the Blunt's Sheykh Obeyd stud outside Cairo can also be found in some of the Egyptian lines today. Lady Wentworth took the Crabbet Stud to new heights in her magical era as owner but it is the Blunts who undertook the initial importations to whom we owe so much.

The performance world is surely where all our Arabians should be aiming. After all horses are for riding. High percentage Crabbet horses won nearly all the major titles in 2005 and did well in 2004 as well. The Supreme Ridden Champions at the National Show in 2004 and 2005 were PHA Silvern Risalm and Muzonomy respectively. Both have now moved on to show their outstanding qualities in other spheres, Risalm in dressage and Muzonomy has just started his endurance career. I know they will both succeed in their special areas.

Risalm was awarded the WAHO Trophy in 2005 for his outstanding special part in promoting the Arabian horse. Much has been written about this special stallion in various publications so I won't dwell on it here but as an Ambassador for the breed and at 99.5% Crabbet, this horse has certainly found his place in history.

Before him came AHS Premium Stallion Rusleem at 73.23% both National Champion in-hand and under saddle. His half sister, OAS Panache (approx. 73%) out of the spectacular moving Rose of Bediya (100%), was unbeaten at the National Show in the in hand ring winning the Foal Championship, and Junior Female Champion as a two and three year old. She missed competing as a yearling because of the cancellation of the show due to Foot and Mouth. Panache has since moved into the ridden arena and as a novice has won all there was to win last year even taking the Reserve Ridden title at the National Show. This wonderful mare will reign supreme in ridden very shortly I am sure.

We must also mention Imad, another AHS Premium Stallion, who did the magic double by winning the Supreme Championship at Malvern and in the same year took the Ridden Horse of the Year at the Horse of the Year Show. Muzonomy of course did this again in 2005 and many congratulations go to those two horses. Imad continues to be a very popular sire at the age of 21.

There are many outstanding mares of Crabbet breeding but recently we sadly lost Silvern Dream. Any horse with "Silvern" in the name is likely to come from this outstanding mare and proof of this must be that so far she already had two descendants receiving the WAHO trophy for their country. Her descendants' performance ability fills a large article so there is no space here but her legacy will continue in every sphere. Dancing Queen also recently died, as did Rose of Bediya. These two mares have also left very important descendants.

In the world of endurance, Vlacq Khamul ridden by Tricia Hirst and bred by Sue Pyke continues to do exceptionally well at the top of endurance recently coming 2nd in France at the Huelgoet's 120 K CEI race out of a start of 79 horses. The event was won by a local rider. In 2005 at the Golden Horseshoe, Lumahla Gold claimed a gold award and the Golden Horseshoe's Premier award. This year Dahlih (98.1%) is on the short list for the World Equestrian Games in August. We hope that Dahlih who successfully completed the Golden Horseshoe ride and all the other horses on this list stay sound so that Great Britain can take a strong team. Susan Hawes shows true dedication to her sport as she works full time in London and started the fitness training of Dahlih in those cold winter months by getting up at 4.30 in the morning when most of us were fast asleep. Other high percentage Crabbet top endurance performers are Lutandorvici, Mellow Jazz, Khairho, and Bitterwell Spirit who is having a wonderful start to the 2006 season taking 2nd place in the 160K Berkshire Downs ride to name some of them. Mention must be made of Yamavar, Yakarin and Yogurt all bred by Rohaise Thomas-Everard at her famous Broford Farm stud in Devon. Rohaise bred many champions in the past and has now switched to breeding top endurance horses.

100% Crabbet horses who have competed at a high level and won include: Al Mesdam (ridden showing), Rosaliah Gold (ridden showing), Iconi (ridden showing), Indian Idyll (racing), Silvern Prince (ridden showing), Sa'ira (ridden showing), Silvern Idyll (ridden showing and Sire produce), Silva Sharde (ridden showing), Shiffalia (in hand, racing and endurance), The Silver Gambler (racing and

endurance), Tigre (endurance), Dancing Queen (Princess Muna), Crystal Eyas (endurance) to name some of them and apologies to any I have missed.

So what about the Crabbet Arabian today? You can see that they combine well with other bloodlines and the need to put back some bone and soundness in limbs is essential if the Arabian is not to be scorned at by the general riding public. The shoulder in many of our horses is becoming very straight and something must be done to correct this. Movement too is something that I am afraid is not true in many of the modern horses. The horse must move from the top of the shoulder and throw the front foot well ahead of the shoulder. The back legs must push forward with the hocks engaging well under the horse and tracking up, not dragging along following the front end. All too often horses run so fast that the back legs can be seen trailing and this is not right. When purchasing a race horse, people watch the walk and I know one very famous Arabian judge, still judging today said if the horse can walk well, it can trot and canter.

There is room for all breeders, those breeding 100% Crabbet horses so that those with lower percentages can upgrade their Crabbet blood, those who breed Old English, generally at least 85% Crabbet and the breeders who have decided that GSB line bred horses is the way to go – these horses generally have around 95% Crabbet blood and most 100% Crabbets are also 100% GSB. Generally people realise that some Crabbet blood in their pedigree is a useful ingredient but there is still some variation on what a Crabbet horse is. The Crabbet Organisation has decided to qualify these horses as follows: Over 75% Crabbet is “predominantly Crabbet”, then the categories of 100% GSB, Old English and Crabbet itself.

It is the responsibility of riders to know what the breeding of their horses is, and where the strengths come from. Without the support of the riders purchasing horses from the breeders, the breeders would go under. We need each other and most of all we need to recognise the qualities of all Arabians, including the wonderful heritage of the CRABBET ARABIAN HORSE. For more information on the Crabbet Arabian, contact the Crabbet Organisation or check out the website on www.crabbet.org.uk.

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