

REPORTS

'Exotic Horses' Evening

An evening on 'Exotic Horses' was held at Moreton Morrell, Warwickshire College, on Friday 17 April, postponed from February because of the snow. An audience of about forty was treated to histories and information on the Palomino, Akhal-Teke and Caspian.

David Webb, Palomino breeder and organiser of the event, started us off by throwing in some thought provoking questions such as 'what do we want a horse to do' – very relevant to the other two breeds. A short break, while we consumed copious amounts of tea and cake, and bought raffle tickets, was followed by Gill Suttle regaling us with the colourful history of the Akhal-Teke, accompanied by many slides and maps. Surely few breeds can quote 'slave raiding' as their raison d'être! Maria Marquise Baverstock brought us back down to earth with the complications of registering Akhal Tekes with the mother stud book in Russia.

The raffle was then drawn – donors of prizes had been numerous and generous, items ranged from a numnah donated by 'Shires', a hand made dog lead from Mongolia, knitted slippers from Turkmenistan and many alcoholic bottles. Finally Ruth Staines spoke on 'The origins of the Caspian Horse', with emphasis on the life and work of Louise Firouz. Comments ranged from 'I shall look at Caspians in a completely different light now' to '(Louise) really shines out'. It is to be hoped that interest in all these horses has now spread a little further.

Sport Arabian – Trakehner Performance Event, 20 June 2009

This annual event was held at the Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell, with its extensive facilities, to show the abilities of Arabs, Trakehners, and this year Akhal-Tekes, (as relatives of these horses) as sport horses. The Akhal-Teke was represented by Gill Suttle's mare Ainur, ridden by Roz Shepherd, and gelding Tedzhen ridden by Gill, in the Show Jumping and Preliminary Dressage Tests. Ainur gained a rosette for her test. And by Beth Dee's two year old half-bred Akhal-Teke palomino gelding, Midoak Magic Icon, bred by David Webb, who came second in an in hand class for youngstock. There was a good representation of Arabs and Trakehners, the cream of which

were shown at a ridden stallion parade in the middle of the day.



Beth Dee with Midoak Magic Icon



Akhal-Teke Breed Show, 18 July 2009

Thankfully the weather was favourable for the show held at The Three Counties Showground at Malvern. We had been invited to take a ring for the show by the British Palomino Society, who were holding their show at the same time. A select group of pure and part bred Akhal-Tekes competed in six classes, in-hand and ridden. The judge, Caroline Baldock, has seen these horses in their native

In-hand winner, 4 & over: Darya Hannigan's Dominik

Turkmenistan, and, as a jockey, has raced Thoroughbreds, their descendants. She gave the competitors their moneysworth by discussing each horse with the handler/rider, and after she had made her decisions, she explained how she had arrived at them to the spectators: everyone felt involved!

A big thank you to our sponsors: Chaseview Veterinary Clinic and Giffords.

Vale of Evesham Autumn Show, September 13

Team Teke was at this popular show held at Moyfield Riding School, South Littleton, Worcestershire. After the show championships, Gill Suttle of Kyzyl Akhal-Tekes riding her gelding Tedzhen, and Lizzie Nicholl, leading Gill's colt Djargalan, made an appearance in the show ring, with David Webb commentating. Spectators were able to obtain leaflets on the Akhal Teke breed from the Team Teke stand, which presented information, photos of Akhal Tekes past and present, and Turkoman clothing and tack.

Thank you to Ruth Staines for providing these reports



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A COMPETITOR'S YEAR

Jacquie Bradbury takes us through the trials, tribulations and ultimate triumphs of a season in British Eventing

In 2009 Aschir and I had our first full season of affiliated eventing. The initial foray in 2008 had been a complete disaster with Aschir, who previously never stopped, completely refusing to jump cross country and being less than enthusiastic over coloured fences. Obviously something was very wrong, and if we were to continue in competition I had to get to the bottom of it. After exhaustive consultation with a number of professionals from various disciplines we narrowed the problem down to a poorly fitting saddle, which meant having to get a new one. I decided to give Sankey a try – a Master Saddler based in Scotland, who does everything by hand, himself.

January 2009.

The New year came and Aschir and I started 2009 still feeling the effects of injuries sustained at the end of 2008, so training was a bit restricted. Consequently I got a bit of a ticking off from our trainer for not making enough progress. This was a bit of a low point, but probably gave me a bit of a boot in the pants to try harder. It was also time for annual tet and flu shots so, while the vet was there I asked her to take a look at a warty thing on Aschir's neck, which popped out while she was examining it. So she excised a small area around it and stitched up.

February.

When the saddle arrived in February the change in Aschir was immediate and nothing short of dramatic. Suddenly he regained his enthusiasm for cross country and we were back on track for the coming season, although we still had to regain his confidence. The lessons that we are taking helped us both in this regard and got Aschir moving forward and ready to tackle anything and everything.

March.

Cross country schooling at Pauntley in conditions of howling wind and horizontal sleet and hail. Aschir didn't seem to notice and really enjoyed himself. I decided to do a couple of unaffiliated competitions there as preparation for the serious British Eventing (BE) ones. Gill very kindly came to crew for me at two comps at Pauntley. Aschir stormed round the course, although his new found confidence ran out at a couple of fences he hadn't seen before.

April: Sapey (1) BE One Day Event

A lovely April Day and we arrived at the venue feeling very nervous. I knew that Aschir could jump the course if he wanted as we had schooled there over the winter. Unfortunately this was one of the courses we had had problems with in 2008 and the question was, would he have the confidence to go round in spite of his memories of discomfort.

The dressage was terrible. The boy was not concentrating and I was very tense. Anyway, we got through it, although with a very poor score. The showjumping course wasn't large, but the ground was quite boggy and the horses can see the cross country, which some find distracting. Anyway Aschir went into the arena, and it was obvious he meant business, jumping a clear round with supreme confidence.

On to the XC. As the Starter said 'go' Aschir rocketed out of the gate and whizzed over the first two fences and we were on our way. We did have a couple of stops, but we finished, and jumping the last and galloping over the finishing line was the best feeling in the world. I think, of the people who finished, we were probably last in the section, but, to me that didn't matter – I now knew that Aschir could do it.

June:

It was full steam ahead for our two events this month, but some scar tissue on Aschir's neck was now looking sore, so the vet had to come out. The result was that poor Aschir had to have a huge chunk of skin removed from his neck, just where the rein would touch. The wound had to be restitched three times and he had to have three or four lots of antibiotics. So we had to withdraw from both June events and the next planned outing to Cheltenham looked extremely dodgy too.

July: Cheltenham BE One Day Event.

I walked the course on the Monday evening and felt it was OK until I came to the fence which had proved our downfall in 2008. It was still there, and just as big and menacing as ever: a big log with a 3'8" brush behind. Anyway, I'd paid the money so I'd just have to grit my teeth and get on with it – at least the going was good. But 24 hours later the venue, which had been glorious parkland, had turned into a complete bog with wagons sinking up to their axles. With a similar, sinking feeling I made my way to the dressage area. It was awful. I hadn't put



studs in for the dressage; consequently we slid round the arena and came away with a score 42 (generous in the circumstances). The SJ was more like bog snorkelling, but we only dropped one fence - OK considering some competitors racked up huge cricket scores.

We got kitted up and went to the XC start. It was chucking it down and nobody else was braving the elements. Aschir set off like an express train although it was raining so hard that I couldn't see where I was going - I had to just point the horse in the direction I thought the next fence was. He was jumping with great confidence until the bogey fence at which point I think he remembered last year, looked at the churned up mud in front and said 'No way'. I didn't blame him either and I was probably not positive enough in my riding. So, another walk of shame back to the trailer.

I was beginning to question whether to keep going.

August: Sapey 2 BE One Day Event.

Walked the course and knew there was nothing which should faze Aschir.

He was very calm and collected in the warm up for the dressage. Oh dear. Mr Excitable went into the arena and gave a high octane performance, ending with refusing to stand still for the salute and finishing dripping with sweat. Most unlike him; perhaps I'd put too much gas in the tank. We returned to the trailer with Aschir, annoyingly, completely relaxed again. On to the SJ where we had another high octane performance, but jumped clear. This was looking more promising.

Aschir erupted from the start gate on the cross country, and took charge. He went round the course without any hesitation, deviation or repetition and crossed the finish with his tail in the air, clear and within time allowed, in fact the fastest round of the day, finishing a creditable 22nd.



Munchie had found his Mojo, and, oh boy, wasn't he pleased with himself. So we were looking forward to the next outing at Berrington Hall.

Berrington Hall BE One Day Event... but once again the weather intervened and the event was cancelled.

September. Cleobury Mortimer BE One Day Event.

We prepared by going to Leyland Court schooling course near Bristol, a long journey, but worth it to do some different fences – all great experience.

I walked the Cleobury course on Friday evening and everything was fine until fence 11: a very large log in a copse,

with a drop on landing. This wasn't good, so I took Aschir to Hilltop schooling course and put him over anything large and log like, and everything with a drop.

On the day but we did a better, slightly more relaxed dressage and a very fast, but clear SJ. I was feeling physically sick before the XC; after all, getting round Sapey, a course the boy is familiar with, was one thing, but doing the same thing somewhere strange might be completely different. I should have had more confidence. He went round the course like a true professional and did another double clear. This time we just missed out on a placing by 0.7 of a point – a real breakthrough moment.

West Wilts BE One Day Event.

After a very long journey we arrived at the beautiful West Wilts Equestrian Centre on a beautiful warm, sunny day. The XC course was very fair, but twisty, not a big, galloping course.

Aschir was completely chilled in the dressage warm up, lovely and soft and round, quite unlike the previous tense affairs. He performed his best test, but I went wrong in the test and had to restart, losing quite a few points, but still scored 34.1.

The SJ was Aschir's, now usual, electric performance and clear again, so, on to the XC. In spite of pulling off a shoe we went round for another confident clear, but I took the scenic route to one of the fences and we incurred time penalties. I thought that would have put paid to any chance of a rosette, so I was not prepared for the announcer saying that we had come 5th – our first affiliated competition rosette. What a result and wasn't he pleased with himself.

October. Mount Ballan BE One Day Event.

This was the biggy. An Eric Winter (Blenheim International) designed course, that had given me the heebie-geebs last year and which had resulted in our most humiliating moment – elimination at the first fence – oops. This year, with 3 double clears under our belt, I should have had more confidence, and I kept telling myself that everything would look so much better with our greater experience. I walked the course on the Friday and, oh dear, oh my: everything up to maximum height and, according to my tape measure, over height. Some fences shared with the grade above, and most were skinny fences in awkward places requiring control, accuracy and boldness. Also my worst nightmare came true with the inclusion of a replica of our Nemesis fence from Cheltenham, except as a skinny going up hill. Cripes, there was no way we were going to get round this time... why was I even bothering?