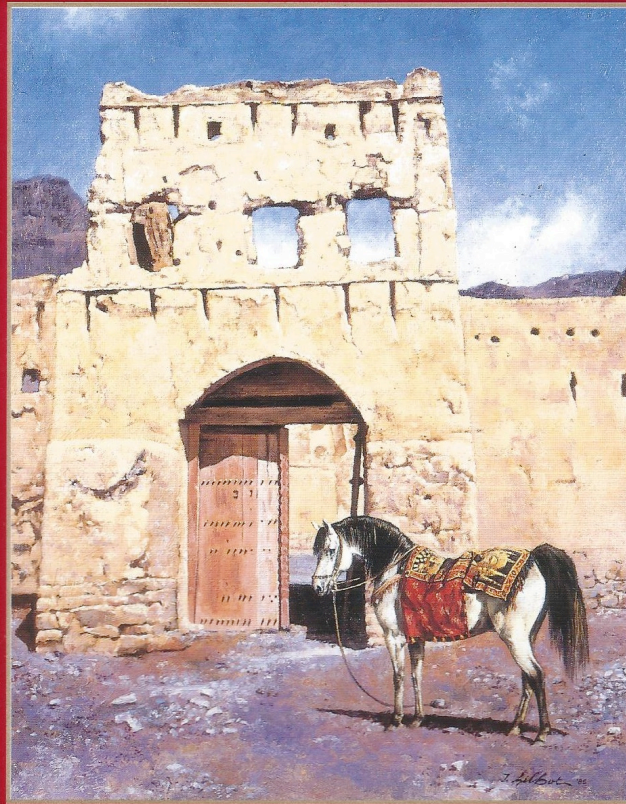


THE
ARAB HORSE
SOCIETY NEWS



Millennium Issue

SUMMER 2000

No. 94

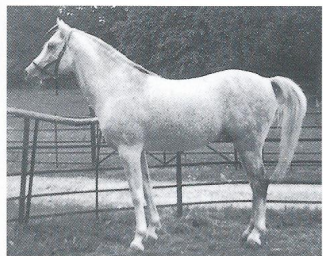
The early days of the Biddesden Stud

Last year members were very sad to learn of the death of Elisabeth Lady Moyne, popular co-founder of the old established Biddesden Stud. In her memory Patricia Lindsay takes a look at the history of the stud and the impact made by Lady Moyne.

WHILE in 1999, in Devon, we were boasting about 50 years of Arab breeding, the 60th anniversary of Britain's second oldest stud passed without a mention. Biddesden has always been modest about its birthdays, but sadly 1999 saw the death of its much-loved co-founder Elisabeth Lady Moyne.

She was 86, but still had all her enthusiasm and love of children, horses and her lovely garden. One of my favourite memories is of a group visit to Biddesden where Finn was commenting on the horses and their pedigrees, while Lady Moyne led them out. "Trot her again mother, faster!" Finn was saying.

The story goes that the stud was founded when Lord and Lady Moyne fell for the



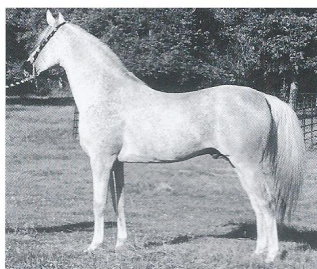
Biddesden's foundation stallion Saladin II

Naseem son Raftan when going to lunch with his owner. They visited Crabbet Stud and bought two mares. One, Dafinetta (Naziri/Dafina), is the ancestress of their "D" line, including the present senior stallion, Dhruv. The second, Starilla (Raseem/Star of the Hills), died young, but not before she had produced a colt by Naziri, Saladin II, who became Biddesden's very important foundation stallion and had a unifying influence on the young stud.

Starilla was replaced by a third Crabbet mare, Crystal Grey (Faris/Silver Crystal), who, through the famed Silver Fire line, founded the "C" family at Biddesden.

From the start, the horses were part of the Guinness family. With nine children, two stepsons, cousins, grandchildren and friends, the house was always full of youngsters who enjoyed the versatility of the Arabians. Some went to university with the boys and played polo, others were driven in harness. It is also said that some of the favourites were ridden into the front hall!

Important decisions about the horses were made by a family conclave. Margaret Evans recalls taking her parents to Biddesden to organise an exchange of



Darzee by Saladin II out of Doonyah

mares. Final arrangements were made during a family birthday party while wearing paper hats!

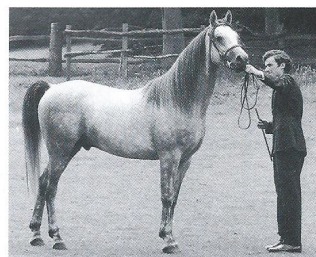
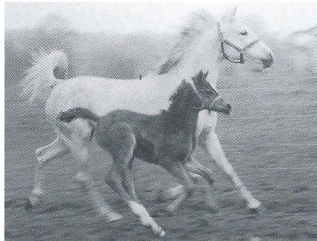
It was understood that when the Guinness family went out hunting they should ride their own produce. As the boys grew taller this role was sometimes filled by Anglo-Arabs from an original Thoroughbred mare.

The stud was established on the Wiltshire/Hampshire border as part of a large arable and dairy farm. Because of the light chalky soil and wealth of shelter belt trees, mainly beeches, the mares and youngstock spend most of the year at pasture, behaving as a natural herd, while stables are used for stallions, riding and show horses.

While always standing their own stallions, the Guinness's have always been completely open minded about using a variety of outside stallions, both established stars and those of less fashionable pedigrees, which it was felt would contribute something.

After Saladin II, and his really charming flea bitten grey son Darzee, the bay Rissalix horse, Rimini, was acquired, while they were also happy to take advantage of some newly imported lines. The Polish Banat was successfully used and the Argos son Magic Argosy. During the short stay in this coun-

Polish mare Biruta and Berenice, by Nari, in 1966



Barkos by Zebadi out of Biruta

try of the Egyptian/Spanish super sire El Shaklan, the home-bred Despina was sent to him and produced Dhruv.

A fourth female line was added in 1962, with the importation of the grey Polish mare Biruta (Trypolis/Bika), who proved a very prolific and successful broodmare and established the Biddesden "B" family. This family was responsible for another of their home-bred stallions, Barkos (Zebadi/Baraka), ridden by Finn in the Marathon. Biruta herself was dam of Burkan, by Saladin, whom we bought as a yearling, sire among many good horses of White Lightning. His son Kantaka returned to Biddesden, thus completing the cycle.

All the Biddesden Arabs and Anglo-Arabs have to be versatile performers, as well as show horses. They have taken part in racing, marathon, hunter trials and events and given the Arab a good name as all-round family pleasure horses. Much of the schooling and competing, as well as the showing, has been shared with Jo Richardson, who has been the cheerful and competent stud groom for over 15 years.

Fun and hospitality has always characterised this old established stud. We remember with gratitude organising the Marathon on Salisbury Plain, with Biddesden as our base. At the end of a hectic and exhausting day, Lord Moyne suggested that we stay over that night. "Oh no!", we said, "We think we had better clear up the course and go off home." He looked at us pityingly. "It's duck for dinner", he said. We stayed!



Above: Lord and Lady Moyne with Devyani (Barkos/Delphine) an example of one of Biddesden's many versatile Arabs

Below: Brothers the Hons Erskine and Finn Guinness, centre, with their sister Mirabel and her husband Tom Helme - picture by Trevor Meeks courtesy of Horse & Hound

