

## Unsung Heroes

Just a brief word of appreciation and heartfelt thanks to all those stalwart souls who steward, man gates, crossings, trail mark, vet write etc so that the majority can enjoy this fantastic sport. When the weather is kind we all feel privileged to be able to enjoy the countryside doing what we do, but when the weather is foul, the riders have the really cushy role, and our helpers on the ground really do deserve medals! So a huge thank you to all.

## Consider this Opportunity

These days, endurance riders are appreciating more and more the value of correct flat work in developing the physique of their horses. Stronger topline means better engagement of the hindlimbs and a more efficient way of going that will be easier and more comfortable for both horse and rider. All "dressage" means, after all, is "straightening", and who has ever seen a weak looking dressage horse?

Dressage is classed by veterinarians as an endurance sport in that muscle groups are trained and developed to work for extended periods of time in aerobic conditions. Now doesn't that sound familiar?

I admit to being very new to endurance riding and training, having dabbled in most other disciplines over the years, but circumstances and familiarity have dictated that most of my training has been done in the sand school, with a couple of pipe openers (for my horses) alongside local racehorses (hand cantering!).

Now many of you will say "boring stuff, going round in circles all day long!", and there was I time when I would have agreed, too! But when I first was exposed to the Lusitano breed, I had the good fortune to have some insight into how these bullfighting horses start their training, and became hooked. One Portuguese trainer that I know will work a horse in hand for 6 months before he gets on its back. When he does, within hours, the freshly backed horse will perform a little shoulder in, a couple of strides of leg yield, or a baby half pass because he has already been taught how from the ground, and most importantly has developed the muscular strength to perform the movements. Only a horse that is developed equally on both sides is capable of going truly straight, and thus putting the minimum of strain and stress on his joints, so the benefit of teaching these lateral movements is really huge, especially in a sport such as ours where soundness and a level action is so critical to success. Not half useful for gate opening too!

I recently met a delightful horsewoman of the "classical persuasion" called Rosalind Harper-Lewis. Ros (originally from Hertfordshire) lived and worked in Portugal as a young woman in the Army

Cavalry School as an instructor. She was "spotted" there by the Maestre, himself, Nuno Oliveira, and he invited her to work with him, which she did until his death, when she moved to France and started her own riding centre and stud. She has trained eventers, show jumpers, pure dressage horses and endurance horses in France.

I have been lucky enough to have had some lessons with her on her last visit to the UK, and she was absolutely amazing! On the strength of that experience I have arranged for Ros to come over to South Wales towards the end of next month and be available for some clinics. She teaches all levels and on all types of horses, and especially loves helping young riders.

Ros will be available on Wed 16th and Thurs 17th November, at Jarreta Stud, near Usk (fantastic covered school courtesy of Jo Jarret). She likes to work with horses and riders on a "split shift" introducing ideas in the morning and then consolidation in the afternoon. She has the most empathetic approach to horses and will take all the time you need to help achieve your goals. Cost is 40 Euros/hour (if you haven't got any leftover holiday currency, sterling will do!) plus £5.00 for the school. Treat yourself and your horse!

It is individual tuition, very focused one-to-one! I think that the exchange rate is 1 euro = 85p at the moment so that would be more or less £35.00 per hour plus £5.00 for the school. All spectators are very welcome, the viewing gallery is not huge, but corners are always good! Ros has just sent me a very detailed CV (attached) which makes interesting reading. To get best value and maximum benefit especially for the horse, at least two separate sessions are recommended.

More details and all booking with me, Jenny Myerscough on 07710 171004

## Info on

### ROSALIND HARPER-LEWIS

I've been associated with horses since childhood with a few gaps when at College and the first years in Portugal. Until 1964 lived in UK - as much time as possible spent riding or caring for horses (mostly in holidays).

1964 - took up a teaching post in Portugal and became associated with a Riding School run by Mary Mc Ginley ( Now and for past 30yrs a Dressage Judge in Devon ). With Mary I finally began to work on Dressage which had been an ambition for several years.

1972 - I started a Riding Centre near Sintra - we had an International clientele which included a riding and Dressage group of mostly diplomats wives some of whom went on to compete. We had a brilliant group of Young riders most of whom competed successfully in Dressage, Jumping and Eventing . We won the Junior Championships several times and one year, and had 1st, 2nd, 3rd and

5th in these Championships. Several of these young students went on to teach riding (USA, Brazil, Portugal and Spain)

During this time I was able to break -in and train several young horses for clients and for myself. One of my own horses was bought as an unbroken 4 yr old - a beautiful Anglo / Luso / Arab, "Just a Whim", who I took up to Advanced and lent to an Army Officer who had lost his horse and needed to defend his title in National Championship - he rode the horse just 3 times and then successfully regained his title. Then I was asked to allow him to borrow the horse to represent Portugal in a competition in France. I was happy to do this as I was totally occupied with my students and preparing a group of 4yr olds for the 4yr old Criterion - it was traditional to break-in at 4yrs and then the Criterion took place in late October . The horses were required to show good quality basic Dressage and Jumping ability as well as showing conformation and paces.

1980 - I applied to join the Instructors Course for Military Officers at The Mafra School. They accepted a maximum of 8 students and of these, 2 civilians were admitted. A test was undertaken and I was accepted - a great privilege as I was the first and I believe still the only woman to do this course and the 2nd foreigner. The first was Noel Jackson who was the British Military Attaché in Lisbon. I received my qualification in 1981 after 10 months of training in Dressage, Showjumping and Eventing . The dressage training involved bringing on a just backed youngster up to performing the then International 3-day event dressage test - I was lucky enough to have a lovely French bred T.B. which won every competition I entered with him. In addition we rode 5 hours / week advanced horses up to Prix St Georges level, these were the horses used for the Military presentation for the Mafra School on ceremonial occasions.

During this course we went on a study visit to Maestre Nuno Oliveira - I realised that this is where and with whom I would love to study but could see no way that this could come about ! He was definitely not a Military rider!

1981 - Here , Luck steps in ! I was asked to plait and prepare some horses for a visit of Mr Oliveira and his students to the Mafra school. I had finished my course by then but was invited to meet the group - During this visit Mr Oliveira approached me and asked when I was going to study with him. I spent the summer riding with his students and then stayed on and worked some of the school horses whilst he was travelling and teaching away from home.

In 1982 he asked me to find him some English working pupils and take over the management of the stables, carrying on the work of young horses, keeping up the work of school horses, and preparing horses for export.

This was an extremely rewarding period during which I was able to enrich my understanding of dressage training and teaching methods.

1986 - This year due to a spell of bad health I had been absent for a short while in UK and on returning to Portugal began a livery yard at my own home . Here I received in training mostly Lusitanos from the Stud Farm of Eng. Francisco Lobo de Vasconcellos, and I had a few students who learned on my trained horses as well as learning about break-in and presentation.

1992 - At my husband's retirement , we moved to France where we had a small farm and I bred Pure Lusitanos as well as carrying out break-in and training of horses from varying breeds and re-schooling of a few difficult horses .

We received students each year that helped in basic work of young horses and preparing them for sale and export of several to the USA. This programme was in conjunction with Bettina Drummond, a celebrated pupil of Mr Oliveira, who sent several horses to me for preparation for her clients prior to export.

2007 - I had to cut back on the breeding programme due to ill health of my husband . I continued some teaching and training but also had to cut back on liveries.

2009 - I took on several teaching engagements in the UK but this also had to end when my husband was hospitalised in 2010.

2011 - Since the loss of my husband early this year , I have returned to teaching in France and the UK and have happily been invited to become trainer to a local Riding Club where I teach Dressage and coach the Junior Event team , as well as training the 2 professional riders, and bringing on new young horses.

--

Rosalie Lewis

Le Chézeau

87300 Blanzac

France