

Babolna

Babolna State stud Today

Noon in Babolna. The august heat lies heavy on people and horses. The show classes for purebred Arabians are held as usual, as the schedule for this international B show lists several more demonstrations and classes for traditional Arabians and Shagya Arabians. A lot of horses have enrolled for the event in the Hungarian state stud of Babolna and wait for their turn in the riding arena which is surrounded by well-filled stands. The show features two different horse breeds which are judged separately:

- Shagya Arabians, a breed tracing back to the stallion Shagya d.b. who was imported to Hungary from the Orient around 1800 and became the foundation sire of the best Arabian lines then known



in the Hungarian-Austrian monarchy. He covered Hungarian warmblood mares, transmitting his beauty and noblesse, his toughness and his stamina - an immeasurable benefit in itself at the times of cavalry horses.

The Shagya offspring with their elegance and robustness were molded into a Hungarian Arabian breed of its own and got their own stud book. Up to today,

Shagyas are enormously popular in Hungary - not only for military use as it was the main purpose in the past, but particularly as riding and carriage horses. The majority of the Babolna stud premises stable the most noble representatives of this warmblood breed with their oriental touch. No wonder, then, that the show should be open for 5th the Shagya Arabians as well.

- Purebred Arabians, with the show classes not only open for horses home-bred in history-rich Babolna, but also for all horses registered in WAHO-acknowledged stud books, according to the rules of an international B show.

Contrary to the situation in many Western European Countries, horses are by no means a luxury in Hungary.

It's not surprising, therefore, that private breeders keep a lot more Shagyas than Purebreds. They still use their horses for farming and transport purposes, as well as showing them successfully in sports.

The particularly selected elite Purebred Arabians, partly in show quality even according to today's standards, are hardly to be found with the private breeders but mainly with the state stud in Babolna. Even here, however, the straight Egyptian stock of dam lines has only just survived recent history.

160 horses participated in the show. Almost 100 of them belong to the Shagya Arabians. The rest consists of pure-breds and 75% of them came from the Babolna Stud. The influence of these origins on the

overall show proceedings were immediately apparent.

Most horses had never heard of training for showing and never came into contact with "beauty farm concepts".

Why should they? Natural beauty was the word of the day. It was just the international judges who suffered from some confusion when being faced with the decision to whom to give the higher score: the horses brought in from abroad with their perfect stand-ups and styling, or to the wild young brats with their natural charm?

Strolling through the barns spread widely on the vast stud premises, one can see the following: the stud's home-bred horses were brought in from the pastures by trailer just a day before their presentation, cleaned with water from the hose, and then brought to the edge of the show arena by stud employees.

There, two professional handlers were waiting, Robert Schlereth and Volker Wettengel who had been invited from Germany just for that purpose.

In their hands they had small slips of paper indicating the numbers of their Shagyas and Purebreds, then they would tie on their starting numbers, put a show halter on their "wild horse", and try to get him in front of the group of judges waiting in the ring - somehow.

The older horses took it all in composed stride.

No "nervous sense", they would just finish their rounds in an overall confident and relaxed behaviour, some of the horses displaying brilliant trotting movements in a natural way, others more or less dragged along and somewhat amazed. Again and again, the handlers could succeed in conjuring up some unknown qualities in their young horses.

One of them was Hamad B (El Nabila B x 227 Hafiza



B). He was standing in the group of two-yearolds with a show halter hanging down to his nostrils as it was much too big for him.

The bit clanged against his teeth and it was more than obvious that this baby had never felt a bit in his mouth in his life.

He chewed quite desperately, trying to spit the ironmongery out and showing the white of his eyes.

Robert Schlereth approached and took horse and starting number away from the Hungarian apprentice holding both, saying “I will take this one, he can win here”.

Everybody laughed, but when the little stallion entered the ring for the first time in his life, he was already floating. Instead of being depressed from the humiliation of halter and bit, he decided to show off for what he was worth.

His tail carried proudly, he trotted past the judges



Ibn Galal I (Ibn Ghatal x Hanan), leading sire of Babolna in the 1980ies.

with a beautiful swan’s neck nobody had noticed on him before, and he even produced quite an acceptable stand-up.

This made him class winner. In the Championships, the judges had no other choice than to reward him with the reserve title, unable to let pass anyone of the international guest horses perfectly trained and styled for the show.

It would have meant turning the criteria for shows and their whole field of profession upside down if they had gone so far as to give the title of Junior Champion to that wild young natural.

There are the things which make Babolna stand out again and again, as many experts have to note.

There are existing unsuspected quality reserves.

Despite all the croaking of “Babolna has sold everything which was of any value”, there will be always foals coming in from those unbelievably



Stallion Master Ferenc Sauer riding leading sire Shagya XXXIX in Babolna.

vast pastures and they might become just stars.

This gene pool of more than 200 years will, again and again, produce masterpieces of phenotype and genotype.

In order to understand how this could all happen, the history of Babolna must be told, at least partly.

Back to the Roots of the Stud

For more than 150 years, the Turks reigned Hungary and parts of Austria.

During their conquerings (1526), the Turkish armies would purely aim at extermination, not only killing all the people who stood up against them but also destroying Hungary’s stock of horses almost completely.

During the long years of Turkish occupation, on the other hand, the Oriental horses left their “genetic fingerprint” in the country of the hussars.

The indigenous country mares were covered by the Arabian stallions the Turks had brought, and in the course of decades, a noble Hungarian steppe horse developed who displayed distinct traits of the Arabian breeds and was professional used by the Hungarian population.

At the end of the 16th century, the Turks left the country, but they were quickly replaced by the Habsburgers from Austria, trying to patronise the Hungarian population even when horse breeding was concerned.

“The Habsburgers shared the European preference of their time, introducing the heavy Spanish and Neapolitan horses all over the monarchy and in great numbers.



They led to the development of Lipizzaners and Kladrubers.

In Hungarian horse breeding, however, their tracks were few and far between, as Hungarian horses were rather inclined toward the Oriental model.

When state and private studs in Europe were forced to try, particularly after the Napoleonic Wars, to fill the great gaps in their ranks of horses, they turned increasingly to Oriental and particularly to Arabian horses who were intended to improve their own stock.” (E. Schiele 1982).

The Hungarians were one important step ahead of their times.

To keep up the percentage of Oriental blood in their horses, they could and they did import Arabian horses from the Orient when other countries just started to think of this for their own horse breeding. A milestone in the history of Hungarian breeding was the stallion Tajar, bought by Baron Fechting from a Mameluke Sheikh in Gizeh, Egypt, in 1811. Tajar must have been the fastest and most noble horse of his time.

In addition, he was extremely fond of people.

He came to be 35 years old and embodied the breeding ideal of his times.

Baron Fechting undertook several journeys to Egypt and the Arabian peninsula in order to import good horses who were intended to consolidate the percentage of Arabian blood in the royal and private studs of Europe.

He was the man who brought Bairactar and the foundation mare Murana I to the royal stud in Weil - later called Marbach - in Wurttemberg, Germany. He also imported the mare Trifle who founded a dam line which is in existence in Babolna up to this day, as well as the stallion Siglavý Gídran whose offspring can be found in Babolna today.

To be able to breed performance horses for the cavalry



Stallion Tajar d.b., imported in 1811, the model horse for horse breeders at the beginning of the 19th century.

for generations to come, and in order to do this in a systematic way, the Habsburg Empress and Ruler of Hungary and Austria, Maria Theresia, decided not only to pay a premium for good young horses, but also to found a stud owned by the crown which would be able to guarantee continuity, strategic breeding according to a plan, and in addition by guaranteeing the financial means to accomplish this aim.

In doing this, she stuck to the well-known saying by Prince Eugen of Savoyen (1663-1736) stating “A full treasury and 200,000 well equipped soldiers give the country more safety than signing excellent contracts”.

To put that differently, armament for deterrence was the motto even then.

Wars, however, were won or lost by the cavalry and no matter whether it was the Moors, the Saracens or the Ottoman Empire, the fulcrum and pivot of the whole business of war was the Arabian horse.

Considering lots of aspects, Arabian horses had the best performance statistics.

And Arabian horses had been introduced into Hungarian horse breeding no less than 200 years ago.

Taking the logical consequences, the first imperial-royal military stud was founded in Mezöhegyes.

For some time, it was the biggest stud in Europe with a stock of more than 4000 horses.

Very soon, however, there were new wars, new losses, new defeats, with the brunt of the losses taken by horses.

The then stud director Csekonics proposed to found a new stud which was to breed mainly Arabian horses.

This was the reason why the military stud of Babolna came to be founded in 1789.

Arabian Horses for Babolna - the Purchasing

Expeditions in the 19th Century The Emperor of Austria and Hungary, the Kings of Poland and of Germany, the Czars of Russia - all the royal houses of the time were looking for the “miracle weapon”, the desert Arabian.

Ordered to do so by their majesties, a great number of young nobles, military doctors, Orient explorers, and horse experts travelled to the Arabian peninsula in order to buy the legendary Arabian horses from the Bedouins and to export them to their respective homes, where they would serve as breeding animals to improve the local cavalry horses.

For the foreigners, however, it was far from easy to identify the desert horses as such and to develop quality criteria for selecting them.

In addition, many of the buyers would prefer to take the easy and less risky way of buying the horses in the port towns of the Orient, such as Aleppo, Beirut,





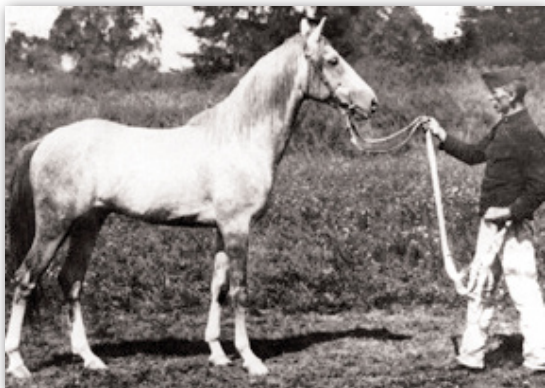
Kohaylan Raschid, born 1897



Saklavy Jedran, born 1876



Schechan Schammar, born 1895



Siglavy Bagdady, born 1895

and Damascus, where they were offered as well fed animals.

A Bedouin, however, would not sell his horse to a foreigner right away, as he would usually breed his horses just often enough to meet his own requirements.

Besides, if buyers managed to advance to the deep desert, the horses there would often appear as too thin and even unhealthy to their eyes.

A great error! Rather it was the opposite: the horses from the horse markets in the North of the Arabian peninsula had been culled because of infertility or health problems, not the asil horses from the Nejd who would be in somewhat poor feeding condition during the dry season but were otherwise healthy and robust and would be ready for the exertions of a long ride at any time.

Another reason for the expeditions to travel to the desert Bedouins and do negotiations directly with them was to find out about the true heritage of a horse. This way, they came to know that the Arabians themselves would divide their horses into two overall groups (Lady Blunt, Lady Wentworth, v.Wrangel et al.):

- The Nejds, the Arabians proper, with the animals themselves or their parents born directly in the area of the Nejd, which is the central and Southern part of the Arabian peninsula,
- The Schimali, the Arabians from the Northern part of the peninsula, from Syria, Mesopotamia, and the area that is today Iraq. (acc. to Schiele 1985).

How should the buyers have known that the term “pure blood” would never be applied to a Northern Arabian but exclusively to a Nejd horse?”

True Arabians in the true sense of the word are only those horses bred in the former Wahabite kingdom of Nejd, and their direct descendants”. (v.Wrangel 1908).

Full of pride, emperor Franz Joseph I would visit his military stud ever so often.

Different expeditions had imported valuable Arabian horses for him in the past, since there was always a demand for Purebreds in order to bring the traits of the Arabian horses into other breeds.

In 1856, he sent the 4th mission to the Arabian peninsula.

Headed by Rudolf von Brudermann, the men were fully aware that they would have to take great risks to find the true desert-bred Arabians.

“In general, it can be said that horses of the first quality will only be offered to those who will make the effort to buy them first-handed and locally.” (L. Burkhardt 1829).

Loeffler (1860), a member of the Hungarian expedition, states: “From what we just reported, it is clear that the truly pure and noble horse, be it stallion or mare, is only to be bought in the desert, where the price will be so high that as you are accustomed to the



prices asked in the North, you cannot help but shrink back, and you will hardly be able to get the price reduced for all your astonishment and negotiations - provided the Bedouin can be talked into selling such an animal at all..." Rudolf v. Brudermann, the leader of the expedition, noted the following in his travel report of 1856: "I faced Bedouins who would ask up to 60,000 FL for a threeyear- old mare and would not even give an answer to an offer of 6,000 to 8,000 FL, but just gallop away.

Such a Bedouin will typically have nothing but his mare, some camels and sheep, a shirt, a cloak and a god... I once met several Bedouins, one of them riding a beauty of a grey mare, a well-framed beast. I asked him whether he would consider to sell her. He asked what my offer was? I dismounted and inspected her teeth and thought her to be about 16 to 18 years old, but she was highly pregnant and exceptionally beautiful. I offered him 1000 FL. "This is what I gave as a tip when I bought her" he said and galloped away."

It was thanks to the horse and human expertise of this Graf Brudermann that the expedition was highly successful in spite of the risky caravaning toward the Bedouin tribes in the high country of the Nejd, an area which was virtually unknown and dangerous to Europeans.

He bought exceptional horses from the Bedouins, 16 stallions and 50 mares all in all, who were transported to Hungary with lots of effort - on foot, by ship and by train.

All of them would prove to have important influence on Purebred Arabian breeding in Europe. Loeffler remarked: "... this collection of Arabian desert horses, of rare beauty and number, was generally acknowledged and honoured so widely that there was the most favourable opinion uttered everywhere and Babolna became a place of pilgrimage for any friend of horses" (Loeffler 1860, as quoted in Hecker 1994).

Years after this expedition to the desert of Arabia, the opinion among many of the European buyers was that "Oberst v. Brudermann has bought the very best away from the desert for importing to Babolna" (Hecker 1994).

Babolna, a "Place of Pilgrimage for Horse Fans"

Von Brudermann was made stud director of Babolna on the merit of the great success he had achieved for the Imperial stud with his spectacular horse imports.

Finally, Babolna was boosting.

The desert imports from the Orient were received with great international interest.

Von Brudermann was able to expand his breeding concept.

The desert-born mares imported to Babolna:



Farha, born 1896



Em Tiur, born 1896



Aida, born 1898



Semrie, born 1896

He decided on a similar approach as King William I of Wurttemberg had adopted for Weil (later Marbach): he would only breed the desert-borns among themselves and keep them as a pure breed, meaning that the imported mares would be covered by Arabian Purebreds only, in order to consolidate and preserve this valuable gene pool in Babolna. For improving the Shagya and warmblood breeds, there would always be Arabian stallions available



this way.

Increasingly, however, different interests gained ground in Babolna.

There was no war at that time to destroy the horses, but the political warfare within the Monarchy was no less dramatic in its implications for Babolna.

Over time, the most valuable stallions were sold or displaced to other Imperial studs such as Lipizza or Slavuta.

Von Brudermann was eventually ordered off to Vienna, and it took his successors only a few years to start some aimless experimenting with English Thoroughbreds in his Arabian stud.

It was only in 1869 that the Emperor committed Babolna stud to the government of Hungary.

They decided to dedicate Babolna to the breeding of Purebred Arabians once more - meaning there had to be expeditions to the Orient again in order to buy fresh horses.

In 1876, nine stallions purchased by Graf Franz Zichy in Constantinople arrived, among them the desert-borns Mahmoud Mirza and Amurath Bairactar.

The latter was later sold to Weil in Germany. In 1885, another expedition brought the stallions O'Bajan and Koheilan Adjuze.

The black O'Bajan was chief sire in Babolna for 25 years until his death.



World Exhibition in Paris, the victorious Babolna mares with their handlers.

His son Koheilan I, a Shagya stallion, became Grand Champion on the occasion of the Paris World Exhibition in 1900 (acc. to E. Schiele 1982).

Successful years followed for Babolna, with the Shagya Arabian breed ever more consolidated and a Hungarian Arabian gradually developed.

The Hungarians displayed the noblesse and the nerve of the Purebred Arabians, but their size and conformation came close to light warmbloods.

The two World Wars would bring suffering and horror for people and animals alike while the stud continued to adhere to its double strategy of breeding Shagyas for one part and Purebreds for the other part, keeping the purebreds in store to be able to improve the Shagyas if necessary.

At this time, the stud was headed by one Tibor von Pettko-Szandtner who displayed vast knowledge and



Tibor von Pettko-Szandtner when commander of Babolna stud.

was highly successful as a breeder. He was later to become world famous in the breeding scene as the director of the Egyptian state stud of El Zahraa.

Those few Arabian horses who had somehow managed to survive World War II were auctioned away by the American occupation forces.

Others ended up with the pharmaceutical industry

as serum suppliers... some were shipped to the US as war booty.

In the course of time, however, the world of horse breeding would come back to normal.

Thanks to the sophisticated system of branding used in Babolna, even horses who had been evacuated or even thought lost could be found and identified.

“Reconstructing the breeding base in Babolna after World War II was difficult, the more so as horses were no longer needed for the army.

Besides, Arabian horses are of little use in agriculture, and farm horses were being substituted by machines in ever increasing numbers anyway.

Despite of all that, they started to revive Arabian breeding in 1962.

The Lippizaner horses, the Thoroughbreds and Partbreds then living in Babolna were brought New Horse Imports by Airplane from Cairo Starting in the midsixties, Arabian horses were once more imported to Babolna.

This time, however, they were not to make their way on foot from the high country of the Nejd, but the valuable horses were flown in as air cargo from the Egyptian state stud of El Zahraa.

Their offspring were not longer intended for the



Monika Savier and Marifa Al Qusar (Teymur B x El Thay Bint Maheera)



*Bint Amer (Salaa El Dine x 236 Amer)
owned by: Al Kharafy Stud - Kuwait
Her dam, 236 Amer is a granddaughter of the *Ibn
Moniet El Nefous son Mohafez as well as the
Morfic son, Ghalion, and she traces in the tail
female to the lovely Inas.*

cavalry, but for fans and breeders of Arabian horses all over the world.

The demand for straight Egyptian broodmares and stallions started to increase, and the Babolna directors began to buy horses from Egypt as they had been advised to do by German horse and Orient expert Dr. Hans Nagel.

The horses who now came from Egypt were to form an important foundation for the breeding of Egyptian purebred Arabians all over the world. There were the world-famous mares Hanan, Tamria, Marah, Bint Inas, El Aziza and Lotfeia.

The most important stallions of this “new Egyptian era” in Babolna were Ibn Galal, Farag and Ghalion. Within a very short time, a gene pool of straight Egyptian horses had formed, well received and acknowledged internationally, but highly controversially discussed within the Babolna stud management as well as within the responsible Ministry in the government.

The new markets were enticing, but on the other hand there was a fundamental urge to consolidate and develop further the traditional Hungarian breed, the Shagya Arabian.

Then stud director Dr. Burgert, responsible for the “new Egyptian era”, met lots of criticism as according to the Ministry’s opinion, the Egyptians

were too small and too noble to be of real value for improving the Shagyas.

They did not recognise at this time that Babolna would face golden times as their straight Egyptian gene pool would be highly renowned and acknowledged internationally. After the stud director had been replaced, the beautiful old mares faced hard times even on the vast premises and pastures of Babolna. There was no end to the purchasing frenzy of Americans, Germans, and Italians, and later of breeders from Arabian countries looking for the Bedouin horses which had been sold away by their fathers.

Quite some champion horses were busted for a few coins of foreign currency and later recognised to have left a great gap for the Hungarian breeding programme.

While straight Egyptian stallions of international renown and enormous quality, such as Ansata Halim Shah, Salaa El Dine, Ansata Abbas Pasha, and later Alidaar, had been used during the 1980ies, during the 1990ies there were Russian and Polish stallions used, such as Kubinec and Visbaden (Naftalin x Presnia).

And they did not only cover the mares from the asile lines (Amurath Sahib) who were not considered to be straight Egyptian, or from the Polish-Marbach lines.

They would even be mated to the offspring of those valuable Egyptian imports from the 70ies and 80ies,”in order to reinstate bone and frame to Purebred Arabian breeding”.

The policy that made fans of straight Egyptians weep and was considered the eradication of an important part of Babolna breeding heritage was recognised as an improvement by others.

Journalist and horse expert Gudrun Waiditschka on the topic: “Switching to Egyptian line breeding during the 1970ies was later considered a mistake by the Babolna administration.

The stud did need the desert horses for crossbreeding with the Hungarian Shagya breed, but the offspring of Farag, to name one, was too noble and lightframed for Shagya Arabian breeding.

Ibn Galal was more suited to the task, being big-framed and having good bone.

What Babolna lost during that time was their solid, big-framed breed of Purebred Arabians.

This Hungarian kind of Purebred and the Shagya Arabian are meant for performance sports in riding and driving.

The Shagya is the cradle of the Shagya Arabian, this Hungarian cultural heritage, and this is what they are proud of there.

And this is exactly what the Purebred Arabian is not, as he was no more than a means to achieve an aim.

You can only understand Babolna breeding policy if you consider the Shagyas in the same picture.”



We All Know More Today ...

The history of Babolna has always been strongly influenced by the ups and downs of political oscillations

- contrary to a private stud. There was a benefit, of course, which was financial means "from above" for more than 200 years, ensuring continuity for the stud as a whole and keeping the employees in pay. After the Berlin wall fell, however, this most far-reaching event in recent history, the stud has been reorganised

to be self-sufficient, in part as an Ltd. business.

Now it's in the hands of state administrators to consider whether to let some equine jewel go in order to meet the government-decreed level of income, or whether to go without that urgently needed amount of income in the hopes of a long-



*Teymur B (Assad x 214 Ibn Galal I)
owned by: Al Qusar Arabians
Teymur B is bred by Babolna, his mother was a daughter of the beautiful Tamria*

term concept earning more.

Anybody who keeps horses knows how risky and costly breeding is - a small wonder, then, that exceptional mares and stallions were sold at quite low prices.

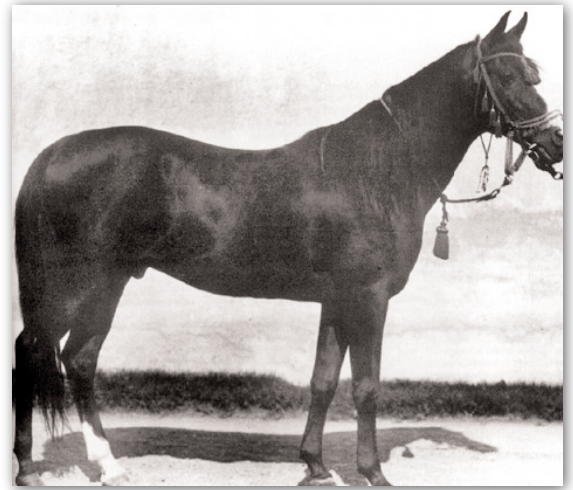
Many of them are international show champions today, with their value up to ten times of what they were sold for in Hungary. Dr

Nagel's comment to that: "We all know more today and there are quite a few horses we would never sell today."

The new breeding expert of the stud, Ferenc Rozman, adds: "We are trying to increase the numbers of our Egyptian stock and are looking for the lost lines."

And indeed, Tamas Rombauer, today's stud director, has leased Babolnabred stallion Teymour B (Assad x 214 Ibn Galal) for the 2005 breeding season.

This important Tamria grandson is owned by Robert Schlereth and Volker Wettengl in Germany.



The influential stallion Kuheilán Zaid, born 1923.

Rombauer also purchased the mare Safiniya Bint Halim Shah (El Thay Thaman x Halim Shah I-1) who tails back to Babolna offspring of Ansata Halim Shah and the famous daughters of Ibn Galal I.

Other re-imports are scheduled.

There are hardly any financial means from the government today, but there is clearly the willpower to constitute a Babolna-based straight Egyptian stock once more.

The stud is big enough for several breeding strategies to be worked at at the same time.

Babolna continues to be highly impressive to everybody who knows the stud, fascinating and multicultural

- a kind of cathedral for horse believers.

There are those vast pastures and the stables rich in history, the horsey atmosphere, there is the Babolna history in itself - all of that is fascinating and fascinatingly present in Babolna, and we will be proud to take part

in its continuing in the future.



The Babolna yard a hundred years ago, lithography.

