

What A Year!

2007 has turned out to be a defining year for the ASAOGB and the Saddlebred in Britain. Initially it seemed it would just be a routine year, but it began with a bang with the ASHA presenting me with the Jenkins International Award and has continued in the same vein.

March saw my acquisition of the gaited stallion Sand Attache's Leading Admiral from Indiana. This gorgeously rich chestnut son of CH Courageous Admiral offered my mares the right mix of genetic input to complement their ancestries. He arrived in May after his 30 days quarantine and a stop-over in Ireland, and was turned out on his very own 40 acres of Sussex pasture with his mares. All appear to be in horsey-heaven and pregnancy test results are eagerly awaited. If he passes on his temperament, congeniality, good looks and powerful movement there will be much to celebrate.

Heavy unseasonal rains caused problems with farmers being unable to remove hay crops from grassland designated as showgrounds so many shows were cancelled, which was a disappointment all round. Nevertheless we forged ahead later in the summer with shows held at permanent, surfaced or covered venues.

For the third year, ASAOGB sponsored the American Breeds Championship and Saddlebred classes at the Colored Horse & Pony Society's Championship Show. This year our classes for Saddlebreds and National Show Horses were well supported and the spotted stallion Even Worse, imported from Germany, took the tricolor.

ASAOGB negotiated and sponsored inaugural classes for Saddlebreds at the British Show Horse Association's Championship Show. This A class show is held at the famous dressage venue, Addington Manor, and proved an amazing day for us. Good entries were thwarted by travel and transport problems so there were not as many present in the ring as should have been, but this turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Whilst our classes were underway in one half of the main arena, the 32 competitors in the Hunter class in the other half all stopped and turned to watch — even applauding. This, the general wave of people flocking to the ringside and the spare time allowed by smaller classes, prompted the steward with the roving microphone to ask for an impromptu demonstration with commentary to explain our breed and what we were all about. This is what we at the ASAOGB really like to do and so welcomed this priceless and totally unexpected opportunity! This was followed by very enthusiastic invitations from several officials to return next year.

Seven days later was the Meet The Saddlebreds event at the ASAOGB Headquarters. This annual event has gone from strength to strength with word spreading through the local community that it is a fascinating and enjoyable afternoon, even for those who think they don't like horses. This year the 100+

audience included visitors from America and Singapore, as well as from the Midlands of England. We were also very privileged to welcome Lord and Lady Healey (Lord Healey was Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Viscount Gage, who is a descendant of Sir General Thomas Gage, who was Commander-in-Chief of the British military in America at the time of the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Viscount Gage was fascinated with the history and presence of our breed and spent much time inspecting the conformation of Sand Attache's Leading Admiral. "Superb horses," he remarked, "wonderful display, thank you so much."



Lord Healey and Viscount Gage presenting commemorative rosettes to Will's Gazette and Jane Green.

We were fortunate to have an addition to our display team for this event. The spotted mare Hot Line To Heaven joined us to demonstrate the Saddlebred in Western turnout which enhanced the versatility aspect of our presentation. This twice great-granddaughter of Supreme Sultan is on a breeding lease at the ASAOGB HQ and will take her place in Admiral's band of mares for the 2008 breeding season.

Sadly, Meet The Saddlebreds also marked the retirement from public life of the imported five-gaited/harness

horse Will's Gazette. Gaz, as we call him, is now 22 years old and has been a stalwart and popular member of the ASAOGB Display Team for 11 years. Hooked to his Houghton Show Sulky (an unknown vehicle in the UK) he attracts enthusiastic respect and admiration. Lord Healey and Viscount Gage made the presentation of commemorative rosettes to a somewhat tearful Jane Green who is now without a driving horse for the displays. Jane and Gaz have not only added an exciting element to the show horse display but have been invaluable for their joint commitment to the cause. Their presence on the team will be greatly missed.

In addition to buying many books and leaving generous donations, members of the audience are still sending thank you cards and compliments in the form of telephone calls and e-mails, all without exception expressing their admiration for the 'beautiful and amazing' horses and our efforts to reintroduce them to the land of their ancestral origin.

No sooner was that event over and the clearing up done than the telephone rang and a show secretary of a large Agriculture Show was offering to host classes for Saddlebreds, having heard about us through the 'grapevine'. She said, "We are looking to improve audience interest and have heard that you are crowd-pleasers." Yes I think it can safely be said that we are crowd-pleasers — wherever our imported show horses go they cause a sensation, eliciting awe and disbelief that horses can be so wonderful.

Then — no it's not over yet — we were contacted about a new and major equine event being inaugurated next year, where we are invited to suggest what we would like to do with our breed: the doors are open for displays, classes, demonstrations, booths. A limitless opportunity. For the time being the dates and plans are confidential but it is a 'new concept' and will be the biggest equine event Britain has ever seen. It is very flattering and rewarding to be invited to participate at such an early stage of the planning.

Well, we know — as you know — that our breed is sensational. We just have to educate the rest of the world!