

By Anne Brown for "Australian Arab Horse News"

What a rewarding trip to Queensland visitors enjoyed for the World Crabbet Convention in Toowoomba!

The British contingent appreciates all the hard work by the organizers; also the commitment from the owners and exhibitors who brought their precious horses to the Show and Parade; and finally the breeders who threw open their gates to welcome us to their studs.

The official video will serve as a great reminder of a fantastic time, but nothing can replicate that warm earth smell, the sizzling barbies and the odour of newborn foals. We had to adjust to November being your spring, and therefore the breeding season. We had left behind weaned foals in Britain!

It was humbling to realize that Australia now has the largest concentration of pure Crabbet horses anywhere in the world and of a quality, refinement and versatility that most of us can only dream of.

Before the Convention itself, some of us had already spent the previous weekend at the Victorian Crabbet Group Show near Melbourne. This introduction to the horses we were about to see on the stud tour proved invaluable as we pieced together their bloodlines and relatives. In fact, we'd visited nine studs before we ever reached Toowoomba, in a non-stop programme kindly put together for us by Ken Coombe from Roxborough Stud, who must have slept with timetables by his bedside for weeks.

At Roxanne Pidoto's Ebjarah Stud, our first port of call, we saw the impressive senior stallion Volcano and the bouncy chestnut Arfaja Harlan. He and his grey full brother Arfaja Robard (whom we were to see later at Fiona Seymore's Wentworth Stud) made a great impression on us all.

In a homage to the doyenne of Australian Crabbet breeders, we toured Fenwick stud founded by Mrs Dora MacLean in the 1930s, at the kind invitation of her granddaughter Vicki Johnson-MacLean who now runs the stud. Then in a downpour, we squelched round the Jamiesons' Seven Oaks stud of Crabbet and Egyptian beauties and enjoyed a welcome barbie.

Arfaja founder Ron Ryan joined us for a day visiting Glenda Shrimpton at Glendarra Park Arabians who were celebrating the birth a new foals, but again COLTS! Then it was off Sean Johnson's Kendra Park, a young breeder with an outstanding herd based largely on Ron's Arfaja stock and Leon Bennett's horses.

So we next toured Leon Bennett's Pevensey Stud, a breeding programme he largely shares with Rob and Yvonne Day who stand Silver Somerio at their old-established Moonlite Arabians. The products of this collaboration were among the most impressive horses we had seen, a conclusion shared by the Convention judges who awarded their jointly-bred and -owned Prince Benay (Sarafire x Veridan Za'aria) the Overall Pure Crabbet Male Championship, and made him and his full sister Zoe Benay, the winners of the Sire Produce Group.

The O'Deas' Inshallah Stud proves what you can achieve with skill, dedication and the very best bloodlines. Although their senior stallion Tommie is retiring at 31, the stock he leaves, such as the glorious and feminine Inshallah Impression, win in any company, not just at Crabbet shows.

Finally we visited the Seymores' Wentworth Arabians where the prancing, dancing white stallion Arfaja Robard knocked our socks off with his movement and elegance.

Our post-Convention tours included visits to Judy Ward's Bellemere Stud standing Bold as Blazes from Indian Dream's line, and to Lynn Hall's Lyndall Stud, a spur of the moment visit as Shardell Stud had

suffered a freak storm and barn damage. As well as high percentage Crabbet Polish-bred Fen at Judy Penfound's Sahalla Arabians followed with a heart-stirring sight of dozens of her Arabs galloping towards us through the bush, tails high and manes flowing. At Nicky and Steve Forest's Arabe Lavalle stud, we admired their elegant bay stallion Boomori Kahlua, full brother to Dandaloo Kadet imported to the USA a few years ago by the ACABONA group (Australian Crabbet Arabian Breeders of North America), to increase their pure Crabbet gene pool.

Next on the itinerary was Cameo Stud belonging to Coralie and Ken Gordon whose ground-covering grey stallion Hallelujah (owned jointly with the ever-cheerful Joan Flynn, one of the Convention organisers) impressed us all, until the Brits spotted a koala up a gum tree - the first we had seen in the wild!

Another of the Cameo stallions, 20-year old Zanzibar (Somered x Zaria, a mare imported from the UK by Argos - out of Zahri who was by Dargee out of Ziree el Wada), has proved an influential endurance sire with his offspring much sought after.

Janice O'Connor, another of the amazing Queensland Crabbet Arabian Group which had put the Convention together, hosted us to her Comanche Lodge, proudly showing us the impressive veteran Silver Wind Van Nina and his foals.

Moondara Stud, owned by Ian and Deb Watson, and Charoway Arabians, owned by Wayne Beasley, with lines going back to the mare Bright Light (Bright Shadow x Shadowlight) jointly treated us to a ridden display in Western and Arabian costume - and a rousing rendition of the Australian national anthem on horseback.

At Alon Arabians, a goat joined the group around the corral to admire 26-year old Sindhcinatti (Sindh's last son at stud?) and his latest son, a ten-day old colt out of Fenwick-bred Jirrima Rosette.

Last call of the day was to the Toft family at their prestigious Bremervale Stud, one of the oldest established and most influential in Australia. They certainly know how to present a horse and throw a party! Dick Collyer had spoken at the Convention on the Australian Endurance scene, commending the team Silver Medallists at the 2005 World Endurance championships and their previous team Golds in New Zealand and in Spain, mostly provided and ridden by the Tofts. So it was a treat to see many of these horses at Bremervale, and three (human) generations of a family who are so positively influencing the performance horse scene with their Crabbet-based programme, although the show horses are now infused with many other lines. Congratulations are due especially to Penny Toft for her phenomenal Endurance success with Bremervale Justice, which won him the WAHO Trophy for 2005.

We were privileged to spend time with endurance competitor Robyn Pembroke at her scenic Mt Eerwah Stud. A few years ago, Robyn had sold her mare Rothlyne Pure Delight to the ACABONA group where she is currently living with Marty and Geri Kirkhuff, so it was a particularly interesting visit for them.

While the group continued north to Ken Coombe's impressive Roxborough Stud of high-percentage Crabbets, I headed south to stay with Anne Maher and her English partner Kevin Beaumont, at Anneka Arabians who have created a hugely valuable gene pool based largely on Wellworth Stud lines of Elvie Tucker and Mark Grundy. This gave me another opportunity to see the supreme show champion, Bernadine, still a little fraught from her long return journey, but gracious to the last, and also the popular bay stallion, Magic Prophecy (Magic Carpet x Arabian Park Dancer), and their imposing 18-year old white stallion Bonn (Rasham x Fairlight).

The Convention and stud visit programme was considered such a success and engendered so much enthusiasm that plans are afoot for a Crabbet Convention in 2008 in the USA, followed by a

Convention in the UK in 2111. With commitment like this, and the advent of artificial insemination with frozen semen, the future of the pure Crabbet horse is in safe hands. Truly, a great celebration of the Crabbet horse.

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