



The Parthian Shot

Newsletter of the British Horseback Archery Association

Issue 2, June 2010

Welcome to the Parthian Shot, occasional newsletter of the BHAA. This is the second issue, slightly behind schedule but nonetheless packed full of interesting historical and practical information for the modern horse archer. And uniquely nothing about football or World Cups!

Also included are two reviews of Horseback Archery tuition courses - as the sport starts to take hold in the UK - and a round up of what's going on in the rest of the world.

The Parthians

by Rick Lippiett

The Parthian Empire was founded in the mid-3rd century BC by Arsaces I of Parthia, leader of the Parni tribe, when he conquered the Parthia region in rebellion against the Greeks. At its height, the Parthian Empire stretched from the northern reaches of the Euphrates, in what is now eastern Turkey, to eastern Iran. The empire, located on the Silk Road trade route between the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean Basin and the Han Dynasty in China, quickly became a centre of trade and commerce.

The Parthians largely adopted the art, architecture, religious beliefs, and royal insignia of their culturally diverse empire, which encompassed Hellenistic, Persian, and regional cultures. For about the first half of its existence, the Arsacid court adopted Greek culture, though it eventually saw a gradual revival of Iranian traditions.

The Parthian Empire had no standing army, yet was able to quickly recruit troops in the event of local crises. The main striking force of the Parthian army was its cataphracts; heavy cavalry with man and horse decked in mailed armour. The cataphracts were equipped with a lance for charging into enemy lines, as well as bows and arrows. Due to the cost of their equipment and armour, cataphracts were recruited from among the aristocratic class who, in return for their services, demanded a measure of autonomy at the local level from the kings. The light cavalry was recruited from among the commoner class and acted as horse archers. Horse archers wore a simple tunic and trousers into battle. They used composite, recurved bows and were able to shoot at



Parthian Horse Archer - the fabled Parthian shot

enemies while riding and facing away from them; this technique, known as the *Parthian Shot* proved a highly effective tactic. Light infantry units, composed of levied commoners and mercenaries, were used to disperse enemy troops after cavalry charges.

The Parthian Empire, being culturally and politically diverse, had a variety of religious systems and beliefs, the most widespread being those dedicated to Greek and Iranian cults. Most Parthians were polytheistic and as with Seleucid rulers, Parthian art indicates that the Arsacid kings viewed themselves as gods; this cult of the ruler was perhaps the most widespread.

Parthians In Historical Context

The earliest enemies of the Parthians were the Seleucids in the west and the Scythians in the east. During the reign of Mithridates I (171-138 BC) the Parthian Empire was at its zenith, conquering Media, Babylonia and Mesopotamia in the west and as far East as the Indus River.

Mithridates also established royal residences at Seleucia, Ecbatana, Ctesiphon and his newly founded city, Mithradatkert (Nisa, in modern day Turkmenistan), where the tombs of the Arsacid kings were built and maintained.

What was the Parthian Shot?

The Parthian shot was a military tactic made famous by the Parthians. The Parthian horse archers, mounted on light horses, would feign retreat; then, while at a full gallop, turn their bodies back to shoot at the pursuing enemy. The manoeuvre required superb equestrian skills, since the rider's hands were occupied by their bow and the rider had neither saddle nor stirrups to aid them. This tactic was used by most Eurasian nomads, including the Scythians, Huns, Magyars, Turks and Mongols and later Byzantine & Sassanids.



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During the reign of Phraates II, incursions by Antiochus of Syria in the West (aiming to retake Mesopotamia, but ultimately leading to his defeat and death) were followed by a more protracted invasion by the nomadic Saccae (Scythians) in the East. The Scythians continued to raid and eventually caused the fall of both Phraates II in 128BC and his successor Artabanus I in 124BC. However Mithridates II recovered the lost lands to the east, and made some alliances with the Chinese Han Empire to encourage trade from West to East along the Silk Road, and the Indo-Parthian Kingdom in the 1st Century BC.

Despite securing his Eastern borders with these shrewd alliances, Mithridates ultimately became embroiled in a conflict with Armenia on his north eastern borders which drew the attentions of the Romans (who were looking to set up a puppet state of their own in Armenia). His successors were to have much to do with the upstart new Roman Empire.

During the reign of Phraates III, after much political upheaval, the Parthian backed Armenian prince Tigranes the Younger was brought to Rome as a hostage. Phraates demanded Pompey return Tigranes to him, but Pompey refused. In retaliation, Phraates launched an invasion into Corduene (southeastern Turkey). Shortly after, Phraates was assassinated by his sons Orodes & Mithridates III - but there followed a period of civil war between the two successors and the Romans effectively used this to divide the Parthians, supporting Mithridates (who was eventually hunted down and executed by Orodes' general, Surenas).

Marcus Licinius Crassus, one of the triumvirs who was now proconsul of Syria, launched an invasion into Parthia in 53 BC; feigning belated support of Mithridates. As his army marched to Carrhae, Orodes (now Orodes II) invaded Armenia, cutting off support from Rome's ally Artavasdes II of Armenia.

What followed was one of the worst military defeats of Roman history (see full feature on the Battle of Carrhae).

Parthia's victory cemented its reputation as a formidable contender to Rome - Surenas returned to Seleucia in triumph, the hero of the Parthian nation. However, fearing his ambitions even for the throne, Orodes had Surenas executed shortly thereafter.



Parthian Horse Archers in action against the Roman formations

Emboldened by the victory over Crassus, the Parthians attempted to capture Roman-held territories in Western Asia. The Arsacids sided with Pompey in his civil war against Julius Caesar and even sent troops to support the anti-Caesarian forces at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC.

Despite eventually occupying most of the Levant, except Tyre, the Parthians were soon driven out by Roman counter-offensives led by Mark Anthony.

More Parthian unrest, internal conflict and assassinations greatly aided the Romans once more - although the Parthians were eventually able to expel the Romans from Armenia once and for all. Following the defeat of Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, Octavian became the emperor of Rome, now a republic in name only (the Romans were also no strangers to internecine power struggles!) Octavian, now named Augustus (27 BC - 14 AD) by the Roman Senate, was able to engineer (through taking hostage the son of Phraates IV) the return of the Legion standards lost at Carrhae. Octavian unscrupulously made full use of this political victory over Parthia to further strengthen his rule of Rome.

Subsequently, although nominally at peace with Parthia, Rome continued interfering in its affairs over the next century.

The Roman emperor Tiberius (14-37 AD) became involved in a plot by Pharasmanes I of Iberia to place his brother Mithridates on the throne of Armenia by assassinating the Parthian ally King Arsaces of Armenia - just one of many convoluted intrigues employed to de-stabilise the region and keep the Parthians busy fighting amongst themselves and their immediate neighbours.

However by the middle of the 1st century, the Parthians had finally succeed in deposing the Roman-backed Iberian King Rhadamistus from the Armenian throne, and by doing so founded the Arsacid line of Armenian kings.

Decline and Fall

Ultimately the frequent civil wars between Parthian contenders to the throne proved more damaging than foreign incursions. A succession of campaigns from Trajan, Hadrian and the great Marcus Aurelius in the 2nd century AD merely hastened the Empire's inevitable decline and fall. Parthian power declined until Ardashir I established the Sassanid Empire, which ruled Iran and much of the Near East until the Muslim conquests of the 7th century AD (although the Arsacid dynasty lived on through the Armenian line).

The Legacy of Carrhae (Dan Sawyer)

Carrhae demonstrates the classic tactics of the horseback archer. The enemy was drawn into an exposed position and then peppered with arrows. Any attempt to engage was met with a feigned withdrawal and subsequent massacre of the isolated pursuers. This was a style of warfare that would torment Western armies for more than a thousand years.



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THE BATTLE OF CARRHAE 53 BC *by Dan Sawyer*

In 53BC a Roman army invaded the Kingdom of Parthia (modern Iran). It was led by Marcus Licinius Crassus, the general who had put down Spartacus' rebellion and who had, in the intervening years, become one of the three men who virtually ruled the Roman Republic (with Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great). Now he sought to relive his glory days and take the fabled wealth of the East. Crassus set off into the desert with some 35,000 heavy infantry, 4000 light infantry and 4000 cavalry, commanded by his son, Publius Crassus, who had fought with distinction under Julius Caesar in Gaul and had been sent with his Gaulish horsemen to bolster his father's army. Roman armies, whilst they had the finest infantry in the world, had always lacked really efficient cavalry, relying on foreign auxiliaries like Publius' Gauls. This lack would be brutally exposed by one of the greatest generals in history.

The king of the Parthians sent his general, Surenas, to delay the Romans, not expecting him to be able to defeat them, hoping either to sue for peace later or to build a sufficient army to fight the weakened Romans. Surenas was a nobleman from one of the most important families in Parthia. The king, Orodes, owed his throne to Surenas, who had led the army that deposed the former king (Orodes' brother Mithridates). Orodes cannot but have been wary and more than a little jealous. Surenas, aware of the Roman infantry's superiority, put together an army that omitted infantry altogether, consisting solely of 1,000 heavy cavalry (cataphracts) and 9,000 horse archers.

The two armies met in the arid area around the city of Carrhae, in what is now Harran in modern day Turkey. The Roman legionaries were tormented by storms of arrows from horse archers, including the famous "Parthian shot". The Romans were caught in the classic dilemma facing those who fight against horseback archers: if they spread out then they would be unable to stand against a charge by Parthian cataphracts. If they stood close together then they became easy targets for the arrows from the composite recurved horse bows. In the end they simply had to stand close-packed and suffer in the dry heat and the arrow storm. Crassus' hope was that the Parthians would run out of arrows - but Surenas understood, as all great generals do, the importance of logistics. A vast camel train brought fresh shafts to the battle, allowing the archers to resupply without leaving the fray. Seeing the replenishment of the archers, Crassus sent his son to drive the tormentors away. This Publius did, pursuing them away from the Roman lines. He then discovered another steppe tactic that would plague Western armies for centuries to come - the feigned withdrawal. As soon as Publius had led his men away from the legions, the Parthian heavy cavalry charged into the Roman horsemen and slaughtered them. Publius' head was ridden past the Roman ranks on the tip of a spear, to the obvious horror of his father.

At dusk the shattered remnants of the Roman army limped away. Crassus led some back to Carrhae but then became trapped. His lieutenant, Cassius Longinus, led a few back to Syria, ignoring the plight of his general. The following day was given over to peace negotiations. These broke down in confusion and violence and Crassus was killed. Most of the army was taken prisoner. Crassus was decapitated and the head sent to the Parthian king. A few thousand legionaries, led by Longinus, made it back to Roman territory. They left 20,000 of their comrades dead and 10,000 prisoners.

Carrhae changed the balance of power in Rome. Without Crassus, Pompey felt strong enough to demand that Caesar disband his army in Gaul and face trial for war crimes. Without Crassus to tip the balance, Caesar felt strong enough to cross the Rubicon and invade Rome. The resultant civil war would destroy the Roman Republic and usher in the Empire. Caesar himself was later himself assassinated by Brutus. The other ringleader was Cassius Longinus, the survivor of Carrhae. There is a touch of irony, since Caesar was preparing to launch an invasion of Parthia to avenge Carrhae.

The Nisean Horse

One legacy of the Parthians was the Nisean horse - an extinct horse breed, once native to the town of Nisa - located at the foot of the southern region of the Zagros Mountains, Iran and first bred by the Medes. They were highly sought after in the ancient world. The famous mount of Alexander the Great, Bucephalus, was said to be a Nisean horse. The ancient Nisean horse was said to have had "not the slender Arabian head but a more robust one that was characteristic of the great warhorse".

During the reign of Darius the Great, Nisean horses were bred from Armenia to Sogdiana. The Nisean horse was so sought after that the Greeks imported them and bred them to their native stock, and many nomadic tribes

(such as the Scythians) in and around the Persian Empire also imported, captured, or stole Nisean horses. Pure white Niseans were the horses of kings and, in myth, the gods.

When Persia defeated a rival country, they would usually leave behind one or two Nisean stallions to "improve" the native stock. The Greeks exported many horses to the Iberian peninsula, where the Nisean greatly influenced the ancestors of today's Iberian horse breeds, such as the Carthusian, Lusitano, Andalusian, Barb, and Spanish Mustang.

When Mark Anthony and his legions were finally expelled from Parthian lands some of the prized possessions they brought back to Rome were the first Nisean horses.

The Nisean became extinct in the east with the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 ... however it is thought that the famous Akhal-Teke continues the line.



Akhal-Teke: Forebears of the Modern Thoroughbred?

The Akhal-Teke is a horse breed from Turkmenistan, where they are a national emblem. These "golden horses" adapted to the severe climatic conditions and are thought to be the modern day descendants of the Nisean horse - they are noted for their speed and for endurance. The Akhal-Teke has had influence on many breeds, possibly including the modern English Thoroughbred through the Byerly Turk (which may have been Akhal-Teke), one of the three foundation stallions of the racing breed.



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Choosing the Right Bow

by Neil Payne

Most people upon trying out a little horseback archery are hooked. The next step is then to buy a bow and some arrows. Leaving arrows aside, this article hopes to lay out the options on the market at the moment for people wanting to buy their first bow.

Firstly, one should never rush into buying a bow. There are so many examples of people buying a "horse-bow" only to later realise that they bought a chunky lump of wood that, yes, shoots arrows, but is basically a waste of money. So what is important in a bow? Most horseback archers would agree on the following 10 points:

1. It must be light
2. It must be tough and sturdy
3. It must be at a comfortable draw weight
4. It should not be too long
5. The riser (part you grip) should allow for smooth nocking
6. The riser should allow for a proper grasp of the bow
7. It should have a smooth drawing action
8. It should not twang and have any impact on the bow hand
9. It should allow for a decent draw length (at least 30")
10. It should look good (of course!)

Taking this into consideration what are the choices people have at present? There are many bows available on the internet but it is important to take into account that the phrase "you get what you pay for" is so very true when it comes to a bow. For each bow or bowyer we talk about below - not a totally comprehensive list of course - we will outline costs, positives and negatives.

Please also note that these descriptions are subjective and one should, if possible, try bows oneself to understand what suits you best. However, this outline of the major horseback archery bowyers should be a decent introduction. (Note to Yabusame enthusiasts - this article doesn't include anything about asymmetric Japanese bows - sorry!)

Kassai

Kassai is without doubt responsible for the resurgence in modern horseback archery especially in Europe. As well as being a master on the horse, he also helped develop a workshop that now produces many bows - his students and many others use his bows for horseback archery. Produced in Hungary the bows offer a range of types and styles ranging from very affordable to very expensive.

The bows are split into 5 types - Scythian, Avar, Hunnish, Hungarian (or Magyar) and Mongolian. Within each type there are also a few different models.

Kassai's bows are made from modern materials with certain natural elements such as leathers, animal skins, woods, etc. The bows vary from interpretations of historical bows to very modern conceptions aimed at improving archery from horseback.

The positives about Kassai's bows are that they are made to a decent standard. They have been well thought through and well designed. On top of this they are mostly affordable. The basic Lynx I (Hungarian) is only 150 EU.

(Note: if you add special finishes to bows they increase in price. As well as increasing the cost it may also mean your bow takes a while to get to you as it will be bespoke and not off the shelf.)

Overall the bows are a great entry level bow. However, be careful. If you can, try out a bow you are interested in. You may find that the riser is not a shape conducive to your nocking style. You may also find many of the bows quite long and some are heavy to hold. These are not small points - they are crucial and one should be wary. (see footnotes)

Istvan Tóth

Istvan Tóth's bows are seen both on internet sites and also at many a UK stall. Again a Hungarian, Istvan produces a number of aesthetically pleasing bows (Magyar, Hun, Mongolian and Scythian). His bows are identifiable by the distinct leather finish and stitching he uses on the bow's limbs. The positives about the bows are that they are usually widely available and cheap.

They will also teach you a lot about what is actually needed for a bow to be acceptable for horseback archery as they have many flaws. The bows are, to be fair, not as well crafted as others. They appear heavy and are heavy, both in the hold and draw.

The draw action is somewhat cumbersome and the energy one feels when releasing an arrow is too much. Lengthwise they are a little on the long side but not too much. Although they look very authentic and capture people's imaginations as a "real horse-bow" they are not the best option available for a serious horseback archer.

Samick SKB

The Samick SKB is made in Korea and is a "traditional" bow made by the manufacturers Samick. It is made out of a mix of laminate, walnut and rosewood. Its 50" long which is more in line with the length one should want when shooting from horseback. On top of this you get a decent 33" draw out of them allowing for really getting the maximum out of it.

The bow's greatest strengths are that it is simple, sleek, light and very affordable (SKB 50s around £80-£90). It is also widely available and therefore ships immediately.

As this bow is, and only ever will be, an entry level bow there is not much you can criticise it for. Being harsh one could say it has little character but then that's not the important. One issue some have found with it though is that the riser is flat and thin. This can cause issues when people are holding arrows in the bow hand as they don't sit nicely.

Saluki

Saluki is the company name for renowned Czech bowyer Lukas Novotny (now in USA). Some might say that his bows are the crème de la crème. Most people who own his bows will testify to the fact that each one is like a work of art. They are all custom made with the highest attention to detail. As a result their performance is second to none. (As is price!)

His horse-bows are of 4 basic types - The Little Giant (entry), The Damascus (Kipchak), Ibex (Crimean-Tatar) and Genghis (Mongolian).

Light vs Heavy / Laminated vs Traditional

The most important rule of thumb regarding horse-bows is that the draw weight should be under 32-36# depending on your build. Always choose slightly lighter if possible. Almost all horse-archers agree on this. Modern materials as opposed to traditional ones represent a different argument - modern materials are lighter, more flexible and prone to less problems of storage. Traditional materials (horn composites mostly) are expensive and more prone to problems. In reality though bows are delicate and they can all suffer from lack of care. Bows that are the real-deal look and feel fantastic but you might need to save up for quite a while to afford one!



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A Turkic bow is also available in a horn (very expensive) or hybrid material for horseback archery. (see opposite)

The only negatives would be that Saluki are by far one of the most expensive bows around and ordinarily you would have to wait a very long time for them.

Grozer

Again a Hungarian bowyer, Grozer has created an internationally recognised brand with his bows. A true craftsman with a love for historical accuracy and culture, Grozer produces some of the finest bows for horseback archery on the market. However, they mainly come with a price tag!

Grozer offers a variety of bow types including Scythian, Roman, Magyar, Turkish, Indo-Persian and Tatar. As a bowyer he offers his customers a bit of everything - historical accuracy with some bows and performance with others. Having produced laminate bows for a number of years, he has now developed a new technology named "Biocomposite laminated". The bows made with this technology consist of the following materials: the middle layers of wood, the inner layer of pressed horn, while the outer layer of pressed sinew plate. These two layers are glued to the wooden plate by modern glue and the glued layer gets a fibre strengthening. Due to these biocomposite materials and the modern technology these bows are faster than the simple laminated bows.

Similar to Kassai's bows, one needs to really see and try the bows in person. Subtle differences between his bows may or may not work for any individual. For example, the riser on his Turkish bows are simply perfect for the grip whereas on the Scythians they require some technical adjustments in your grip.

Probably the best bows he has to offer are any of the Laminated/Biocomposite range and the Junior Turkish Bows (120 EU - a great entry bow based on real Turkish bows of antiquity).

The two negatives about Grozer are that it can take months to get your bow to you as they are all made to order other than a few in stock and secondly they are more expensive than others on the market. Again, you get what you pay for but one needs to weigh up the options properly.



Top Picture: An exquisite horn-based Turkic bow by Lukas Novotny of Saluki bows, complete with Ottoman quiver. Cost: Over £1700

Middle Picture: A fully horn-and-wood composite Grozer Magyar bow made using traditional techniques and all natural products. This particular one would be unsuitable for horseback archery as it has a draw weight of above 50lbs, but it shows the classic Magyar shape and Hungarian style siyahs and riser. Note also the self-knocked shafts. Cost: around £650

Bottom Picture: A Lajos Kassai Mongolian 'Wolf'. Note the string-bridges (classic Mongol-style bow) and the horn-knocked shafts with Mongol-style broadheads. Cost: around £150-£180

Scythian, Hunnish, Avar, Magyar, Tatar, Mongolian, Turkic ... and More!

There's a bewildering number of choices - many of the above represent particular historic periods and the slight variations and augmentations that bowyers developed through the ages. As mentioned before, if you can, try each one out for yourself and see what suits your build (and style!). In essence though, if you've decided to splash out a bit on a Grozer or Kassai (rather than a Samick) then we'd usually recommend start with trying either Hungarian or Turkish bows as these tend to be the easiest to use - Mongolian or the asymmetric Hunnish bows tend to be longer and heavier (good if you are tall though), and Scythian or Avar bows have curved risers which can cause nocking problems. If you've got the funds for a Saluki then knock yourself out!



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BHAA Horseback Archery Course by Neil Payne

Following one of the BHAA's commitments to help develop horseback archery in the UK, it was pleased to host Norbert Kopczyński and Kasia Rokosz from Poland for a weekend training course in May 2010. Held in Somerset, the "technical master class" was aimed at helping all levels of BHAA members from beginners to the more experienced.

Norbert has been involved in horseback archery for many years and of late has grown in stature to become recognised as one of the world's most promising athletes. In Korea 2009 he won the respect of the organisers and fellow competitors to become named as the best horseback archer.

The BHAA came to know Norbert through competitions as well as British representation in the annual "Zurawiejki" event held in Poland. It was here that Norbert's technical expertise became evident and as a result a request for his tuition was submitted by the BHAA.

Accompanied by the ever cheerful Kasia, who acted as our interpreter, they braved an English May to share their knowledge and experience with us. And the English weather did not let us down. We were met with rain, cold, wind and the odd patch of sunshine. Despite the often grim periods all participants understood that they needed to grasp as much information as possible and apply it with gusto! Even in the rain.

The weekend began with an assessment of everyone's archery from the ground. Norbert then gave everyone individual coaching on posture, drawing, release techniques and follow-through.

The subtle changes made huge differences to everyone's shooting and it soon became clear that we had all slipped into bad habits over the years! Everyone was filmed and we all had the chance to watch the videos and have our problems and mistakes clearly explained visually. Once the confidence was up it was time to get on the ponies and watch our techniques go to pot! Which they did. The pouring rain did not help but after a few gallops later we all realised how much work and practice was still ahead of us in terms of getting the basics of technique in place.

Nevertheless we plodded on with Emily Lampard, Jehad Shamis, Damian Stenton and Rick Lippiett giving sterling displays. The day ended with some dry clothes and an introduction to our Polish guests of a traditional Saturday night staple - the local curry house!

Sunday saw continued work on the ground and on horseback with a competition to round off the day. A twist on the Mamluk style competition was used to test our skills with shooting at targets at different heights, distances and shooting off the nearside of the horse.

Winners on the day were Jehad Shamis and Rick Lippiett. Sunday was topped off with another British staple - fish and chips (which pleased Kasia no end).

The weekend was another great success not only in the BHAA helping develop its members' skills but also in strengthening our relationships with colleagues abroad. Keep an eye on our website for any upcoming specialist courses.



Damian Stenton executes the Parthian shot at canter, on the indefatigable Splash.



Jehad Shamis on Splash, watched by Norbert from outside the track.



Neil Payne at full pelt and full draw, riding the fleet-footed Annabel.

What has BHAA Membership ever done for us?

Why join the BHAA as a full member? Well, firstly you'll be in line to know about BHAA events, tuition courses (like the above) and competitions. We'll also provide assistance and advice for those wishing to attend international competitions, and through our organisation you'll have access to cheaper personal insurance for horseback archery. Obviously there's the occasional quarterly horseback archery newsletter and you get to vote at Annual meetings. But the perhaps the real benefit is being a part of an emerging sport in the UK, and helping support and promote this ancient martial art.



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The Centre for Horseback Combat by Claire Sawyer



On a blisteringly hot afternoon at the start of June, Dan and I were fortunate enough to become the first clients of Zana & Karl Greenwood at their new riding school. The Centre for Horseback Combat is, we believe, the only establishment that is certified as a riding school and fully insured to teach horseback archery.

I first tried horseback archery a year ago and have been desperate to do some more. As a keen rider and archer, the quality of the horses was of huge importance to me. Our two mounts were Niagara and Toddo, Andalusian and Lusitano geldings, who are a pleasure to ride. They are well schooled stunt horses on whom you can enjoy the feeling of speed but feel safe to concentrate on nocking and aiming, assured that they will stop at the end! Dan on the other hand, though a county level archer, is an inexperienced rider and had never tried horseback archery before. We were very impressed by Karl's tuition, from the importance he placed on calmly exerting your authority from the point of leaving the stable, to the finer details of riding.

Having got to grips with the horseback part of the equation Dan was re-taught archery (at least the nuances specific to shooting from a moving horse rather than stationary on the ground) and shooting races helped to get the idea of the urgency involved in horseback archery and the havoc it can play with your technique.

He then shot from walk and trot; being led allowed him to enjoy the experience fully rather than worrying about what his mount was doing while he was thinking about archery. He's itching to get back for our next lesson so that he can try the run independently and at canter.

The venue near Eastbourne in East Sussex is without parallel. Riding facilities include a 20x40m outdoor school with a top class all-weather surface (used for lessons and jousting) and a 90m horse-archery run.

There is a club house with loads of space, a bar and a balcony looking out over the field containing the archery set-up; I can't wait for the BHAA weekend there in August as that balcony was calling out to me as the ideal spot to enjoy a chilled glass of wine on a balmy evening. There is a smaller field to the side of the house which would be perfect for camping during weekend events and we're reliably informed that a fantastic pub is half a mile down the road. And the ultimate test - we took along our kids (2 boys under 2yrs) and I am amazed to say that the place is as child-friendly as you could ever hope for, considering the inherent risks of horses and fast-moving arrows.

So many thanks to Zana and Karl for a superb day - we'll be back for another lesson very soon and look forward to the tuition/competition weekend in early August!

The Centre for Horseback Combat

The Centre for Horseback Combat is open every day for courses in jousting and horseback archery. Day courses include lunch and an opportunity for horseback archers to try jousting, and vice versa. Standing Archery is available for spectators to have a go. Children and dogs are welcome, a play area is provided although supervision is required. We have a fully equipped clubhouse with games, Wi-Fi, snacks and drinks to occupy spectators and families, and the viewing balcony provides superb views of the action. We are adjacent to the Cuckoo Nature Trail, take a bike or bring your horses! As the sun goes down, please join us for a barbeque and some drinks in the Clubhouse, a perfect end to a perfect day! www.horsebackcombat.co.uk



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International Horseback Archery Competitions June - September 2010

by Jihad Shamis

MONGOLIA

Kicking off the international calendar this year is the Mongolian Horseback Archery Festival, as part of the national Nadaam celebrations from 6th - 9th July. Held just outside Ulan Bator this festival is part of a growing move to promote Horseback Archery back in one of its cultural homelands among the people of Mongolia. If anyone would like to go on the spur of the moment please get in contact with Neil Payne.

Over the summer there are other shows in Japan and the US but these are largely invitation only exhibition competitions and as such we're not going to cover them here. The next open competition is actually likely to be on our home soil.

UK

August 7 - 8th sees the BHAA hold its annual mini-competition at the Horseback Combat Centre in Sussex. This will likely test Korean and Hungarian competition styles and will likely go some way to find out who best to represent the UK in the up and coming EOCHA in September. However in the meantime comes one of the premier established fixtures on the Horseback Archery calendar...

KOREA

The 6th World Horseback Archery Championships in Sokcho City, Korea. Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism this is a well established event. Now in its 6th year the event will be held from 13th - 17th August. Master Lee and his students welcome all-comers to compete in a Korean style competition with the theme "One World, One People. Bringing People Together".

The UK has been well represented over the last couple of competitions but as usual we are always looking for experienced horse archers to join in and extend our presence in the Far East.



Above: Tsogthuu Shavrai from Mongolia
EOCHA, Germany 2008
Photo © Uwe & Ute Hantschack

Below: GrandMaster Lee at the EOCHA
competition in Germany 2008.
Photo © Uwe & Ute Hantschack

EOCHA

Much closer to home is the 3rd European Championship of Horseback Archers which will be held in Oud Herverlee in Belgium this year from the 11th - 12th September. This event, as well as the traditional Hungarian and Korean style competitions will also include the Turkish Qabaq (shooting at a gourd on a pole). As in previous years there will be both National Exhibitions from the Eastern Schools of horseback archery, and a jousting show.

As far as we are aware actual competitors will be limited to two per country and the BHAA is seeking to find its best two horse archers to compete. Naturally like the other World Cup in 2010 the event is likely to be dominated by the German team (with some help from the Hungarians and Polish) but all are welcome as spectators - the event is always an enjoyable and worthwhile spectacle. You never know, this might be the year for British horse archers!



Footnote: BHAA August Competition

The weekend of August 7th & 8th 2010 will host the BHAA's 2010 Championships. To be held at the brand-spanking-new Centre for Horseback Combat in Sussex we are welcoming entrants from the BHAA for what will be a great weekend. The Saturday will be used for training, coaching, last minute tips and warming-up with Sunday being competition day. Registration forms will be sent to all members; if you have not received one please email info@bhaa.org.uk