

CRABBET REVITALISED IN AUSTRALIA – IS TIME RUNNING OUT IN THE UK

By Caroline Sussex - 2004

For many years now pure Crabbet horses have been insufficiently appreciated here in England. Only a very few breeders have attempted to perpetuate these bloodlines, and the genetic pool has become diluted.

In this country, there are many who misunderstand the term “pure Crabbet”. For example, it is widely believed that Old English lines are 100% Crabbet. Most of the Old English lines are predominantly Crabbet but are not 100%. It is essential for breeders that there should be a universally accepted definition of what exactly constitutes a pure Crabbet Arabian horse. There is a rapidly diminishing gene pool, and a definition is necessary if these horses are to be preserved in their 100% purity.

By contrast, In Australia, the term “pure Crabbet Arabian horse” has an accepted meaning, which is as follows:

Horses descended from pure Arabian horses purchased, owned or bred by Wilfrid Blunt, Lady Anne Blunt, Lady Wentworth or Crabbet Stud.

Australia has a large and growing group of Crabbet breeders who know their pedigrees and bloodlines and use the definition which has been in acceptance for many years. The definition has now been adopted here in the UK by the Crabbet Organisation after it was used to define horses breeding at the Crabbet Convention 2002.

In a visit to Australia last year, in just two weeks, covering a small part of the country, I was lucky enough to see 17 studs, some larger than others but all with Crabbet horses. One of the most exciting new enterprises for the Crabbet horse in the world is a new stud which I visited at the end of my trip, owned by Fred and Fiona Seymore. Fiona is new to Arabians but has been converted by the story of Lady Anne Blunt and her travels in the desert. She has been struck by the meticulous methods in which Lady Anne recorded and checked every horse that was purchased and the rigorous culling at the stud if horses did not come up to scratch.

My thanks go to the kindness and generosity of Australian breeders and in particular to Brother Peter McIntosh and Leon Bennett who organised my tour and between them accompanied me to most of the studs. I had a wonderful trip to Australia, not only seeing a selection of the Crabbet breeding programme but also being able to talk only of Australian lines which has been so beneficial in getting to know their horses.

It is imperative that if you wish to start breeding, a good background knowledge of your subject should be obtained. While we wish to preserve the Crabbet bloodlines as far as possible, we should realise that as in any breeding programme, you experience pitfalls and the odd colt or filly may not come up to expectation. In England in recent years because people think they cannot keep stallions, many good horses have been gelded and the gelding classes contain horses which really ought to be stallions. I hope that in future, if horses have to be gelded that semen will be frozen before gelding is done so that there is a chance to retain those lines.

The tour

The tour started in the Adelaide hills where Martine Stibbs, new to Crabbet horses, has acquired some interesting lines. She has two stallions, Erin Park Nelson, a bay by Crenel out of Fenwick Rosanna (who I saw at Frank Murphy's stud in Sydney later) and Shahl by Sunlights Crescendo out of Risalka. However, for me the three year old filly, Yabissa by Sarafire out of Boomori Vogue was the pick of the stud and should make a very good broodmare for Martine.

High on my agenda had been a visit to Dawn Suter and Lynn Matthew's Boomori stud at Port Lincoln. Port Lincoln is famous for its tuna fishing and is just a 35 minute flight from Adelaide. Fortunately the weather was warm and sunny and Dawn's stud overlooks the ocean making the location quite stunning. The Boomori stud was established in the late 1970s but started breeding pure bred in the 1980s when Chip Chase Kaiwanna was purchased. Kaiwanna was placed many times both in halter and under saddle and proved to be a wonderful sire. He was crossed with the foundation mares who trace in tail female line to Rafina (Rustem/Risala), in particular with Crown Jewel. An important introduction to the stud in 1987 was the lease of the top 10 mare Dandaloo Baylanie (now owned by Moonlite and Pevensey Stud) by Boyar, a son of Sindh and out of Windsor Park Bay Magic who goes back to Riffalani and hence Rafina in tail female.

Boomori Kismet, out of Dandaloo Baylanie by Boyar impressed me very much with her spectacular movement. In 1994, the stud was offered the use of Volcano, a very impressive grey stallion who goes back to the famous Risheem (by Irex) who seems to be a very important ingredient in the Crabbet programmes in Australia. Kismet and Volcano produced the attractive stallion, Boomori Hallmark retained at Boomori. Boomori Marksman, By Boomori Hallmark out of Boomori Classic Touch, (Ruberto ex Boomori Touch of Class) is a young colt, almost black in appearance with a pretty head and good movement. It will be interesting to see how this colt develops in the future.

Boomori later acquired the beautiful moving chestnut stallion, Bolshoi, a full brother to Dandaloo Baylanie. He has been crossed very successfully with Boomori Touch of Class and has been a useful addition to the stud. The stud is small but breeding for quality and being slightly out of the way means that Dawn relies on her own stallions for her breeding programme.

The next day we drove from Adelaide around the bay to Yorketown to Dr Geoffrey and Chris Tucker's Newlands Stud (no relation to the Wellworth Tuckers). Fortunately for the Crabbet cause, the Tucker's daughter, Emma has become very interested in Crabbet breeding so it is to be hoped that these wonderful bloodlines will be utilised. The stallion here was the bay Zahriz, a son of Sarafire out of Silette (Rudolfo ex Silsilla), a very upstanding and correctly made horse and one of the best Sarafire sons seen on the trip. Sarafire (by Samiri ex Devotion) goes back in tail female to Fickle (Riffal/Fadoura) which seems to be a very successful breeding line. To prove this point, the young mare Autumn Fire, again by Sarafire, out of Silsilla (Sherif ex Sahm) showed great potential and it is to be hoped that she is bred to an outside stallion to keep these very valuable lines going. Silsilla with her half sister, Bint Sahm, both out of Sahm, go back to one of the most important tail female lines in Australia, Nuralina.

Fenwick stud

Australia owes its Crabbet programme mainly to Dora McLean of the world famous Fenwick Stud, now run by her grand-daughter, Vicky. Dora was responsible for importing 10 stallions and eight mares from Crabbet and gathering up many of the earlier Crabbet imports that were already in Australia. A trip to Australia would not be complete without a visit to Fenwick.

It was a relief to hear that the fields were beginning to recover from the drought in 2003 and that grass was plentiful. The drought caused considerable hardship to breeders with hay reaching extortionate prices which were still high in some areas.

Vicky took us round the fields. I had seen Fenwick Rendevous and Phantom at the convention in 2000 but I was struck this time by Fenwick Phantom and his action. Fenwick Freyja by Fenwick Rendevous out of Feylana impressed me, as did many of the mares. They are strong in the hindquarters and loin area, something which can be a weakness over here. Fenwick Starlight is always impressive, a beautiful daughter of Greylight and Starflower who goes back to the lovely mare Nejmet es Subh and again Nuralina. Vicky has sold Renasar (by Sarafire ex Fenwick Renaq), her young stallion, seen at the convention, but retained a chestnut colt by him out of Ennerdale Galaxy, Fenwick Orion. This colt has large white markings going up his legs and is very typey and good set on of head and neck with lovely small ears. He should be an interesting sire for the future.

Fenwick Silver Charm (Fabulous ex Brilliant Star) had a very good colt foal at foot by Rendevous and it will be interesting to see how he grows up. The filly, Fenwick Brilliance who I liked at the convention, has grown into an attractive mare and had her first foal at foot, by Riamus.

While at Fenwick, I was also able to talk to Vicky and Anita Tolley, who had kindly driven me there, about a number of Crabbet-related issues.

Arfaja and Wellworth horses

At the convention in 2000, the mare Arfaja Evangeline who completely captivated me but I was unable to go and visit Ron Ryan, owner of the Arfaja stud on that trip due to lack of time. It was my greatest desire to see the Arfaja horses and meet Ron - and was the inspiration for this trip. Ron had been very ill last summer and he had made the sad decision to part with his horses. Now recovered, I am sure Ron will be thrilled that his horses have been leased and sold to people dedicated to promoting the Crabbet cause and who will continue a breeding programme with guidance from him.

Roxanne Pidoto of the Ebjarah Stud has been fortunate to have Arfaja Harlan, a stunning chestnut stallion by Rasham (Greylight ex Sparkle) out of the mare Wellworth Leilani. Harlan is a compact horse who moves flamboyantly and has that "look at me" quality I like so much. Rasham has a reputation in Australia of being one of those special sires and there can be no dispute about that. He is by the famous Greylight out of Sparkle (by Starflower), tail female line to Nejmet es Subh and Nasifa. Roxanne has leased four mares from Ron, three by Rasham and one by Silver Somerio. The pretty mare, Arfaja Moonflower, by Rasham is out of a Sparkle mare, Arfaja Moonfire, and contains much valuable blood.

The Wellworth horses in Australia were reputed to be some of the best but sadly there are very few left that are pure Crabbet. Roxanne is fortunate to have two mares by Wellworth Tangiers, Mira-Monte Tamyn, with a chestnut colt foal at foot by Harlan, out of Mill Park Sparkling Star tracing to Ria and Electria in the tail female. Wellworth Tangiers was by the lovely Rishem out of Fickle, and so was a full brother to Morocco, a horse of exceptional quality. Roxanne's other mare, Mira-Monte Silver Glitter, with a grey colt foal by Harlan, is out of Woodlyn Silver Spangle and contains the wonderful lines of Electric Silver, Carlina and Fadoura and tail female to Sobha. These foals are Harlan's first offspring and if they are anything to go by then Harlan will be a very valuable sire. Roxanne also has the mare Arfaja Mariella (Silver Somerio ex Mitla) whose offspring are of great importance in other studs.

Moving away from Melbourne, to the Bendigo area, the first stop was to Shirley Douglas-Grieg's Mill Park Arabians. Here was a special stud with some quality horses. Shirley has the Wellworth blood through the Wellworth Lilac daughter, Mill Park Zarifa. Wellworth Lilac was a full sister to Wellworth Leilani. Zarifa, by the Rasham son, Arfaja Haluj owned by Judy Ward in Queensland, had an outstanding filly foal at foot. She is by Shirley's bay stallion, Mill Park Falconer who is by Ruberto (Sindh ex Ringlet) out of Felene. This filly gave a wonderful trotting display before running off to seek the shade on a very hot day. For me, the beautiful bay filly, out of Dandaloo Baylina was hard to beat. Dandaloo Baylina is a full sister to Dandaloo Baylanie and was owned by Dawn Suter at one time. The outstanding mare, Mill Park Talieah, by Ruberto ex Amareece, beat Arfaja Evangeline at the Victorian Crabbet Show in 2002. This mare is really beautiful and although not in show condition this year, her quality shone out.

Sadly, I was unable to see the young colt, Mill Park Amastar (Mill Park Falconer ex Amareece) who was at the veterinary clinic. Shirley's new acquisition was Senussi a young chestnut stallion, full of presence and style by Dandaloo Khaalid ex Dandaloo Sissi. The dam of Khaalid is Dandaloo Baylanie, a full sister to Dandaloo Sissi hence Senussi is a mother/son mating. It will be interesting to see how he crosses with the mares at Mill Park.

Glenda Shrimpton has been fortunate in being able to lease a couple of mares from Ron, including Arfaja Laura by Silver Somerio. Somerio's sire, Somerled, represents another influential and important line in Australia. Arfaja Laura is out of Arfaja Nuala, who is by Bronzestone out of Persareh, tail female line to Carlina, through Perfection. This mare had a chestnut colt foal by Rasham who was very well put together and should be one for the future. In addition, Glenda had Arfaja Rishenda, a young mare by Sarafire out of Arfaja Rashma, a full sister to Arfaja Robard and Arfaja Harlan. It will be interesting to see how Rishenda turns out being quite a leggy filly at present but a lovely moving horse. An interesting breeding will be Fenwick Silver Dawn (Fenwick Phantom ex Fenwick Silver Charm) who is in foal to Arfaja Harlan. Another Rasham daughter, Adbarina Pasha also visited Harlan thus line breeding to Rasham which has been a great success for the Arfaja stud.

Glenda had arranged for Ron to join us at her home after lunch. Sometime in your life you are lucky to meet someone special - I can only say that the time spent with Ron can be described as a unique experience in a breeders' lifetime. His knowledge and memory of horses through the years is remarkable. The proof of his ability to breed successfully can be seen in the influence his horses are having in the Crabbet bloodlines of Australia today. We looked at eight albums of photographs of Australian horses from the early imports at Fenwick to the present day. Ron is an excellent photographer and he showed the horses to us in all their glory, particularly the qualities of Sindh and Greylight, two such important horses at Fenwick and in most breeding programmes. Ron has combined these two lines so successfully to cross the gold and silver families and to create many beautiful horses that I saw on this trip. The Crabbet breeders in Australia are indeed fortunate to have Ron Ryan on hand to advise them in their breeding programmes.

I next met Sean Johnson and his father, Ken, at their new Kendra Park Arabian Stud. Sean at 19 is really keen on the horses and has been helping Elizabeth Fawns with showing and

handling. His enthusiasm was catching and Sean has been extremely fortunate in starting his stud with the help of Ron. He has the mare Arfaja Nuala (Bronzitone ex Persareh) on lease from Ron and Nuala is in foal to Arfaja Robard. The Johnsons also leased from Rob and Yvonne Day and Leon Bennett, the mare Veridan Za'aria who has produced two outstanding fillies for Sean. The two year old Silver Somerio filly had real style and was well conformed but it was the yearling, Kendra Park Silvaria by Rasham who was simply breathtaking. Sadly, I was not able to put her straight on a plane to England! This lovely filly had enormous eyes, very broad between them and a beautifully chiselled head with good conformation and action to match. These two will be outstanding foundation mares for Sean's stud and the pressure is on to continue their excellence in the next generation!

Ron's stallion, Arfaja Nassif, by Wellworth Tangiers out of Persareh, an extremely important pedigreed horse, was with the Johnsons and it is good news that he has some mares in foal this year as he has no stock to date.

Rasham

We went a few metres down the road to Elizabeth Fawn's stud. Ron Ryan and Glenda Shrimpton had come up to see the horses as well so after lunch, we were shown the horses. At last I was to see the famous Rasham who although 29 years of age and unsound on one leg due to an injury, was full of life. His head was beautiful - enormous eyes and so fine. His whole bearing was of an exceptionally important horse, which he is. Before lunch, Ron had shown us a video of Rasham and Greylight at one of the major shows in the past and the two stallions were so alike it was fascinating to see. Line breeding to Rasham is definitely a worthwhile exercise and this was proven in the breeding of the famous and ethereal, Arfaja Evangeline. She is just one of those mares you cannot take your eyes off, so feminine with fineness that one sees so rarely. Evangeline is by Arfaja Robard (Rasham x Wellworth Leilani) out of Arfaja Estella (Rasham x Persarah). Estella is back in foal to Robard so perhaps this time a colt will be born.

I had seen and admired Bundara Park Monria at the Convention in 2000 but seeing her again, reminded me of her beauty and importance. She is again by Rasham out of Bronzia who goes back to Electric Silver. This mare is $\frac{3}{4}$ the same breeding as the beautiful young filly, Kendra Park Silvaria seen earlier that day. Another Rasham filly, was Arfaja Madelena, a two year old out of Arfaja Mariella (seen at Roxanne Pidoto's stud). Mares visiting from Pevensey and Moonlite were Pendita, a full sister to Autumn Fire, (seen at the Tucker's stud) so the importance of this line has already been mentioned. The other mare was Pure Silver by Somerled (recently purchased by the Days from Joan Flynn). Somerled was a beautiful grey stallion, by Baz out of Silver Radiance. Somerled is also the sire of Silver Somerio out of Silver Doura. Silver Somerio has two crosses to Electric Silver close up through Silver Radiance and Eldoura. He also picks up the valuable blood of Barada II on both sides together with Indian Magic and Silver Fire through Silver Moonlight.

Moonlite and Pevensey studs

It seems appropriate that the next two studs on the trip were Moonlite and Pevensey, owned respectively by Rob and Yvonne Day and Leon Bennett. Here two studs have joined together and are experimenting with their breeding programmes. They are prepared to travel distances to breed to different stallions and try and get different bloodlines into their programme. Their chief stallion is the bay Sarafire, by Samiri out of Devotion. His pedigree is remarkable in that it goes back to the early Crabbet horses in three generations. Samiri, by Stefan, by Rangoon by Skowronek. His dam, Devotion, is by the famous Risheem and out of Sincerity by the outstanding Shafreyn and out of Fickle. You can see the breeding coming through yet again and the importance of these lines. Sarafire was bought, despite his advanced age, by the studs after being looked at as a possible breeding stallion. Now past his best at 31, he still possesses excellent conformation and a gentle nature. His importance in the Crabbet picture in Australia has been shown already.

The two studs have between them retained several of his offspring, including the stallions, Prince Benay, Snow 'n' Fire and Pevensey Safari. Perhaps it is Sarafire's daughters that hold the key to the future. At Rob and Yvonne's, they have Benay Silver Flight out of Lyndale Razala and the lovely, Zoe Benay out of Veridan Za'aria. Za'aria is also the mother of Prince Benay and the lovely fillies at Sean Johnson's stud. The last mare is Sarah Benay, a bay mare out of Starr Faithful and by Sarafire.

The studs have recently added to their numbers. The grey stallion, Silver Somerio, was purchased a few years back and the studs have some young fillies by him who need time to mature. In 2003, two Somerled daughters were purchased from Joan Flynn. Simply Silver out of

Silver Magic who came in foal and has produced a really lovely filly by Hallelujah and Pure Silver seen at Elizabeth Fawn's. The Days have also been fortunate to have from Ron Ryan the mare, Arfaja Rashma. It will be very interesting to see how these mares slot into their programmes.

At Leon Bennett's Pevensey stud, there is the beautiful Nadaji, by Sarafire out of Bint Sahn, the mare I liked so much at the Tucker's stud. Also by Sarafire are the mares Pevensey Baybe out of Dandaloo Baylanie a promising young mare and Portia Benay out of Santarabia Porfira. Santarabia Porfira is out of Peridot, another Greylight daughter out of Perfection, also tracing in tail female to Carlina.

Another Porfira daughter is Petra Benay, a lovely bay mare, by Magic Prophecy (Magic Carpet ex Arabian Park Dancer). Magic Carpet is another Risheem son out of Sefra, a Fickle daughter. Petra Benay foaled early to produce a very pretty bay colt foal by Dandaloo Kadet who was still a bit wobbly on his legs. His sire, Dandaloo Kadet was sold last year to the States so the two foals I saw by him are important to Australia. Dandaloo Baylanie has also found her home here and her importance has already been mentioned in this article. Pevensey Raisa, the first pure Crabbet foal born at the stud and out of Leon's foundation mare, Dandaloo Karisma (full sister to Dandaloo Baylanie) had been bred to Wonders Never Cease, a son of Volcano, and this filly foal showed much promise. The chestnut stallion Royalund Silver Miracle by Al Borg Jarim (by Greylight) has been leased to bring in the blood of Electronet through his dam, Rossonet (Electronet ex Rossiyan).

Wyreema stud

I was really pleased that at the next stud, Dini Mercieca's Wyreema, I was able to see Volcano. I had admired him from photographs and had been interested to see this charismatic grey stallion. I was not disappointed. His style and wonderful movement were displayed with great energy despite the heat. It was delightful to watch and here I felt was a horse who could really use himself fully. Sadly, Dini is not keen to stand him at stud which is a shame as to date, few of his offspring have lived up to his qualities although this may change in the next generation.

Dini also has the chestnut stallion Bold as Blazes by Al Borg Jarim out of Oxford Wonder and no less than three of Dini's mares are by Al Borg Jarim. These mares are not breeding at present which is a great shame as with the lines getting fewer and fewer, losing these would be a pity for the Crabbet cause.

Inshallah stud

One stud not to be missed on any tour is the Inshallah Stud, owned by Larry and Marilyn O'Dea. Larry and Marilyn, have dedicated their lives to breeding beautiful Crabbet Arabians who have achieved great things in open competition under saddle. Their standards are high, and they have a lovely group of horses slightly differently bred from other studs, but still linking in with the successful lines that I have found on my tour.

The lines used are Crenel, who died in 1999, who was bred and born at Fenwick. He was by the beautiful stallion Baz (Rakib x Barada II) out of Chiffon (Sindh ex Carlina). Again, you can see the tail female line of Carlina producing important stock. Crenel was from his photographs a very beautiful stallion, with an extremely pretty head. I understand that he had the ability to stamp his stock and this can be seen in the Inshallah horses of today. Inshallah Silver Salute out of the mare Fanfaronade who is by Sindh ex Fascination, of the Yusuf line, was quite stunning. He stands very tall and has a beautiful head with good action. He has excellent conformation and Inshallah are using him while their other stallion, Inshallah Silver Echo is leased to Trevor Jacobsen in Tasmania.

There were no fewer than seven mares by Crenel at Inshallah, in particular, the attractive Inshallah Silver Image, out of Fenwick Persahri and Inshallah Signature, a beautiful bay mare with ground covering action, out of Inshallah Tranquility. A lovely chestnut colt, Inshallah Echos Man, was a favourite with me for his style and presence. He is by Inshallah Silver Echo out of Inshallah Silver Image so is a double cross to Crenel. Inshallah Silver Echo is out of Dandaloo Sissi, a full sister to Dandaloo Baylanie. The Crenel offspring are now being crossed with the O'Dea's other stallion, Tommie, a lovely bay of 29 years of age. He is by Banderol, another son of Sindh out of Balsora tail female to Barada II, out of Briolette, (Greylight ex Brilliant) and again to Barada II through Bind'A this time, so the lines are fairly close in some respects and once again highlighting the cross of Greylight and Sindh.

The bay colt foal by Dandaloo Kadet out of the mare Inshallah Silver Elysiam by Tommie is important – the only foal on the ground so far at Inshallah, but they expect more in the new year. There are too many Inshallah horses to mention here that have competed successfully in the show ring in Australia and others that are starting up in endurance. I saw Inshallah Encore at the 2000 Convention performing dressage to a very high standard. Arabians are good at dressage and it was good to see Crabbet horses performing at this high level.

Frank Murphy, brother to Marilyn O'Dea, has now retired but he retains a few Crabbet horses mainly similar lines to the O'Dea's as he was able to use their stallions and is a great fan of Crenel. He has Erin Park Thor, a chestnut son of Crenel out of the mare Bremervale Khali-Khan, who goes back in tail female to Nuralina and has such illustrious names in her pedigree as Electric Silver, Riffal, Silver Drift and Silver Gilt among others. The bay mare Fenwick Rosanna had an attractive foal at foot by Erin Park Thor who looks very promising. Frank also had a full sister to Erin Park Thor, a grey, Erin Park Kate.

Magic Carpet

Before going to Australia, I was keen to see horses by Magic Carpet and I was able to do so at the next stud, owned by Anne Maher and Kevin Beaumont who had recently moved to Colo Heights, a valley in the National Trust area of Colo Forest. Magic Carpet is another Risheem son, out of Sefra who is by the Indian Magic son, Rosfennick out of the famous Fickle. His dam is Arabian Park Dancer by Banderol out of Ballerina (Shafreyn ex Baksheesh), so once again Barada in tail female. Anne has been riding Magic Prophecy and has officially qualified him as an endurance horse. To qualify in Australia and get your yellow book, you have to complete two 80Km rides and three training rides and be vetted clean at all events. Although looking a little on the lean side, Magic Prophecy, shows good qualities and excellent conformation that would blend well with other breeding programmes.

Anne also has the mare Bernadine by Arabian Park Phaeton out of Priscilla, another valuable line and a two year old grey filly, Dancing Magic by Magic Prophecy. The colt, Magic Prague, although tall and elegant needs time to develop before reaching maturity. He is by Bern ex Dreaming Magic.

Wentworth Estate

About three hours from Sydney is a new Crabbet stud which is essential on any tour of Australia. Fred and Fiona Seymore have bought a farm in an idyllic location near Karuah, north of Newcastle, where they plan a large Crabbet stud based on the lines of Ron Ryan's Arfaja Arabians. They have been very fortunate in that they have been able to acquire eleven of these famous horses to start them on their way. They have also been fortunate to meet Jennie Stuart who is their manager and helping them in the setting up of the stud. Jennie was responsible for the transportation of the horses to their new home and her knowledge and wonderful natural horsemanship methods of training should be a great bonus for the stud. Situated in an area where the name "Wentworth" is used for many sites, it seemed appropriate that the estate should be called "Wentworth Estate" to tie in with what they are trying to do.

The leading light of the stud is the grey stallion, Arfaja Robard. Bred by Ron, "Robbie" by Rasham out of Wellworth Leilani, is a horse that you can't take your eyes off. He has the presence and bearing of a special Arabian, and does not need any special training to give the aura of being important. On arrival at the stud, we were shown the stallions before dark. It had been a long wait to see Robard and I was not disappointed.

Jennie had bought with her Arfaja Danyon a Silver Somerio son out of Wellworth Leilani. I had previously seen this stallion in 2000 and I thought he had matured since then. He put on a lovely show. Two of Robard's sons, Arfaja Starfire out of Arfaja Moonfire and Arfaja Alexi out of Arfaja Alicia were then trotted out. These two colts showed off with great style and it will be interesting to see how they develop later.

Jennie Stuart had tragically lost Fenwick Panache in 2002 so it was very good to see his son, Silver Eminence, out of Hajarlee. This grey colt showed much likeness to his sire and moved with great style.

The next morning we went around the paddocks to watch the stallions and colts trotting and showing off, before heading off to see the youngstock and the mares in the fields. Photographs of grey mares all together in a pasture create a magical picture but to be able to see a field of Crabbet grey mares created an unforgettable image. By Rasham, there were the mares,

Rasheema (ex Raseema) and Arfaja Natasha (ex Persarah) and the beautiful yearling filly, with a classic head and enormous eyes, Arfaja Majella out of Arfaja Mariella.

Among the illustrious names collected here were the famous mares Persareh (by Sardonyx ex Perfection), Eveeta by Fenwick Panache (ex Nakeeda) who is in foal to Arfaja Danyon, and Sarachet (by Panache ex Sarella). In addition, there were two Silver Somerio daughters, Hajarlee (ex Shahwan Park Heights) and Arfaja Silver Mist (ex Arfaja Rashma seen earlier at the Days). Arfaja Ajrami, a rose grey mare, by Arfaja Robard out of Meadow View Nicholette, contains 43 crosses to Skowronek. The grey mare Nakeeda (by Magic Myth ex Cynara) had a free moving colt by Arfaja Danyon and the mare Meadow View Virginia (by Sarafire ex Meadow View Silver), a typey bay mare, was due to foal in the new year to Riamus. Two interesting young fillies, the chestnut Ashualli (by Arfaja Danyon ex Eveeta) and Silver 'n' Lace (by Fenwick Panache ex Harjarlee) completed the picture here.

The beautiful scenery, shrubs and wildlife, including wallabies jumping around made this stud an oasis of calmness. The horses seemed very contented and the natural pastures enable them to lead a normal horse life and the emphasis is on as natural a method as possible. The stud hopes to hold clinics on a variety of subjects including training, which I would recommend attending. I believe this stud will go far and we wish them well.

Paywit stud

The last stud of this great trip was back at Melbourne. With one day left, I was able to visit the Paywit Stud owned by Nick and Dorothy Byrnes. Recently relocated to a larger acreage, and set among the beautiful hills near Trafalgar, the Paywit Stud is also home to four mares owned by Camille Rogers who drove us down from Melbourne. The breeding here has direct lines from Fenwick. The grey stallion, Fenwick Silver Star by Fenwick Phantom ex Fenwick Silver Spangle was so impressive, we wondered why there was no stock by him on the ground. However, Dorothy explained that they had been using her special chestnut stallion, Rasindh who had tragically died the previous year. Dorothy assures me that Silver Star was to be used on most of her mares this year and not a moment too soon!

Fenwick Phantom, is by Greylight out of Fascination, a lovely mare and Fenwick Silver Star's mother, Fenwick Silver Spangle goes back to Royal Radiance and hence Silver Gilt so this stallion is from the sought after Hamdanieh Simrieh strain.

Four mares at Paywit belong to Camille Rogers, including the mare Fair Beginning by Sardonyx ex Vanity Fair going back to Barada II, and Meadow View Nicol Star.

Dorothy's main mare, Fenwick Starstruck, is a grey tracing back to the lovely Nejmet Es Subh in tail female through Fenwick Starlight. Starstruck is by Fenwick Rendevous. Dorothy has quite a few mares by her stallion, Fenwick Rasindh and of note were Paywit Sun Sparkle and her full sister Paywit Sun Glint.

Back to the UK

There were many studs I would have liked to see but they will have to wait for another year. It was wonderful to see the dedication to the Crabbet cause and I wish all the breeders in Australia much success in their programmes for 2004. Hopefully some of these horses will be presented at the Crabbet Convention to be held in Queensland in 2005 and I look forward to meeting everyone again.

This memorable trip reemphasised to me the importance of breeding 100% Crabbet Arabians. It is my desire to encourage breeders in the UK to realise that time is running out to save the horses in their 100% form in their homeland. It is my belief that these horses are not of historical interest to be abandoned and crossed with other lines but they are worth preserving because they represent a vivid insight into the characteristics of the desert horses so much admired by the Blunts.

By way of postscript, I should say, that since writing the above, I have learned with great sadness that Rasham has died. I feel even more honoured to have seen him, and am heartened to know that his dynasty lives on in Australia.