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Luso news

THE LUSITANO BREED SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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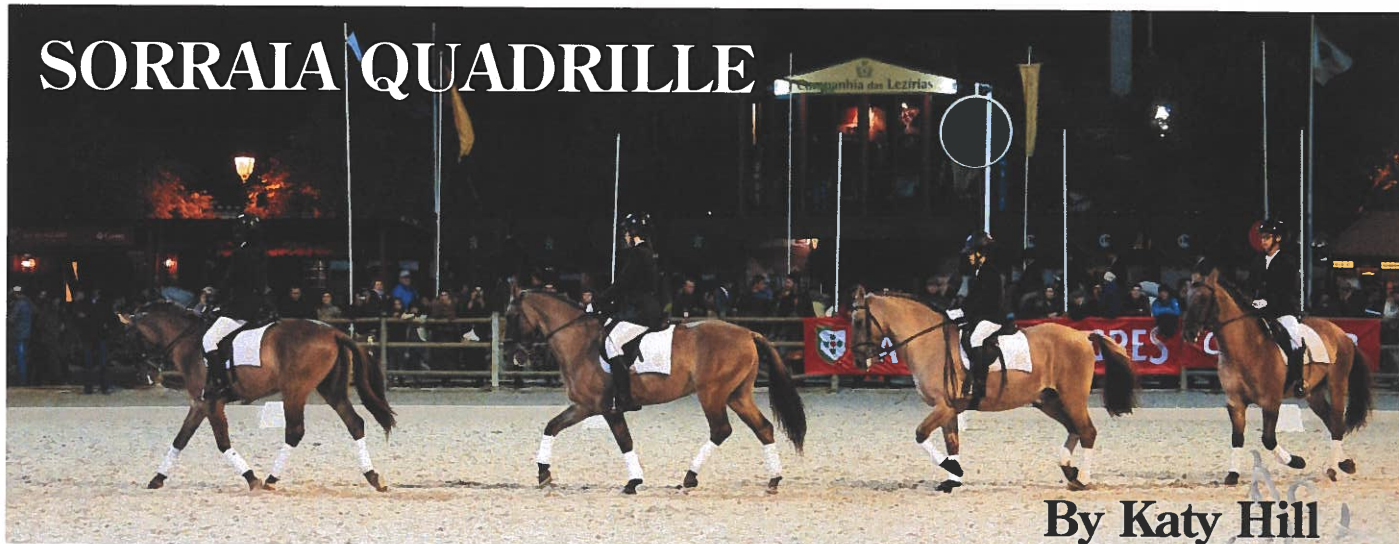
SHOW REPORTS

GOLEGÃ
THE SORRAIA QUADRILLE
TEAM GB WORKING EQUITATION IN AUSTRIA

FREE TO MEMBERS OF THE LBSGB



SORRAIA QUADRILLE



I first heard about the rare and endangered Sorraia horses of Portugal a few years ago from a friend, Nuno Marques, who I first met some years ago while working at Santo André Lusitanos, (STAL), and having lessons from António Borba (Master of the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art). António regularly sent clients and colleagues to Casal Branco, in Almeirim, for lessons with Nuno who, after obtaining his degree in Equiculture (Horse Breeding and Equitation), had worked with him for five years. He was highly regarded as a talented, inspirational teacher, who was very good at building riders' confidence and making lessons fun, whatever the level.

As my husband and I and a friend returned to both STAL and Casal Branco several times for lessons over the years we stayed in touch with Nuno, and when he moved into a new role managing and training the Sorraia horses at the Escola Superior Agrária de Santarém (ESAS) in 2015, we were very pleased for him. With his background, we thought it was great that he would be able to reach so many young students working with these beautiful horses. At Santarém he teaches as well as facilitates equine therapy sessions, using only Sorraia stallions that are part of the conservation programme run by Professor António Pedro Andrade Vicente, PhD, and veterinarian Professor Paula Maria Augusto de Azevedo, Principal of ESAS. I have long felt that it would be great to share information on these wonderful horses with members of the Lusitano Breed Society of GB.

Sorraia horses are a small, compact horse, no smaller than 14.2hh in height, of a distinctive grullo or dun colour. They have some very primitive characteristics, such as dorsal stripes, bi-coloured manes and tails, and occasionally zebra stripes on their legs, yet they bear a striking resemblance to Lusitanos in the way they look and move, such as their ability to collect. It is Nuno's belief that, if well selected and properly trained and ridden, like Lusitanos, Sorraia horses could achieve great things. The team at Santarém has been working hard to breed and raise the profile of these beautiful horses, so it was very exciting to be invited to come and watch them perform a quadrille at Golegã for the first time.

On the eve of São Martinho (St Martin's Day), which fell on a Friday this year, we arranged to meet Nuno and his students at the Golegã stables, which is about a kilometre and a half from the main arena. The plan was to watch the preparations and then walk with the horses and riders to the main arena. Nuno and the students appeared very relaxed, calm and happy as they plaited, groomed and bandaged the horses expertly. Within a couple of hours four stunning Sorraia stallions had



emerged from their stables, looking far more like dressage Lusitanos than primitive wild horses!



As the light faded we accompanied Nuno, Paula, and the four elegantly turned-out riders: two girls and two boys, aged 17, 17, 10 and 14 respectively, and their horses into Golegã via the back streets. I was so impressed at how calmly they coped with the traffic, noise, smells and crowds in the narrow streets, and, as we reached the main arena, even more impressed to see the young riders and horses instructed by Nuno to go out into the Largo da Feira de São Martinho, to ride with all the other



horses, riders and carriages before the quadrille! That really must have taken some courage from both horses and riders, as well as Nuno!



As 7pm approached, the horses and riders reappeared, still looking calm. Nuno wiped some specks of foam off of the horses and soon the gates were opened and in they rode. It was such a lovely atmosphere on the eve of São Martinho, with a very good crowd.



The display went very smoothly to music from Star Wars and The Pink Panther, for a bit of added humour, and the riders seemed to really enjoy themselves. As they left the arena they were smiling, and it was very clear to all of us and their families what a huge achievement it had been.

After the event I asked each rider how they felt about riding at Golegã, and this is what they said:



'Before the show in Golegã, I was feeling a little nervous because a lot of people would see and it was my first time to make a show in a fair as important as this. In the end I can say that I was more nervous than at the beginning. It seems a little silly but that's the truth, because after the show, in my case, the adrenaline came in full force!' **Lead rider, Beatriz Alexandre Duarte Gomez, aged 17, on É-Unico.**

When asked to sum up the whole experience in one word, Beatriz chose the word, *'Inspiration'*.



'Before the show in Golegã I thought I would be very nervous but I wasn't because I didn't have the notion of how important and big the show would be. Only when we entered the arena and the silence was so intense did I understand how important it was. In the end I was really happy because the group did a great show and we represented our school quite well, and our Sorraias, and in the end that is the most significant thing.' **Second rider, Beatriz Roberto Madeira de Almeida Raimundo, aged 17, riding Zoado.**

**Photography: Aurelio Grillo
Jo Monck
Katy Hill**



'It was the first time I went to Golegã on a horseback. I loved it! I was a little nervous, because the show was in such an important event. Afterwards I felt really happy. The experience in Golegã was wonderful!!!' **Third (and youngest) rider, Francisco Maria Gonçalves Fernandes Griné Antunes, aged 10, on Ziano.**



'Before the show I was a little nervous because it's a show with a big importance, but after the show I could relax because the show had gone well.' **Final rider, Pedro Miguel Alves Ferreira, aged 14, on Frasquete.**

And how did their trainer feel?



'I feel very happy with the horses and with their evolution and character. They have shown how big they can be. As for the students, I feel very proud of all the dedication, effort and love they have put into this work since the first day.'

Nuno Alexandre Reis Marques.

Nuno told me that he now plans to raise the level of exercises being shown by the Sorraia horses and their riders at public displays in order to give the breed as much exposure as possible, and to ensure these amazing horses never disappear.

In the next issue of Luso News, Katy explores the Sorraia conservation and breeding programme at the Escola Superior Agrária de Santarém.