



*Cheiron: The International Journal of
Equine and Equestrian History*
Vol. 3, Issue 2/2023
© The Authors 2023
Available online at
<http://trivent-publishing.eu/>

The Royal Mares: Imagining a Race (Part Two)

Miriam A Bibby

Abstract

In the years since their first appearance in Cheny's Racing Calendar of 1743, a group of celebrated yet vague beings, the Royal Mares, have from time to time attracted scholarly attention. Suggested to be the foundation mares of the Thoroughbred breed, they have subsequently been variously described as imported mares, as mares bred on the island of Britain, or a mixture of both. This paper explores the origins and progress of the story, around which mythology has accumulated, showing that there is a core of truth within the legend of imported mares, but that certain aspects of the historiography have been influenced by unreliable sources. The evidence for imported horses from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century is also examined in depth. Part I having examined the evidence up until the seizure of the horses (and other goods) of Charles I by the Parliamentary commissioners, Part 2 commences in the aftermath of the regicide and events under Commonwealth rule.²

DOI: 10.22618/TP.Cheiron.20233.2.216004

CHEIRON is published by Trivent Publishing



² NB: in part 1 of the Royal Mares, footnote 3 indicated that Richard Nash suggested the Byerley Turk was foaled in Co. Durham. This is an error, as the correct location of Yorkshire, included in the main body of the paper, is referenced in Nash's work.

This is an Open Access article distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) license, which permits others to copy or share the article, provided original work is properly cited and that this is not done for commercial purposes. Users may not remix, transform, or build upon the material and may not distribute the modified material (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

The Royal Mares: Imagining a Race (Part Two)

Miriam A Bibby¹

Abstract

In the years since their first appearance in Cheney's Racing Calendar of 1743, a group of celebrated yet vague beings, the Royal Mares, have from time to time attracted scholarly attention. Suggested to be the foundation mares of the Thoroughbred breed, they have subsequently been variously described as imported mares, as mares bred on the island of Britain, or a mixture of both. This paper explores the origins and progress of the story, around which mythology has accumulated, showing that there is a core of truth within the legend of imported mares, but that certain aspects of the historiography have been influenced by unreliable sources. The evidence for imported horses from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century is also examined in depth. Part I having examined the evidence up until the seizure of the horses (and other goods) of Charles I by the Parliamentary commissioners, Part 2 commences in the aftermath of the regicide and events under Commonwealth rule.²

I. Aftermath of the itinerary and Hore's altered evidence

With the itinerary of Charles I's horses, and his execution, royal horse breeding came to an end, and the horses were dispersed. Prior, having examined the Calendar of State Papers relating to the dispersal, and including some commentary from this in his book, suggested that "Cromwell was apparently anxious to preserve the breed of Tutbury. Traditionally he was fond of horses, and in any case he would have recognised the importance of encouraging horse breeding if only for military purposes."³ As will shortly be discussed, Cromwell was interested in horses beyond breeding them "for military purposes." Prior, though having access to key, indeed critical, documentation for elite horse breeding from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, was not above making generalised and unsubstantiated comments, and to deferring to authorities who frequently had their own interests, commercial and otherwise, in the narrative. (See A Cautionary Note or Four, in part 3 of this series.)

¹ President, Equine History Collective; co-editor-in-chief, *Cheiron*; Affiliate, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow

² NB: in part 1 of the Royal Mares, footnote 3 indicated that Richard Nash suggested the Byerley Turk was foaled in Co. Durham. This is an error, as the correct location of Yorkshire, included in the main body of the paper, is referenced in Nash's work.

³ Prior, *Royal Studs*, 54.

Hore, meanwhile, avers that six of “the best horses in Titbury race” were to be given to Colonel Jones along with a pension in gratitude for his “recent victory over the forces of the Duke of Ormond in Ireland,” citing the Earl of Leicester’s Journal as source for this information.⁴ Hore also suggests that some of Cromwell’s commissioners had been requested to select six of the best Tutbury horses for “the Lord General” [Cromwell].⁵ Finally, Hore further notes that horses from the Tutbury race acquired by Lord Colpeper were given back to the king at Restoration, and taken to the Royal Stud at Hampton Court, “where the horses of Cromwell, seized by the Crown, were already located.”⁶ This last statement does not, however, correspond with the reality of the situation at Charles II’s Restoration as described by Prior and others (see below). For the purposes of this paper, it should be said that none of these comments by Hore has been cross-referenced with other sources, a necessary task when using Hore as a source. His work is not totally unreliable but it must be cross-referenced and cited with extreme caution.

II. Oliver Cromwell’s overlooked contribution

The Roundheads, as everyone knows thanks to Sellar and Yeatman, were “right but repulsive” while the Royalists were “wrong but romantic.” Not top-level academic analysis perhaps, yet one wonders whether a particle or two of this entertaining summary has not permeated the debate around the Lord Protector’s own interest in horses. Oliver Cromwell was a horseman, and an astute assessor of horses, even though he may have been willing to pay “over the odds” for imports of unknown quality. While the details of the dispersal of the Royal Stud are not known, it does not seem unlikely that some of the mares of Charles I would come into his ownership after the king’s property was distributed after his execution. Cromwell’s interest in horses and horse breeding is reasonably well-documented, and that interest included his attempt to augment and improve his own studs by importing Barb and Arab horses. Yet this fact, so significant to equine historians, often receives only passing interest in biographies and histories of his life and time. The significance is that Cromwell’s interest marks the first *well-documented* attempts to import Arab, or Arabian horses, into Britain, and likely the first *plausibly documented arrival* of Arabians, or at least one “Arabian” stallion. However, since this stallion may later appear as a “Turk,” it is questionable whether it can justifiably be called Arabian even though that is clearly what Cromwell was requesting. Patrick Little provides an excellent analysis of Cromwell’s horse breeding programme, which he describes quite appropriately as “Cromwell’s Arabian enterprise.”⁷ Further, the exchange of horses

⁴ Hore, *Newmarke*, Volume II, 171.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 173. Why is it six on both occasions?

⁶ *Ibidem*, 172.

⁷ Patrick Little, “Uncovering a protectoral stud: horses and horsebreeding at the court of Oliver Cromwell, 1653–8,” *Historical Research*, vol. 82/216 May 2009, 265. Whether or not these were Arabians as understood by the term today, or were perhaps Turkoman horses, closer to the modern Akhal-Teke or Turkmenian horse, is debatable.

with some of England's most aristocratic, and not-necessarily pro-Commonwealth families, was part of his horse breeding activity.⁸

Cromwell indubitably "sent abroad" various of his officers to obtain "Foreign Highbred Horses and Mares for Breeding," the term ascribed to Charles II, and at least one Barb mare was acquired, with the intention of being kept as a brood mare.⁹ The orders appear in the Papers of State for the period. The details of the acquisition, outlined by Little, reveal the difficulties of the task of procuring these imports. Cromwell also owned a horse known as "The Dun Arabian." The purpose of Cromwell's programme is frequently viewed as being the improvement of horses for light cavalry use, rather than horse racing, and horse racing was banned under Cromwell in 1654. Yet his attitude towards racing was more pragmatic and complex, viewing races not as unlawful games or sports, but rather as potentially seditious events. As Little points out, it is the case that "(e)ven when providing examples of Cromwell and his supporters enjoying racing, historians such as Derek Hirst seem to think that there is something peculiarly royalist about the turf."¹⁰ It would appear that after the Restoration, perhaps long after the Restoration, attempts were made to attach this Cromwellian enterprise to Charles II, thus adding to the legend of Charles II as the founder of racing and the Thoroughbred racehorse as we know them today. This would obviously have been far more palatable to those who considered themselves Royalists and loyalists in later reigns too.

Was Cheney the creator of this new mythology? Currently it would appear so. In any case, Oliver Cromwell's imports, other than the stallion that became known as Place's White Turk, do not appear to have had lasting influence on horse breeding in Britain. Indeed, upon Restoration, "(t)he Cromwellian mission to import Arabian horses to enrich the bloodstock of England had apparently failed. After 1660, the Arabian horse returned to being an exotic creature, treated with a mixture of suspicion and wonderment, while the approved breeds remained the Spanish Horse and the Barb."¹¹ Patrick Little suggests that the apparent collapse of Cromwell's project may in part be due to an outbreak of disease in the Lord Protector's stables.¹² It is also interesting to speculate whether Cromwell's desire to build his own breed of "improved" horses reflects his desire to rule in monarchic style and adopt the behaviour and attributes of monarchy. His equestrian portraiture is certainly heavily influenced by that of his royal predecessors.

III. Charles II: outsourcing his studs

As Patrick Little has shown, the idea that horse breeding and racing fell into decline under Cromwell is not the case. Nor was it true that Charles II imported "Highbred Horses and Mares for Breeding" in order to develop a racehorse breeding programme. What is known is that Charles II was interested in racing, raced himself

⁸ *Ibidem*, 266.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 259.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 254.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 264.

¹² *Ibidem*.

at Newmarket, and was watching small horses, likely Galloways, at the last race he attended, which was illustrated in a memorial to the late king by Francis Barlow.¹³ However, at the start of his reign, it is unclear what, if anything, he had left to race with.

It is also well-documented that Charles II effectively “outsourced” his own horse breeding programme to others. In a very short space of time after his return, Charles II issued Letters Patent requesting that James Darcy, or D’Arcy, a member of the D’Arcy-Conyers family of Yorkshire, be made “Master of the Studd or Surveyor of our Race at Tutbury in Our County of Stafford.” This is not at all surprising. Northern horse breeders such as the Darcy family and the Fenwicks were some of the best in the country. A loyal Yorkshireman was a godsend to the monarch, since most Yorkshire families had horses in the blood, metaphorically speaking, as well as the stable. Darcy had married well too, the daughter of Sir Marmaduke Wyvill, thus obtaining the estate of Sedbury, where he bred his own horses. The north understood horses, and had done for centuries, since the supply of horses for border wars was essential to both the Scots and the English. Yorkshire in particular had gained a reputation for the quality of its horses, and this was later remarked upon by Daniel Defoe in his (admittedly partly fictional) account of his tour through the island of Britain.¹⁴ Prior notes that the original Letters Patent, dated June 6, 1660, are not now in the Public Record Office. However, twelve years later apparently, a further Deed of Appointment, which was kept in private hands and Prior had seen, was made as follows:

Charles R. Our Will and Pleasure is That you forthwith prepare a Bill for our Royall Signature conteyning a Graunt of the Place or Office of Master of the Studd or Surveyor of our Race at Tutbury in Our County of Stafford unto Our trusty and welbeloved James Darcy Esq. To have and to hold the same during his life together with all Fees Privileges and Perquisits thereunto belonging, and in as full and ample manner as Sir John Fenwick or any other person formerly enjoyed the said Office. And for so doing this shall be your Warrant.
Given at Our Court at Whitehall this 6th day of June in the twelwe year of Our Reigne.¹⁵

The document was signed by Edward Nicholas, Secretary of State. It can also now be seen whence came the references to Wyvill and Fenwick in Cheny’s original report! Sir John Fenwick is referenced in the Deed of Appointment as a former “Master of the Studd” and a Wyvill, albeit Marmaduke, and not Christopher, was Darcy’s father-in-law.

¹³ David Oldrey, *The Heath and the Horse: A History of Racing and Art on Newmarket Heath*, ed. David Oldrey, Tim Cox and Richard Nash (I.B. Tauris, London, 2016), 26, 29. See also Miriam Bibby, Galloway racehorses: the “Noble Brutes” racing before Charles II in 1684? <https://historyonhorseback.com/2022/04/18/galloway-racehorses-the-noble-bruites-racing-before-charles-ii-in-1684/>

¹⁴ Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 512.

¹⁵ Prior, *Royal Studs*, 88. Hereafter referred to in this paper as Darcy, for convenience.

What is interesting about this (apart from the fact that it may simply be dated the twelfth year of Charles II's reign because it includes the interregnum period, and Charles II had been crowned in Scotland at the age of 18, therefore the date of 1660 is in fact accurate), is that it is clear from further documentation that when James Darcy first visited the Tutbury Race shortly after his original appointment, he found it "so despoiled that it was now useless for a stud, and accordingly he put forward an alternative scheme for His Majesty's consideration."¹⁶ The proposal he suggested was that as "his Majesty hath no Race [stud], Tutbury being made incapable of it," he would provide "twelve extraordinary good colts" for eight hundred pounds per annum, and if "His Majesty please to have but six Colts yearly, I'll take four hundred pounds for the charge of the Race, and two hundred pounds fee."¹⁷ Darcy also requested £200 per annum for "myself and grooms."¹⁸

As Darcy pointed out, his offer was a good deal, since the Crown had previously been paying £1200 - £1500 for the role of "Master of his Studs," and the king would no longer have to pay out for mares, as they would come from Darcy's own stock, as would the stallions, of which he would keep two. This is what Charles accepted: "in consideration of eight hundred pounds yearly paid unto him during our pleasure, Hee should out of his ground and Breed of Mares annually serve unto Our stable twelve choice horses, without any further charge unto us."¹⁹ So James Darcy was supplying the colts and fillies, "twelve choice horses," bred from his own mares at his own breeding grounds at Sedbury in Yorkshire. Despite rumours that some horses, mares, and geldings belonging to Charles I had survived the war and Commonwealth, according to Prior this turned out not to be true, and "the King, who unlike his Father, had never seen his beautiful estate of Tutbury, seemed to display no further interest in it now the stud had been dispersed."²⁰ Hore includes a reference to a command that on May 26 1660, "the Sergeant at Arms forthwith seiz all the goods of such persons as sat as Judges upon the late King, and that the seven horses of *Oliver Cromwell* said to be the best in *England*, and such other horses are seized of" were to be put into the service of the king. This Hore attributes to *The Parliamentary Intelligencer* of 21-28 May.²¹ However, this has not been verified for this paper by secondary referencing, and in any case, it does not provide proof that any horses were actually "seized." The acceptance of the Darcy offer would seem to suggest they were not, and that there were no horses found to "seiz."

¹⁶ Ibidem, 90.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 91.

²⁰ Ibidem, 92.

²¹ Hore, *Newmarket* Volume II, 213. A tale relating to the "Coffin Mare," alleged to have belonged to Cromwell, turns up in various places: "THE COFFIN MARE: a daughter of the Selaby Turk,—a dau. of Mr. Place's White Turk, 'was stolen out of the Lord Protector's stud; and, though strict search was made and a great reward offered for her, no account could be had, Mr. Place having kept her closely secreted in a cellar till the death of Cromwell.' Hence her name." Theo Taunton, *Famous Horses with Portraits, Pedigrees, Principal Performances, Descriptions of Races and Various Interesting Items* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston and Company, 1901), 9.

Interestingly, Richard Nash dates Darcy's proposal to the sixth year of Charles's reign, at a time the king was inaugurating new plates to be awarded for racing, though on what basis Nash makes this claim is unclear.²² Prior certainly dated Darcy's Letters Patent to June of the year of the Restoration, which occurred in May 1660, but only provided evidence for a document he had seen dated to the "twelfth year" of Charles's reign, which he assumes was the real date (more likely to be, as suggested earlier, that the interregnum was included as part of the reign). Nash further suggests that "Darcy had managed to supply himself with a good number of 'Royal Mares'. Almost certainly, these mares descended from those kept in the Royal Stud (either Hampton Court or Tutbury) at the time of the English Revolution," and also suggests that the "cost of rebuilding a significant racing stud from scratch would have been far greater."²³ However, there is no evidence to suggest that previous kings (or Cromwell) had ever had a stud devoted *solely* to racing, nor does Darcy's offer specifically relate to horses for racing, apparently, just "extraordinary good colts," or "choice horses."

Moreover, the suggestion that Darcy had in his ownership mares that had previously belonged to King Charles I does not match with either Prior or Little's accounts. These further indicate that nothing remained of the royal horses acquired by Cromwell's administration by the time the king returned. Plus, of course, there are Darcy's own comments on finding the Tutbury Race "so despoiled that it was now useless for a stud." If his own mares really were descendants of royal ones, would this not have been referenced in some way in the documentation at that time? That would surely have been a further attraction of Darcy's offer to the king. On the other hand, if they were mares that had been taken from the Royal Studs, or their descendants, could not the king have simply appropriated them as his own? However, Prior does make a very generalised comment about "any mares mainly of Barb descent that the D'arcy family had presumably acquired at the break up of the Royal Stud" being potentially useful crosses with the "White Turk," sometimes identified conjecturally as the Cromwellian import that came to be owned by Rowland Place, and was eventually standing at stud at Dinsdale in Yorkshire.²⁴ No firm evidence is therefore available to support the Darcy acquisition of mares that had previously been in royal studs and it remains conjectural.

The Darcy family had "good form" with royalty, however, dating at least as far back as the reign of Henry VIII. During the Dissolution, Sir Arthur D'Arcy had written to Thomas Cromwell about the quality of the pasture at Jervaulx Abbey, adding further that: "For surely the breed of Jervaulx for horses was the tried breed in the North, the stallions and mares well sorted. I think in no realm should be found the likes to them. For there is large and high grounds for the summer, and in winter woods and low grounds to serve them."²⁵ Anthony Dent suggested that the "trydd breed" of the north, as it appears in the original documentation, and in Shakespeare's

²² Nash, *England's Fortress*, 239.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Prior, *Royal Studs*, 82.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 3. The source cited in Prior is a Surtees Society publication, *Memorials of Fountains Abbey* Vol I, 190.

Henry VIII as “the best breed in the north,” was the Galloway, or something very like it.²⁶ Horses from Galloway may very well have contributed to the quality of the horses produced by this northern religious foundation. However, the producers of the Galloway horse itself, in Galloway, are currently far more difficult to discover or define. This may be, as suggested in part one of this series, because at least some of them were Gaelic-speaking, and therefore currently have no voice in the Thoroughbred discourse, which is still dominated by theories and academic debate about the relationship between largely southern English aristocracy and their imported horses.²⁷

It is clear, however, that there were no specifically imported Royal Mares during the reign of Charles II, just largely Yorkshire-bred ones, whether the descendants of mares owned by previous monarchs or not. James Darcy died in 1673, and while his son, also James, received honours under subsequent monarchs, he was not given the role of Master of the Royal Studs. An interesting development occurred in the reign of William III, when James Darcy the younger applied to the monarch to clear an outstanding debt which had been in place prior to the death of his father. In lieu of back payment, Darcy suggested that the king:

either grant him a yearly pension of two hundred pounds per annum for five years, or (now your Royal Fleet [is] lying in the Mediterranean) that your Majesty would give orders that good Barbary or Arabian horses be sent for and that he may have six horses to supply the great number of breeding mares which your petitioner hath.

For in all England he cannot be furnished with good stallions but what are of the same kind [i.e., of D’arcy blood] and the hazard of venturing eight hundred or a thousand pounds by the Merchants for such horses he cannot undergo, considering the great debts upon his estate.²⁸

This suggests that the younger James still had access to many good mares, but probably not to stallions. He was horse-rich but cash poor. His words suggest all the good stallions in England were essentially Darcy stallions, and they were now too closely related to one another. This only confirms the unlikeliness of the northern horse breeders ever having had Arab, or any other purely “Oriental” studs in the days of Charles I or the Commonwealth. The relatively small number of stallions available would have resulted in dangerous inbreeding, and this also reveals that there was apparently no regular supply of stallions from beyond the island throughout the

²⁶ Anthony Dent, “Creation of a Breed,” *Equi* 22, June/July 1984, 18.

²⁷ See for instance Donna Landry, *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), *passim*. For an alternative view, see Bibby, *Invisible Ancestor*, forthcoming. Alexander Mackay-Smith tends to view the major studs in the north as Hobby-breeding studs, which may have an element of truth but is not an entirely satisfactory description. Alexander Mackay-Smith, *Speed and the Thoroughbred: The Complete History* (Lanham: The Derrydale Press, 2000), *passim*. This may be in part due to the absence of information about the Galloway from the debate until recently.

²⁸ Prior, *Royal Studs*, 95.

period 1616-1660. Since Charles II did not apparently import any stallions, or at least none with any lasting influence, this clearly remained the case for even longer.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hore unequivocally states that “(t)he facetious monarch [Charles II] was likewise a breeder of race-horses, having imported mares from Barbary, and others of the most fashionable Eastern strains, which were selected by the best judges, whom he sent abroad for that purpose, regardless of expense. These were designated as Royal Mares, and appear as such in the stud - book to this day.” Equally unsurprisingly, other than the much later stud book, no other evidence is provided.²⁹ However, in typical Hore style, he does not linger over the tale, and quickly moves on to an exposition of the king’s habit of “sauntering.”

IV. If not mares, then imported stallions/horses in the reign of Charles II?

There is evidence that Charles II did import one stallion, or at least one horse, through a reference in Prior, cited in Donna Landry’s *Noble Brutes*, relating to Heneage Finch, Earl of Winchilsea and ambassador to Constantinople, who was allegedly tasked with finding suitable horses.³⁰ Landry also notes that Prior had included this well documented importation of at least one horse in his 1924 volume, but that by the time of publication of his 1935 volume on the Royal Studs, he “rather over-stated” the case against Charles being an importer.³¹ In his 1924 work (in which as previously noted in this series, Prior had enthusiastically endorsed Hore’s invention of the “Arabian Studs” of Newcastle and Fenwick), Prior provided two pages of credible information about Winchilsea’s possible task. He notes a letter from Winchilsea to the King in August 1663, which advised him that he was sending him “an Arabian horse, the best he can procure.”³² The horse appeared to arrive, as shown in a letter from Ricaut, Winchilsea’s secretary, who had also spent time preparing the horse so that he was at his best: “This weeke I presented His Majestie from your lordship with the horse [sic] ...the King was highly delighted with the horse...”³³ The animal, which was presented at St James’s Park, had survived the sea voyage well, and was to be sent to Newmarket, “for the King hath a great opinion that hee is very fleet.”³⁴ A few years later, Earl Winchilsea was writing to Count Leslie of the difficulty of procuring any horses even for the king, whether Arabs from his “correspondent” in Aleppo or others. He was to try to obtain some of the “Turcoman breed” instead, but the tone of his letter was not optimistic.³⁵

In contrast, in 1935 Prior wrote in his preface to the Royal Studs that “The King [Charles II] sent neither the Master of the Horse, or any other high personage, on such a mission [ie to procure horses and mares for breeding], and there were no importations of horses of any moment during his reign, the one or two that came to

²⁹ J.P. Hore, *The History of Newmarket and the Annals of the Turf* Volume III (London: A.H. Baily and Co, 1886), 94.

³⁰ Landry, *Noble Brutes*, 85.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 88-9.

³² Prior, *Early Records*, 162.

³³ *Ibidem*, 162-3.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 163.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

this country being merely presents from the East. It is true that the king told Lord Winchilsea, our Ambassador at Constantinople, to try and get him some Arabian horses, but he did not succeed in obtaining them.”³⁶

This does seem, as Landry suggests, to contradict his earlier work. However, examining it further reveals that his latter comment is simply the literal truth. Winchilsea’s primary task was not a mission to secure horses: he was the Ambassador at Constantinople. If, while carrying out those duties, he should be able to provide Charles II with horses, he would do so, and the correspondence indicates there was at least a single instance of him arranging the delivery of a horse. However, what precisely is the meaning of “an Arabian horse, the best he can procure”? Is this Winchilsea writing in the third person? If not, is the “he” in question the “correspondent” in Aleppo? In any case, a horse acquired may well have been a gift, whether from a figure at the Ottoman court, Winchilsea himself, or possibly the Levant Company, whose representative he was in Constantinople.

The title of Ambassador carried no salary, and all expenses were paid for by the individuals themselves, or their companies. There could be all kinds of reasons for wanting to supply gifts to the King. “This weeke I presented His Majestie from your lordship with the horse” might suggest a present sent from Winchilsea to the king, rather than a “direction to acquire.” In that case there may not have been a “direction” from the king to purchase Arabian horses at the earlier date, and between his two publications, Prior evidently had reassessed his interpretation of the manuscripts. This may have caused him to reconsider his “certainly directed” comment of the previous book. Any “direction” from Charles may have only come after the arrival of the first horse, in which case Winchilsea was not able to fulfil any request for further Arabians. There is certainly a degree of ambiguity about the exchange. Of the horse we know little more; we do not know whether he was gelding or stallion, or whether he turned out to be a successful runner as the king fancied. In any case, there is nothing to indicate that the horse was specifically imported for his ability to race; rather, that the king, who was keen on racing, thought he might have the potential for speed. This is an important point.

Yet his arrival seems to have sparked great interest in king and courtiers: “The horse was commended by all for a curious shaped horse,” which Prior interprets as “an excellent shape.” This is possible, although no dictionary consulted suggests this meaning for “curious.” It may rather indicate that the horse was considered rare, and unusual in appearance. This, and its good health after its voyage enhanced its novelty, which would suggest that few, if any examples of Arabians, had previously been seen by the English court. Prior’s search for documentary or any other evidence relating to imported Arab horses in Charles’s reign ended there, as there was nothing added in the 1935 edition, but rather something subtracted. Indeed, the Winchilsea story provides the sole content for Prior’s brief two page chapter entitled “Importation of Arabs by Charles II” in his *Early Records*.³⁷ Prior himself had been convinced in his *History of the Racing Calendar and Stud-Book* that Winchilsea had imported mares for

³⁶ Prior, *Royal Studs*, ix.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 162-3.

Charles II and when he discovered the true facts of the matter, that he had not, Prior presumably wanted to clarify his findings beyond shadow of a doubt.³⁸

There is a further reference in Evelyn's diaries for 1684 of the arrival of three "Turks," but as with so many other imports, as Prior comments, "(w)e are not told what became of them, beyond the exorbitant prices asked precluded a ready sale, being immediately beyond the current value of bloodstock. They would perforce have remained in this country, and possibly did good service at the stud, but cannot be identified."³⁹ A private importation of a "Barbary horse" occurred in 1662, when Lord Sandwich brought one to England for himself, along with "a little Turke and a Negro" to serve as pageboys to his daughters, a stark reminder, if one were required, of the close connection between the trade in exotic non-human animals, including horses, and the trade in human beings.⁴⁰ Daniel Hahn refers to the Russian ambassador giving a gift of an "Arab horse" to Charles II in 1662, but no citation is given.⁴¹

As Prior concluded correctly in his 1935 publication, "so far from its being the case that Charles II imported a number of mares, as stated in the *General Stud-Book*, and copied from it by almost every Turf historian, those that were brought to this country arrived some forty years before he came to the throne, apart from those which had come over in previous reigns. The King does not appear to have maintained a stud of his own at all, nor can it be traced that he acquired any mares from abroad. It will be seen from the D'arcy papers that the Royal studs in his day had not been re-established, and remained in abeyance for a long period."⁴²

Therefore no significant imports of horses for breeding stock, and certainly no concentrated effort to acquire them occurred until the days of William III. As final confirmation of this, it is notable that an image provided in *The Heath and the Horse* shows a rare instance of imported Mantuan horses in the reign of Charles II ca. 1670. The authors contrast these taller Mantuan imports with the "little racing Galloways" which were clearly important racehorses until the end of Charles II's reign, and beyond. The reputation of the Mantuan horse breeders had endured from the days of Henry VIII until this time, and there was still nothing else during Charles II's to replace their famous *razzæ*, or the little running-horses which were arguably mainly Galloway or Hobby hybrids under a different name.⁴³

In corroboration of this, it is worth noting the very useful summaries of Arthur McGregor and Julian Munby relating to horse numbers and types in the stables of monarchs from Henry VIII to Charles II, summarised in a paper by Munby. Revealingly large numbers of coursers were listed in the stables of rulers from Henry VIII to Elizabeth, as were "Hobbies and geldings," the latter likely, for reasons stated earlier, to be Scottish geldings, particularly since Galloways were often bracketed with

³⁸ Prior, *History Racing Calendar*, 15.

³⁹ Prior, *Royal Studs*, 83.

⁴⁰ Grigson, *Menagerie*, 37.

⁴¹ Daniel Hahn, *The Tower Menagerie* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2004) 124.

⁴² Prior, *Royal Studs*, 76.

⁴³ Oldrey et al, *The Heath and the Horse*, 26. Bibby, "Galloway racehorses: the "Noble Brutes" racing before Charles II in 1684?" <https://historyonhorseback.com/2022/04/18/galloway-racehorses-the-noble-brutes-racing-before-charles-ii-in-1684/>

Hobbies as a similar type. Together these categories often made up over 50% of the royal stock.⁴⁴ In Henry's post-mortem inventory, five Barbaries and six Jennetts are additionally specified, apparently separate from the coursers, along with eleven stallions and fifteen Hobbies and geldings.⁴⁵ This could be suggestive of low imports at this time. In contrast, Charles I is estimated to have had a remarkable 120 coursers in 1628, and Charles II just 43 in 1668. The number of "geldings," however, remains fairly constant throughout both reigns, at 20.⁴⁶ The focus on coursers may imply interest in racing, though it can almost certainly be taken as representative of the known interest of all these monarchs in hunting.

A further significant point is that the Galloways played an important role in a key diplomatic exchange of 1681 with Moroccan ruler Moulay Ismail (1672–1727). The Galloways were described as a gift specially chosen to give pleasure to the ruler and his court, correspondence suggesting that "six Gallway naggs' would be very acceptable, 'for the Moores are of an humor that loves presents mightily'" and the job of finding six suitable animals "of the smallest size of Gallowaies that are possible to bee had" was entrusted to Secretary of State Sunderland. He further had to note that "twill bee very necessary that they have long tails, they having little esteeme for others, such a trifle as this obliges theise sort of people more than can bee imagined."⁴⁷ Sadly the Galloways seem to have perhaps arrived in poor condition, as did other items of the exchange, and were derided. Since Moulay Ismail's country raised quality Barbs, which were involved in gift-giving with the crowned heads of Europe, this gift of speedy *Scottish* long-tailed Galloways is noteworthy. One of Moulay Ismail's equine gifts to Louis XIV eventually ended up in the ownership of Henry Curwen of Workington under the name of the Curwen Bay Barb. The Curwen family were originally of Colvend in Dumfriesshire, and it is suggested that the stallion was bred to the Galloway mares owned by the Curwens.⁴⁸

As Catholics, the Curwens were restricted by the laws of the time to the ownership of horses of value less than £5. Therefore, like other Catholics, their racehorses ended in the hands of sympathetic Protestant friends, and their contribution passed from the records, to be replaced by more politically appropriate (in those times) narratives. Like the potentially Gaelic speaking horse-producers of the Galloway uplands, their contribution to horse racing and the Thoroughbred have been replaced by the dominant themes of English aristocracy and imported horses.

V. Queen Anne and the Royal Mares

Racing then entered into the tempestuous period at the end of the reign of Charles II and during the reign of James VII/II, in which it became ever more entwined with

⁴⁴ Julian Munby, "Horse and coach in the royal stables of Queen Elizabeth and James I," *Las Caballerizas Reales y el Mundo del Caballo*, ed. Juan Aranda Concel and José Martínez Millán (Córdoba: Edita: Instituto Universitario «La Corte en Europa» – UAM y Córdoba Ecuestre, 2016), 304.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*. 305.

⁴⁷ E. M. G. Routh, *England's Lost Atlantic Outpost, 1661 – 1684* (London: John Murray, 1912), 215.

⁴⁸ John Gillespie, *A History of the Colvend Coast: Napoleonic and Victorian Times* (Andover: Phillimore, 2011), 104.

contemporary politics.⁴⁹ Little is known about breeding at this time, though it may be that the younger James Darcy ensured that there were still plenty of good mares. By the reigns of William and Mary and their successor Queen Anne, the Darcy mares had received lasting fame, which is perhaps not surprising since the words of James Darcy the younger suggest there were many of them. Thus, the Darcy mares are likely to have provided much of the maternal material in the creation of the Thoroughbred. Brood mares described as Darcy mares appear in the previously cited studbook of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, along with his Great and Large Arabs, Barbs, Spanish horses, and horses simply identified by colour. (And as for this being “an Arab stud,” there are also carthorse mares listed in foal, and at least one carriage horse being used as a stallion.⁵⁰) A few names in particular stand out: the Darcy Whynot Mare, influential upon the Thoroughbred breed, and Darcy’s Royall Mare, covered in 1711 by “the Great Arab.”⁵¹

Thus it is likely that the concept of the “Royal Mares” dates to the time of the agreement between Charles II and James Darcy senior, and not prior to this, giving some plausibility to the Cheney statement. A conflation of the younger Darcy’s request for Arabian or Barb stallions from William III, and his father’s agreement to provide mares to Charles II, could well have produced the inaccurate idea of imported “Royal Mares.” James Darcy made a similar appeal to Queen Anne to help him access Barb and Arab stallions, thus suggesting that his request to William III had fallen on deaf ears. The outcome of his appeal to Queen Anne is unknown.⁵² It further suggests that it was during the reign of William III that opportunities were on the increase for Arabs and Barbs, or as Dent and Goodall put it long ago: “we tend to think of that other accession, the oriental horse, whether Barb or Arab, as happening with a bang some time about the time of William III.”⁵³ While clearly not true in the case of the north African Barbs, which had been known for many centuries, it is arguably true for the Arab horses. The Arab horse “project” that had begun with Gervase Markham’s eulogised (but apparently unprovenanced) Arabian in the late sixteenth

⁴⁹ For details of this period, see Nash, “Sporting with Kings,” 13–25 and “The Sport of Kingmakers: Horse Racing in Late Stuart England,” 304–22. The Curwen Bay Barb is further proof of the enmeshing of religion, politics, and racing at this time. Brought to England by Henry Curwen in 1698, a gift from the sons of Louis XIV, the Curwen Barb was originally a gift to the king of France from Moulay Ismail, and became extremely famous in England. However, as Prior points out Curwen may have had to send the Barb to Mr. Pelham “to avoid his being seized under the most iniquitous law then in force, which did not permit Catholics to own horses over the value of five pounds.” Prior, *Early Records*, 146. See also Bibby, *Invisible Ancestor*, forthcoming.

⁵⁰ Prior, *Early Records*, 113–142. Regarding the Welbeck Stud, Edwards notes that the stud was in decline after the death of William Cavendish in 1676. Edwards, “Decline of an Aristocratic Stud”, 872. While mythology has emerged around a subsequent owner, Lord Harley, due to his family’s importation of the Bloody Shouldered (Shoulder’d) Arabian, the stud declined further under his management and his horses were at one point impossible to sell. *Ibidem*, 878–9. As well as being covered by the Dun and Bloody Shouldered Arabians, both of which appeared to have severe issues as sires (*ibidem*), some of Harley’s mares were covered by the Ovington Galloway, owned by an originally successful Yorkshire stud which appears to have gone into its own decline as the owner aged. (*Ibidem*, 879.)

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 119.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ Anthony Dent and Daphne Machin Goodall, *A History of British Native Ponies* (London: J.A. Allen 1988), 2.

century, continued with James VI/I's acquisition of another Markham Arabian in 1616, and faded away until Cromwell decided that these imports were what were required to produce the super-horse of state. Cromwell's Arab horse project having fizzled out, there were no more significant imports until the days of William III.

That William III was sending officials to seek out and import horses at this time is clear from a note in Prior at the end of his section on Routh's studbook in "Early Records": "Mr Richard Marshall, the King's Studmaster, was born in 1659, and was of the family long resident in Selaby [Selby in Yorkshire]. He was sent to Barbary by William III in 1699 in search of Eastern horses for the Royal Stud, and brought home nine stallions and five mares."⁵⁴ One of these is likely to have been the Moonah Mare, while one of the stallions may have been the Royal Affrican, of which more shortly, although very little is known about this horse.

It is clear by now, however, that a few mares had been imported consistently from the days of Henry VIII, and that these were Mantuan, Barb, or Spanish, and not Arabian. Interest in horse breeding and imports continued during Anne's reign. The Moonah Barb Mare, imported by William III, was frequently referred to as "Queen Anne's Mare," and this mare had an important role to play in the history of northern horse breeders, as will be shown. Anne was as enthusiastic about horse racing as her predecessors and deserves better recognition for her support of the sport in her reign. The foundation of the racing calendars, and subsequently the G.S.B., marked the arrival of horse racing into the modern era, and the superiority of the Thoroughbred racehorse, with the abandonment of Galloway racing at York in 1740 (and notably after Culloden) scarcely causing a ripple. Histories of the sport began to be published. Some, as is clear from this story, were more accurate than others. By the time of Prior's 1935 publication on the Royal Studs, based on original documentation, it was evident that the "Royal Mares" were not specific imports dating to the reign of Charles II, but the Darcy mares and their offspring, themselves likely to be the product of various matches across time on the island of Britain, particularly in the north of England. How much, if any, continuity in breeding was there between the various reigns from Henry VIII onwards? This is truly hard to assess; the one thing that can be said with confidence is that if there was any genetic continuity, it would mainly have to be concentrated in the Darcy mares of Sedbury, plus possibly Old Bald Peg, of whom more in the final part in this series. Many of the incoming stallions, while often described as "Arabians" were actually horses of Turkoman type, closer to the modern Akhal-Teke, and this is what recently published DNA evidence confirms.⁵⁵ In the next issue of *Cheiron*, Part 3 of the "Royal Mares" examines selected individual mares named in the historiography of the Thoroughbred, as well as the progress of the story in the twentieth century.

⁵⁴ Prior, *Early Records*, 70.

⁵⁵ Barbara Wallner et al, "Y Chromosome Uncovers the Recent Oriental Origin of Modern Stallions," *Current Biology*. Volume 27/13, 10 July 2017, 2029-2035; <https://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/222753/turkoman-sires-at-the-root-of-thoroughbred-male-lines?>

Bibliography

- Altamirano, Juan Carlos. *Historia y Origen del Caballo Español/History and Origins of the Spanish Horse*. (Málaga: np., 2005.)
- Bibby, Miriam A. *Invisible Ancestor: the Galloway Nag and its Legacy*. Budapest: Trivent Publishing, forthcoming.
- . “Arabians in the Architecture,” *Cheiron* 1/1 2021, 129-130.
- . “Mist on the Border: The Emperor Severus and the Netherby Arabians that never were,” *The Liminal Horse: Equitation and Boundaries* ed. Rena Maguire and Anastasija Ropa (Budapest: Trivent Publishing, 2021), 277-308.
- . <https://historyonhorseback.com/2022/04/18/galloway-racehorses-the-noble-bruites-racing-before-charles-ii-in-1684/>
- Bower, M.A. et al. “The cosmopolitan maternal heritage of the Thoroughbred racehorse breed shows a significant contribution from British and Irish native mares.” *Biol. Lett.* (2011) 7, 316–320.
- Brotton, Jerry. *The Sale of the Late King’s Goods: Charles I and his Art Collection* Basingstoke and Oxford: Macmillan, 2006.
- Brown, James. “Nic and Mac: Gaelic Lingering in Eighteenth Century Carrick.” *Galloway, The Lost Province of Gaelic Scotland* ed. Michael Ansell, Ronald Black and Edward J. Cowan. N.p.: John Dewar Publishers, 2022, 265-280.
- Burnett, John. “Paisley Horse Races and the Silver Bells.” *Renfrewshire Local History Forum Journal* Vol. 8, 1997, 1-9.
- . “The Sites and Landscapes of Horseracing in Scotland before 1860.” *The Sports Historian* 18/1, May, 1998, 55-75.
- . *Riot, Revelry and Rout: Sport in Lowland Scotland before 1860* East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000.
- Cassidy, Rebecca. *The Sport of Kings: Kinship, Class and Thoroughbred Breeding in Newmarket*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Cavendish, William, Duke of Newcastle. *Methode nouvelle et invention extraordinaire de dresser les chevaux*. Antwerp: Jacques van Meurs, 1658.
- . *A New Method and Extraordinary Invention to Dress Horses*. London: T. Milbourn, 1667.
- Cavendish, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. *The Life of William Cavendish Duke of Newcastle to which is added the true relation of my birth, breeding, and life*. London: John C. Nimmo, 1886.
- Cavriani, Carlo. *Le razze Gonzaghesche di cavalli nel Mantovano e la loro influenza sul pure sangue Inglese*. (Roma: Cooperativa Tipografica Manuzio, 1909.
- Dent, Anthony. “Creation of a Breed,” *Equi* 22, June/July 1984, 18-20.
- Edwards, Peter. “The decline of an aristocratic stud: the stud of Edward Lord Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, at Welbeck (Nottinghamshire), 1717-29.” *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (August 2016), 870-892.
- Elwin, Malcolm. *The Noels and Milbankes, Their Letters for Twenty-five Years, 1767-1792*. London: Macdonald, 1967.
- Fraser, George MacDonald. *The Steel Bonnets*. London: Harper Collins, 1971.
- Gillespie, John. *A History of the Colvend Coast: Napoleonic and Victorian Times*. Andover: Phillimore, 2011.

- Grigson, Caroline. *Menagerie: The History of Exotic Animals in England 1100 – 1837*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Hahn, Daniel. *The Tower Menagerie*. London: Simon and Schuster, 2004.
- Hartley-Edwards, Elwyn, ed. *A Standard Guide to Horse & Pony Breeds*. London: Macmillan, 1980.
- Hore, J.P. *The History of Newmarket and the Annals of the Turf* Volume II. London: A.H. Baily and Co., 1886.
- Landry, Donna. *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Little, Patrick. "Uncovering a protectoral stud: horses and horsebreeding at the court of Oliver Cromwell, 1653–8." *Historical Research*, vol. 82/216 May 2009, 252-67.
- Livingston, Alistair. "Gaelic to Scots in Galloway." *Galloway, The Lost Province of Gaelic Scotland* ed. Michael Ansell, Ronald Black and Edward J. Cowan. N.p.: John Dewar Publishers, 2022, 265-280.
- MacGregor, Arthur, ed. *The Late King's Goods*. London and Oxford: Alistair McAlpine in association with Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Mackay-Smith, Alexander. *Speed and the Thoroughbred: The Complete History*. Lanham: The Derrydale Press, 2000.
- Major, Philip. "The Fire of his Eye': Thomas, 3rd Lord Fairfax's 'a Treatise Touching the Breeding of Horses.'" *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1, January 2010, 20-30.
- Millar, Oliver. "The Inventories and Valuations of the King's goods 1649-1651." *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 43, 1970-1972, iii-v, vii, ix, xi-xxviii, 1-458.
- Moran, William L. ed. and trs. *The Amarna Letters*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Munby, Julian. "Horse and coach in the royal stables of Queen Elizabeth and James I." *Las Caballerizas Reales y el Mundo del Caballo*, ed. Juan Aranda Concel and José Martínez Millán. Córdoba: Edita: Instituto Universitario «La Corte en Europa» – UAM y Córdoba Ecuestre, 2016, 297-327.
- Nash, Richard. "Beware a Bastard Breed?: Notes Towards a Revisionist History of the Thoroughbred Racehorse." *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Edwards, Karl A.E. Enenkel and Elspeth Graham. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 191-216.
- . "Sporting with Kings." *The Cambridge Companion to Horseracing*, ed. Rebecca Cassidy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 13–25.
- . "The Sport of Kingmakers: Horse Racing in Late Stuart England," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 37:3-4 (2020), 304-22.
- Oldrey, David, Timothy Cox, and Richard Nash. *The Heath and the Horse: a History of Racing and Art on Newmarket Heath*. London and New York: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2016.
- . "Gentlemen's Recreation and Georgic Improvement: Lord Fairfax on Horse Breeding." *England's Fortress: New Perspectives on Thomas, 3rd Lord Fairfax*, ed. Andrew Hopper and Philip Major. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016, 246-7.

- Piccolomini, Aeneas Silvius. *Secret Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope: The Commentaries of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini* (abridged) trs. Florence A. Gragg and ed. Leona C. Gabel. London: the Folio Society, 1988.
- Prior, C.M. *Early Records of the Thoroughbred Horse*. London: The Sportsman 1924.
- . *The Royal Studs of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. London: Horse and Hound Publications, 1935.
- Rae, George. *The Sporting Life Guide to Owning a Racehorse: a Handbook for Current and Future Owners*. London: The Sporting Life, 1990.
- Routh, E. M. G. *England's Lost Atlantic Outpost, 1661 – 1684*. London: John Murray, 1912.
- Taunton, Theo. *Famous Horses with Portraits, Pedigrees, Principal Performances, Descriptions of Races and Various Interesting Items*. London: Sampson, Low, Marston and Company, 1901.
- Tobey, Elizabeth. “The Palio Horse in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy.” *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Modern World* ed. Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, 74, 87.
- Tonni, Andrea. “The Renaissance Studs of the Gonzagas of Mantua.” *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World* ed. Peter Edwards, Karl A.E. Enekel and Elspeth Graham. Leiden: Brill, 2012, 261-77.
- . “Allevamento e diplomazia tra Mantova, Torino e Londra: lo scambio dei cavalli tra cinquecento e seicento.” DSS Papers STO 01-08, 1-28:
- Weatherby, James. *An Introduction to a General Stud-Book*. London: Printed by H. Reynell for J. Weatherby, 1791.
- Lady Wentworth. *British Horses and Ponies*. London: Collins, 1947.
- Lady Wentworth, *Thoroughbred Racing Stock*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938.
- Williamson, Eila. “Horse-racing in Scotland in the Sixteenth and earlier Seventeenth Centuries: Peebles and Beyond.” *Review of Scottish Culture* 14, 2001-2002, 31-42.
- Wilkinson, David. *Early Horse Racing in Yorkshire and the Origins of the Thoroughbred*. York: Old Bald Peg Publications, 2003.