

# 50th ANNIVERSARY





# OF THE ASIL CLUB

By MONIKA SAVIER - Photos: Asil Club Archive

*"To continue to preserve the precious lineage of Asil Arabians, vigilance is required. Just as the Bedouins of yore were the guardians of the bloodlines of these astonishing animals, so too are we, today, their guardians. The Asil Club is a key aspect in this."*

(HH Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Presidential Affairs & Deputy Prime Minister, United Arab Emirates)

*"The Asil Arabians heritage has been meticulously sustained and perpetuated by the people of Arabia since time immemorial. Today this "pure, genuine and noble" breed continues to thrive through the work of the Asil Club and the support and interest of breeders and friends throughout the world."*

HRH Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, President & Chairman of the Board Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities (SCTA), Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Asil Club



نادي الأصيل

Of all the horse breeds that have been domesticated and selected by humans around the world for thousands of years, it is the Asil Arabian horse that trace the course of history in a fascinating way and tell the story of the flow of time. The riders and cavalry of the old world trusted the people-friendly Arabian horses from the Orient, with their lives. Today, it is people for whom history, art, culture and nature are important, who also seek closeness to Arabian horses. It is their beauty, harmony and charisma that make these horses irresistible. After the Second World War, many small private stud farms were established in Europe, they flourished and became the backbone of Asil and Straight Egyptian horse breeding until the 1990s. This success story had its origins over 200 years ago, when the aristocracies in Europe, Poland, Italy, Germany, Spain, Russia and the Balkans imported Arabian horses from the Orient to improve their own horse breeds, from which many successful breeding programmes emerged. These horses, their endurance and robustness, were the genetic basis for a successful cavalry. Their intelligence and connection with the sensitive rider were important aspects in the common struggle for survival in the battles of that time.



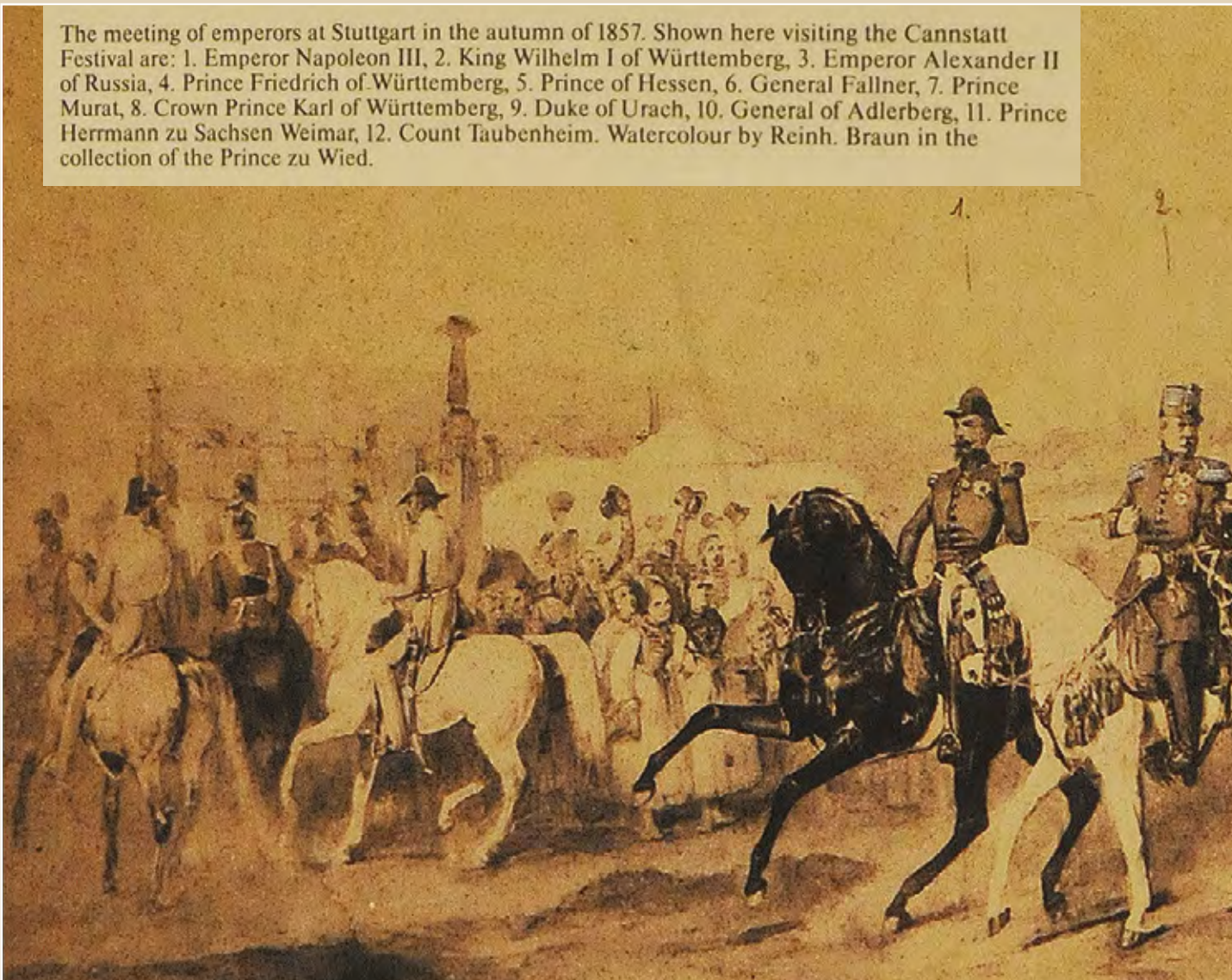


Two cruel world wars in the first half of the 20th century reduced the horse population in the state studs and royal houses. The car had long since been invented and had also become a status symbol in the Orient. The Bedouins had largely stopped breeding in the post-colonial period. There were no longer any buying missions from Europe and for the shepherds' children, the future lay in the cities.

The Arabian horse had not been forgotten. Most of the descendants of the desert nobility lived on, but far away from the steppes and deserts of their origin, in Nejd in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Iraq or the Arab villages in the Khuzestan province in western Iran. Only Egypt had been able to maintain and protect its proud breeding despite many crises and wars.

Most of the noble Arabian horses from the Orient, however, lived in the diaspora, they had exchanged the barren steppes of the East for the lush pastures of the Western world. Their world was now mainly the USA and Western Europe. As a result, new target groups and new markets emerged. The Arabian horse was no longer a war horse, but had become a sport and leisure horse, and its triumphal march around the world was unstoppable. In the USA alone, in the 1980s, over 200,000 Purebred Arabians were registered after a short time. However, most of them were not registered as Asil Arabians, but with the WAHO (World Arabian Horse Organisation), which was founded in 1970 and is based in England. This organisation united the Arabian breeding associations of the world under one roof.

The meeting of emperors at Stuttgart in the autumn of 1857. Shown here visiting the Cannstatt Festival are: 1. Emperor Napoleon III, 2. King Wilhelm I of Württemberg, 3. Emperor Alexander II of Russia, 4. Prince Friedrich of Württemberg, 5. Prince of Hessen, 6. General Fallner, 7. Prince Murat, 8. Crown Prince Karl of Württemberg, 9. Duke of Urach, 10. General of Adlerberg, 11. Prince Herrmann zu Sachsen Weimar, 12. Count Taubenheim. Watercolour by Reinh. Braun in the collection of the Prince zu Wied.





It issued passports with a 5-generation pedigree and claimed the term 'purebred Arabian' for itself: *"A purebred Arabian is one which appears in any purebred Arabian Stud Book or Register listed by WAHO as acceptable"*. But the actual and original definition of a purebred Arabian horse clearly referred to its origin, bred by the Bedouins in the deserts and steppes of the Orient.

How could the origin and originality of these horses be better protected? The moment had come to found the ASIL CLUB.

**THE ASIL CLUB WAS FOUNDED TO PROTECT THE AUTHENTIC ASIL ARABIAN HORSE, AN ENDANGERED ARABIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE.**

In 1974, the ASIL CLUB was founded in Germany

by Dr Georg Olms, a breeder of Asil Arabian horses himself, and other dedicated breeders, equestrians and scientists. The aim was to preserve and breed Arabian horses *"whose pedigree is based exclusively on horses bred by Bedouins. Without any evidence of admixture of non-Arab blood at any time. The word 'asil' is derived from the Arabic and means straight, noble and genuine"*. (Asil Arabians Volume 1).

The Asil Club quickly managed to forge social groups from different nationalities. This is still its strength today.

This goal should be achieved together with the international members, to bridge the horse breeding cultures of Orient and Occident, to celebrate the asil Arabian horse as a World Cultural Heritage, these were the tasks the Asil Club has put down as theirs from their founding. Maintaining the pure







At the victory arch in the city wall of Cairo. Lithograph by Jozsef Heicke. 1846.

Bedouin tradition, never introducing foreign blood, has been a religious dogma in the Arabia Desert area for centuries. This original line breeding resulted in a valuable Arabian horse the Asil Club strives to preserve world-wide.

The concept of purity, the selection and preservation of the asil horses, was one of the most important aspects of every discussion between the breeders and supporters of the club. These horses were hard to beat in terms of beauty anyway. A few years earlier, the Pyramid Society had already been founded in the USA. They had also declared their goal of preserving the purity of the 'Straight Egyptians', which also refers to the original Bedouin breeding, but whose horses had been imported to Egypt.

*"In the early 19th century, the ruling families of Egypt gathered the finest horses from the deserts of Arabia and*

*brought them to the land of the pyramids. This extraordinary collection, unrivalled since the time of King Solomon, became the foundation for the modern-day Egyptian Arabian..."* (Pyramid Society Foundation, USA).

In 1974 the majority of the founding members of the Asil Club were breeders of straight Egyptian horses. Especially in the USA, various definitions and subgroups of the imports from the desert emerged, which differentiated the asil and straight Egyptians into 'not so pure', 'pure' and 'even purer', true to the motto "rare things have added value" (K. Marx). But the Asil Club remained relaxed. From the very beginning, it saw itself as an umbrella organisation, where all breeds of the Desert Arabian felt at home and should be promoted. As a result, the Asil Club did not participate in commercial line bashing, which in the years to come had an enormously negative





A. De Dreux, Omar, 1859. Archiv Dr. K. Thieme

impact on the preservation of some bloodlines in the already limited gene pool of the asil breed. While the so-called “Straight Egyptians” are also ASIL by definition of origin, not all Asil are also “Straight Egyptians”. The Asil Club recognised from the outset that the original Arabians could only be based on the way of life of the nomads. *“The largest herds and most beautiful desert horses were found in ‘Desert Arabia’, which includes the deserts of Syria, Iraq, Jezira and the landscapes of Nedjd and Hajjar”.* (Ammon, 1834). *“Many of the large tribes of the Anazeh Bedouins had already been displaced by the Wababis and had left Inner Arabia with their horses for Mesopotamia, Aleppo and Iraq.”* (Tweedie, 1894) In this respect, it was only right and proper for the ASIL CLUB to consider a broader geographical background as the recognised country of origin of the horses.

The Arabian horse was a product of the slowness of time and the vastness of the steppes and deserts. It had genetically consolidated itself over many years as a people-friendly working animal due to the harsh living conditions, and it found itself amid much political and commercial turmoil in the 1980s.





## THE RETURN OF THE ARABIAN HORSE TO THE ARABIAN PENINSULA – A BIG CHALLENGE FOR THE ASIL CLUB

The Gulf States had largely shaken off their colonial ties and, due to their fossil wealth, were developing new aspirations. Arabian horses fitted perfectly into this desire; they helped to shape the identity of a young nation of Islamic culture, for no horse in the world has had such a decisive influence on the history of mankind as the Orientals did on the jihad, the spread of Islam. During the last century, the Arabian horse had lost its importance even for the Bedouins themselves, with a major part of the gene pool being exported to Europe and the US. Today, it has re-gained an important role for the social life and identity of many groups of the Arabian

population in most of the Arabian countries. Consequently, purchasing missions of a new kind have been flourishing, this time moving from East to West and at the beginning re-importing the asil Arabians and pure Egyptian offspring to Egypt and the Middle East. Even there, the world has changed for horses. Later, apart from the Syrian Badia, Bedouin horse breeding has switched locations from the black Bedouin tents of the barren half desert to sometimes luxurious stables on the outskirts of the big cities at the Gulf.

In Western Europe and the United States, a lively breeding world developed. The market for asil and especially for straight Egyptian Arabians flourished. The large stud farms in the Gulf and in Egypt came and brought many horses of old noble lines back to their original homeland. They

Amurath 1829 (Bairactar/Saady III), chief sire at the Royal Stud Weil and one of the most famous sires in Arabian and light horse breeding. Painting by Sperling from 1846, in the collection of Friedrichshafen Castle.





were often very successful with them, both in the show world and on the racetrack or in endurance sports. The grandchildren of the Bedouins paid careful attention and invested a lot of money.

The show world conquered the Gulf States. The horse imports from Europe were quickly the grandparents of the new show champions. For many, winning at any price was the motto. But even in the Gulf States, there were many breeders of straight Egyptians and Asil horses who preferred to show their horses to their breeder friends from around the world at home rather than send them to shows.

*“I want to get back to the authentic Arabian horse. I see it in the pictures of Adam, Vernet and other painters of this era. It is a horse with a gentle and noble charisma, who moves elegantly but also has power and endurance in the way they cope with life. When I have succeeded in breeding such a horse, I don't have to take it to the world championships in Paris. I am just as proud and content to have it at home.”* (Mohammed Al-Marzouk, Kuwait)  
*“Many members of the Asil Club have a reserved*

*relationship to shows, because the commercial selection, focused on type and beauty, and contradicts the principles of the authentic preservation breeding of the Asil Arabians. “The Club insists that its members observe the principles of pure breeding. It refuses to give in to sudden fashions and to worship grace and beauty alone, thereby making the horse a mere object for the show ring.”* (Dr Georg Wenzler, co-founder of the Asil Club).

Philippe Paraskevas, from Egypt, writes: *“The Asil Club is well known for being an organisation that still seeks to uphold the full range of the characteristics of the Arabian: The Arabian Phenotype, the Arabian Genotype, and, most importantly, the unique inner disposition of the Arabian, the defining mental characteristics of our Desert Arabian (...)* We all know that the historical Arabian is under threat of extinction, mainly because of the ill effects of the beauty contest-like shows that so often drive the market.

*The market usually defines what the majority of breeders do, and the markets are not interested in the perpetuation of the Historical Arabian. They are interested in promoting whatever sells at any one point in time.”*

Not only the exaggerated fixation on beauty through





C. Vernet, Mehmet Ali. Archiv W. G. Olms

selection was a big issue for the members of the Asil Club. The invention of frozen stallion semen and the dominance of reproduction technologies also posed a major challenge. This led the world of breeding further and further away from the original requirements of the club for its members, namely, to preserve and save the breed of origin. After the beginning of the new millennium, the globalisation of frozen semen and embryo transfers had been perfected to such an extent that the shipping of semen from champions had long since penetrated the geographically defined breeding areas and the original breeding goal had been dissolved in favour of international show Arabians. The definition Straight Egyptians, is still referred to pure breeding from a single country of origin in their name.

The Asil horses from the other countries of origin were hardly relevant in terms of numbers. They were bred, if at all, by competent enthusiasts, as exotic breeds.

For several years, the import of Arabian horses from Europe to the Gulf States and Egypt has



V. Adam, A Noble Arabian in the field. Archiv J. Wich

practically ceased. The Arabian horse is definitely back in its homeland on the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia alone has registered 6,000 foals in one year, with many colts not even being registered. Today, usually only show winners are shipped globally.

In the West, the Asil horses are popular as leisure animals and Straight Egyptians are rarely shown anymore. In Europe today, trainers dominate the breeding and showing scene with there internationally bred show horses. They present many horses from the Gulf States at the European shows, where they are mostly among themselves. The few breeding enthusiasts of the old straight bloodlines who have survived the collapse of the markets and are still breeding are looking for other ways of communicating, advertising and working together in





today's digitalised world. Winning isn't everything. The Arabian horse still unites breeders and the Asil Club, with its diverse programme, culture, sport and education.

### THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ASIL CLUB

*“Omnis Nobilitas Ab Equo – All nobility comes from the horse”*

*“In the Asil Club members from 40 countries are united in friendship to preserve one of the first pure breeds in the world, one of the most precious cultural treasures. They believe in the tradition of the Bedouins, the creators of Asil Arabians. Through careful attention to Asil bloodlines, members intend to preserve the performance and honesty of their horses and stress their marvellous traits.”* (Asil Club 2024)

The Asil Club was active early on as an influencer,

opinion maker and informant on the origin and breeding of the Asil Arabians, including the straight Egyptian Arabians. *“Dr Olms is not only a horse breeder, he is the head of an international publishing house based both in Germany and in New York, which gave him the means to go about it professionally. Olms Press already published an equestrian line, the Documenta Hippologica, including facsimiles and reprints of important old books on breeding and equitation”*. (Betty Finke, The Swift Runner, 2024)

He also repeatedly encouraged the other founding members, geneticists and cavalry captains, to write articles, studies and reports on the origin and breeding results of the Arabs from the desert. *“He has been the president of the Asil Club since its founding and has juggled the club through thick and thin since”*. (Gudrun Waiditschka, In the Focus, 2024).

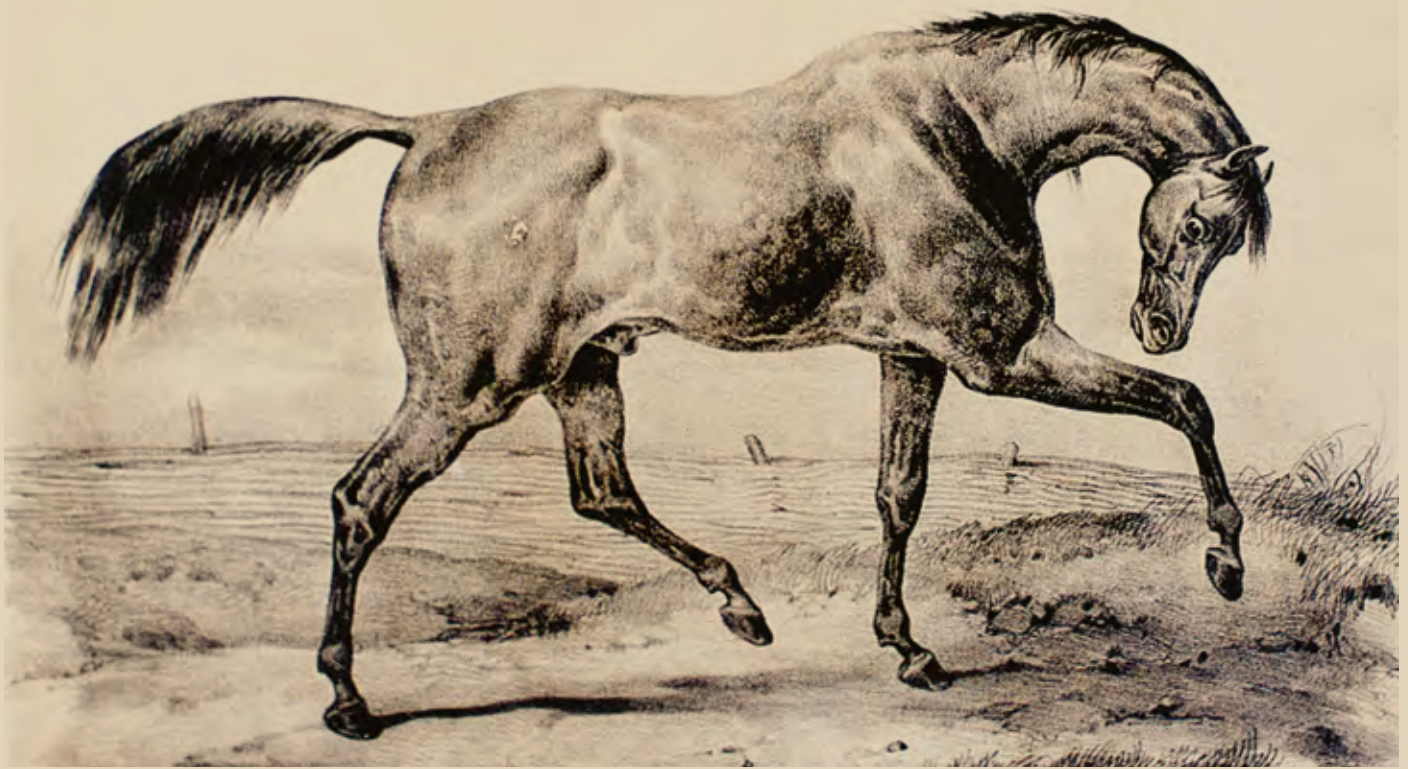
His professional contacts with Arab countries, where he successfully conveyed his concerns to the royal houses, were one of the reasons why the Asil Club now has more than 400 members in 40 countries. Even the royal stud farms of many Arab countries, as well as state stud farms such as those of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt and Syria, Marbach and Babolna in Europe, became members and participated in the Asil Club's publications and events.

The first comprehensive documentation of Asil Arabians was published as early as 1977.

*“It included a selection of quotes on the authentic Arabian horse by experts past and present in German and in English, classic art depicting Arabian horses, many photographs of Asil Arabians with their details and pedigrees, a record of performance achievements by Asil Arabians, and a catalogue of the members' stud farms and their horses”*. (Betty Finke 2024)

In addition to the books ASIL ARABIANS, of which 7 have been published to date, which have also been published in Arabic for 20 years, the second mainstay of the ASIL CLUB was an Arabian horse show, of course only for straight Egyptians and asil Arabs. It originally took place every two years. The show classes are rather relaxed performances, panda eyes are not allowed,





and sharp stand-ups and chasing the horses is discouraged. To counterbalance and compensate for the beauty event, there are ridden classes and endurance races. The events were usually attended by thousands of enthusiastic visitors. Today's Arabian horse shows can only dream of such popularity.

The legal structure of the Asil Club is a registered non-profit organisation that must hold a general meeting every year. The club carries out this task as a wonderfully organised communicative, continuing education programme. Each meeting takes place at a different stud. There are specialist presentations on important topics and current issues, as well as presentations of the stud's own Asil Arabian horses.

A current project under the auspices of the Asil Club is the application to the Ministry of Science and Culture to include the Asil Arabian horses in the register of the 'intangible cultural heritage of UNESCO'. This application was granted in Lower Saxony. The next step is now to have the application recognised by the UNESCO Commission in Berlin.

### **THE ASIL CLUB IS A ROCK IN THE TROUBLED WATER AND IS MORE IMPORTANT TODAY THAN EVER.**

For 50 years now, the Asil Club has served as a platform for breeders of Asil Arabian horses, where people from all over the world with different interests, identities, world views, and values could come together to work towards the preservation and a better future for the Arabian horse. Dr Olms, the founders of the Asil Club, and its team laid the substantive foundation for this. Over the years, critical members and the elite of Arabian horse breeding from the Occident and Orient jointly formulated different strategies and proposed solutions.

*"You will not see the irresponsible, downright abusive practices of modern showing at our ASIL CUP INTERNATIONAL shows, and we may also point out that the ASIL CLUB was the first in Europe to introduce endurance rides in the programme of its ASIL CUP INTERNATIONAL" (W.G. Olms, 2019).*

The club never shied away from publicly debating and offering alternatives for better keeping and



breeding conditions for the horses. This agenda primarily reflects the fears and hopes of the members themselves of losing the Arabian horse as a descendant of the desert nobility. The current situation of horses in show-Arabian breeding in connection with reproduction technology is worrying. The expertise of the club, its power of discourse, but also the passion of its members is indispensable. There can be no compromise when it comes to saving the authentic Arabian horse. Only a broad alliance of supporters across all borders can stand up to the commercial show world and its selection methods,

which are based solely on phenotype.

The Asil Club quickly succeeded in forging social groups from different nationalities. This is still its strength today. The asil Arabian horse and its preservation was the common denominator that bridged the diverse interests of its many enthusiasts and supporters. After 9/11, globalisation of breeding, the wars in the Middle East, Covid, the wild years of digital capitalism, the Asil Club could still be a rock in the troubled water of today.

**And it is more important than ever before.**





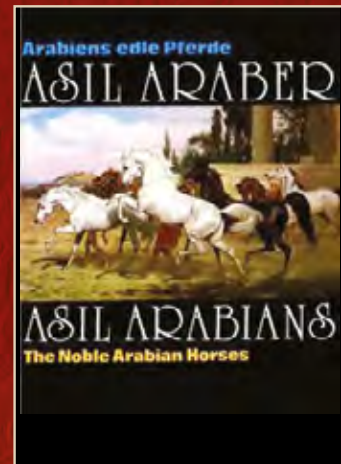
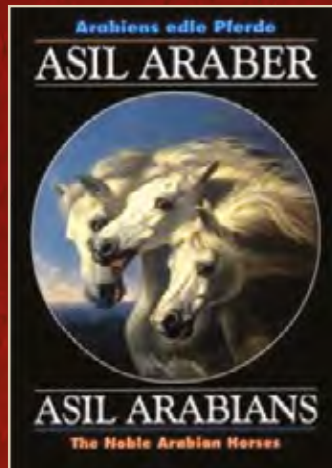
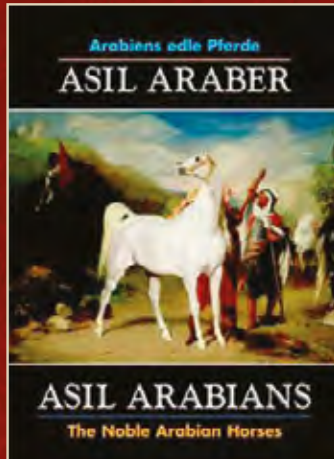
Asil Club



نادي الأصيل

In 1974 the majority of the founding members of the ASIL CLUB were famous pioneers of Egyptian horse breeding. Some have been scientists or stud manager. Here is the complete list:

TIBOR VON PETTKO SZANDTNER	DR. HANSJÖRG TAUSCHKE
ELKE BEHRENS	DOBIMAR VON KAMEKE
HEINER BUSCHFORT	DETLEV VON ARENTSCHILD
GÜNTER W. & MARGRIT SEIDLITZ	DR. OTTO SAENGER
GEORG & UTE THIERER	DR. WILHELM UPPENBORN
DR. WALTER GEORG OLMS	DR. FOPPE B. KLYNSTRA
BARB-MARIA MÜLLER	PROF. GERT PREISER
ESPERANZA RASWAN	OBERST H. HANDLER
CARL-HEINZ & CONSTANZE DÖMKEN	DR. KURT KIRSCH
DR. GEORG WENZLER	DR. HANS J. NAGEL
ERIKA SCHIELE	DR. ROBERT BURGERT





# THE HH SHEIKH MANSOUR BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN ASIL ARABIAN HORSE FESTIVAL

'NOBILITY OF THE DESERT', AT THE MARBACH STATE STUD, GERMANY

**T**he Asil Club celebrated its 50th anniversary on 13 July 2024 with its members, guests and many noble Arabian horses, camels, salukis and falcons at Marbach State Stud. Endurance rides started early in the morning from the Marbach stud farm. The exciting and varied show programme in the large riding hall in front of hundreds of guests showed once again that Arabian horses are extremely versatile. They like to form a team with the people who ride or lead them, are intelligent, powerful and can of course show much more than just a stand-up in the show ring. A festive evening with lectures, live music and good food in the historic riding hall rounded off the day.

The co-operation between the Marbach State Stud and the Asil Club has existed since the club was founded. Dr Georg Wenzler, the director

of the Marbach State Stud at the time, was one of the founding members. For him, the Arabian horse was first and foremost *"an excellent riding horse for sport and leisure purposes and must be bred for performance, otherwise it degenerates"*. (G. Wenzler, Asil Arabians, 1977)

In harmony with the breeding philosophy of King William I of Württemberg, the breeding goal in Marbach and at the Asil Club is still the merits of this desert Arabian. With the original asil Arabian breed of the former royal stud in Weil, founded in 1817, the State Stud maintains the world's oldest uninterrupted and documented purebred Arabian breed. *"Marbach makes a special effort to preserve the asil lines of the founding horses Bairactar and Murana I, imported from the desert, supplemented by famous lines from the Egyptian State Stud El Zabara in Cairo"*. (Marbach State Stud, 2024)



Asil Club founder and president Dr. W. Georg Olms



The historical Marbach State Stud





Angela Dorschner-Filsinger and her straight Egyptian mare Sheikha Zafarana



The Goebel Family and Salukis



Nasheed Al Amal, bred by Philippe Paraskevas in Egypt and now chief sire at Marbach



Oliver Juskowiak and the stallion Moushah





Stallions parade with KP Noury, Kauber Platte stud and Anton Baumann



Stallions Parade with Marbach's straight Egyptian stallion Naoufil

Silvia Naumann, Breeder/Rider, technical event and showdirector as well as board member of the Asil Club



Arabian Salukis in Action



Mona Schnauffer with Hames el Naarah





Vaulting Group of Girls



Klaus Niethammer driving the Marbach broodmares Dafina and WM Sahaabah





Danielle Merzbach, Management Asil Club, Assistant to President and Mister Ibrahim, UAE



Emirati Arabian horse with U.A.E Guest



Dr. Astrid von Velsen-Zerweck, Director of the Marbach State Stud, Speaker



Silvia Naumann and her stallion Serenity Shaham





Yin Yang Balance Group with Mares and Foals from Sha Mon Stud



The mare Namrata, bred and owned by Marbach State Stud



Classical Cello, played by Eva Freiberg and Equestrian Arts with Hispano-Arabian Stallion Unico CP, ridden by Kristin Ullrich



Desert Ships, Camels presented by Frank Bock and Family







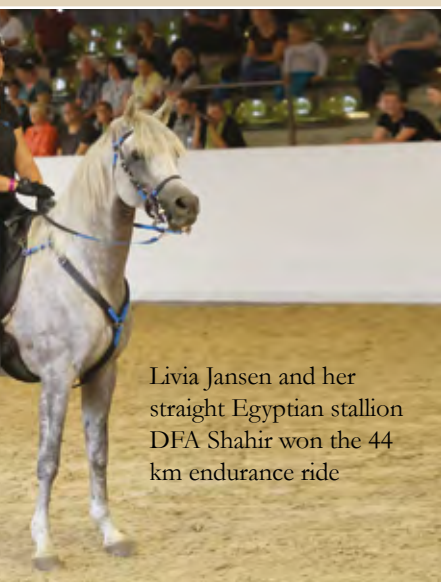
Endurance Riders with Coach Ina Baader and Dr. Astrid von Velsen-Zerweck



Falconry, the royal art of hunting



Asil Club Endurance Rides 2024  
The winner of the different races



Livia Jansen and her straight Egyptian stallion DFA Shahir won the 44 km endurance ride



Marbach's Daughters of the Wind, the asil mares band



Manfred Olms, Dr. Georg Olms and Moahmmed Achmed EAHS General Director UAE



Dr. Georg Olms



Dr. Matthias Oster,  
Board Member of the Asil Club,  
presenting the history of the Club



Anniversary event in the evening at the



Guests from UAE with Bilal al Nabelsi, Syria and Dr. Astrid von Velsen-Zerweck





Live Music on high level. Alexandra Lehmler and Session band



historical riding house