

Models In Britain

By Keren Woods

Model horse collecting was born in Britain in 1947, when the first Julips came wobbling out of their molds. Does that come as a shock to you? Did you always think that the hobby in Britain, as in Germany, Sweden, and Australia was started by imported Breyers? Not a bit of it! There was a flourishing model horse scene here in the UK for years before we discovered that "the Americans are at it, too".

I acquired my first "proper" model in 1968—a Julip Welsh Mountain Pony. In those days, the hobby was more exclusive than it is now, and only Julips and other similar latex models such as Isis, Pegasus, and Otway were considered the "correct" thing to show. These models came with hair manes and tails, and had flexible legs, so you could have endless hours of fun making them gallop and jump over the furniture and around the garden. Julip's slogan was "A riding stable on a table," and they supplied all sorts of accessories to create just that; not just tack and riders but trailers, bandages, rosettes—everything down to stable cats and rats, in fact! Their horses may not have been detailed or very realistic, but they were much appreciated by pony-mad little girls like myself who couldn't have the real thing.

"Pony" was the young rider's magazine then, and it was through its pages that the model horse scene came together. The Postal Pony Club was probably not the first ever model horse club, but it was the most important, as its members included Marian Rickerby, Caroline Johnson, Marilyn Sweet, and Jane Rowall, all of whom were to have a great future influence. Marian founded "Model Horse News," the longest running all-breed magazine/club in the hobby. Caroline, with her interest in real Arabs, introduced the idea of giving models real parents and pedigrees. Marilyn went on to become the world expert on Beswick horses. And Jane, as well as being the first Brit to own Breyers, made the first serious contact with the American model scene in 1976!

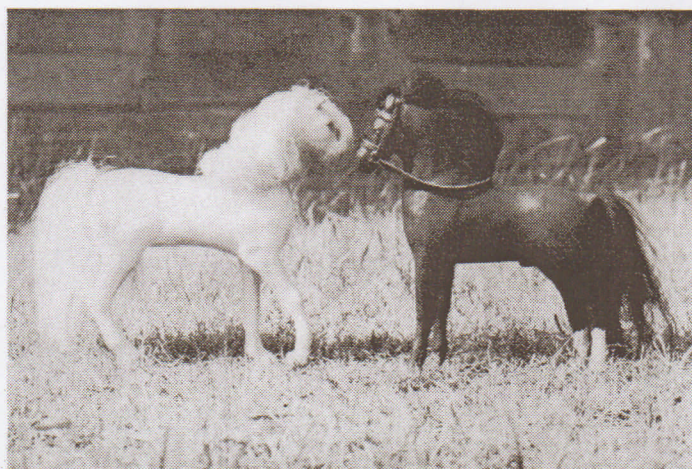
Because our British hobby developed independently of what was going on in the US, we do a number of things rather differently. In the first instance, most model enthusiasts over here would probably describe themselves as model horse breeders and showmen, rather than collectors. There are few "one of each they made" collections over here, probably because there are such a wide variety of makes available, and also probably because British collectors (well, certainly the older ones!) can't rid themselves of

the feeling that anything with a molded on mane and tail isn't really a "proper" model, since it was established long ago that "proper" models have hair ones!

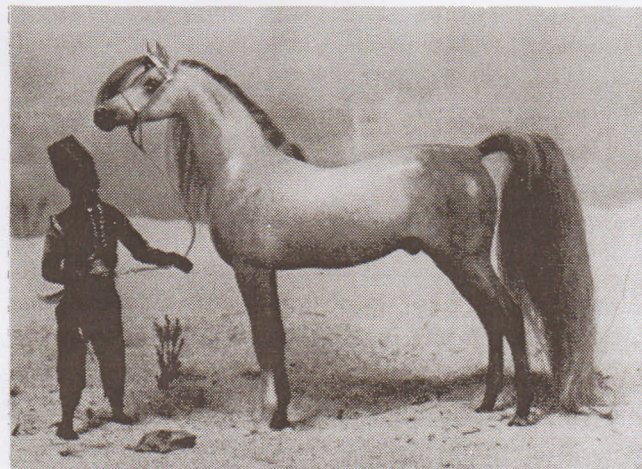
We also don't rent our mares and stallions out as sires and dams, but instead most people raise an annual foal crop. These foals usually have a foal model body for the first year of their life, but then, unless their breeder intends to keep them, they generally sell them as "DOs" (details only). This is really just a paper pedigree, detailing parentage, foaling date, color, etc.—a useful way of keeping control over your horse's offspring. "DOs" originally developed as a stop-gap in the mid-1970s, when it became very difficult to obtain models of any kind here, but though adult "DOs" are not really approved of, it's far easier (and cheaper!) to run a herd of DO youngstock than buying a batch of models every year would be!

The most obvious differences between ourselves and collectors in America are our shows. Photo showing got off to a late start in this country, as film processing remained expensive here compared to the US, until the late 70's. Before then most shows were postals, judged by dice or similar chance methods. Nowadays though, photography is relatively cheap, and photos shows are now the norm. However, class lists look thin in comparison to American ones, because we don't have the variety of ridden classes that you do. In the real British horse world, only one style of riding is practiced—the style you call "hunt seat"—but our ridden classes are not exactly the same as your "English pleasure hunt seat" ones. For example, no horse under the age of four may be shown under saddle, and a double bridle or pelham is the norm (though novices may wear snaffles). Numnahs (saddle pads) are not generally used. Western and Park classes (for the handful of imported Morgans) are sometimes found at small specialist shows, but never at County (Class A) level. Our model horse shows, being based on our real horse scene, reflect this; however, we do have more western classes than you'll find at real shows!

There are two other major differences between our shows and yours. First, riders are required in all ridden events. Any model shown without a rider will automatically be disqualified. This does make life more complicated, especially when trying to find riders for non-Trad sized horses (and also when setting up entries at live shows!), but on the other hand, we consider it much more realistic than having the model running about all by itself! The second



Old style Julip Arab mare and stallion owned by Keren Woods



Gai Gwalchmai—Rydal OF owned by Keren Woods

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