

Interview to Chris Lowe



by Talitha Bakker ■ photos by Henrike Hoermann

TA: How was it like growing up with the beautiful Arabians at Claverdon stud?

CL: Life at Claverdon was, and is, fantastic. From a young age I was able to learn off some of the best people around. My grandmother Joan Ratcliff started Claverdon stud over 60

years ago, and we have had some great times and some not such great times! Overall though, it has been an amazing experience and everyday I think how lucky I am to live in such a beautiful place, where horses can be out in very large pastures and enjoy life just being a horse. I had a great upbringing being shown how to care for horses in different styles. This I feel has given me the ability to care for horses in all types of different environments.

TA: Do you remember the first Arabian you showed?

CL: I remember very well the first horse I showed! I was 12 years old, my mother would have normally shown the horses at the time but she had just had a knee operation. I was thrown in at the deep end at Haydock Park Show, which used to be one of the toughest shows to compete at in the UK. I entered the ring with our veteran mare Zemire. The class had 17 horses competing, with about 5 or 6 national champions in it. I ended up winning the class and the rest is history - I had the Arab bug.

TA: Over the years you have successfully trained and showed countless Arabians and since a few years also started to judge. How do you like judging? Is it something you would like to continue?

CL: I passed my national judging exams a few years ago. I have been judging in the UK since, and it's been a lot of fun. I am limited to which shows I can judge at though, due to the current ECAHO rules about professional trainers and handlers.

I really feel it helps to be a good judge working with horses everyday. Having shown and produced show horses for many years, I feel it gives me a good advantage. I really feel it's a shame professionals can't be judges. They are the ones actually working with horses day in and day out.

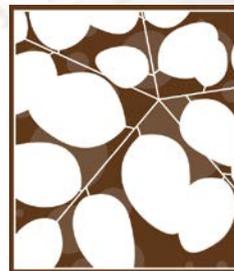
I think certain concept shows where handlers can judge, like the Arabian Futurity Europe and the AHO Breeders' Cups, are an excellent idea.

Not everyone can make a judge. It's a tough job with not that many "thank yous" at the end of the day. Judges have to travel long distances and stand all day without a lapse in concentration and at the end of it they are not even paid for it. I strongly feel that if judges were paid a nominal fee, then they are also employed and therefore accountable for their actions at a show.

TA: Earlier this year you got married to the beautiful Amy. How does she like the Arabian horse world? Does she often travel with you?

CL: Yes, we were married in April and we had such a lovely day surrounded by great friends and family. We hope it was fun that our European friends got to experience a traditional English wedding. Amy has been bitten by the bug and now has her first horse in partnership with her good friend Charlotte Barr. Amy loves all animals and so loves spending time with the horses and the other animals on the farm. With working, travel to all the shows wasn't always possible but now she has finished her job at Aston Martin she hopes to be able to attend more shows outside of the UK.

TA: Since this year, you also started to be the manager of



the very successful Al Baydaa stud in Egypt. How did this start and how are you managing this between Claverdon and your travels to Egypt?

CL: The Manager's job at Al Baydaa came around through my good friend Raphael Curti. He approached me at the end of 2014 to discuss the possibilities of me managing Al Baydaa farm for the owner Mr. Ahmed El Talawy.

After a few months of discussions and a few trips here and there, I arrived in Egypt. Once I had seen the beautiful farm and the outstanding horses I was very excited. Mr. Talawy has an amazing vision for what he wants to create, and he and I are completely on the same page in our direction of what we want to achieve at Al Baydaa.

There is much work that has to be done at the farm and it will take a couple of years to get it to where we want to, in terms of design and layout. We are currently trying different systems to see which is the most practical and efficient way to run the farm.

Over the past decade, Mr. Talawy has bred and acquired some of the best straight Egyptians in the world. This is evident in the show results for 2015, with Fady Al Baydaa being named Gold Champion colt at the Egyptian Event Europe, following up on Kais Al Baydaa's championship a couple of years ago at the same show. In Egypt at the Rabab show we competed with 11 horses - 9 qualified for the championships and we won three Gold medals and two Silver. We won further championships at the El Zahraa National and International show in November.

It has been tough juggling Claverdon and Al Baydaa together. I always knew it would be challenging, but I am not one to shy away from a bit of hard work. When taking the job I discussed it with all my clients at home. They have been very supportive of this change. I would like to thank Otto and Anne-Lise Berg, Nils-Arne and Sandra Holmudden, Inge Sorenson and Reijo and Linn from Naples Arabians for their support and trust in me. Claverdon is a family run



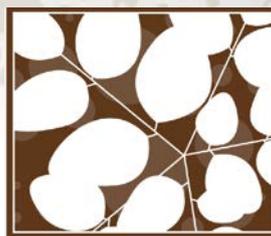
farm, with the support of my mother Joanne Lowe and our wonderful staff who have stepped up to the challenge and performed amazingly. Caring for horses isn't an individual task, it's a team task. When everyone works in the same direction the job goes well and problems are faced as team instead of individually.

TA: How many horses does Al Baydaa stud have at the moment and are they mainly straight Egyptian?

CL: Al Baydaa currently has around 60 purebreds at the farm in Egypt, with a further 50 recipient mares. We are nearly all straight Egyptian in Egypt. In Europe we have a further 20 horses with Raphael Curti at Privilege SFQ, with a mixture of straight and non-straight.

TA: Recently Al Baydaa purchased the beautiful AJA Angelo. Will they breed him to the SE mares or start a new non-SE breeding program.

CL: AJA Angelo was purchased at the same time that I started working for Al Baydaa. Angelo was purchased by Al Baydaa and Al Mai stud, the beautiful farm in Kuwait owned by Mr. Talawy's wonderful wife Madame Mai. Angelo will compete in February at the Kuwait International show, after which he will return to Europe where he will stand



at public stud with Privelege SFQ. We will show Angelo in 2016 – he, along with our lovely collection of non-straight mares like the black swan Zenyatta and a few other recent purchases, will add for an exciting year. We will breed him to some non-straight mares of Al Baydaa. We haven't discussed about using him on any straight mares as of yet.

TA: What to you are the biggest difference/challenges between SE and non-SE breeding?

CL: This is a great question. I think the easiest way to answer this question is knowledge and experience. When breeding SE, it is vital to know the pedigree and the strains. I feel in non-straight breeding, a lot of people are breeding with stallions because they like him as a horse, and not looking enough at pedigrees to see what will work with their pedigrees. I also feel people are following trends of popular stallions and not trying lesser-known stallions. Great stallions are out there that deserve the opportunity to breed some good mares, but may not have been marketed as well as certain other stallions.

It still amazes me how much the SE can change so much. Time is a key factor when breeding SE. Many people can rush into choices on a young horse – through not knowing the pedigree, they will not know how the horse changes as they mature and may discard a horse that turns into a beautiful mare or stallion.

TA: What are your plans with Al Baydaa over the years?

CL: Al Baydaa already has a highly credible name in SE breeders and non-straight breeders. So my job is made a little easier when you have such a great basis. Mr. Talawy is an



extremely kind and generous gentleman. He likes to see others succeed in their breeding plans with success at the shows. He wants the shows to be more spectator orientated, as shown for example at the All Nations Cup in Aachen with the full sponsorship for the 'Vote and Win'. We were so pleased it was received so well by so many people. We feel it added a little something extra to the atmosphere of the show.

My main objective for the farm is finish the buildings work on the farm. We are building a vet clinic on the farm that will have state-of-the-art technology and some of the world's top vets. This will offer to all horses owners and breeders – not just Arabian – a first class clinic to care for their horses. We don't just want the best for our horses at Al Baydaa, but for all horses in Egypt. If we can help all horses in Egypt through advice on feeding and medical requirements, then we will feel we have achieved something for the good of the horse. We as a team feel it's our duty to the horse to be able to offer the best care a horse deserves. We are currently the leader in breeding technology in Egypt, with our South American vets performing embryo transfers for us and outside clients. We hope to expand this side of the business in the next few years as well.

For the future in the breeding barn, I hope we can continue to produce top class Egyptians and non-straight for Mr. Talawy. It would make me very happy for a home-bred SE Al Baydaa horse to compete on the world stage. Hopefully this might happen in 2016 with Hala Al Baydaa and Raphael Curti – fingers' crossed! □