

AZRAELL (1988 - 2009)

BORN IN 1988, AZRAELL was the first foal of Blacklord Caesaro (Vali-Hi Garibaldi x Easter Magic) out of Genista (Indian King x Jazirah Sbeyel), bred by Mr Bond and Ms Shaw. Caesaro stood with Anne Brown at Gadebrook stud having been imported from America, and Az, to date, has been by far his most successful son.

Az made an instant impact on those who saw him, being 15.3hh and a stunning mahogany bay colour. The first ten years of his life resulted in an outstanding ridden showing career owned by Samantha Horwell, with far too many championships to list. Azrael's name is forever linked through to a particular win when in 1998, aged ten, he won the inaugural Ridden Pure-bred Arab class at the Horse of the Year Show, shown by Richard Ramsey, the key to his success was his manners. Azrael followed this success later that year by also gaining the Reserve European Champion Ridden Arab award.

Aged fourteen, Ann Hawke sold Az to Karen Wood, and he moved to his new home on the Devon / Cornwall border, thriving as sole stallion on a small stud. He was used on Karen's own mares, producing some outstanding Anglo foals, Kalbahaski (from El Khamsin), Zephyrous and Burnished Gigolo (both from Mystique Breeze). As time approached for Kal to be weaned, he kept escaping into his dad's field. Az seemed happy with the arrangement and enjoyed the company, so Kal stayed with Az from then on. Az took pains to teach his young son the finer points of sliding down the hill on your back so as to really get any available mud truly ground into the mane / coat. It was during this time I



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During these years Az was ridden by Nina Tekle. In British Dressage competitions, where, despite voiced bias to him being an arab, they achieved wins at both Prelim and Novice levels. Az was enjoying his new role, and he with Nina, also went hunting. Late 2007 Nina was not able to ride anymore, so when I moved to Devon in August last year I got the chance of a lifetime to ride Az.

He was huge. The balance and power that rippled through him as he moved was awesome. Despite my initial trepidation, he carried me confidently knowing he wouldn't put a foot wrong. Early on I tried schooling him. Ten minutes later I understood the message, I will take care of you, don't worry and I know a lot more than you do! Point taken Az, let's go for a ride.

On his first EGB ride we were passing through a gate and several guns went off

simultaneously. Az turned slightly to look, and my stirrup caught on the gate and broke. Any other horse would have spooked, he waited for me to dismount, and I walked him back in-hand to the road where we could be collected. Our second ride he gained a grade 1 and showed his amazing manners surrounded by mares.

We started fittening work for this year, our last ride was along the Tamar on a gorgeous frosty morning. Three days later the end came very swiftly, the vet thought he must have a tumour which ruptured something vital. His last seven years were full of relaxation and pleasure. His relationship with Karen was based on mutual appreciation and understanding. He was deeply contented and will now be deeply missed. On the day he died, Caroline Sussex completed his heritage certificate. I had looked into his pedigree a few months earlier hoping to use him on my mare Clutha, and thought he may be over 80%. It arrived two days after he passed away: Azrael, 81.56% Crabbet.

Azrael was the first Arabian horse to win HOYS, and he was the first predominantly Crabbet horse to win HOYS. He was a hidden gem, a stallion carrying the American Crabbet lines lost from Britain, with bay and black genes. A treasure has been lost just at the point where his Crabbet heritage was recognised. Azrael means Dark Angel, there is no better description of this magnificent stallion. He was and always will be, Azrael. ■

