

## Yeguada del Hierro del Bocado, EXPASA - Safeguarding the Heritage of the Spanish Carthusian Horse

Written by Sabina Holle, Hanna Stud reprinted with permission

**The Carthusian or Cartujano horse** is one of the about 87 breeding lines of Pure Spanish Horses registered with the Spanish Stud Book. D Rafael Atienza writes in his article about 'El Caballo Cartujano' that the precise history of this line is rather unclear and subject to much speculation due to the contradictory reports written about it. Adding to any speculation is the fact that the first Spanish Stud Book was published in only 1928 and considering the century-old existence and history of the Spanish Horse breed it is extremely difficult to trace pedigrees to times before 1928.



However, especially throughout this century the Cartujano line has been and still is, regarded as one of the best and purest and most true to type amongst all different line of Spanish horses and many breeders all over the world proud themselves to have at least in parts breeding stock, that incorporates Carthusian blood. In Spain, certain studs dedicate their entire breeding endeavours to breeding this one line. In general, any animal with at least 75% Carthusian blood in its pedigree is considered to be a 'closed Bocado'. The word 'Bocado' meaning bit, refers to the distinct brand in the shape of a curb bit, that can be seen on the original Carthusian horses. Today again one stud is the proud owner of this sought after identification.

### The Past

The name Cartujano takes its origin from the church or monastery (La Cartuja) of Jerez de la Frontera, where a special breed of Spanish horse existed. The breed went through periods of high popularity both in the 18th and 19th century. Originally the Carthusian monks were dedicated to maintaining their purity, later, the breed repeatedly changed hands and name. With the French invasion and the sale of properties, horses went into the ownership of several private people but eventually the name 'Cartujano' prevailed. Some of these owners are well documented such as Antonia Romano. Some stallions and mares were also sold to local breeders from Jerez.

A large pool of horses eventually were bought and hidden from French invaders by the priest D Pedro Jose Zapata y Caro and his brother Juan Jose. Later J Jose's sons inherited the stud, which after their death was bought by Vincente Romero. The literature tells us that at the time Vincente Romero bought the stud he only managed to rent the famous Bocado brand. In order to avoid confusion and as a cost cutting exercise he added the letter 'C' above the centre bar of the brand. Today brand still looks like that and sometimes is used in conjunction with the old brand.

Unlike some other European breeds, the Pure Spanish horse does not have its own brand. Each stud or breeder uses his own distinctive brand, which next to the horses is the second most treasured possession a breeder has. It reflects years of hard work and dedication and is only passed on from father to son, thus staying in the family for generations. Only in the event of a complete stud sale may the brand be sold to the person that bought the majority of the stock and will carry on breeding the same line of horses.

One of the first breeders to occur in the Spanish Stud Book, Romero Bernitez, acquired most of his horses from Vincente Romero. When Vincente died in 1911 the stud was divided and horses sold throughout Spain but also to Mexico. Later in 1940 there appear three major breeders of Cartujano horses: Roberto Osborne, Fernando Terry and Francisco Pallares. Over the next decade breeders such as Manuel de la Calle, Pedro Salas Garau and Diego Mendez also acquired several horses. Some of these breeders, namely Pedro Salas Garau sold several horses to Australia in the seventies. Therefore a few of the original foundation sires and mares in the AHAA studbook (Australasian studbook covering Australia, New Zealand, and some Pacific Islands) trace their lineage back to these famous bloodlines, and some of their offspring subsequently has found their way into New Zealand.

### The Present and Future

Since 1990 a state owned company, EXPASA, has been the holder of the 'Hierro del Bocado' - the Bocado brand. Expasa operates their stud - Yeguada del Hierro del Bocado - on the original lands owned by the Carthusian monks. This farm was and still is called the 'Finca Fuente del Suero' Southwest of Jerez de la Frontera. Presently this stud is quite possibly the most important reserve of Carthusian horses in the World. The stud owns about 200 breeding mares, grazing on the land of the former Carthusian Monastery, just as it was almost 500 years ago.

The Hierro del Bocado is considered to have one of the most ambitious programs for the improvement of animal lineage in Spain today. The aim is to maintain and improve the distinct features and qualities of the Carthusian horse, using a strictly controlled breeding programme. This farm is truly state of the art in all aspects. In early 1998, Expasa finally decided to open the door of their stud to the wider public, resulting in possibility of studtour every Saturday morning all through the year.

### Stud tour of Hierro del Bocado

Visitors are greeted at a lavish reception area on the top of a rise overlooking the main building complex with training facilities, stables, tack rooms, offices, haybarns, mare stalls and private veterinary facilities including an equine surgery. Making your way down to the buildings through a main entrance gate opens the view up into a large courtyard surrounded on three sides by beautiful stables for colts and stallions. Straight ahead is a large indoor arena enclosed on one long side entirely by glass so as not to obstruct the wonderful view of the valley and the city of Jerez in the far distance.



*Visitors are treated first with an introductory video, outlining the property and the aims of the stud, followed by a beautiful parade of some of the best horses. Some youngsters are paraded in hand, older horses are ridden or shown in carriage, mares are shown in the traditional way of a cobra. The cobra of Hierro del Bocado has either 10 or 12 mares in it, making their parade a breathtaking spectacle but also showing off the accuracy and quality of their breeding stock.*

Next follows a tour of the buildings, giving the visitors ample time to see several stallions and those mares with foals at foot inside the mare stalls having their daily meal of hard feed and supplements. From here, one can also catch a glimpse of the outdoor training facilities, consisting of a further two full size arenas, three round yards and an automatic walker. The way back to the indoor arena leads past the veterinary facilities with five crushes for mare examinations, laboratory, surgery recovery and isolation boxes.

The highlight of the visit is a performance in the indoor arena. About 50 youngstock, yearlings, separated by gender are driven into the arena at liberty, by a Vaquero on horseback, afterwards the weanlings come in, still accompanied by one or two broodmares and show off their playfulness to the delight of the spectators. Several breeding stallions are introduced either in hand or under saddle and a typical Spanish carriage performance, with four horses wearing the traditional headgear.

The highlight once again is a performance by the mare cobra, ten mares together walking, trotting, in circles and straight lines, stopping and doing shoulder-in. All this with only one handler, holding only one mare. A magnificent display of brilliant horsemanship. To top off this wonderful and informative morning, the stud runs its own souvenir shop, where one can spend money easily. Everything is organised from T-shirts, Sweatshirts to sun umbrellas, keyrings, posters, videos and silk scarves. The only thing that is not for sale easily are the horses. Hierro del Bocado has horses for sale. Once a year, a number of youngsters is offered to a select number of people. Selection takes place by mail and you have to be invited to purchase a horse, making sure that these horse only go to approved breeders and studs.

This is not all about Hierro del Bocado. The stud also functions as an equine research centre. Working in collaboration with the Veterinary School of the University of Cordoba, research into mare fertility, foaling procedures, Artificial Insemination and Frozen Semen collection is conducted. Further pedigree information is gathered by means of DNA typing, not only for identification of individual animals but to identify certain genetic characteristics, more in the sense of overall gene mapping of animals.

Establishing a stud like this, shows a true commitment by the Spanish government to preserve this wonderful line amongst the Spanish Purebred horse. Following the overall European trend for strict control in breeding, supervision of studs and expertise of studmasters, moving away from pure chance and placing paramount emphasis on quality breeding stock, especially in the mares, will hopefully guarantee this stud a well deserved position amongst the top breeding facilities in Europe.

Visit the website of Sabina Holle, Hanna Stud at <http://www.spanishhorses.co.nz>