



DOMA MENORQUINA

A display by the Equestrian School of Menorca.

To say that this small group of riders took me by surprise would be an understatement! Sadly, the first appearance of the Equestrian School of Menorca was a well-kept secret and the first rider appeared in baroque attire after an afternoon of dressage when the stadium had all but been vacated. Before long, however, word about their extraordinary riding skills must have spread and large clusters of spectators made their way back to watch. Their second “billing” attracted a much larger crowd who thoroughly appreciated the remarkable gymnastic skills of horses and riders.

They commenced with classical dressage tests which were enjoyable but not out of the ordinary – not until the first horse suddenly stood up on it’s hind legs and walked down the arena! The remainder all



followed suit – some jumping along on both hind legs for what appeared to be an interminable time. It just didn’t seem possible for the horses to maintain such an upright stance with riders on board for such long periods. So upright were they that I felt they must **surely** topple backwards. The whole group of the participants put on a show which included this remarkable movement properly known as the “bot”. The aim of the “bot” is for the horse to stand on it’s hind legs while keeping it’s head and shoulder relaxed and



without tension. The riders would achieve this from a trot with little or no visible indication that it was about to happen (certainly there was none of the energy building usual to airs above the ground whether ridden or in hand) and the horses were happy to perform it in close groups. At one stage they

were all along the centre line, alternatively facing different sides of the stadium, all performing a perfect “bot”.

It was highly dramatic and any show organiser looking for something different with which to entertain the crowds need hardly look any further! Having talked to members of the Association on their stand, I understood that they will be delighted to travel further afield to demonstrate their talents. They were also at pains to explain that the bot is not a movement that requires force and only horses who show sufficient willingness and aptitude are used for such work which has its origins in Menorcan culture. Dating back to medieval tournaments, the horses and their riders became an essential ingredient of every major fiesta on the island. In fact, the bot is performed in the midst of dense crowds and processions and it seems quite acceptable apparently to “lose” the occasional spectator as a result. Remarkably the horses seem to take it completely in their stride.

Some of the horses participating in the demonstration were part-breeds, but mostly they were purebred examples of the Menorcan horse.

THE MENORCAN HORSE

The members of the Menorcan Equestrian School were at pains to point out that this is a distinct breed. Certainly it owes something to its’ cousin from mainland Spain, the PRE, but it also has some distinct characteristics of its own.

To begin with, the horses are smaller and have a lighter build with a more streamlined shape. The limbs are fine and long, the head quite small and neat. However, it does have - in common with the PRE - a low-set tail, arched neck and are naturally well balanced with light and elevated paces. One very distinct feature, however, is that all purebred Menorcan horses are black in colour.

Club Escola Menorquina - puts on regular shows so why not pay them a visit if you are holidaying on the island? You can see in-hand work as well as displays of high school work, long-reining and Menorcan horse-drawn vehicles.

For further information contact them at: www.showmenorca.com or the Carretera Cala Galdana km 0.5 (Ferreries).

Escola Equestre Menorquina - where they offer instruction (3 month courses) on Menorcan horses – high school work, classical riding, jumping and carriage driving. For further information contact them at :- **Lloc de Binisebani – Ciutadella de Menorca** Tel : 607 49 68 24



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