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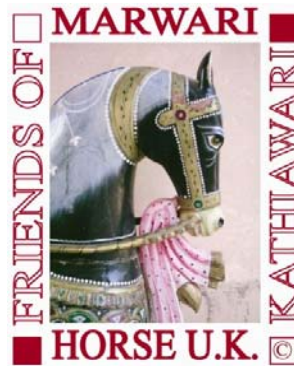
## **The 6th International Colloquium on Working Equids**



29<sup>th</sup> November - 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010 (optional field visit - 3<sup>rd</sup> December)  
India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

The 6<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium on Working Equids  
New Delhi, India 29<sup>th</sup> November – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010

**Notes from the Colloquium by Janet Barber,  
Member of the Friends of Marwari / Kathiawari Horse UK**



**Produced for:  
Friends of Marwari / Kathiawari Horse UK  
and  
Indigenous Horse Society of India**

## **Introduction**

Caroline Moorey, Chairman of Friends of Marwari/Kathiawari Horse UK supported my suggestion that I could, if helpful, attend the above Colloquium on behalf of the Friends, taking the opportunity of my presence in Delhi at that time. My task was three fold:

1. To report on some of the general findings of the Colloquium
  
2. To discover what potential there was for the efforts currently being made by the 'Friends' and the IHSI to
  - a) distribute 'kind' bits to Marwari and Kathiawari horse breeders, owners and traders, particularly in Rajasthan,
  - b) to link with the initiatives of others, in particular the Brooke Hospital for Animals, the organization which staged the Colloquium
  
3. To ascertain what interest in and knowledge of these breeds was evident at the Colloquium

## 1. A short report on the Colloquium

*I have only attempted below to give a flavour of what was discussed at the Colloquium as all the papers presented, references and bibliography were published and available to participants at the time of the Colloquium, and, can now be read on the Brooke Hospital website at [www.thebrooke.org](http://www.thebrooke.org).*

The Colloquium was excellently organized and attracted over 150 participants from about 30 countries, including those in Asia, Africa, US, Europe and Latin America.

The focus of the Colloquium was on equids, used for draught (ploughing, forestry etc) and transport (people and goods). However, other animals used for these purposes were often included in case studies and discussions – camels, elephants, buffaloes and bullocks for example.

The Colloquium began with three outstanding and inspirational speakers.

The first address was given by **Maj Gen Dr R M Kharab**, renowned for his service in India to working animal welfare. He gave a description of the current state of working equids and other working animals in India. As his speech is not included in the publication referred to above, it is worth quoting from General Kharab's address.

The General began by quoting Ghandi – *'The social development of a nation is judged by the way it treats its animals'*. There are 2,800 animal charities in India which are very active in advising State governments on many aspects of animal welfare. With respect to legislation for example, there is a legal maximum to the weight of a load an animal should carry or pull and this is checked by the police. There are 80 million (this figure needs verification) pack animals in India including 6 million horses; 4 million donkeys and 1.4m mules, in addition bullocks, camels and yaks. 67% of agricultural development is by animal power. The General continued to emphasize the crucial economic importance of draught animals to India, and, in one of his final remarks, he referred to the poor economic status, universally, of the animals' owners.

The second paper by **Tina Wallace**, International Gender Studies, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, UK, concerned the need for genuine Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in the assessment of issues which owners of working animals believed to be important; she stressed it was very difficult to get this right, and she regretted amongst many things, 'promise inflation' by NGOs who became unduly influenced by donor expectations. She also said that NGO strategies may be well articulated but are developed a long way from where the work takes place; *'people don't live in your projects – they live in interwoven and complex socio-economic context's*. Dr Wallace stated that, regrettably, donors now took a much less sympathetic approach to the intermediary recipient of their funds (an NGO say) taking enough time, through PRA, to fully understand the needs of the ultimate beneficiary in terms of technical and financial support. This was due to donors seeking to shorten project cycles. Dr Wallace then went on to plead for much more thorough and detailed analysis of results – NGOs seldom returned after 5 years – to learn what they had achieved.

**Peter Sandoe**, Danish Centre for Bioethics and Risk Assessment, University of Copenhagen, was the third opening speaker. He began with a Kantian quote *'he who is cruel to animals is also to his friends'*. Sandoe went on to compare animal welfare ethics in developed, and those in the developing and emerging economies; he addressed definitions of cruelty and the many cultural differences at play in the treatment of animals in different countries; he proposed that *'ethical principles for dealing with animals are context specific'*.

These three papers set a very high standard which, to the greatest extent, was equalled by all other speakers. What followed was a wide variety of themes and topics over the next three days. At the strategic level, they included how to

- conduct disaster relief efforts in order to rescue domestic and working animals;
- how to change entrenched public and citizen opinion using the example of successfully stopping people conducting their 'needfuls' in fields, and other public places;
- how to persuade governments to introduce community learning programmes for marginalized sections of society, and,
- the future for working animals in Africa and Asia.

Specific case studies referring to camels, elephants, buffaloes, donkeys and other equids included the

- identification of lameness;
- the design of harness;
- the problems arising from the poverty of owners;
- issues of nutrition;
- diseases and their treatment; and
- examples showing the need to move from a treatment to prevention focus.

**The tragic, fundamental and inescapable conclusion of the Colloquium was:**

- Millions of working equids (and other working animals) live in chronic and acute pain, suffer from hunger and fatigue and loneliness, largely because their owners are poor with neither resources nor knowledge; *'most working donkeys in India suffer from chronic pain'* said Cyril Roy (University of Prince Edward Island, Canada).
- The attitude of governments and society, almost universally, is that working animals and their owners are to be pitied, scorned, or ignored.
- In eastern and central Europe where there are over a million working equids and elsewhere, images of working horses are used to represent the 'backwardness' of the nations within whose boundaries they work. In striking contrast to the draught horse – regarded as an unfortunate symbol of under-development - in the same countries (for example Europe) - the 'pleasure' horse is regarded with admiration.

However on the more positive side:

- The veterinary, animal behaviour, and social scientific basis for treating equids is now being researched with more resources, and targeted at the fundamental problems of equine welfare.

Professional and vocational networks promoting scientific findings are expanding and deepening, ensuring that theoretical and practical knowledge gained is being communicated more comprehensively across political and cultural boundaries.

Research into science-based treatments which result in practical application in the field, including identifying with more accuracy levels and causes of pain, reasons for physical deformity or abnormality, and what influences resistance, and vulnerability to disease, for example, are developing fast.

- The organizations usually associated with horse, and other animal welfare, have increased their capacity, their cultural and geographical reach, and their levels of activity substantially, in ways that improve working horse welfare and productivity. These would include the Brooke, World Horse Welfare, Society for the Protection of Animals in North Africa, the Donkey Sanctuary, and many newer small indigenous NGOs in countries with developing and emerging economies.
- There are signs that the international government institutions, including Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, and other multi-laterals (for example the United Nations Development Programme {UNDP}), and those disbursing government bi-lateral funds (example the UK's Department for International Development), are beginning to understand that working equids and other animals, have high economic and social value, particularly in the context of achieving the Millenium Development Goals. If the Millenium Development Goals are to be reached, more resources must be available to the owners of working animals to improve their health and capacity to work, thereby increasing household income for poor families.

## 2 An informal assessment for the potential of collaboration between the Indigenous Horse Society of India and the Brooke.

I had informal discussions with the Chairman of the Indigenous Horse Society of India, (IHSI) Thakur Randhir Singh; Major General Sharma, CEO, Brooke Hospital for Animals (India), and, Kamelish Guha, Chief Operations Officer at the Brooke's India office.

The following points emerged:

- A review of the status of indigenous horses in India – the Spiti horse; the Manipuri breed which is crossed with local horses for use in transport in Dhaka; it is also used for polo; the Zanskari breed is of particular concern to Thakur Randhir Singh because it is used for, amongst other purposes and under very bad conditions, to take pilgrims to the Shri Mata Vaishmo Deva Shrine in Ladakh. With regard to the Marwari horse, it is now found in many States – the inference was increasingly. They are used as tonga ponies '*all over the country*' as well as for ceremonial purposes. (There was a report in an Indian newspaper that a Marwari horse was used in a wedding ceremony of a Dalit {low caste}family, perhaps unusually). (A short address Thakur Sahib wished to give to the Colloquium, which in the end was not possible, was given to UK Chairman for information).
- I discussed with Major General Sharma the extent to which concern for the welfare of horses would be seen only as a European pre-occupation – he answered emphatically that it was a major concern of people in India and reminded me that the Brooke's Mission is to give equids relief from pain and suffering.
- Thakur Randhir Singh wished to give all encouragement, in principle, to a closer alliance between IHSI and the Brooke.
- Major General Sharma and Kamelish Guha said that the Brooke was planning a major and enhanced effort in Rajasthan in the near future, and would be very happy to work with the IHSI on a broader programme, which could put the 'Bit Donation Scheme' initiative into a wider context.

They would be happy for the IHSI representatives in India or elsewhere to work with them on developing a programme of work in Rajasthan.

They suggested that more analysis, for example, of why owners use severe bits would be helpful – they said that the cheapness of severe bits was not the issue, but speed in getting a horse ready for work was the main incentive as well as gaining rapid immediate control of the animal.

- I was told that there are innumerable animal fairs in India including those held in Rajasthan, rather like Pushkar. '*In the last week there have been at least 10...*'
- If IHSI wanted to collaborate with the Brooke, Major General Sharma said that a 'small' amount of money would be welcome, to create the Rajasthan plan.

- The Brooke (thinking about discussions held at the Pushkar Fair in November), has developed a 'hoof kit' for use by horse owners in India.
- The Donkey Sanctuary India is working in Rajasthan on donkey welfare – Rajasthan has the highest donkey population in India – 26,000 animals.

I concluded that the Brooke people, and Thakur Randhir Singh, were genuine in their desire to work more closely together and were most gracious and open to collaboration. I say this on the basis, of course, of only initial conversations with them. I said I would come back to the UK and report, as I have above, to the Chairman of the UK Branch of 'Friends' UK who will consider how to proceed.

Major General Sharma encouraged the 'Friends' UK to talk to the Brooke in London, which would be necessary at some point, about IHSI and Brooke collaboration in Rajasthan, but I said this must wait for a while.

The Brooke has just published an excellent work book, called 'Sharing the Load' which is a manual founded on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) principles. Its purpose is to help community workers on the ground, at the village and family level, engage working animal owners in discussion to achieve much greater awareness by them of the conditions in which their working horse, mule or donkey, can function healthily and energetically. The book has many compelling case studies of the practical and beneficial changes achieved in the treatment of working equids by their owners, as a result of initiatives inspired by 'Sharing the Load' (and other similar PLA approaches).

'Sharing the Load' includes 27 different Toolkits for different situations, including one for 'How to increase the value of my animal' for example. It is clear from this publication that the Brooke has a very competent and experienced grasp of what might be achieved using the approaches it advocates. It is likely therefore that any plan, developed by the Brooke, in collaboration with others perhaps, for a wider and more in depth work programme for Rajasthan, will include the kind of PRA and PLA initiatives described in 'Sharing the Load'.

The scope for working in Rajasthan, at the 'community', village, or family level, on the welfare of Marwari or Kathiawari horses is, probably, largely unknown at present. But, if 'Friends' UK and the IHSI want to work with the Brooke, part of the preparation and thinking should include (apart from the Colloquium proceedings already mentioned), reading 'Sharing the Load'. (Full title: Sharing the Load – A guide to improving the welfare of working animals through collective action. Practical Action Publishing; [www.practicalactionpublishing.org](http://www.practicalactionpublishing.org); ISBN: 978 1 85339 7196. price £15.00

### **3. Knowledge of Marwari's and Kathiawari's found at the Colloquium**

With the help of 'Friends' business cards, a name badge, and leaflets, (available to me through the foresight of Caroline Moorey), I was able to talk to a good number of people about these breeds. Most people had never heard of Marwari or Kathiawari, but were very intrigued once I had an opportunity to explain their history and value.

I have given UK chapter a list of colloquium attendees, as well as a note from myself about those who showed a particular interest in the Marwari and Kathiawari breeds.

**Janet Barber**  
**December 2010**