

Musket

by Kathleen Jones

First a bit should be said about Musket's sire, Toxophilite. The name means "one devoted to archery", and surely that is a good name for a son of Longbow. Toxophilite was a very good horse of the 1850's who has long since faded into the mists of obscurity. Toxophilite was owned by the 14th Earl of Derby, who had hoped the horse was good enough to win the stakes named for his family - the Epsom Derby, of 1858. But the colt failed by a length behind Beadsman. Still, he was a good runner. He won both starts at two, and five of seven starts at three, including the Doncaster and Grand Duke Michael Stakes. He won two races at four - the Claret Stakes, and a sweepstakes. But in one of his races that year, he bled significantly from the lungs and was eased up. Because of that incident, his stock was not held in high esteem.



Musket was bred by Lord Glasgow, a bitter and opinionated old man who held fast to his own ideas about "bettering the breed". It was his habit that if he determined that any of his stock were inferior, he ordered them to be shot dead - thus no longer contributing to the thoroughbred gene pool, nor eating up his expensive feed. While this action was illustrative of his commitment to the breed, it hardly endeared him to lovers of horses.

In the early spring of 1869, when Musket was still an awkward 2-year-old, he came under the scrutinizing eye of Lord Glasgow, while training with some other juveniles on the farm. Glasgow disliked the lot, but judged Musket to be the worst of an unpromising group, and ordered him shot. Veteran rider, John Osborne, who was visiting the farm that day, intervened and pleaded for a reprieve for the yet-unnamed Toxophilite colt, insisting that the colt would mature and "come around". Glasgow refused to change his mind, but took Osborne's words under consideration, temporarily.

But Musket did not come around in the short span of time that Glasgow had scheduled him to. His works continued to be unimpressive and it seemed unlikely that the colt would survive the summer. But Glasgow took suddenly ill and died in mid March. His horses were transferred to George Payne. It is certain that if this man had lived a few more months, or perhaps even a few more days, the Thoroughbred breed would have been altered - for the worse.

Musket, now so named (because he was spared from the musket), debuted on July 8, 1869 at Newmarket in a maiden plate and was soundly beaten. He was tried again at Ripon on August 2, and again ran unplaced, so was put away for the remainder of the season. At three, he was tried longer, and showed some skill, running second in his first race at a mile. Four days later, he was sent out going 2 miles and earned his first victory. From then on, he was a force to be reckoned with at longer distances, but he never gained

any great public following. Despite victory after victory, the crowds always suspected that he would eventually have to be eased up as his sire was, although this never came to pass.

Following his one race in 1872, Musket was advertised for stud duty, at Glasgow Stud Farm, for 30 guineas. But he was not popular with breeders. Grandsire, Longbow was known to have had breathing problems, and this coupled with Toxophilite's bleeding incident, was enough to keep mare owners skeptical of Musket. In the six season that Musket stood in Britain, he got only 65 foals. The best of these was Petronel, which won the Two Thousand Guineas, Doncaster Cup, and Great Yorkshire Handicap.

After the 1878 season, Mr. Payne looked for a way to dispose of the horse. This was no small feat since Glasgow's will specified that none of his horses could be sold. Payne found a loophole, and for a fee of £500, leased Musket for 99 years to the Waikato Agricultural Company of New Zealand. From New Zealand, he was sent to Melbourne. As a large, powerfully-built horse with good bone, Australian all agreed he could probably make a name for himself as a sire of carriage horses.

Bloodstock salesmen tried in vain for some time to dispose of him, and eventually there was an interested party, and Musket was returned to New Zealand in time for the breeding season of 1879. In his first season, he got only two thoroughbred mares, his other mates being mares of doubtful origin.

Not a lot is known of his breeding record, as official stud records were not kept there until many years after his death. But he did become a power and that is evident through his offspring. His best get include CARBINE, TRENTON, MARTINI-HENRY, TIRAILLEUR, NORDENFELT, and MAXIM (which was exported to California for stud duty).

Musket was the broodmare sire of Melbourne Cup winners - THE GRAFTER and GAIUS, as well as many other important stakes horses.

In Australia, the Musket line has been noted for soundness and sturdiness, and for its freedom from bleeding, roaring, and other lung afflictions.

Exported to far side of the earth on the assumption of unsoundness, two of his sons were sent eventually back to England specifically because the line was known to be very sound. How ironic. The traits carried by this line are free from the very things for which breeders first avoided him - and for which Lord Glasgow would have shot him.

Pedigree:

Musket, br.c. born 1867	Toxophilite	Longbow	Ithuriel
			Miss Bowe
		Legerdemain	Pantaloon
			Decoy
	unnamed mare	West Australian	Melbourne
			Mowerina
		Brown Bess	Camel
			Juliet's dam

(female family # 3)

Born: 1867, in England

Died: 1885, (age 18) in New Zealand

Racing Record:

Year	Age	Starts	1st	2nd	3rd	unp.	earnings
1869	2	2	0	0	0	2	0
1870	3	9	7	1	0	1	£ 1,956
1871	4	2	1	1	0	0	920
1872	5	1	1	0	0	0	1,195
total		14	9	2	0	3	£ 4,071

Stakes Record:

at 3:

- won - Flying Dutchman Handicap (1 1/4 miles, at York)
- won - Ascot Stakes (2 1/2 miles, at Ascot)

- won - Her Majesty's Plate (2 miles, at Lincoln)
- won - Her Majesty's Plate (3 miles, at Shrewsbury)
- won - Severn Cup (2 miles, at Shrewsbury)
- won - Great Midland Counties Handicap (2 miles, at Warwick)

at 4:

- won - Midland Counties Stakes (2 miles, at Warwick)
- 2nd - Alexandra Plate (3 miles, at Ascot)

at 5:

- won - Alexandra Plate (3 miles, at Ascot, carrying 132 lbs.)