

Obituary: Duke

By Dominic Sewell and April Bowles

Editor's note: Those of you who attended the reburial of King Richard will no doubt have your own memories of the two destriers who preceded the coffin in procession. The grey was Coralito, ridden by Dominic Sewell. The other, ridden by Tobias Capwell, was Duke.

It is with great sadness that we announce the loss of the well-renowned destrier Duke, who passed away peacefully.

Duke was a seasoned jousting horse who earned the respect of everyone he met. Hot, fiery and often opinionated in his younger days, he became Historic Equitation's most reliable and consistent mount, taking many knights down the list for the first time. He proved to be a champion through to his Autumn and Winter years, bringing glory to those he carried.

Duke came to Historic Equitation in 2009 after working briefly at the Black Country Museum. The following year he went to Denmark for a joust at the Middelalder Centret at Nyborg Falster. The centre is a beacon for historical re-enactors and public alike because of its authentic medieval layout, including a harbour.

Anyone lucky enough to see Tobias Capwell and Duke jousting in tournaments throughout Europe will have noticed their enthusiasm together in the lists, sometimes with Tobias receiving lances whilst Duke was balancing on his two hind legs. The match was often unbeatable, a combination that will leave a huge gap.

A firm favourite in the jousting community, Duke knew his job and he loved it. We are certain he will be greatly missed by everyone on the circuit.

In 2012 we went to St Wendel, the first serious and accurate attempt at recreating a joust with solid lances. It was a triumph of an event with Dominic Sewell jousting him this time.

2014 saw the great road trip of all time. Two months and three magnificent events. First back to Denmark for the Town Centre joust of Nyborg, a wonderful event. Next Switzerland for a marathon 10-day event. Tobias was riding Duke at the time, but it was hard on all of us with high temperatures in very humid conditions. This is when Duke really proved to be one of the finest horses in the field of historical re-enactment. Finally, back to the Middelalder Centret for a weekend joust. We didn't think we had ever been so tired!

In March 2015, came the event that captured the whole world's imagination: the reburial of Richard III. Four horses from Historic Equitation took part, from the loading of the coffin near where Richard fell to the solemn procession and the entry to Leicester Cathedral. Those who knew Duke will forever remember that day, when he escorted the coffin, striding majestically up to the Abbey, indeed a mount fit for a King.

2016 saw Duke's debut at the Tournament of St Michael at the Chateau du Plessis-Bourré, in the Loire Valley, where he returned three times, the last occasion being in 2019.

Duke was more than an asset, he was the heart and soul of the Historic Equitation operation and was never far from his equine colleague Briar. They could both often be found getting into mischief, from raiding supplies at home to an overnight adventure at Hampton Court Palace in 2018. We could

never get mad at their casual, unauthorised wandering, because they were no threat, they didn't gallop around causing chaos, just quietly wandered to the nearest bale of hay to help themselves.

Duke's ashes will be buried by the tilt rail at his home in Northamptonshire.

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Historic Equitation own and train horses for jousts and re-enactments; they also train riders to take part in these events and keep this aspect of history very much alive.

Many thanks to Historic Equitation for the photos used here and also on the back cover of the Journal.

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