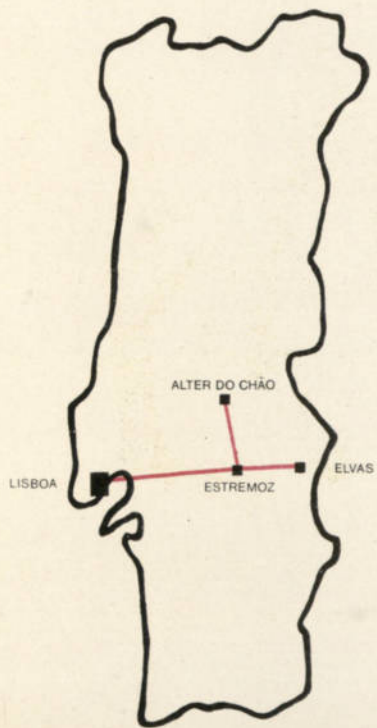
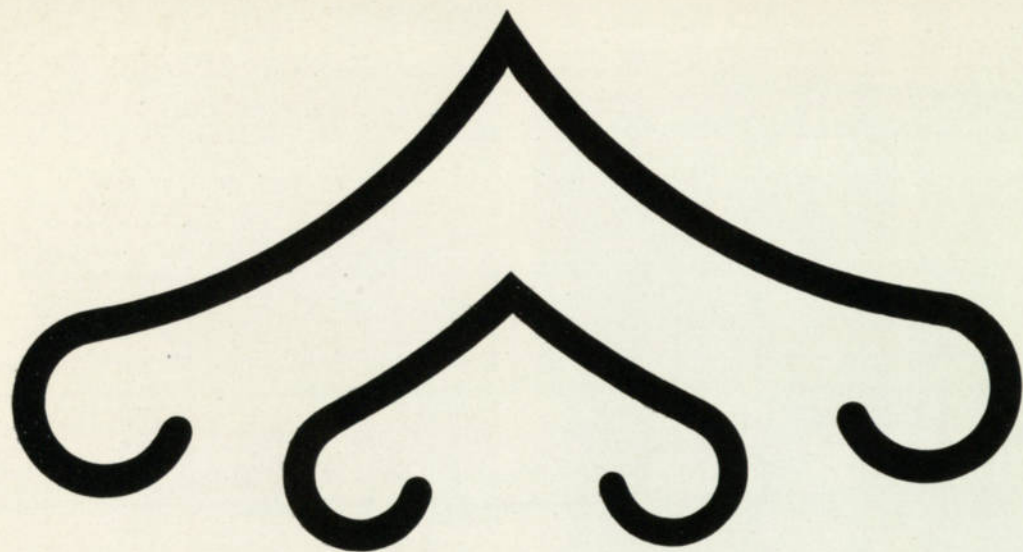




COUDELARIA DE ALTER
PORTUGAL

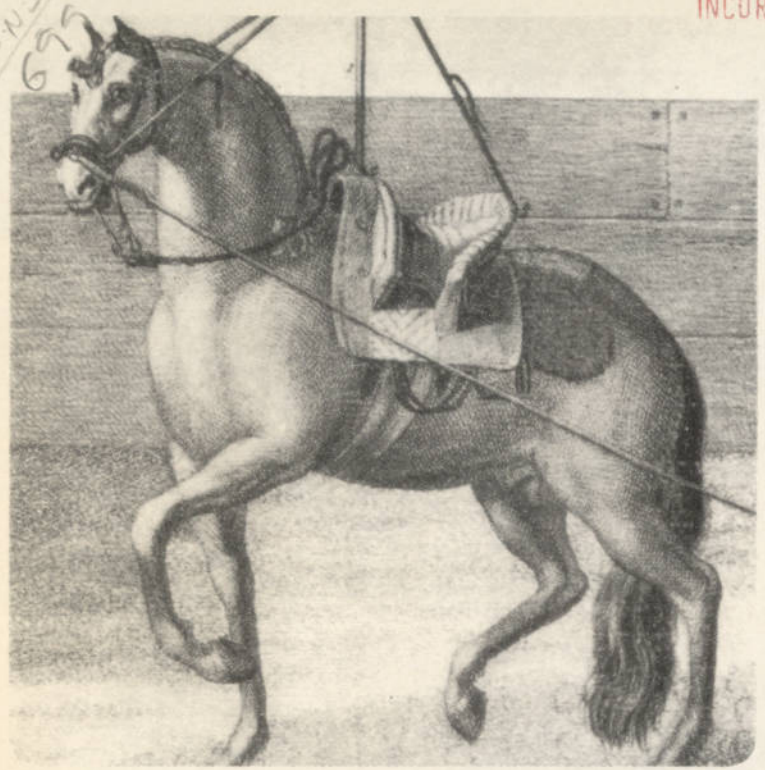
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THE ALTER STUD

The Alter do Chão Stud was founded in 1748, towards the end of the reign of Dom João V. Great interest was being shown throughout Europe in raising thoroughbred horses, and the lack of a stud to meet the needs of the Portuguese Court led Prince José to give his support to the setting up of the Coudelaria de Alter.

Some forty Andalusian mares formed the basis for Alter horsebreeding, but in fact, decades before the Stud was founded, the Spanish master Don Gregório Zuñiga y Arista, in his work *Doctrina del Caballo y Arte de Enfrenar*, wrote:

«In the Province of Alentejo, in this Kingdom of Portugal, I have some experience that the colts which are bred at Arnela de Alter do Chão grow into very fine horses»

Very soon, however, the Stud was to face vicissitudes that seem to have heralded its decadence. Poor criteria in the choice of breeding stock led, at the beginning of the 19th Century, to the beginning of a decline in the breed. A large part of the responsibility for this can be attributed to the introduction of French mares captured from the Napoleonic forces at the Battle of Arapiles (1812) and — later — when the



Peninsular War was over, to the incorporation into the herd of mares left over from the auction of the mounts of two cavalry regiments. The degeneration of the breed was evident in a diminution of corpulence and lack of fire. In an attempt to remedy this state of affairs, General Beresford sent a famous Arab stallion to serve the mares, and this, as was written, «helped somewhat to produce smaller heads in its descendants». In 1828 Andalusian stallions were bought, these being followed by Arab and Moroccan stock, with the aim of «breeding saddle and luxury carriage horses».

The Alter Stud knew the most illustrious Portuguese horsemen, such as the Marquis of Marialva who «even at the age of 76 supervised the dressage every day, handling many colts and filly with as much verve as he did when he

was still young».

But the decline became more marked, to the point when «the only two stallions whose ancestry made them usable, were sold off by auction». Fortunately they were bought up by a connoisseur, Dr Ruy d'Andrade, and this indefatigable expert on the Portuguese Alter horse later ceded them to the Directorate-General for Livestock Services. From 1942 — the year in which the administration of the Stud was transferred to the Ministry of Economy — up to the present day, recovery of the breed has proceeded in such a way as to justify full optimism as regards its future. The Horse Festival, which is held every year at the Alter Stud, is a public demonstration of the excellent standard nowadays attained by the Portuguese Alter Real horse.













AN EXEMPLARY HORSE

«I have long conceived the Alter breed as the only well defined breed, noble, of pure blood and typical of the good saddle horse, that exists not only in Portugal, but in the whole Peninsula».

Silvestre Bernardo Lima
(Zootechnician)

«... of regular corpulence; in its lines both regular and harmonious; — manageable; courageous; possessing all the noble qualities (...) is elegant, — haughty, — skittish, — an exemplary horse; hard as steel; in gait very regular, even when trotting and galloping; sober; — of rare nobility; and, perchance, more lovely than any!».

General Joaquim António Vito Moreira
(Master of the Royal Stables)

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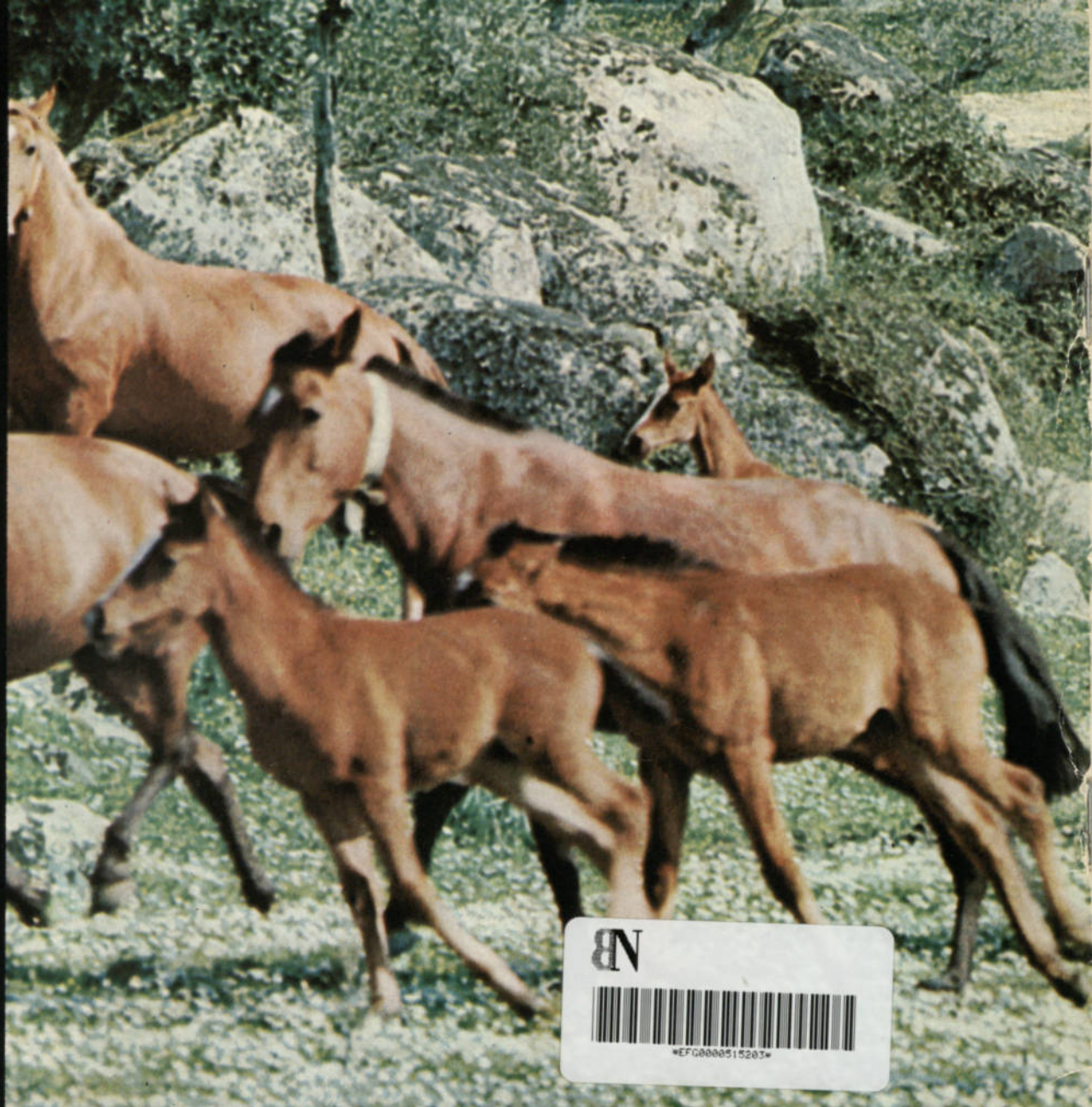
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