

A WOMAN OF SUBSTANCE

MARTIN STEVENS TALKS TO THE TRAILBLAZING LANWADES STUD OWNER ABOUT BREAKING NEW GROUND, HELPING THE CAUSE OF WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY, AND HOW THE BREEDING LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED

KIRSTEN RAUSING is now such a bastion of the British breeding establishment that it is easy to forget she was once considered something of an interloper, and caused quite a stir when she bought Lanwades Stud in Newmarket in 1980.

Indeed, Alan Yuill Walker wrote in his 1991 book *Thoroughbred Studs of Great Britain* that “the bloodstock community was mildly surprised, to say the least, when Colonel Nat Frieze sold Lanwades Stud in Kentford to a striking, but unknown, Swedish girl still in her twenties”.

It is not entirely true that Rausing was a woman of mystery, as the astute Captain Tim Rogers had engaged her to manage Baroda Stud and Grangewilliam Stud during the preceding three years, recognising her horsemanship and head for pedigrees from when she had taken mares to be covered at Airlie Stud as a flying groom earlier in the 1970s.

However, the fact that it was often pointed out while in Ireland that the Swedish native had blown in from Siberia does confirm there was something in the notion that she was regarded by the locals as rather a curio.

Looking back on her arrival at Lanwades Stud 40 years on, Rausing remembers how she caused eyebrows to be raised.

“I was younger than almost any other stud owner in Newmarket by a generation or more, I was a foreigner and I was

female: these three things were deemed quite exotic at the time,” she says.

Rausing is proud to add that the prominence of women in the industry is no longer a source of astonishment, thanks in part to her breaking new ground and then assisting others to climb the ladder.

“There were some female grooms just beginning to come into racing yards in 1980, but they always looked after fillies,” she says. “There were certainly no women in the breeding industry, and in fact I think I was the first to employ women. All of that has changed now and I am very pleased to say we represent diversity in all its forms at Lanwades.”

Rausing has always done things her own way, and has often had to make her own luck. Soon after taking over the reins of Lanwades Stud she prompted further bemusement when the Irish St Leger and Prix Royal Oak winner Niniski was syndicated to stand at the property. Even then, stayers were often met with market indifference.

But Niniski made the doubters eat their words when his first crop yielded the champion two-year-old Kala Dancer and King George and Prince of Wales’s Stakes winner Petoski – both bred by Rausing

herself – as well as the Yorkshire Oaks runner-up Kiliniski.

Petoski was bred by Rausing from her Petingo mare Sushila, who had been bought at the Goffs Irish National Yearling Sale of 1976 and would prove crucial to the survival and then expansion of Lanwades Stud in its early years.

“It was only with substantial help from the bank that I was able to buy Lanwades, which was then 150 acres and in a pretty poor state,” explains Rausing. “I could not afford to buy the main house, which was subdivided from the rest of the property, so I just bought the yard and land.

“The bank asked what collateral I had, so I said I’ve got just the thing you need: I’ve brought two mares with me from Ireland, and you can have them both. Well, they were very sniffy and told me in no uncertain terms that I was no longer in Ireland and here in England any type of livestock could not be used as collateral, as it would soon be dead stock.

“Somehow I managed to convince them to let me buy the stud, but in fact the whole place was in hock to them for several years.”

The bank made a mistake, as one of the mares was Sushila and sales of the foals she produced in the afterglow of Petoski’s exploits more than paid for the stud farm.

The increased revenue generated by Niniski after he became champion first-season sire also helped, of course, and all profits were ploughed back

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► Kirsten Rausing with Study Of Man (top), Lanwades Stud's new recruit for 2020. He is a son of Japanese sensation Deep Impact

into acquiring more land and making improvements.

Forty years on, Lanwades Stud has grown from 150 acres to over 1,000 acres and from five employees to 40, including Rausing's yearling operations at Staffordstown in County Meath.

In that time, Rausing has bred the winners of just under 2,000 races worldwide including ten individual horses who struck at Group 1 level – from Kala Dancer to Time Warp, who got Lanwades' ruby anniversary year off to the perfect start by gaining his third Group 1 victory in the Hong Kong Gold Cup in February.

Time Warp's breeding exemplifies Rausing's long nurture of prized families, and reminds us how infrequent – yet usually judicious – her forays into purchasing breeding stock have been.

He and his brother Glorious Forever, both Hong Kong Cup winners, are out of the Stormy Atlantic mare Here To Eternity, whose maternal granddam Hot Thong was sourced in Brazil as Rausing was keen to acquire a mare from a family she had known well for several generations.

"Hot Thong's granddam Puget Sound was foaled at Lanwades, as her dam Kilavea, a Hawaii half-sister to Nureyev, was owned by a friend of mine, Magnus Berger," recounts Rausing.

"I persuaded him to send Kilavea to Niniski in his first season, and soon after she was put in foal she was sold privately to Colonel Dick Warden of the Curragh Bloodstock agency on behalf of Sheikh Mohammed in his first year of entering the industry.

"Sheikh Mohammed bought two mares that year: one was Kilavea, with the result of the mating with Niniski being Kiliniski, and the other was Oh So Fair, who was carrying Oh So Sharp."

Rausing's association with Kilavea and her descendants is not confined to her finding Hot Thong in Brazil, either. In the mid-1990s she spotted Kiliniski coming up for sale at the Keeneland ♦

January Sale, having produced little of note for Darley, and managed to buy the mare for the minimum bid of \$2,000.

Kiliniski repaid Rausing's allegiance to the family by producing four fillies in succession. One of those was the Listed winner Kiswahili and another was Robe Chinoise, who in turn became the dam of Rausing's British Champions Fillies & Mares Stakes heroine Madame Chiang.

Madame Chiang and the brothers Time Warp and Glorious Forever, all descended from Kilavea, are also all by Lanwades Stud's late stallion Archipenko, who Rausing speaks of with particular fondness.

"Next to Niniski the most important horse I ever had here was Archipenko," she says of the son of Kingmambo, whose dam Bound was a Nijinsky half-sister to Kilavea and Nureyev. "His early loss was a severe blow for Lanwades. He was a magnificent horse to look at, a very good racehorse himself, and it would be hard to find a better pedigree than his.

"He was the sire of seven individual Group 1 winners on three continents from, let's face it, very limited opportunities. He stood in Argentina for one year only but sired three Group 1 winners there.

"He died aged only 13 from leukemia, which is very unusual in horses; losing him hit us very hard."



Niniski and Archipenko rank among four stallions who Rausing identifies as having been pivotal to Lanwades' success, along with Selkirk, the source of 17 Group 1 winners including Classic scorers Kastoria and Wince, and Hernando, whose six top-level winners were headed by Prix du Jockey Club victors Holding Court and Sulamani and Oaks heroine Look Here.

The other horse central to the fortunes of Lanwades Stud was Alruccaba, owned by Rausing with Sonia Rogers, and particularly Alruccaba's daughter Alouette, who produced Rausing's Group 1-winning sisters Albanova and Alborada.

The 'Al' dynasty has flourished ever since and its most recent star is Albanova's granddaughter Alpinista, runner-up to Love carrying Rausing's distinctive white and green silks in the Yorkshire Oaks in 2020.

"I have always been a great admirer of the old Aga Khan Studs families and in particular of that tracing back to the legendary Mumtaz Mahal," says Rausing. "I was always looking for something from that family and then, to my amazement, Alruccaba came up as a winning two-year-old, but with a tendon, at the December sales of 1985.

"Mrs Rogers and I bought her together for 19,000gns, one bid above

FAB FOUR STALLIONS RESIDING AT LANWADES STUD

Sea The Moon

The 11-length German Derby winner, by Sea The Stars out of a Monsun sister to Classic winners Salve Regina, Samum and Schiaparelli, has blossomed into one of Europe's most exciting and in-demand stallions.

His first Group 1 winner as a sire came when Alpine Star ran away with the Coronation Stakes in June, while his sister topped the BBAG Yearling Sale when sold to Gestüt Ammerland for a record-equalling €820,000 in September.

Study Of Man

Lanwades Stud's new recruit for 2020 is a valuable proposition as a Classic winner by the late Japanese sire legend Deep Impact out of a daughter of Storm Cat and the wonderful Miesque.

His first book featured some of Rausing's best mares – such as homebred Group 1 heroines Lady Jane Digby and Madame Chiang, and Alwilda, the dam of Alpinista (right) – as well as some choice partners sent by his owner-breeders the Niarchos family including Ikat, the dam of champion Main Sequence.

Bobby's Kitten

The top-class sprinter-miler, who took the scalp of No Nay Never when he won at the Breeders' Cup, was represented by his first two-year-old runners in 2020 and he fielded a double-tally of winners including the exciting Beresford Stakes runner-up Monaasib.

He also enjoyed a tangential boost to his profile this year when Kameko, another by Kitten's Joy, won the 2,000 Guineas and Joel Stakes.

Sir Percy

The unbeaten Group 1-winning two-year-old and Derby winner continued to supply a steady stream of classy performers in the past 12 months, headed by St Leger runner-up Berkshire Rocco and Royal Ascot scorer Scarlet Dragon.

He is still providing handsome profits for breeders, too, and two of his colts commanded a price of 150,000gns at Book 2 of the Tattersalls October Yearling Sale.



the 18,000gns reserve, and through Alouette she gave me my great champions Albanova and Alborada. Another of her daughters, Jude, was useless on the track but produced Quarter Moon and Yesterday for Coolmore, and another daughter, Last Second, has founded a productive branch for Denford Stud by producing Aussie Rules and Approach, the dam of Coronet.

"It has been a remarkably prolific family but the mares do seem to have a lot of fillies. I try if I can to keep a lot of the fillies and sell almost all of the colts, one of whom was Dragon Dancer, who nearly won the Derby."

The prize-money earned by dual Champion Stakes winner and world champion three-year-old filly Alborada allowed Rausing to set up a foundation that provides funding for a range of medical and veterinary research and educational ventures, animal welfare concerns and international disaster relief.

Support from the Alborada Trust proved crucial to several causes related to the thoroughbred industry in the wake of Covid-19 this year, including a grant of £200,000 made to the Racing Foundation, which assists all racing charities.

In all, around £4 million has been awarded to charities in Britain and overseas to help them cope with the demands being made upon them by the pandemic.

Rausing has for many years spent a lot of her time serving the industry, too, most notably in former chairmanships of the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association and European Federation of Thoroughbred Breeders' Associations and as current chair of the International Thoroughbred Breeders' Federation.

She is therefore better placed than many to comment on how the breeding landscape has changed most over the last 40 years. When asked to do so, she points to the advances in reproductive medicine as having altered the business of standing stallions beyond all recognition.

"The greatly improved reproductive medicine and veterinary practices have led, for better or worse, to massively enlarged stallion books," she says. "Fifty years ago, if a stallion covered 200 times that would have meant 40 mares. Forty



► Aerial shots of Lanwades Stud in Newmarket (above and below) and (opposite page, from top to bottom) in-demand resident stallions Sea The Moon, Bobby's Kitten and Derby winner Sir Percy

years ago 200 covers would have been for 50 mares and now 200 covers would mean upwards of 150 mares.

"That is due to the fact that we can pinpoint the mare's ovulation point almost exactly, but also of course because hygiene protocols are much improved. That is thanks largely to the Breeding Codes of Practice, which originated in the UK 35 to 40 years ago and have been copied by almost all European countries and many other nations around the world.

"The Breeding Codes of Practice have meant we routinely achieve tremendous conception rates and mares carrying to full term at a much improved rate, and we have in fact conquered Contagious

Equine Metritis and other such unpleasant contagious diseases by the policing of the codes of practice."

Asked for an appraisal of her own progress since buying Lanwades Stud in 1980, she says: "I've achieved what I set out to do. I wasn't always sure I could do it, but I surprised myself a few times and I got there in the end.

"I received a lot of help, particularly from the horses, especially as I couldn't operate at the highest level against the big boys. In that context I think we did exceptionally well to produce a few champion sires in competition with people who had unlimited means."

Rausing adds that to ensure the survival of Lanwades Stud, which proudly markets itself as The Independent Option, she has had to provide something a little different for breeders – in particular, stallions who can cover mares from the prevailing sire lines.

"Selkirk could cover anything to do with Sadler's Wells and Danzig and clicked very well with those lines," she says. "Niniski was the first Nijinsky in Britain, and Archipenko could cover almost anything.

"Now we have Sea The Moon, who was the first son of Sea The Stars to retire to stud; Study Of Man was the first Deep Impact in Britain and Bobby's Kitten was the first Kitten's Joy – all good outcrosses. Sir Percy is, on the other hand, the last representative of the Mill Reef line in the British Isles."

It would be no surprise if we were speaking of one or more of those names in the same breath as Niniski, Selkirk, Hernando and Archipenko when we come to celebrate Lanwades Stud's golden anniversary in ten years' time. ■

