

Newspaper: **GANDUL**
Date of publication: **May 25, 2007**
Author: **Daniel Befu**
Type of article: **Feature Report**

Title: **Englishmen revive farriery and saddlery in Romania**

Quotation: "Romanians are selling horses for 10-20 million old lei. In Great Britain, these horses can be sold for up to £6,000".

It is a year since a group of ten British specialists from the International League for the Protection of Horses visited Romania with the purpose of, teaching local people the forgotten trades of farriery and saddlery. Founded in 1927, the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH) the ILPH is one of the world's leading horse welfare charities. As well as Great Britain, the ILPH operates in South America, Africa and Eastern Europe.

In Romania, farriery and saddlery are ancient professions, which signify the age-old relationship between horse and man. Unfortunately, the most skilled farriers and saddlers are now retired and their knowledge is in danger of being lost altogether. It is said that the last "genuine" farriers served their apprenticeships in cavalry units during World War II. The communists didn't encourage training of farriers and saddlers, abandoning occupations that didn't fit in with the idea of "the socialist mechanisation of agriculture". Today, farriery and saddlery don't even exist on the list of recognized trades and professions.

The first beneficiaries of the nine-week courses for farriers and saddlers launched by the ILPH were 22 farmers that live near Targu Mures. Another 20 farmers from the Iasi region followed them in 2007. In the beginning, the proud workers weren't easily persuaded to participate in the workshops organised by the professional farriers from the ILPH. "These Englishmen have come here to teach us how to shoe our horses, as if we have no idea how to do this", they grumbled, initially. The self-effacing "Englishmen" gave them a lesson, during a farriery demonstration in the village. Among those brought on day one to take part in the demonstration was a very over-excited horse. The animal wanted to bite and kick every person that tried to get close to him. The locals who attended the demonstration were keen to offer the English farrier advice: „ First, you need to sedate this horse in order to shoe him". Other locals told the English farrier: „Don't get close to this horse, because he will kick you so hard that you will end up on the other side of the yard." The English farrier couldn't understand a word of Romanian and took no notice of the advice being offered to him. He successfully replaced all four shoes of this "vicious animal" with such ease, calming the horse with gentle handling. Needless to say that, in just a few minutes, the whole village became fans of the English farrier, and were all keen to learn his skills.

At graduation, the participants who attended the courses received complete kits, with tools used in farriery (worth £277) and saddlery (worth £194).

In 2006, the ILPH also organised a series of seminars at the faculties of veterinary medicine in Iasi, Timisoara, Cluj, and Bucurest. Veterinary surgeons from the University of Liverpool gave presentations to 860 students as well as to practising and official vets about the latest findings in the field of equine medicine. The speakers provided advice on colic, lameness, equine infectious anaemia, the spread of disease, as well as veterinary best practice.

Initiated in Romania by the ILPH, the programme is in its early stages; the objective is for it to continue until 2011 with a budget of one million pounds. Jo White, Head of Campaigns and European Affairs for the ILPH, thinks that the Romanians must reconsider the huge entrepreneurial potential of the horse: "You have one million horses, many of which are very valuable from a genetic perspective. Just look at how strong some of the horses are that are used for pulling carts. Many horses are also very beautiful. Unfortunately, in many cases they end up simply as beasts of burden. In Great Britain, we have 1.3 million horses, which are the

basis for an industry that includes horse racing, riding for pleasure and rural tourism. Only in Scotland and Wales are horses used for working in the forests, but this is rare. People who work with horses are very well paid and there is a great demand for them on the labour market, as their training is of such a high standard. In order to become a farrier a trainee must attain a four year vocational qualification.

In England, there are 2,500 professional farriers. In Romania, farriers are generally blacksmiths who, from time to time, fix and fit horseshoes in order to make additional money. "In one year, I've met just three qualified farriers who do this as a full time job. They have studied abroad and now they are working within the sports horse arena", says Jo White. Jo emphasises that horses in Romania that cost between 1,000 and 2,000 lei would cost between £3,000 and £6,000 in England.

But in order for Romania's horses to reach their real potential—whether they are working or leisure horses – we must give up on some of our Stone Age habits and understand the needs of the animal. Jo White explains: "Many horse owners think they know how to shoe their animals. Moreover, these owners change the horseshoes as rarely as possible; in some cases leaving shoes in place for more than a year. No one seems to explain to them that, in most of the cases, "playing" the farrier results in the premature ageing of the working horse and decreases its efficiency. In England, to take care of a horse costs between £2,000 and £3,000 each year. Horses are taken to the farrier once every 5-6 weeks in order to prevent lameness. Also, the harness and the saddle need to be designed properly and reassessed every year, to make sure it doesn't damage the horses back. We would like people to know these important facts about horse management. We would also like people to know that if they invest more money in horse welfare, the owner will recoup these costs because the animal will be more efficient: the horse will be stronger, he will rarely become ill, he will live longer, and finally, it will be a boost for rural tourism in Romania, as tourists will leave the country impressed by working horses". Jo, who is passionate about horses, continues her campaign in favour of the horse. She emphasises that horses must be checked by a dentist at least once a year and that "a carcass only trade should replace the long distance transportation of live horses to slaughter from Romania to Southern Italy."

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International League for the Protection of Horses