

Kimbustion

Searching for Shergar

His Story

Shergar wins The Derby, (Epsom Downs 26 July 1981)

The Aga Khan's mighty racehorse, Shergar, won the Derby on the 26th July 1981. Ridden by Wally Swinburn, the bookies fancied the horse's chances - and he was awarded final odds of 10-11.

But no-one could have predicted the margin that Shergar would win by that day - Upon passing the post he was a fully ten lengths in front of his nearest competitor. It is still the most convincing Derby win of all time. Peter Bromley provided the memorable commentary "you need a pair of binoculars to see the rest of the field!"

And so Shergar became "the Greatest Racehorse of all time".

Interestingly too, he was well natured, with a good temperament, because of this he was also the most loved of horses by race goers and his handlers alike.

Shergar was put to stud, but his claim to fame was soon to be further embellished with what happened next.

Shortly after 8:30 p.m. on February 8, 1983, a gang of masked men burst onto the Irish stud farm where he was stabled.

They had come to steal him.

At about 8:40 on the night of February 8th, 1983, one of the sons of Ballymany stud groom James Fitzgerald answered the door of their house at the stud. He was, then forced inside by armed men, and Mr. Fitzgerald himself came downstairs to find his son pinned to the floor.

The man put Mr. Fitzgerald's family in one room before taking him and his wife to the kitchen. They were calm and well behaved after their initial violent intrusion.

They forced "Mr. Fitzgerald to take the men to Shergar's stable and to assist in loading the horse into a double horsebox, which they called for from the main road by two-way radio.

One of the gang was familiar with handling horses. The horsebox containing Shergar was then towed away by an old brown Hillman or Vauxhall car.

Mr. Fitzgerald wasn't taken with it but kept in the house for another hour. He was driven in a van to the outskirts of Kilcock, a small town 20 miles north of the stud, told that a ransom of 2 million sterling pounds was wanted and warned of terrible things which would happen to him and his family if he went to the police.

At that time he thought that his family was still in the hands of the gang. There were at least six in the gang, some members of which possessed a rifle, a revolver and a sub-machine gun.

There was a problem in that by now, Shergar was owned by a Syndicate. There were 20 shares with the Aga Khan still having a majority. It was very unlikely that the group as a whole would be able to come to some agreement in negotiating with the kidnappers.

The best information to date points to the fact that Shergar was taken by the IRA to raise monies for their cause.

Other problems with the plan started to emerge in that the kidnappers had underestimated the popularity of the horse itself with common folk...he was not just a commodity with an expensive price tag..... He was a national hero!

A huge police search was mounted but Shergar was never found. Again the information and rumour to date would seem to suggest Shergar was shot quite soon after being taken. The first story is that the kidnappers couldn't handle him and that he was shot within a few hours. The second is that he was hidden on a farm, but as the police hunt intensified, it was just too dangerous to keep him any longer. This second story is even more tragic in that suggests Shergar was finally machine gunned to death and wouldn't die straight away, having to be shot several times he suffered a terrible death.....We may never know for sure what happened to him.

I hope that as time goes on, someone with the wisdom of a few more years, may say where his remains are. Personally it's not that I think anybody is interested in retribution (The struggles in Ireland were real at the time and people were passionate about their causes)

I think it's that Shergar's story still has a sad ending.....**Shergar deserves a memorial in Ireland and his remains to be laid to rest there.** You would be surprised at the number who would visit if such a place existed.

Please can someone bring him home to his people and tell us where he is?

Thanks Jon