

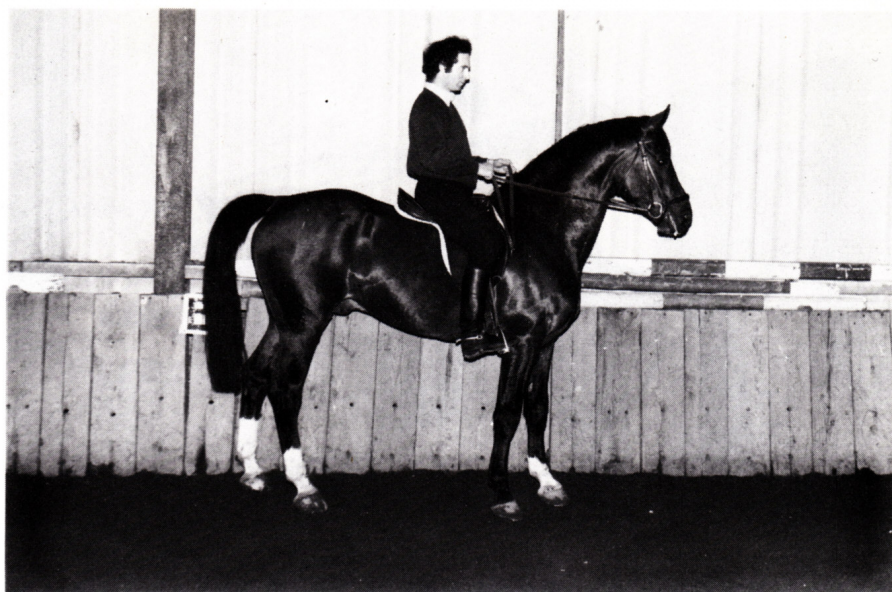
To the question of whether he permitted the use of gadgets, he replied, "I train the horses in a simple snaffle with a dropped noseband. I do not need gadgets in most cases. The horse must work for himself as an athlete would, loosening, developing and strengthening his muscles, tendons and joints by a variety of gymnastic exercises that are performed daily in the school. By loosening up the horse and encouraging him to develop the correct muscles, we improve his balance and engagement. Then, the 'total look', the way he carries himself in his paces, his 'carriage' comes naturally to him."

All work stages follow the criteria of precision, and accuracy of the geometric shape is most important. "One cannot expect to have a straight horse from riding a crooked line!" Similarly, the 20 metre circle encourages the horse to bend more readily and engage himself. "A horse cannot keep a true bend or ride a correct circle if the rider is thinking of a seventeen and a half metre square!"

Rapport

This attention to detail and thoroughness in schooling are also evident in the steady rhythm which is faultlessly maintained in all paces and in riding up to the bit. He does not tolerate intermittent contact. "At all times," he says, "the horses must get into the good habit of listening to the rider through the action of the aids. In all school work, one should be constantly asking and checking 'Is he forward enough from behind?' — 'Could we achieve a little more bend?' — 'Is the rhythm regular?' All these questions must be in the forefront of the rider's mind." He continues: "We achieve our ends by rapport, by 'conversation' with the aids, giving and taking in harmony. If the horse loses his attention for a moment, leans on the reins, loses his rhythm, becomes over-eager and takes too much, then we must take back, call his attention to the work in hand. We must give a signal, an aid which is the most important in equitation — the half-halt. A good rider will use it a thousand times to balance his horse."

When the horse has achieved active engagement from behind and is going forward in balance, then David progresses towards collection with



David Pincus riding the beautiful and impressive dark bay stallion, *Riduna Rigoletto*.

shoulder-in and half-pass until the horse is working through a more collected frame. Lateral and longitudinal exercises gradually increase the flexibility and engagement of the haunches and prepare the horse for collected canter. All these exercises bring the horse into a shortened frame in which he works very deeply from the haunches and shoulders with a well-balanced head-carriage. This is the picture of the dressage horse — an athlete of no mean gymnastic ability.

German Bred Horses

It is thus, to the German-bred horse with its powerful, athletic build and its capacity to absorb constant mental stimulation without becoming over-

excited, which is all part of dressage training, that David has principally turned to develop his Training Centre. "The horse," he says, "must learn all the exercises within three years of training and then perfect them." To do this requires a horse of great mental and physical stamina.

Accessibility

Although some clients come from local areas, David has pupils from all over the country. The location of the Dressage Centre is sufficiently near to the main motorway network of the M6, M5, M4 and M50 that it is easily accessible to clients even from Scotland. It is situated in an elevated position above the Wye valley and is approached from the main Hereford



Behind the main stable building is the yard shown here, with David's Lodge on the left. The section of the building on the right houses a row of indoor boxes and, facing it, a further row of newly constructed timber loose boxes form a third side to the yard (not shown here).



As David rides *Rigoletto* into the pirouette, it is significant to note how calmly the horse accepts the bit and is being ridden with the lightest contact.

to Tewkesbury road by a half-mile long, tarmac driveway. Thirty acres of well-managed paddocks flank the drive, all with post-and-rail fences and high, wind-breaking hedges. The drive sweeps through the spacious grounds of Sheepcote, a tall, redbrick, Victorian residence, round to the stables and a large car park with accommodation for several cars and horse boxes. The drive leads on past a tennis court, Sheepcote Lodge where David lives and on to an outdoor manège and the large indoor school.

Heart of the Centre

The indoor school is the working heart of his training centre. Standing as it does on the crest of a hill and facing due south, it commands the attention of both visitors and stable staff. The building has a wood and steel frame,

with corrugated asbestos cladding, and measures 50 metres by 21 metres. The sides are completely covered in as protection against the wind and this was a great advantage during the heavy blizzards in January this year when the horses were turned loose in the school (not all at one time) as the rest of the Centre was snowbound.

Judges Box & Gallery

The interior of the building is completely surrounded by four foot high kicking boards and the flooring of peat, sawdust, sand and salt provides a good surface on which to work the horses. Along the west side there is a visitors' gallery and also a jump store to house arena equipment. A heated judges' box at the centre of one short side is enclosed on three sides with the viewing side open to the

arena. It has a useful hatch window for passing score sheets and other information to the steward's box which is built alongside it onto the outside wall of the school.

Encourages Judges

The steward's box, complete with loudspeaker, opens onto the outdoor exercise area (an extension of the outdoor manège) so that, when there is an indoor competition in progress, there is the minimum of delay when calling the next competitor. David has run several dressage and jumping competitions which have proved very popular. He likes to encourage the Preliminary and Novice judges to judge, unofficially, the Elementary tests (competitions for only these three levels have been held so far) to give them practice for judging at a higher level.



This small hatch in the side of the judges' box has been devised so that dressage sheets and other items can be handed to the steward's box beside it.

From the outdoor manège/exercise area, with its bark surface and post and rail fencing, there are gates leading off to either the paddocks or to the cross country course which has a woodland section. A further gateway from the outdoor manège gives access to the stable complex.

The main stable building is long and solidly-built in red brick of the same era as Sheepcote house itself. Contained within it are a row of indoor boxes, the feed room and a large stall used for short-racking a horse which requires attention. First aid equipment is stored in a cupboard on the wall. The brick floor slopes down to a central drainage channel in the passage along the fronts of the boxes so the hosing down of a horse presents no drainage problems. An



The stable buildings. The indoor school, which is not shown in this photograph, stands to the left, with the tennis court between it and the stables.

extensive loft on the first floor is approached via a brick-built, outside staircase.

Facing across a square yard towards this building is a row of newly-constructed, wooden loose boxes which open onto a concrete strip running in front of them. At right angles to and joining together these two principal stable blocks is another building, forming the third side to the square yard, with more loose boxes incorporated into it. Most of the loose boxes in the brick buildings are very roomy and can, if necessary, be divided into stalls with partitions which can be slotted into place. David explained that, on the Continent, it is very common to see high class dressage and other types of competition horses standing in stalls quite satisfactorily.

Deep Litter

Another aspect of stable management which is widely used on the Continent and which he applies to his stables is deep litter bedding. All the boxes have concrete or brick floors and are thickly bedded, in almost every case, with wheat straw which is not fully mucked out each day. The boxes are regularly skipped out during the day and the dirty straw removed from the top of the bed, while the rest is left undisturbed. Clean straw is laid on top and the bed gradually builds up into a thick "mat" which is dry and warm so the horses are encouraged to lie down. The bed does not get kicked about so no bare floor areas are ever exposed which could endanger the horse if he should lie down or roll. Properly managed, this method has several benefits, not least of which is that it is economical and saves time.

The Buildings

The stables so far mentioned are used for housing the mares and geldings but the three stallions live in loose boxes which face across a wide yard towards the back of the main stable building, with the tack room alongside. The door of the feed room is approximately opposite the stallion boxes so the whole arrangement of the stables is quite compact and efficient to run. The stallions' boxes are not in immediate proximity to the other stables but in no way are they kept



The stallion yard with *Riduna Rigoletto*, the 7 year old, approved Westphalian stallion on the right, *Dalibor*, the 3 year old Hanoverian colt in the centre and *Gladiator*, the 5 year old Hanoverian stallion at the far end. Part of the indoor school can be seen on the left of the photograph.

apart from the other horses which pass by their loose box doors constantly during the day and work in the covered school with them.

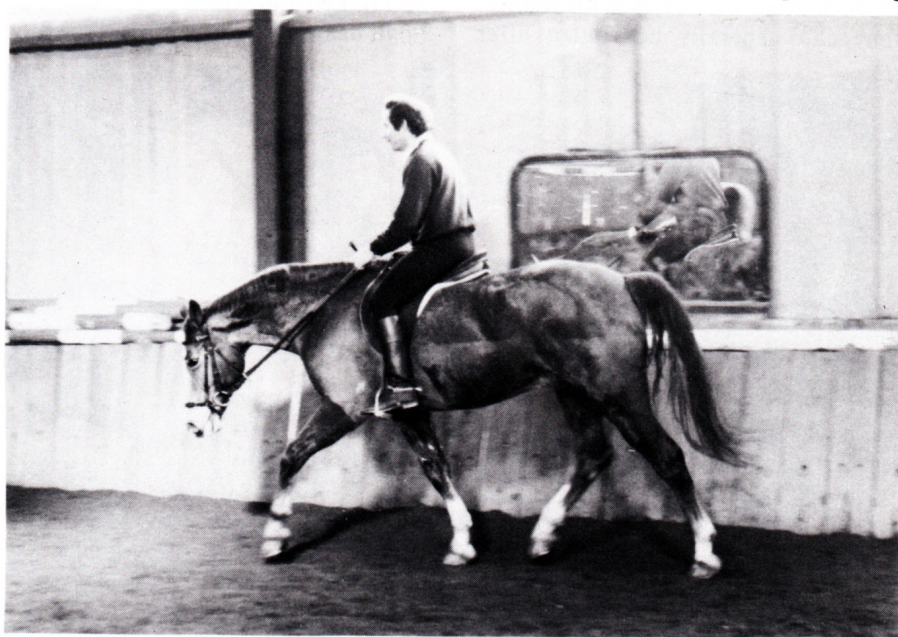
David's Lodge forms the fourth side of the main stable yard and has windows facing into the yard on one side and towards the indoor school on the other.

The Feed Store

The horses have their feeds in corner mangers and their water buckets stand firmly in two rubber car tyres standing on one another to avoid

spillage. On the whole, hay is fed in nets as there is generally less waste this way, but if any of the horses clears up its hay without leaving much on the ground, it may have its hay fed on the floor which, in fact, David prefers as it is more natural for the horse to eat this way.

The feed store has a brick floor and its wide sliding doors on two sides give ready access to both yards. Feed is stored in vermin-proof metal bins and there is a chaff cutter which is used every day as chaff is mixed in with all the feeds. Feeds are measured out by the scoopful, one scoop holding



David allows his horses frequent spells of relaxation during their schooling sessions. When working in low outline, he always looks for the horse's back to be rounded as an indication that he has been working correctly.



Jon Evans, who is in charge of the yards, preparing the feeds with working pupil, "Bunny" Retell. A small trolley is used to carry the ingredients round to each of the horses in the stables.

approximately 2 lbs of corn. David calculates all the feeds individually, writing up the quantities on a list pinned to the wall. The horses are fed at 7 a.m., 12.30 and 5.30 p.m. In addition, the stallions have a feed of stud cubes which David takes in to them on his final round of the stables at 10 p.m.

Feeding

Hay is fed four times a day so there is always hay with the horses but a check can be made on how much is needed each time to avoid unnecessary waste. David made the point that, with the type of steady work done by the horses in his stables, they can generally be ridden after

half-an-hour has elapsed following a feed. As he rides as many as 12 horses each day, it is important that he starts with the first one in the school as early as possible in the morning.

A trolley is used to take the feeds round to all the horses. On it are carried bins holding the various constituents of the feeds, according to which feed is being made up. The bin containing corn has 30% rolled barley and 70% rolled oats in a mixture which is weighed out into the correct proportions. Another bin contains chaff which is included in all feeds. Soaked sugar beet pulp is added to the morning feeds and a mixture of bran and flaked maize is added to all feeds. Soya bean meal goes into the evening

feeds, all the quantities varying according to the individual horse's requirements. Molassine meal is also fed and additives used include the proprietary brands of Turf-Min (a Tithebarn product) and Super Codl-vine (from Mill Feed Services, Stow Park, Lincoln) for vitamins and flowers of sulphur which the farrier recommended for the benefit of the horses' skin and feet.

Ferrous sulphate in the form of a yellow powder, supplied by the vet, is added to supply iron, and calcium is also added. All the quantities are, of course, carefully measured, just a teaspoonful in one feed per day.

Trace Element

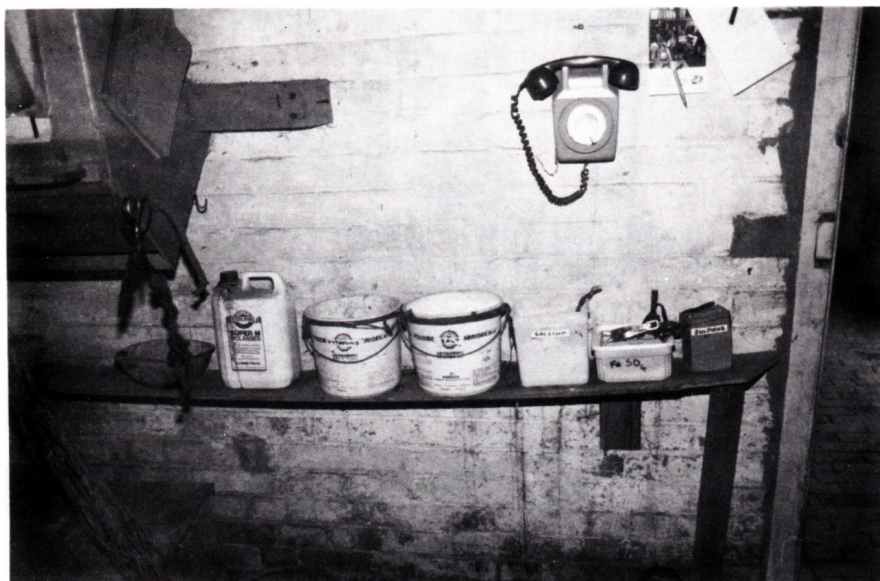
Salt is included in each feed and all the horses have a salt lick containing selenium fixed to the wall of their stable, as the land is deficient in this trace element. Some of the feed, including the salt licks and Turf-Min, are supplied by the feed merchants, West Midlands Farmers, but some David buys from local farmers. He buys a year's supply of hay and straw at a time, although not all of it is stored on the place as he arranges for the farmers to hold it for him and deliver smaller quantities when required.

An inexpensive source of large plastic buckets was located at the local fish and chip shop where they had formerly held the oil used for frying. At only 30p per bucket, and well cleaned, they have proved admirable for the horses' water and, cut down in depth, for carrying the feeds round to the stables.

The Tackroom

The tackroom is built of brick with a concrete floor. At one end, two suspended racks the width of the room, hold the saddles (David favours Passier saddles) while bridles are hung individually along the wall. The bridle brackets are disused "ladder" brackets from telegraph poles and have been painted with anti-rust paint before being screwed to a board running along the length of the wall. Rugs, boots, bandages and other horse clothing are stored in metal lockers and shelves fitted along one wall hold cleaning materials and grooming kits.

All the horses were well rugged and



Plastic ice-cream boxes are used to hold the calcium and ferrous sulphate, which are fed in minute quantities to the horses, and are kept on the shelf shown here with the other feed additives.