

# Ambitions Fulfilled

by Christine Davies

## Part Two



*Convenida & her colt foal, El Primo, by Ultimado II; the first purebred Andalusian to be born in the UK for about 200 years.*

It turned out to be a period of nearly eight months before I finally was able to fly to Barcelona to meet up with the horses and the transport and start the final leg of getting this valuable cargo home.

When I arrived at the farm the three horses were tied up in cattle sheds and Trevor Owen and his son, who had unloaded the pigs by this time, were dutifully washing out the lorry ready for our return trip.

The stay at the Torrento family farm in Corominas turned out to be a little longer than expected as one of the horses papers had gone missing. Fortunately Senor Torrento happened to be an important farmer and landowner in the area and was able to rectify the problem in a couple of days. My enforced stay turned out to be a real bonus. I visited Barcelona and did some sight seeing in this beautiful city. I also got to know the family and all the farm workers and even some of the villagers. The farm was situated in a mountainous area and consisted of flat plateaus which were cultivated and punctuated by forestation. The air was fresh and clear and the views breathtaking. Every morning the shepherd

herded his flock of sheep and goats for the day, whilst the cows were brought in to milk in a very hi-tech shed, quite a contrast.

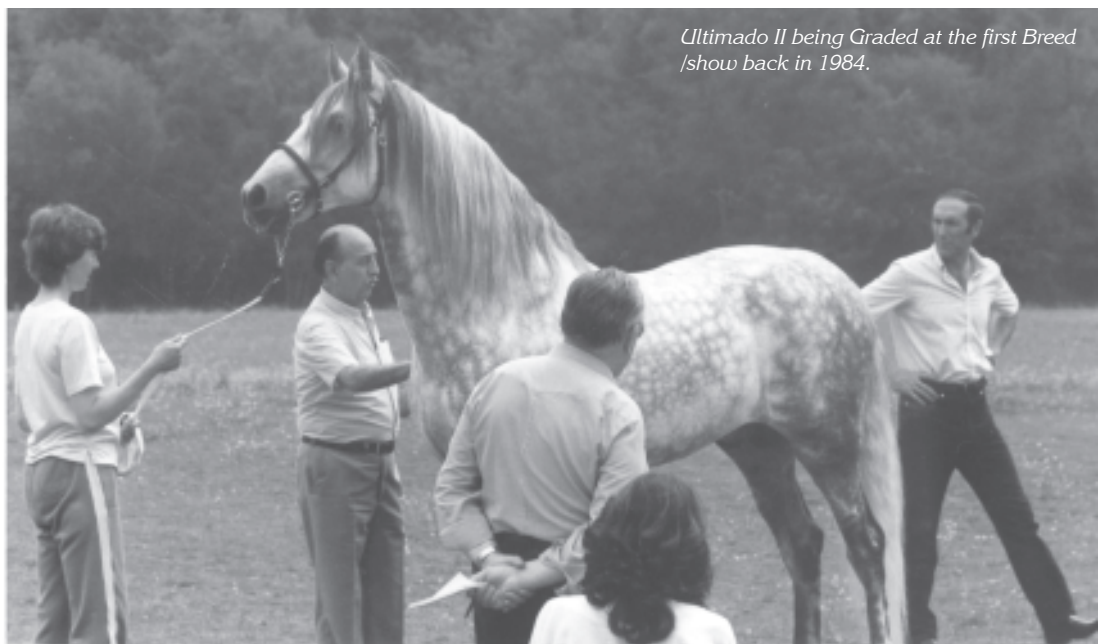
Lunchtimes were interesting. It seemed everybody went to a canteen about a mile up the hill, where local produce from the area was used to cook delicious meals. We even had local wine and brandy with the meal. The strange thing was nobody appeared to pay for the privilege of eating here. Perhaps it was the cook's job to feed all the workers. I never did find out.

On the 23rd of April 1979 we finally left Corominas with the three horses and made our way to the frontier post at La Jonquera. On our arrival here we were greeted with the news that the official vets had left for

the day, so we had to wait overnight and wait their return in the morning, before we could continue our journey home. This turned out to be pointless, because the next morning the vets failed to arrive so the border police let us go without seeing them anyway.

The following three days were easy in comparison. The horses all travelled really well and were very contented considering the time they had already been on the lorry. I had lovely views of the passing countryside but little sleep. The two men shared two bunks in the cab which was fitted out very comfortably, but I shared the back of the lorry with the horses. This was only fair as they were doing all the driving and needed a good nights sleep. Finally after arriving in this country on the 26th of April the lorry pulled into Mike's yard in Great Melton at 12 o'clock.

Everyone was there to welcome us and to see the horses that I had bought some eight months ago. Luckily during the enforced wait Ultimado II had been graded. To my



*Ultimado II being Graded at the first Breed /show back in 1984.*

delight but not surprise he had attained the high mark of 84.5 from the Jefatura de Cria Caballar. Convenida and Diplomada were too young to be graded in Spain, but they successfully passed their grading by the Cria in this country.

Convenida and Diplomada proved to be delightful mares with lovely personalities and temperaments. Six months or so passed and we backed Ultimado,. He was quite a challenge in the early stages but soon gained confidence and began to enjoy everything we did with him. He competed in Hunter Trials, Dressage and even Show Jumping. But most of all he loved Hunting. He is the only horse I have ever known to show such displeasure at having to go home after a day's hunting. He would lay back his ears and look as though he could kill you. Another favourite trick of his if you didn't have your wits about you was to whip round and gallop back to the other horses who were going on. Although once back at the box he always walked straight on the lorry, resigning himself to going home.

He loved life and in his later years when the stud season had finished he would always stay at my stables at home until the next breeding season started. Convenida and Diplomada did us proud as expected and produced some lovely progeny. Diplomada had three foals and was in foal again when Mike decided to

*Convenida and El Primo, with Christine & Mike Curson.*



cut back on the horses and all the work they required and so sell her. We still see some of her stock and they are a credit to her and Ultimado. Recently we received a video from Terry Gauldon, who has Valentino, one of Diplomada's offspring. He has turned out to be a star performer in film and TV work. His likeness to Ultimado is very striking.

As for "My Little Star" Convenida, she produced six foals before Mike decided to sell her also. Mandy Wheatcroft bought her for her Millpark Andalusian Stud, where she produced a further six foals. Convenida's very first foal, El, Primo, made history as the first Purebred Andalusian foal to be born in the UK for over 200 years. He went on to perform with Mary Chipperfield in her various circus routines.

In 1986 Convenida did not produce a foal so I backed her. She proved to be a wonderful ride and an exceptional hunter here in Norfolk. In fact she was one of the best horses I



*Ultimado II and Christine winning the Ridden Championship at our Breed Show.*

have had the privilege of riding to hounds. She was quick and nimble and would jump like a stag. It was always a secret ambition of mine to have Convenida when she retired from stud but due to work commitments, Mike decided to sell her and thankfully Mandy gave her a loving home. Sadly she recently died at the age of 22, but I will always have a special place in my heart for "My Little Star".

Mike Curson decided to stop breeding horses in 1990, and as a wonderful gesture for my helping him with the stud over twelve years, he transferred the ownership of Ultimado to me. But, sadly four months later on December 11th 1990, Ultimado died during an operation at Newmarket for colic.

How cruel life is. We were devastated, but I console myself with the fact that Ultimado had a wonderful life both with Mike and myself, It could have been different had he

stayed in Spain.

Ultimado II sired many partbred foals as well as his purebred progeny, including my own lovely Hispano-Arab mare Ultima, who became the first entry in the foundation Hispano-Arab Stud Book in this country, after her Grading by the Criá. She in her turn has produced my wonderful Dressage horse Airoso, who is by a Lusitano stallion.

Ultimado II, Convenida and Diplomada proved to be truly wonderful horses and a great credit to



*Ultimado with Simon, Christine's son, after a gallop around the fields.*



*Ultima at the 1997 Lusitano Soc show*

their breed. Ultimado was consistently winning In Hand at the Annual Breed Shows. In fact he was never placed lower than 2nd in any In Hand class competing against all

breeds. He has given his own kind of distinction to all his offspring, but, just as importantly, he has left a legacy of good temperament.

