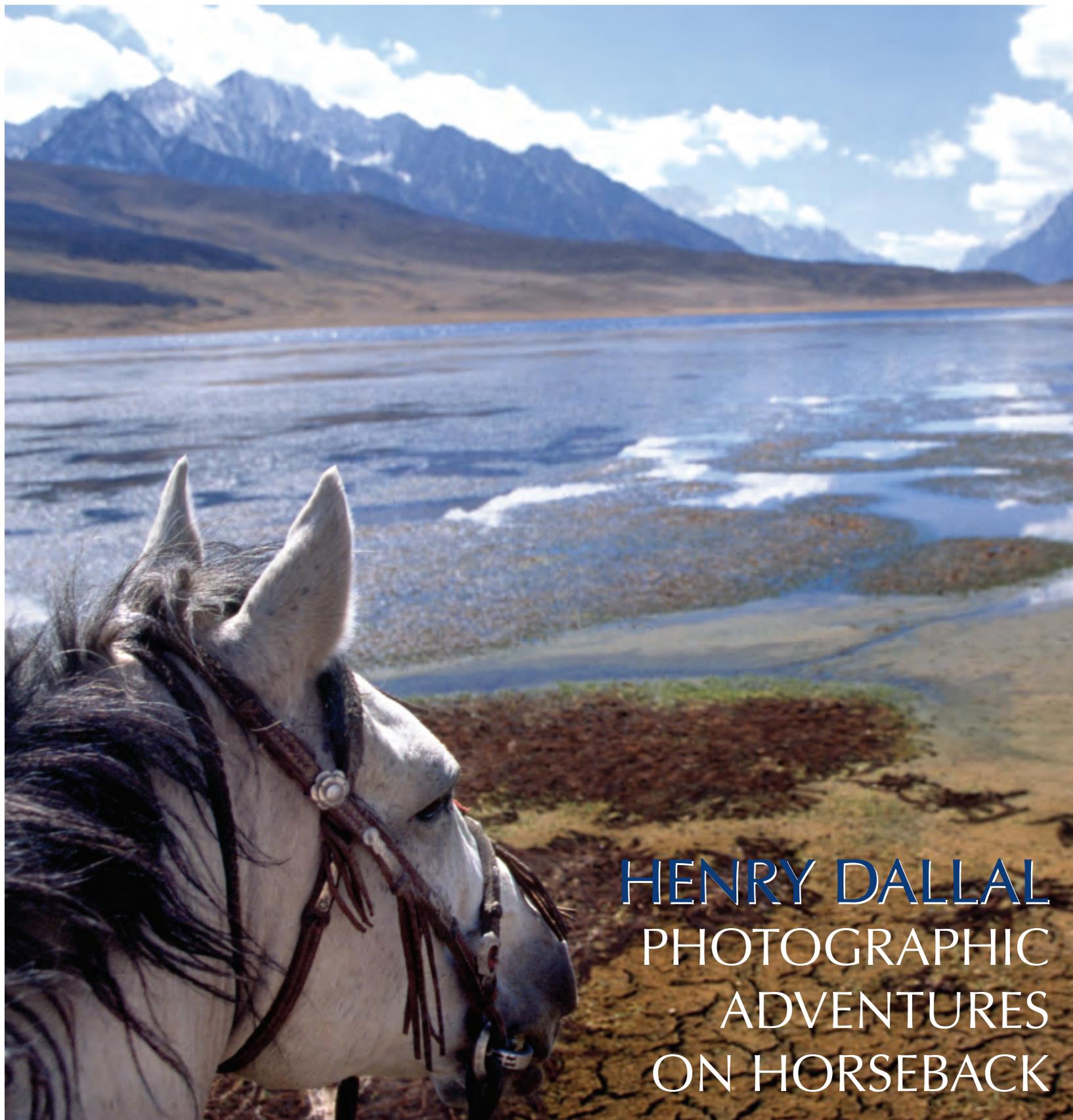




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HENRY DALLAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
ADVENTURES
ON HORSEBACK

Shooting from the saddle, Henry Dallal's artistic adventures on horseback

Lucy Monro



MANY PHOTOGRAPHERS CHOOSE horses as their subjects, but not many shoot from the saddle. Henry Dallal, best described as an artistic adventurer, does just that. His accomplishments are many, and unusual. Acclaimed for his photographic book, 'Pageantry and Performance', a photographic celebration of

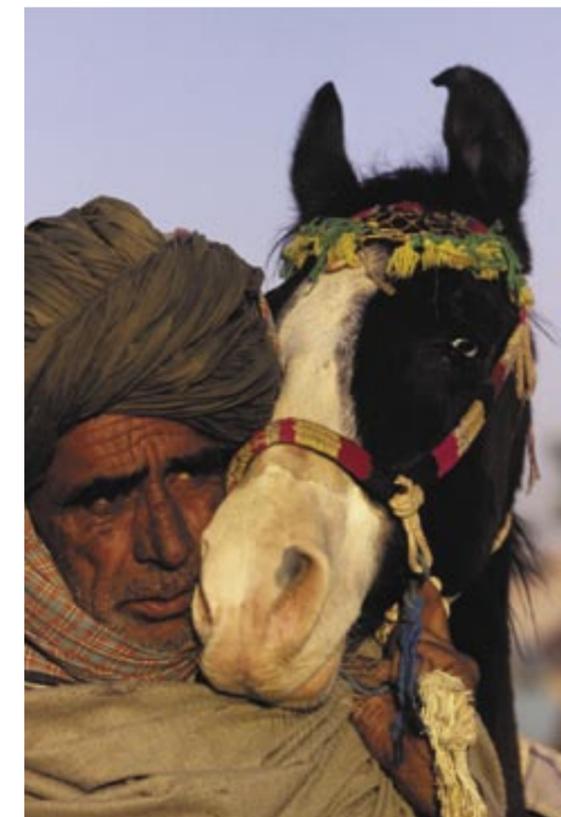
images that takes the reader deep into the pomp and ceremony of the Household Cavalry, Dallal is a man to whom adventure comes naturally. He describes himself as, "A traveller with a camera" and, of his work, says simply, "It's a journey."



Dallal is a traditional photographer with a passion for adventure that he fulfils through mountaineering and constant travel through the world's most magnificent mountain ranges on horseback with a camera in his hand. The awards he has won are many, but when talking to him it becomes clear that he considers his greatest achievements to be capturing what he sees on film so that others may experience what he has. "To me, the art of photography is capturing the spirit of the subject through beautiful, emotive, unmanipulated photography - capturing what you see", he says. That mission extends to recording on film what others before him may have seen, for Dallal's adventures have their roots in historical adventure.

Talking to Dallal is an adventure in itself that transports the listener into the world of 'Boy's Own' albums; into a time when men were heroes who rode into distant lands on horseback to seek out and discover, or fight to capture, save, or liberate territory or individuals. Dallal's adventures include retracing Lawrence of Arabia's steps on horseback, riding through Washington State with the native American Colville tribe, riding with tribesmen in the Hindu Kush, through the Shandur pass in northern Pakistan, trekking across Rajasthan, saddling up with the 61st Cavalry in India, and following in General Napier's footsteps aboard mules in Ethiopia. Most of his adventures take place on horseback, but when at home in London Dallal is to be found shooting from the saddle of his bicycle as he follows the Household Cavalry around the city.

Dallal's exploits on horseback with a camera have, not surprisingly, attracted the attention of those who own horses. He was commissioned to photograph Her Majesty The Queen of England for the front cover of a Golden Jubilee publication and that image now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery collection. Another image of Her Majesty taken by Dallal graces the cover of a recently published book commemorating The Queen's 80th birthday. Most recently Dallal was commissioned



Dallal's images bring his adventures to life for posterity.

◀ Henry Dallal at work in the saddle.

by HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, Wife of HH General Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai, to photograph her and her husband with their favourite four-legged friends and, after attending the Junior Endurance World Championships in Bahrain last year, Dallal was commissioned by HRH The King of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, to contribute images of the race for a forthcoming book.

Not surprisingly, considering he has done so much, it is impossible to restrict Dallal to talking of one project, or of claiming any as being his favourite. What is easier to assess is his motivation - which is invariably desire for new experience and adventure. He describes the stories that he follows as, "An excuse to give the work a frame", but it is clear that he cares passionately about trying to capture the essence of the experiences that his forefathers must have had. He rode across Scotland, from Perthshire to Aberdeen following the route that General Wade took in the 18th century and retraced part of the British campaign through the Shandur Pass choosing camp sites each night according to the diary of an old soldier who fought in the Great Game.

In Ethiopia the terrain that Dallal wished to cover was judged too harsh for horses, so he used mules to travel from Somalia along the route that General Napier took in the 19th century when he was sent by Queen Victoria to preserve and protect British Empire honour and rescue ten European hostages that Emperor Theodore had captured. The mainly Indian army of 26,000 that Napier led crossed the Red Sea before riding overland

to Ethiopia where the Emperor capitulated after a terrible battle and committed suicide, leaving behind a wife and young child whom Queen Victoria offered sanctuary at Sandhurst. The boy lived out the rest of his life in England and is the only foreigner to be buried in St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. Of his epic journey along Napier's route through Abyssinia Dallal says, "As we travelled it felt as though it was a thousand years ago."

Originally from Iran, Dallal moved to the UK, when he was 23 years old, when his family fled the revolution. He has lived in the United States, but has now made his home once again in London. Home, however, is not a place in which Dallal spends much time and, by his own admission, he seems happiest in the midst of natural wilderness and at the centre of a tribe. "I love the spirit of nomadic tribes. I'm desperate to go back and to experience the nomadic migrations with the Qashqai, Kurds and Baluchis in Iran", he says of a trip that he dreams one day may be possible and that would take him back to his native land.

It was his fascination with tribes and horses that led Dallal to make the Household Cavalry one of his subjects. When he moved to London Dallal's love of horses immediately drew him to the regiment that is so much a part of the English capital's heritage. "The barracks were my studio. The Household Cavalry is a great tribe, right in the centre of London. I love tribal photography, but I never thought I'd find a tribe in the centre of London!"

What started as a passion eight years ago rapidly developed into an ongoing project to document the historic regiment



that culminated initially in the publication of 'Pageantry and Performance'. Not wishing to be restricted by printed images Dallal moved into using multimedia so that he could produce shows with sound and music to allow audiences to experience the wonders of the Household Cavalry for themselves. As well as taking photographs, he records the sounds that he hears; the cacophony of the cavalry on tarmac, the chink and swoosh of a young trooper's sword and the whickering of horses in their stables. The resulting production, also entitled 'Pageantry and Performance', brings the content of the book to life and has been shown at Windsor, projected on the walls of Windsor Castle, and showed at Blenheim Palace to worldwide acclaim.

The production is just part of an impressive portfolio of achievement. Dallal's exhibitions include the Naples Museum of Art, and the Florida and Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC. He was awarded 'Best View of Britain at 6am' on BBC Radio 4's Today programme with an image from his book, from which two others were selected by The Royal Mail and used in their Collector's stamp pack commemorating the Trooping of the Colour in June 2005. His work has been published in various publications including the Los Angeles Times, Country Life, Daily Telegraph, The Times, Harpers and Queen and the Household Cavalry Journal, among others, and has graced a variety of magazine covers.

▲▲ Safari at sunrise in Rajasthan.

◀ The Gold Coach in front of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

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Dallal's speech reflects his love of bygone eras. He talks of "terrible battles" and of "magical experiences" in places that he describes as "incredible wildernesses". It is not surprising that his love of history and passion for tribal custom now leads him to a unique tribe. India's 61st Cavalry is the last remaining active mountain cavalry regiment in the world and the subject of Dallal's latest project. Nehru decreed that the unit, based in Jaipur and Delhi, should be retained and the present day regiment is an amalgamation of cavalry units created from the armies of the Princely states and the British Raj. Dallal's aim is to capture the essence of the great and historic Indian cavalry for posterity with unique and intimate imagery in the same way that he celebrated the Household Cavalry.

Dallal is also thinking about other horse related books and is planning a major expedition to Tibet to follow the path taken by the great explorer Colonel Francis Younghusband who was dispatched by Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, to lead a military expedition into Tibet in 1904 during the Great Game.

Quite how Dallal makes time for his travels and prolific productions is a mystery. His 'Pageantry and Performance' show aired at Blenheim Palace throughout April 2006 and now moves to The Royal Court Theatre on board the Queen Mary II. In 2008 he will exhibit at the International Museum of the Horse at the Kentucky Horse Park. In the meantime he continues to work with the Household Cavalry, the 61st Cavalry, and pursue a myriad of new adventures in faraway lands. Something of a nomad himself, Henry Dallal appears to have stepped from days long past to enrich our present with his tales of adventures and personal experience of history. Where men once wielded swords and towed guns behind their mounts, Dallal rides 'hands free' into modern day adventure armed only with his camera and an artistic eye.

"I only photograph what I enjoy doing", he says in conclusion. It is our good fortune that Dallal enjoys doing what he does so that we may share the fruits of his adventures. 📷

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