

**The David Allan Column**



**“The naming of ~~cats~~ horses is a difficult matter..”**



*Naming cats for the famous stage show was cool —naming horses is arguably even more fun!*

“The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter. It isn’t just one of your holiday games”. Thus did T.S.Eliot – at fascinating length thereafter - describe the importance of naming. In this case naming CATS.

That part of the *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* became the second song – actually verse spoken in sync by the entire cast – in the brilliant stage show, seen by this writer 22 times in its heyday on the revolving set at the New London Theatre on Drury Lane.

Peter Ustinov’s elderly character in the cult 1976 film LOGAN’S RUN bizarrely recites a shortened version of the poem reminding me to hope that LOGAN – bought from us by Team Bass, placed in

the Cape and a recent winner in Mauritius - was named after him.

LOGAN was named by his owner, not us. Anyone overseas reading this would say. “Of course he was, why bother to state the obvious?” Well...there are plenty of different practices in SA bloodstock/ racing compared to elsewhere, but perhaps the most obvious is the practice of naming by breeders.

Sometimes the explanation “This is how we have always done it in South Africa” is fair enough. But when we look at the messes in the Stud Book (not the fault of those now in place) which are corrupting other countries’ stud books due to naming processes; also the inaccuracies and **(to p 2)**

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*Gray's Inn, hidden away (left); Postage Stamp commemorating Edict Of Nantes (right).*

**DAVID ALLAN (...cont)**

costs arising from unusually registering mares annually; and the palaver associated with issuing unnamed passports, then named passports, paying to change names and so on, we really do have to ask “Why?”.

One of the joys of ownership is in naming and of course there are South African breeders who sell unnamed. “*What on earth has it got to do with the breeder?*” asked a first time visitor to this year’s Cape Premier sale, looking at something on which he might spend a million rand. “*We can change can’t we?*”. (The answer is “*Yes provided you’re not superstitious*”).

An honest explanation given by an elderly SA breeder was “*I name so I can follow them*”. Another said “*Someone might buy because they like the name*”. Well, yes, they might. If really ditzzy. Hardly a business plan.

But naming by an owner (or a group of owners having a naming lunch, yes!) is a delight that deepens the pleasure when all goes well.

If it goes so well that the horse becomes a stallion, then the naming exercise develops a broader effect. Firstly, familiarity with that name is the passport to immediate knowledge amongst mare owners and foal or yearling buyers. Secondly, that name will be half of the parental partnership producing youngsters who need names!

Imported stallions don’t always arrive with full familiarity. At a sale that included GITANO HERNANDO first crop stock, one trainer

asked a certain consigner to show “all except those” because he had never heard of him. The question to ask was “*Why haven’t you?*” but this was a case of not doing homework on a catalogue, and was/is not the norm. SA breeders know their double international Grade 1 winners and rightly judged that Gitano – like the serendipitously stranded SILVANO (same breeder, same sire line, same racing performance, similar top class dam) – would get later developing types wanting a bit of distance. And so it now unfolds, reaching whatever level in due course.



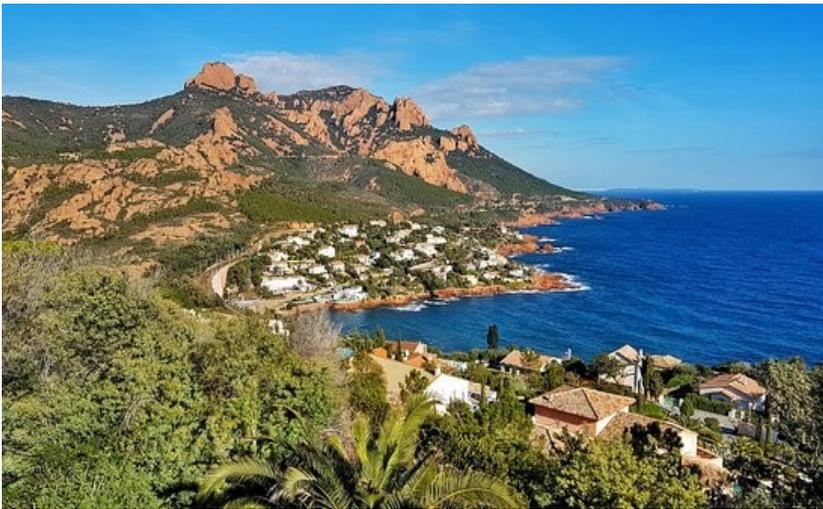
*'Nando' by a son of Whakilyric out of a mare by Sadler's Wells 3 parts brother.*

“Gitano” is Spanish for a male Romany. Hernando, bred by Stavros Niarchos, was by Niniski out of the great Miswaki mare Whakilyric, therefore difficult to name from Mum and Dad!

He was given an Hispanic name in the language family of Fernando, Ferdinand...and Nando! So here we have an Iberian Gypsy named Nando.

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*The Mediterranean seaside at Antheor, Var.*

GREYS INN makes one think a bit. GRAY'S INN is one of the Four Inns of Court in London, established in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, for lawyers called to the Bar. Lincoln's Inn is probably most famous as in "Lincoln's Inn Fields" - well worth a visit. Chancery Lane and Temple tubes are the nearest for a look-see at these tranquil havens of hushed thinking space, so close to the hubbub of Strand and High Holborn. (The names are flowing already...).

**Quite where "a" became "e" and the apostrophe was lost is not clear, but the naming of LEGAL EAGLE is spot on. The potential for Gray's/Greys Inn naming is limitless.**

VAR creates intrigue. He is by Forest Wildcat out of Leona Prima, the site of a major earthquake in the San Francisco Bay area in the 80s, and the name of a musically violent local punk band in the noughties. Having started out talking about cats, I see now as I am writing that we have a Wildcat and a Leona Prima. Prima as in Prima Ballerina and Leona as in Lioness. Two Cats!

I doubt that he was named for "VaR", the acronym for "Value at Risk" in investment analysis. Mind you, Var's VaR should be low (meaning very good). And the horse predated the latest Video Assisted Referee experiments in football.

More likely: Var is an area ("department") of South-Eastern France that includes the port of Toulon as its capital. It crops up in schoolbooks as the place to which thousands of French people fled across the Med during the Algerian war in the 60s.

Come to think of it, being where it is, there must be Huguenot history which means multiple links in South Africa – not least to Derby winner EDICT OF NANTES, named after the 1598 declaration (L'édit de Nantes) of equal human rights for protestant Huguenots or Calvinists.

When EDICT OF NANTES goes to stud, send him a VAR mare and send keen namers into ecstasy! - **tt**.

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