

The Haflinger

Encounters in Tyrol, South Tyrol, and Trentino





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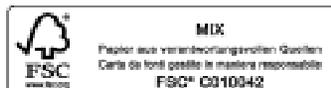
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TAPPEINER.



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The first of his kind:
statue of the stallion
Folie in Schluderns



Fascinating Haflingers

What makes Haflinger horses so fascinating? It is not only their looks that are so captivating; good-natured, calm, and even-tempered, both able and willing to work, from composed to spirited, the Haflinger is a horse you can always rely on. For many people, a Haflinger is the ideal way of balancing out a busy working life – and for most it is a heart horse or even a soulmate. Today Haflinger horses are popular for equestrian sports up to the highest levels, as recreational horses for long outings or harnessed to a carriage, and also in a therapeutic role.

In recent years a lot has happened in Haflinger breeding. There is now a greater focus on line breeding, on genetically proven sires and dam lines, to ensure maintenance of the gene pool. Increased attention is also being paid to near-natural rearing in robust herds, with up to 40 percent summer pasturage in the mountains. All this benefits the users of these horses, as they can be sure of having a healthy, resilient, strong, and self-confident horse as a partner by their side.

This book is not only for Haflinger fans, but also for all horse enthusiasts, animal lovers, and other people with related interests. The aim is to provide useful factual information about the Haflinger breed in clearly understandable language.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to this book with their expertise and their personal or financial support. It is doubtless something special that breeding organisations from Tyrol, South Tyrol, and Trentino have joined together to produce this publication in the spirit of a Euregio-wide culture of the Haflinger horse.

We hope that the book will give all readers hours of pleasure and that they will be able to pass on their enthusiasm for Haflingers to others, so that this cultural asset of the historical Tyrol will have a long and successful future.

ROBERT MAIR

Tyrolean Haflinger Breeding Association

A Book about the Haflinger Horse, its Roots, People, and Future

This book has been written in order to familiarise people with our Haflinger horses, beyond all clichés and stereotypes. It offers insights into the history of a breed whose development, strange as it may sound, was significantly influenced by events at the level of international politics. These events were long the cause of competing claims to the breed, and the resulting tensions could only be overcome by placing the unifying aspect of the Haflinger in the foreground. That meant respecting the horse's history, a history that is also shaped by the personal experiences of some very different people in whose lives and everyday activities the Haflinger played an important role, as it still does today. If we want to understand the nature of the breed, we cannot avoid examining its roots. Haflingers cannot be considered without reference to their special bond to the region and its people, where they form a natural part of everyday life and work. And one thing must be made clear: it is not a question of seeking to distinguish oneself through the Haflinger but of preserving this authenticity. A Haflinger on a mountain pasture is more than a motif for photographers; it is authentic life. Behind the Haflinger lies a multitude of experiences, which are presented in this book: how have we humans influenced the Haflinger, and how does the Haflinger influence us? To that extent, the spirit of the future can be discerned from this book; the links with the origins are a formative element for today and tomorrow. To preserve this connection, and thus the essence of the Haflinger, is our task as a breeding association. As such, we stand behind and not in front of the horse whose story we tell in this book, together with the breeding associations of Tyrol and Trentino. The focus is entirely on the Haflinger as a living element of our region, with its past, present, and future.

MICHAEL GRUBER

Provincial Federation of South Tyrol Haflinger Horse Breeders

A Horse with Unlimited Potential

After the First World War, Haflingers were primarily bred by farmers in Trentino for agricultural work, for which the horses were ideally built, with a low centre of gravity and plenty of muscle. At that time they were also requisitioned by the army as pack animals for operations in the mountains. Organised breeding in Trentino came much later when, following the foundation of the Italian National Federation, the Trentino Breeders' Association, which until then had only been concerned with cattle breeding, established a separate group for Haflingers. Haflinger horse breeders' associations were gradually founded in all the valleys of Trentino. The National Federation subsequently mandated the Trentino Breeders' Association to keep the herd book and organise horse shows. For the Trentino Haflinger breed, whose population had always been much smaller than that in South Tyrol, this was an important step forwards. Following the mechanisation of agriculture, Haflingers were basically no longer needed as working horses and were kept purely for breeding purposes, if at all. The exception was the few stables that kept Haflingers for their customers to ride out on. It was only when a recreational and sporting equestrian scene was established in Trentino that a targeted effort was made to promote the Haflinger in cooperation with the Trentino Breeders' Association. At the horse shows, too, there was a gradual shift of focus from work horse to sport and leisure horse.

Our aim is to show that the Haflinger is a horse with almost unlimited potential, healthy, robust, easy to handle and to keep, and a real all-rounder, whether as a work horse or as a riding and driving horse. That is why we are all the more pleased to be involved in the production of this joint Euregio book, which presents the history and use of the Haflinger in these three areas of its original breeding territory, also with reference to the old trade routes, in order to familiarise a wider audience with the Haflinger as a symbol of the region.

GIUSEPPE SIEFF

Trentino Provincial Breeders' Association, Equine Section

Preface



Hardly any other farm and leisure animal is more closely associated with the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino than the Haflinger horse. In the past it was used mainly for agricultural purposes and for transportation in steep terrain, but nowadays it is a popular leisure horse that is prized for its good nature and stamina far beyond the borders of the Alps. Haflinger breeding, which has existed in this form for around 150 years, forms part of our common culture. We are therefore all the more delighted that the history of the Haflinger horse has now been reviewed under the auspices of the two breeding associations in North and South Tyrol and with the involvement of Trentino and is now being published in the form of a book. We thank the editors for their invaluable work and wish the readers hours of pleasure with the book.

MAURIZIO FUGATTI

Governor of Trentino

ARNO KOMPATSCHER

Governor of South Tyrol

GÜNTHER PLATTER

President of the EGTC European Region

Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino and Governor of Tyrol



Rediscovering Historical Trails

**It may well be the epitome of freedom:
riding into the sunset and stopping
somewhere to cook a simple meal
while the horses graze peacefully.**

TEXT: KATJA SOLDNER





“
The Haflinger
horses and
their ancestors
were the pack
animals of
choice for
sumpters in
those days.
”

Nowadays, long-distance riding in Trentino, South Tyrol, and Tyrol is not quite as simple and idyllic as that. But still, when I have found a place for the night after spending the whole day in the saddle and I hear my horse rhythmically chewing, I am at peace with the world.

From farm animal to travel companion

In former times, horses were used for travel, to transport goods, pull carriages, and as work horses on the farm. They also played an important role in wars. In our part of the world, however, horses were mainly used for trade. For centuries, carrying goods on steep trails and paths over mountains and passes was only possible with the help of pack animals. Until the 16th century, and in some places even later, roads suitable for carts did not yet form an adequate network. Goods were therefore loaded onto horses and mules to be led in small trains along the mule trails and over the mountain passes. The Haflinger horses and their ancestors were the pack animals of choice for sumpters in those days: they were frugal and sure-footed and had impressive stamina.

On the path of the sumpters

Such mule trains used to take routes that many a long-distance rider is rediscovering today. The entire European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino, the historical County of Tyrol, is criss-crossed by a network of former mule trails. The starting point of one of the main routes through the region was the Tonale Pass in

Did You Know That...



... some Haflingers have an engine? Facts and curiosities surrounding the breed

On **7 April 1896**

the first farmers' race was held in Meran with Haflinger horses.

In **1958** America's first Haflinger horse arrived by sea. Today there are some 20,000 Haflingers in America.

Haflingers can now be found in over

40 different countries.

Prometea

is the name of the first cloned horse, a Haflinger mare born in 2003.



The Haflinger built by Steyr-Puch is an

all-terrain vehicle

that was mainly used by the Austrian and Swiss armies until the 1970s.



In 1969 the Austrian Federal President Franz Jonas made

Queen Elizabeth II

a gift of two Haflingers, which she took with her to Balmoral Castle.

Most of the

horse milk

produced in Germany comes from Haflinger mares.

Haflinger horses can reach a high age. They often live to the

age of 30

and, in some cases, 40.

That makes them a long-lived breed.

Haflingers

can be recognised
at first sight



Colour: various shades of chestnut

Forelock, mane, and tail: full, silky, and preferably light in colour

Eyes: large, lively, and expressive

Nostrils: large and fine

Ears: mobile and in proportion to the head

Head: dry and expressive with a flat broad forehead, pronounced cheeks, and wide throat latch

Height: the goal is an ideal height of 148–152 cm for stallions and 147–150 cm for mares

Neck: medium-long, muscular, and well set with taper to the head-to-neck connection

Forehand: long, sloping, and dry shoulder; pronounced withers reaching well into the back

Midsection: firm and well-muscled back; short and wide loin; harmonious transition to the croup, slightly sloping ribs, well-set breastbone, and short and closed flank

Hindquarters: rounded, moderately sloping croup with a well-set tail, well-muscled all the way down to the gaskin, long, slightly sloping with strong musculature

Limbs: forearm with firm, dry musculature; the hind leg is well-muscled, the joints dry, well-set, and of an appropriate size, the shins strong with clearly defined tendons, and the fetlocks suitably long and correctly aligned

Hooves: with a healthy, resilient, and preferably pigmented hoof wall

Sources: A.N.A.C.R.H.A.I., Bundesverband Deutscher Stutenmilcherzeuger e.V., Fohlenhof Ebbs, Johann-Puch-Museum, "Haflinger in Südtirol" by Evelyn Reso, Provincial Federation of South Tyrol Haflinger Horse Breeders, Royal Collection Trust, rp-online.de, science.orf.at, Tyrolean Haflinger Breeding Association



Old Smugglers' Paths Rediscovered

For centuries, the transalpine network of paths, mule tracks, and mountain crossings between North and South Tyrol were arduous but important trade routes. On these trails, goods changed hands, both legally and illegally. Often enough, man's companion – as a beast of burden or a commodity – was the horse.

TEXT: MARIANNA KASTLUNGER



In the old days grain was bartered for wine: the farmer Alois Gamper with his horse in Jenesien, around 1930

“
The transalpine network of paths survived along the border almost everywhere and remained a cultural and economic link.
”

Today no one has to climb up to the mountain ridges to transport livestock, food, or other goods. But the old smugglers' paths can still be followed on foot and in some cases on horseback – just like the people who travelled here with their horses and mules for thousands of years.

In ancient times and in the Middle Ages, the main route over the Alps was doubtless the Via Claudia Augusta, one of the main Roman roads connecting present-day Bavaria with northern Italy. It led along the River Etsch through the Vinschgau Valley up to the Reschen Pass, along the Inn Valley, and over the Fern Pass to the Ausserfern region. Almost equally important was the Via Raetia, another link between Verona and Augsburg via the Brenner Pass, Innsbruck, and the Seefeld Saddle. Starting in 195 AD, the Romans improved the trail to make a narrow, steep but metalled road. With their famous road construction skills they created a trade route that survived unchanged for centuries before it was finally improved in the Middle Ages. However, these main routes were far from being the only way to cross the mountains.

Neighbours in the shadow of three-thousand-metre peaks

Away from the main routes, people also established settlements and, subsequently, relationships with the inhabitants of the neighbouring valleys, crossing mountainous terrain to do so. In 1320, a mule track was created over the 2,474-metre-high mountain pass Timmelsjoch, which connects the Ötz Valley and the Passeier Valley, for transporting goods on horses or mules; it was too narrow and difficult for carts. Similar mule trails are known to have existed from 1630 onwards leading from the Ahrn Valley via the high mountain passes Heiliggeistjöchel and Hundskehljoch to the Ziller Valley. Apart from serving as trade routes, the tracks were also used by Ahrn Valley farmers to drive their cattle over the mountains to spend the summer on high-level pastures on the North Tyrol side of the Alps.

Although goods and passengers were increasingly transported on the main traffic routes by rail in the 19th century and by car in the 20th century, the transalpine network of paths survived along the border almost everywhere and remained a cultural and economic link. When South Tyrol was awarded to Italy after the First World War, the old mule tracks took on a new lease of life, as good money could be earned by smuggling various goods over the mountain passes.

“
For taking goats
and even cattle
and horses
across the border
unnoticed, the
wily smugglers
had other tricks
up their sleeves.
”



Life could be hard in the past: under the transhumance stock farming system in the Vinschgau (top of page 22) and the Ahrn Valley (above), animals are moved to distant mountain pastures for the summer.

Clandestine trade

Pasta, olive oil, wine, and schnapps were scarce in North Tyrol while in South Tyrol tobacco, salt, sugar, flints, and tools such as scythes were hard to come by. There was also trade in bicycles, nylon stockings, tyres, and books (for secret German lessons in South Tyrol under the Italian Fascists) – in short, everything that was needed somewhere, and made affordable by smuggling.

Carrying these items across the mountains on a backpack frame might seem a laborious undertaking these days, but it was definitely worth the effort: at a time when a farmhand in South Tyrol earned just 9,000 lire a month and a new pair of shoes cost 12,000 lire, a single trip across the border brought in three times a month's pay. So the contraband goods were stowed in cans or baskets, concealed with pieces of wood, and carried as if they were empty, so that the revenue officers and border patrols would not be suspicious. For taking goats and even cattle and horses across the border unnoticed, the wily smugglers had other tricks up their sleeves.

Reminiscences of a smuggler

The view from the village of St Peter up to the main Alpine chain, which surrounds the Ahrn Valley with over eighty three-thousand-metre peaks, gives you an idea of the hardships faced by smugglers and all those who wanted to reach the neighbouring valleys. Without physical fitness and detailed knowledge of the area, they were unlikely to succeed. "Other routes over the border like the Staller Saddle were lower and easier," says Valentin H., who drove goats, sheep, cattle, and also horses across the border in the 1950s and 1960s. That is not his real name, but he wants to remain anonymous, even though his smuggling days have long been over. He remembers well the privations of the post-war period. Every year Valentin obtained an official permit to cross the border. This allowed him to move his cattle to the family's mountain pastures in the neighbouring regions every summer and to work as a cattle dealer there. However, all

A symbolic act (from the left):
the jurors Walter Werni, Hannes Neuner and
Andrea Sgambati at the 2015 Haflinger World Show
in Ebbs, at which the seal was set on
international collaboration



United by the Origins

The Haflinger is the symbol of a culture that has shaped it to its requirements in a region where it has always been a part of everyday life. This is reflected in a joint project by the Haflinger breeding associations of Tyrol, South Tyrol, and Trentino, the original home of this horse.

TEXT: EVELYN TARASCONI



“
The central
focus of the
work on the
project is
the Haflinger
Trail.”

In their mountainous homeland, the ancestors of the Haflinger had long worked side by side with humans on farms and as packhorses, but selective breeding did not begin until the 1870s. The division of Tyrol after the First World War, however, soon brought a sharp cut – also for the Haflinger: the breeding associations had to reorganise and comply with new national regulations in South Tyrol and Trentino. The gap between the associations widened over the years and at times seemed unbridgeable.

Common goals

The turning point came in the 1990s, when the provincial authorities were making increasing efforts to achieve closer ties, which took concrete shape in 2009 with the decision to establish the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino. A similar result was finally achieved in the world of the Haflinger: in 2013, at the initiative of the governors of South Tyrol and Tyrol and through the commitment of the associations' executives, the breeding associations joined together under the umbrella of the World Haflinger Breeding and Sports Federation. That set the scene for interregional cooperation and ultimately for the project entitled “Haflingers – Ambassadors for the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino”.

United by the Haflinger

Within the framework of the project, work began in May 2018 on a reappraisal of the history of the Haflinger. Historical documents from archives and private collections were examined, processed, and restored. Common ground and differences in breeding developments and approaches were clearly revealed. The result is a travelling exhibition to be held at locations relevant to the history of the breed in all three parts of the European Region: Ebbs, Meran, and Mezzocorona. A film is also planned. The central focus of the work on the project is the Haflinger Trail as a combination of historical trails and today's paths in the everyday life of the Haflinger. The objective is to have a long-distance Haflinger riding trail in the not-too-distant future as a physical expression of the bond between the three parts of the European Region – for horse riding enthusiasts and Haflinger lovers and all those who want to follow the traces of the history, present, and future of the Haflinger breed.

The Glorious Show at Mezzocorona

TEXT: PAOLO FLORIO



Hustle and bustle in Mezzocorona on 20 April 1897: the stand selling the popular lottery tickets is at the back and has a wooden roof.

The first edition of the grand horse fair was held in 1890; the last, in 1999. Mezzocorona was called Mezzotedesco at the time, and the local currency was still the Austrian florin (to be replaced by the “crown” in 1892) when, at the very beginning of the last decade of the 19th century, the first “Horse show” was organised in the town in the Rotaliana plain.



Souvenir from the 1960s:
a first-class mare at the
Dorigati family farm



“
In 1952 the
Haflinger
breed started
to prevail.
”

For “just” 40 soldi (a florin was divided into 100 soldi) you could buy a lottery ticket and hope to win one of the eight prizes. The most wanted was a 4- or 5-year-old horse worth 300 florins. The other prizes consisted of two foals, a saddle, two complete cart harness sets, and two reins with whip worth 15 florins each.

It is the year 1890, and the rare and faded vintage photographs show a square crowded with farmers and bourgeois people, horses on show and draught horses, carriages, and carts. No one knows how long it lasted, but one thing we know for sure is that it was usually held at the end of April, and that it grew year after year until it came to an abrupt end because of the First World War. After the war, the show returned under a new name, “Spring Fair”, and it consisted of a livestock exhibition and stands. It was organised on and off, however, and sometimes with very long intervals between editions. In 1952, on the occasion of Fair No. 25, the Haflinger breed started to prevail, and everything went handsomely until 1968, when the boom of farming mechanisation put a damper on the interest in the fair and it was discontinued once again.

Seventeen years went by, and in 1985, thanks to the enthusiasm of a small group of Haflinger horse lovers, from the ashes of the ancient Habsburg horse show



A packed crowd watching the jurors at work: members of the police and fire brigade are there to keep order.





Happy faces:
winning breeders with
their foals



Humans and Horses

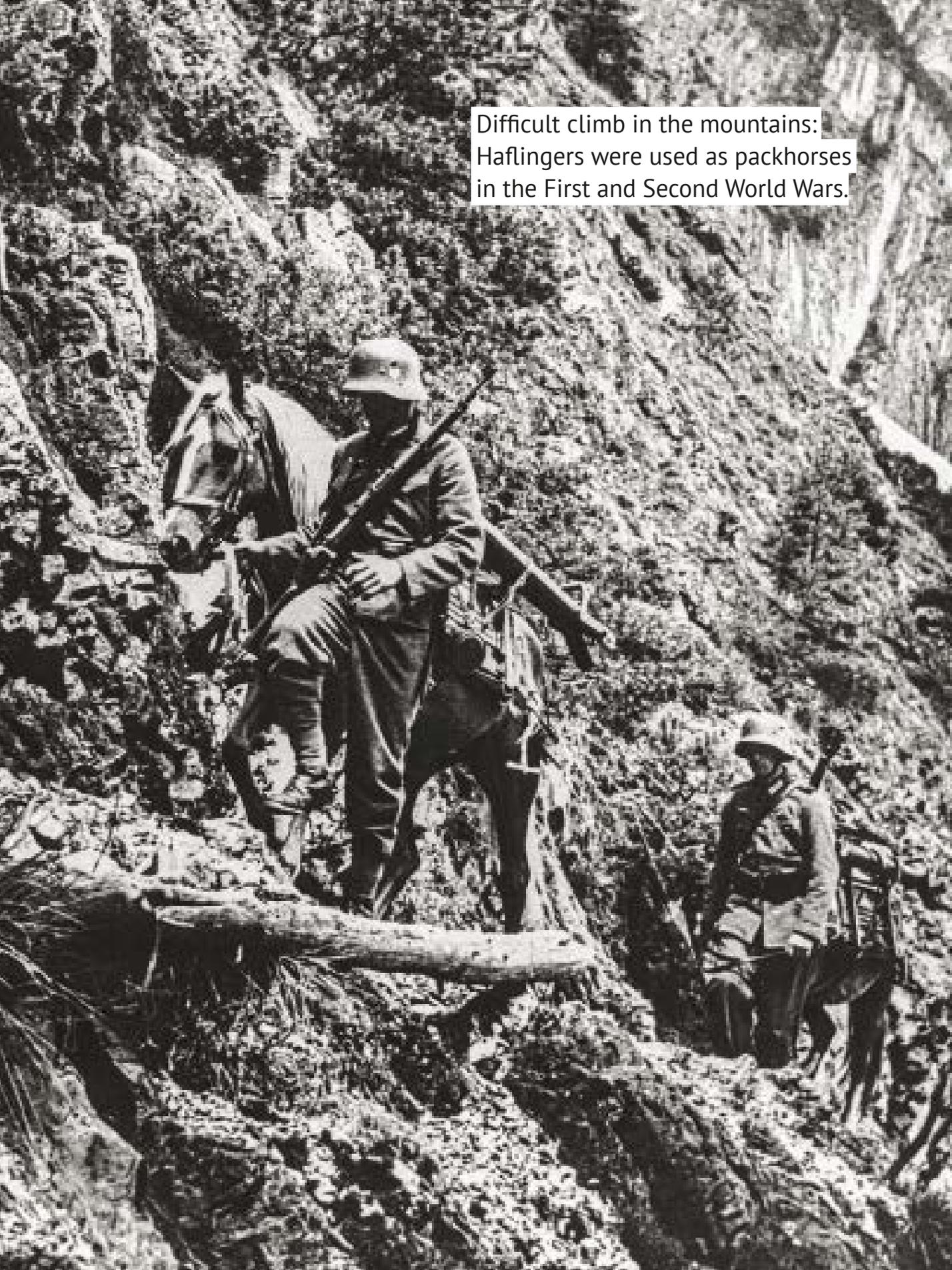
Now and Then

TEXT: TESEO LA MARCA



Horses were indispensable until a hundred years ago, in some places even until 50 years ago: in agriculture, in mining, and not least for transporting goods. Then came industrialisation and motorisation. It is no coincidence that the Haflingers have nevertheless continued to be so successful in South Tyrol.

Difficult climb in the mountains:
Haflingers were used as packhorses
in the First and Second World Wars.



The crowds love it, as do the participants: the Gauder Festival procession



Traditional Festivals and Festive Rides

Unthinkable without Haflingers: the value attached to the cultural heritage in Tyrol is reflected in the wealth of traditional festivals, parades, and processions that take place throughout the year. The decorated Haflinger horses always make a special contribution to the festive atmosphere and are considered a cultural asset of Tyrol.



St George's Ride

St George's Ride ("Georgiritt" in German) is the name of various horse pilgrimages that take place around St George's Day on 23 April. Brightly decorated horses and carriages go in procession to the church or circle it several times. Afterwards Holy Mass is celebrated and the horses and riders are blessed. One such St George's Ride is held in Ebbs. In some places, the religious celebrations are accompanied by contests of skill, such as wreath spearing, in which riders have to catch a hanging wreath at the gallop with the tip of their spears.



Ebbs flower parade

Every year in late August, Ebbs is awash with flowers. During the annual Blumenkorso festival, colourful floral sculptures made of thousands of flowers are paraded through the village. First held in the late 1990s, the event now features some 50 floats, some of which are pulled by Haflingers. With compositions ranging from traditional designs to animals and mythical creatures, the floats become more varied every year. The most beautiful ones are awarded prizes.





How has world history influenced the Haflinger breed? Why do Haflingers not only make good packhorses but also therapists, riding instructors and equine sports aces? What has shaped the character of the breed? What gives it its charm?

The Haflinger is not just one breed of horse among many; it is an integral part of the daily lives and culture of the people living in the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino. Twenty-three articles from the three provinces provide a fascinating insight into the history and everyday life of the horses and the people. Based on locations that are of special significance for the breed, a path is mapped out across the three provinces, which in the near future will actually connect them in the form of the Haflinger Long-distance Riding Trail.

- ▶ Richly illustrated
- ▶ With interesting facts and background information
- ▶ For Haflinger fans and all horse lovers

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