

Queen's horses carried tainted silks

It's royal gifts as usual amid the mystery of the sheikh's missing daughters, **David Brown and Rob Wright** report

The Queen has continued to accept gifts of race horses from the ruler of Dubai, even after his wife fled to London in fear of her life.

Horses given by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum accounted for a sixth of those that carried the Queen's silks during the flat season last year.

Some of the gifts were accepted after the sheikh's youngest wife, Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, 46, fled to London with their two young children in March 2019. Two months later the princess, a former Olympic equestrian, was invited to join the Queen for tea at Windsor.

The revelation of the continuing gifts comes after the Queen was urged to use her influence over the sheikh to secure the release of two daughters he had abducted. Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland, spoke this weekend of her regret at failing to use her prestige as a former United Nations human rights envoy to intervene on behalf of Princess Latifa, 35.

Robinson had lunch with Latifa in 2018 and later described her as a troubled young woman.

A shared love of horses has seen Mohammed develop a friendship with the Queen that transcends normal royal protocol. He is regularly invited to join her at Royal Ascot.

Mohammed, 71, prime minister and vice-president of the United Arab Emirates, has invested a fortune to make Godolphin in Newmarket, Suffolk, one of the premier racing stables.

John Warren, the Queen's racing manager, declined to comment yesterday about the gifts from Godolphin since 2019 or on rumours that further horses had been accepted. A Buckingham Palace spokeswoman said that it "would not comment on private matters".

The Queen does not buy horses. All the 55 horses that carried her silks during the last flat season were from the royal stud, except the nine given by Godolphin. The age of some of the Godolphin horses meant that they must have been



MEGAN RIDGWELL/PA

given after the princess fled to London. Mohammed is reported to have given the Queen four yearlings each year since 2009.

Six of the sheikh's gifts won a race last year: Lightness, Just Fine, Inveigle, Wakening, Chosen Star and Desert Flyer. They collected £34,440 in

prize money but cost the Queen about £270,000 in training fees. The previous year five other horses from Godolphin carried the Queen's silks in flat races.

The Queen's association with the sheikh is expected to come under the spotlight again this week as a new audio recording is released from Latifa, who the High Court found had been abducted by her father.

In the recording she recalls one of the sheikh's senior aides saying that her father would take no notice of pleas to release her.

She says: "He is saying, 'Nobody can make your father let you be free, nobody. Nobody is stronger than him.' Yeah, it is all like brainwashing, they are trying to discourage me."

Latifa was seized in 2018 by armed men while escaping Dubai on a yacht with Tiina Jauhiainen, a friend who had been her martial arts in-

structor. She has also appealed for her freedom in videos from her "villa jail".

Concern about the princess's plight has been spreading at the UN. Her supporters at first requested help from the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, overseen by the UN Human Rights Council, which

women. UN officials attended an online conference where the new audio was played, alongside video testimony from the princess. "You could see they are taking it very seriously," her lawyer, David Haigh, said. "You cannot fail to be affected by these videos."

Jauhiainen has published an open letter to the Queen appealing for her to use "whatever influence" she has with the sheikh to secure the release of Latifa and her sister Shamsa, 39, who was abducted in Cambridge in 2000. She wrote: "Given you so obviously value justice, freedom and family and that you command universal respect, I truly believe your intervention could help bring the ordeal of these two women to an end."

Mohammed's British properties include the 3,300-acre Dalham Hall estate in Newmarket, a £75 million Longcross estate near Cobham, Surrey, and a 63,000-acre Highland estate.

Additional reporting by Dominic Kennedy



Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein was invited for tea with the Queen two months after she fled to London

Mohammed gave Lightness, above, to the Queen's stables



has put her on its list of cases. Her ordeal has been referred to three more bodies: the special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the special rapporteur on violence against women; and the committee on the elimination of discrimination against

Brenda was right, we hate elections

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

Brenda from Bristol summed up the country's mood in 2017 on being told of a new election: "You're joking? Not another one."

Research using questionnaires filled in by more than a million adults from two dozen European countries over the past 30 years finds that Brenda was right: elections make people miserable.

The people surveyed were asked how satisfied they felt about life before and after 148 national elections. As polling day approached the mood slumped. The proportion of people satisfied with their existence fell by 2.5 per cent.

Those who were very dissatisfied rose by 16 per cent. The author of the study has calculated that that figure is equivalent to the drop in collective happiness expected if one in eight people

suddenly became unemployed. The same pattern was seen in elections dating back to 1989, suggesting that social media cannot be blamed. "I'm not saying that elections are a bad thing," Dr Nicolas Schreiner, a research fellow at the University of Basel, said. "But there is something fundamental about them that makes us unhappy."

People do bounce back after an election, though. It may be that a little discomfort is not a bad thing if voters are grappling with difficult decisions.

Schreiner said that some countries could learn from others to make their elections less painful. Britons, for instance, experience a smaller drop in wellbeing than Germans or Italians.

In Taiwan researchers found that spending on healthcare increased by almost a fifth during campaigns. Schreiner said that studies of the Brexit

referendum in 2016 and the US presidential election won by Donald Trump that year suggested that those voters who backed the winner "may experience short-lasting gains in wellbeing".

He added, however, that the negative consequences for those on the losing side tended to be "more enduring".

The PA news agency, however, has a report that might bring some good cheer: a new record is about to be set for the longest period since a parliamentary by-election has been held. On March 5 a total of 582 days will have passed since voters last went to the polls in a Westminster by-election. The record is 581 days, the time between the Ogmere by-election on February 14, 2002, and the Brent East poll on September 18, 2003.

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Motorbike football dying out due to lack of revs

Valentine Low

When it comes to thrills, there are some people for whom a game of football is simply not exciting enough. If you want adrenaline — and, more than likely, a few bruises — they believe the answer is a sport that is louder, faster and, possibly, more dangerous than the beautiful game: football on motorcycles.

Despite its attractions, motoball is dying out. Popular in the 1930s, it has fallen into such a decline that Britain has only one remaining club.

Now the Hayes and Southall Motoball Club in west London is appealing for people to take up the sport so they can have someone to play against. Ray Attewell the club secretary, said:

"When we go to shows and people come and watch they are really interested because it is new and exciting, but they don't want to actually take part."

"The sport really is on its last legs and we are trying to keep it alive and are desperate for new members and new clubs. But it is very hard because it seems like a sport that is hard to get involved in."

Enthusiasts say the reason for its decline include a lack of venues, and the cost of maintaining the equipment. There are also complaints about noise.

Attewell, 57, added: "It can be dangerous and has been described as gladiatorial before. You get the odd knock and bruise from either falling off or being crashed into."