

**Descriptions of horses found in  
England from 1170 to 1614 with  
images that match the  
description taken from Europe  
from 1070 to 1600.**

The name “Smithfield” derives from the Anglo-Saxon for “smooth field” and refers to a flat, grassy area outside of the walls of medieval London. The area served many purposes, hosting agricultural sales for hundreds of years, serving as the site of executions, housing religious grounds, and providing a location for the 1381 peasants’ revolt depicted on the next slide.

The Death of Wat Tyler at the hands of  
Walworth, Mayor of London, with the young  
Richard II looking on. 1385-1400



Horses were traded in that area from the time of the Normans through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Painting by Jacques Laurent Agasse (1767-1849)





## **the society for creative anachronism, inc.**

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For our purposes, we can focus our research on horse types and riding styles from 1070 to 1600, to keep within the SCA's mission.

The following is not an exhaustive list of turn-out, but rather it may serve as inspiration or a guide if you want to tailor your horse to its activity in the medieval style.

Owning a horse in the correct style is not a requirement to ride at any SCA event. Rather, let the artwork and descriptions serve as an inspiration to your riding style and turnout.

One of our best descriptions of the Horse Market during the Norman Era comes from William Fitz-Stephens "Description of the City of London" published in 1170.

NORMAN LONDON



William Fitz Stephen

WITH AN ESSAY BY SIR RANK STENTON  
INTRODUCTION BY F. DONALD LOGAN

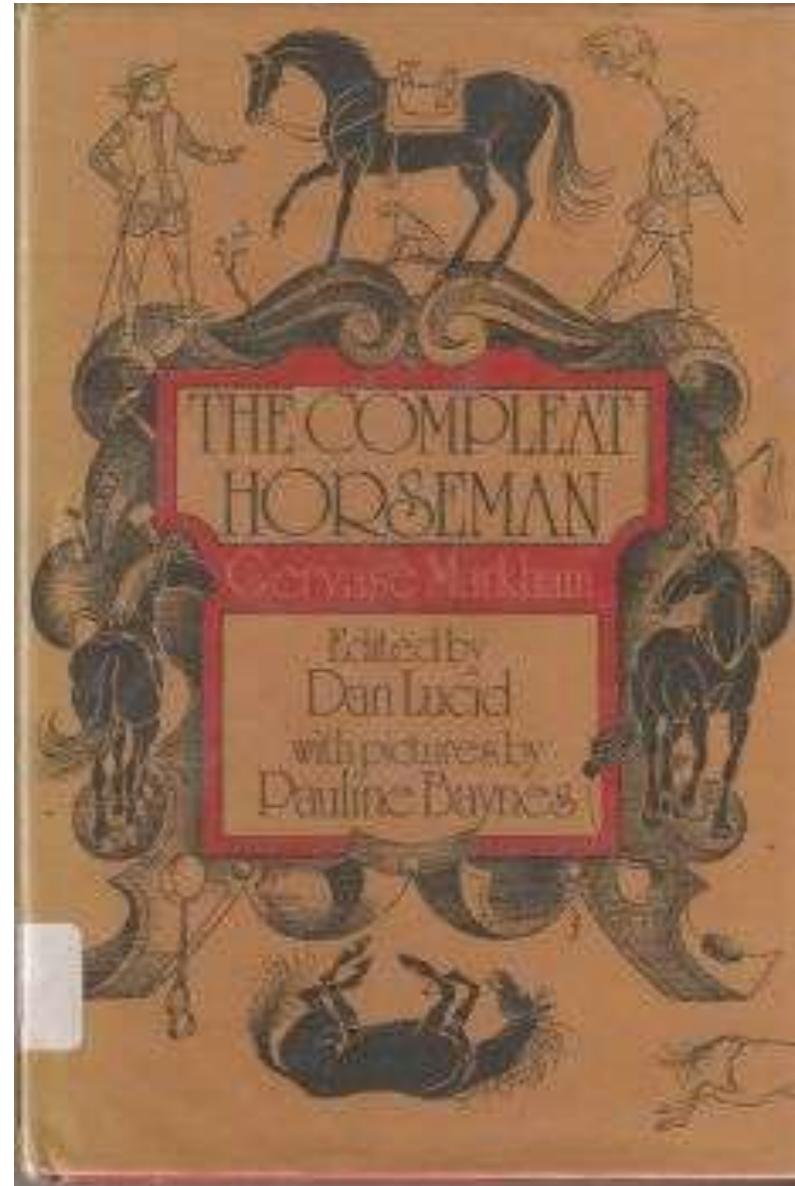
“In a suburb immediately outside one of the gates there is a field that is smooth, both in name and in fact. Every Friday (unless it is an important holy day requiring solemnity) crowds are drawn to the show and sale of fine horses. This attracts the earls, barons and knights who are then in the city, along with many citizens, whether to buy or just to watch.” William Fitz-Stephens "Description of the City of London" (1170)

Though Fitz-Stephens wrote in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, we know the market was in use for hundreds of years and site of all classes of people including travelers, opening us up to wealth of horse types and equestrian pursuits.



In 1614 Gervase Markham published “The Compleat Horseman”, again highlighting the diversity of horses available to Englishmen:

“For the choice of the best Horse, it is diverse, according to the use for which you will employ him.”



The general riding mounts include:

- Palfreys
  - Very fine quality, cost almost as much as a war horse
  - Frequently described as having a lateral or ambling gait.
- Haquenees
  - origins in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Trotters
- Jennets
  - Sometimes tagged as Ladies mounts
- Rouncies
  - Lesser Quality
  - May serve a pack horse role

“It is a delight to see the palfreys trotting gently around, the blood pumping in their veins, their coats glistening with sweat, as they alternately raise then lower both feet on one side together.” William Fitz-Stephens  
"Description of the City of London" (1170)

“If you would choose a horse for a Prince’s Seat, any supreme Magistrate, or for any great Lady of State or Woman of eminence, you shall choose him that is of finest shape, the best rein, who naturally bears his head in the best place without a rider’s hand; that is nimblest and easiest pace, gentle to get upon, bold without making affrights, and most familiar and quiet in the company of other Horses. His color would ever be milk white, with red marks, or without, or else fair dapple gray with white Mane and white tail. And of these the *English* is best, then the *Hungarian*, the *Swedish*, the *Polish*, the *Irish*.” Gervase Markham “The Compleat Horseman” 1614.

# Theodosius Arrives at Ephesus

From the Cathedral of Notre-Dame ca. 1200–1205



# *The Magdeburger Reiter* 1240



# “Charlemagne and The Pope”

## Antoine Verard 1493

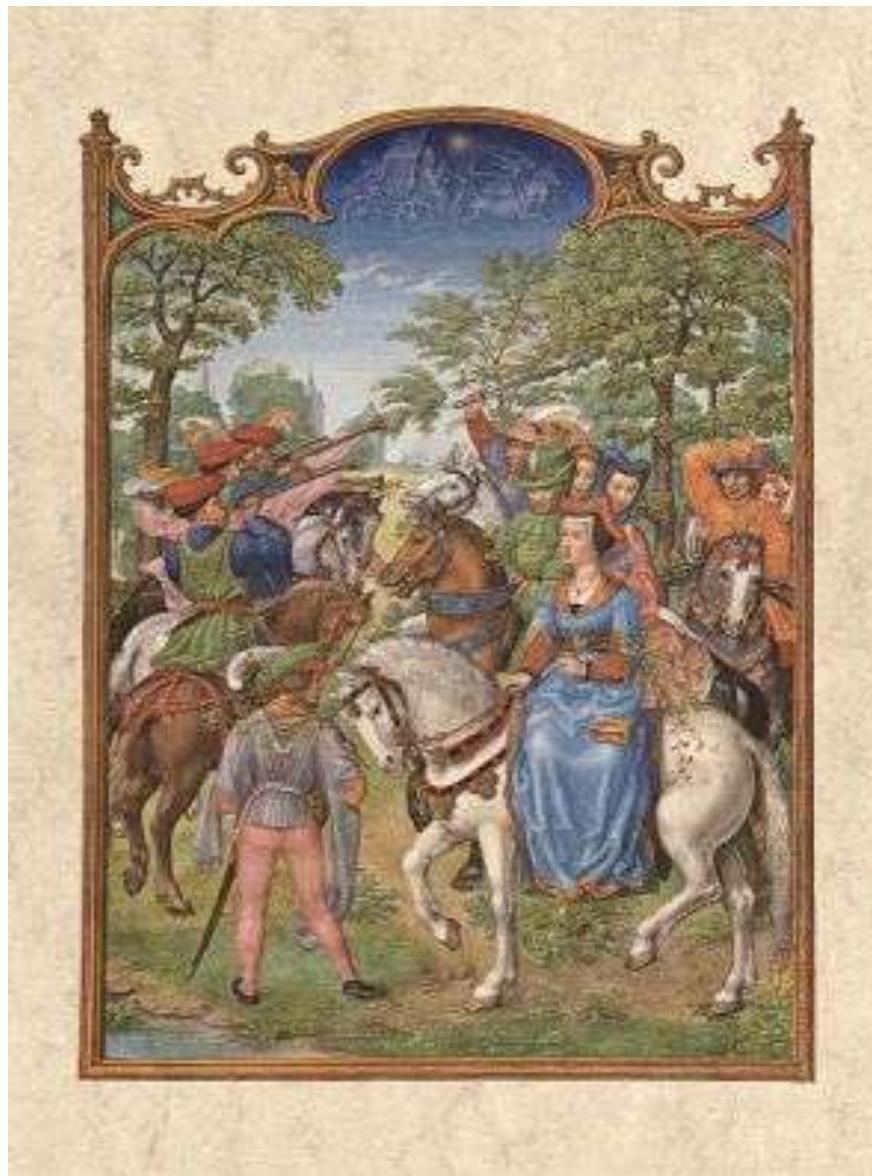


# Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry

## 15th Century



Mai, Brevarium Grimani, fol. 6v  
Flemish circa 1510



# “Triumph of Maximilian”

## 16<sup>th</sup> Century Holy Roman Empire



# John Derrick - Images of Ireland 1581



“Then to see the horses more suitable for squires, rougher yet quicker in their movements, simultaneously lifting one set of feet and setting down the opposite set.”

William Fitz-Stephens "Description of the City of London" (1170)

“If you will choose a Horse only for travel, ever the better shape the better hope. Especially look that his head be lean, eyes swelling outward, his neck well risen and his joints very strong. Let him be of a temperate nature, neither too furious, nor too dull, willing to go without forcing, and not desirous to run when there is no occasion.” Gervase Markham “The Compleat Horseman” 1614

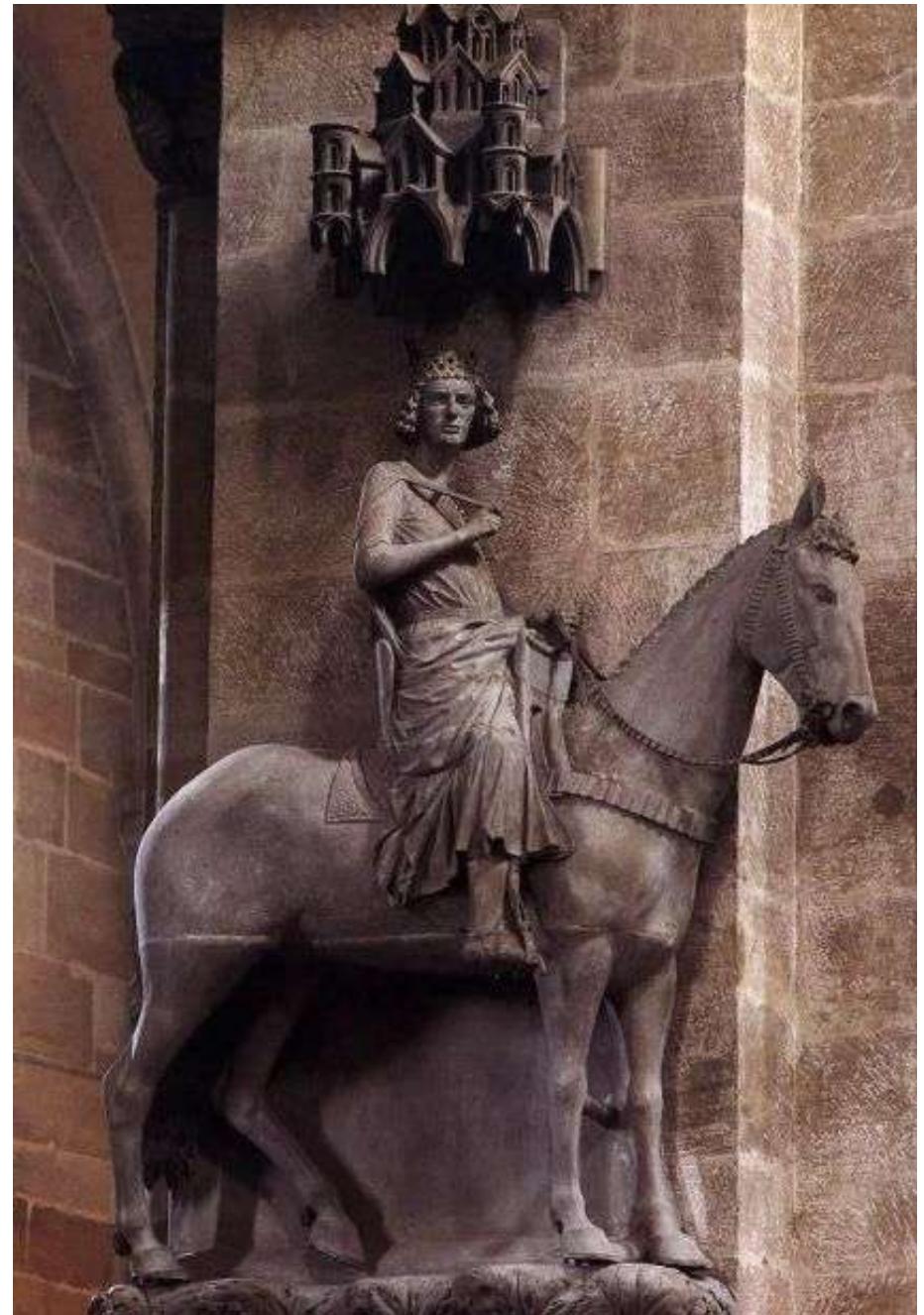
Miniature (St. Cuthbert),  
Yates Thompson MS 26, f.  
14r 12th century



A miniature from a 13th century Apocalypse manuscript (London, British Library, Additional MS 35166), The 3rd seal, the black horse.



Equestrian Statue  
Bamberg Cathedral  
13th century



# Winchester Bible 13th Century



# Mirror Case France 1300-1330



Große Heidelberger  
Liederhandschrift circa  
1340



# The Journey of the Magi Stefano di Giovanni ca. 1435



# “Tournaments”

## Rene d'Anjou 15<sup>th</sup> Century

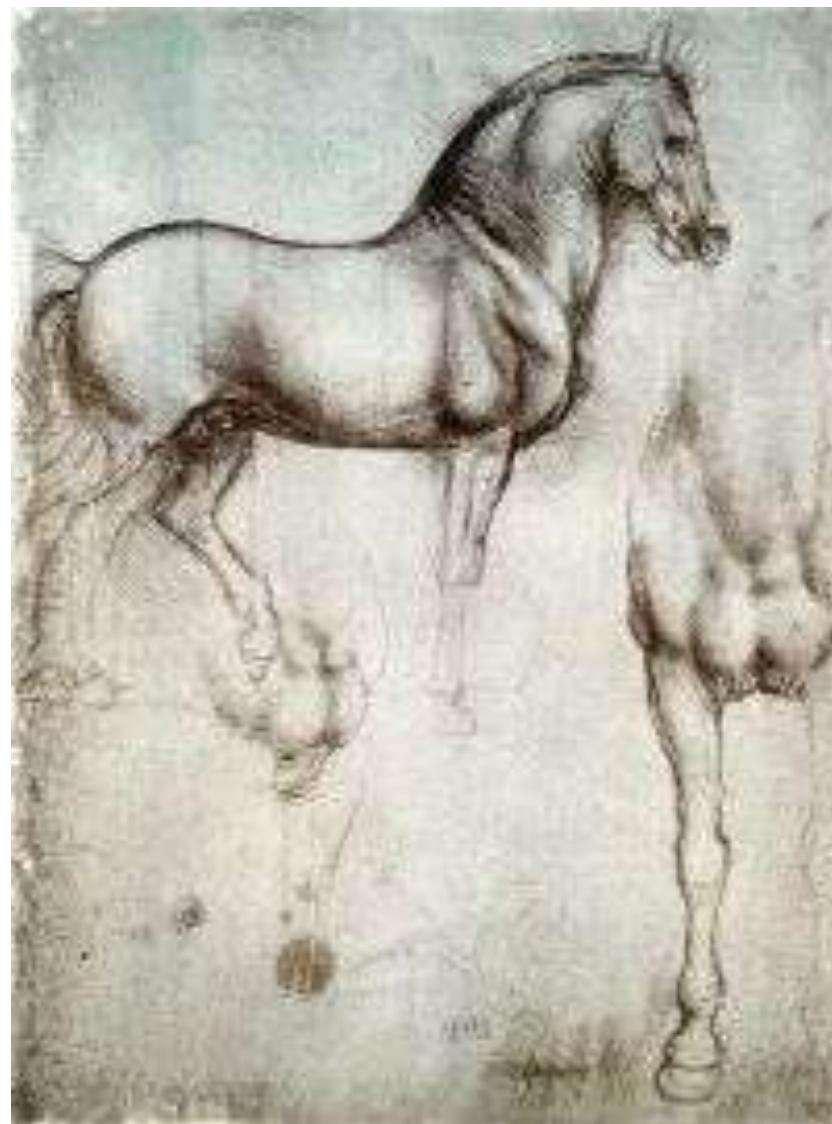


# The Lady and the Knight Durer 16th Century

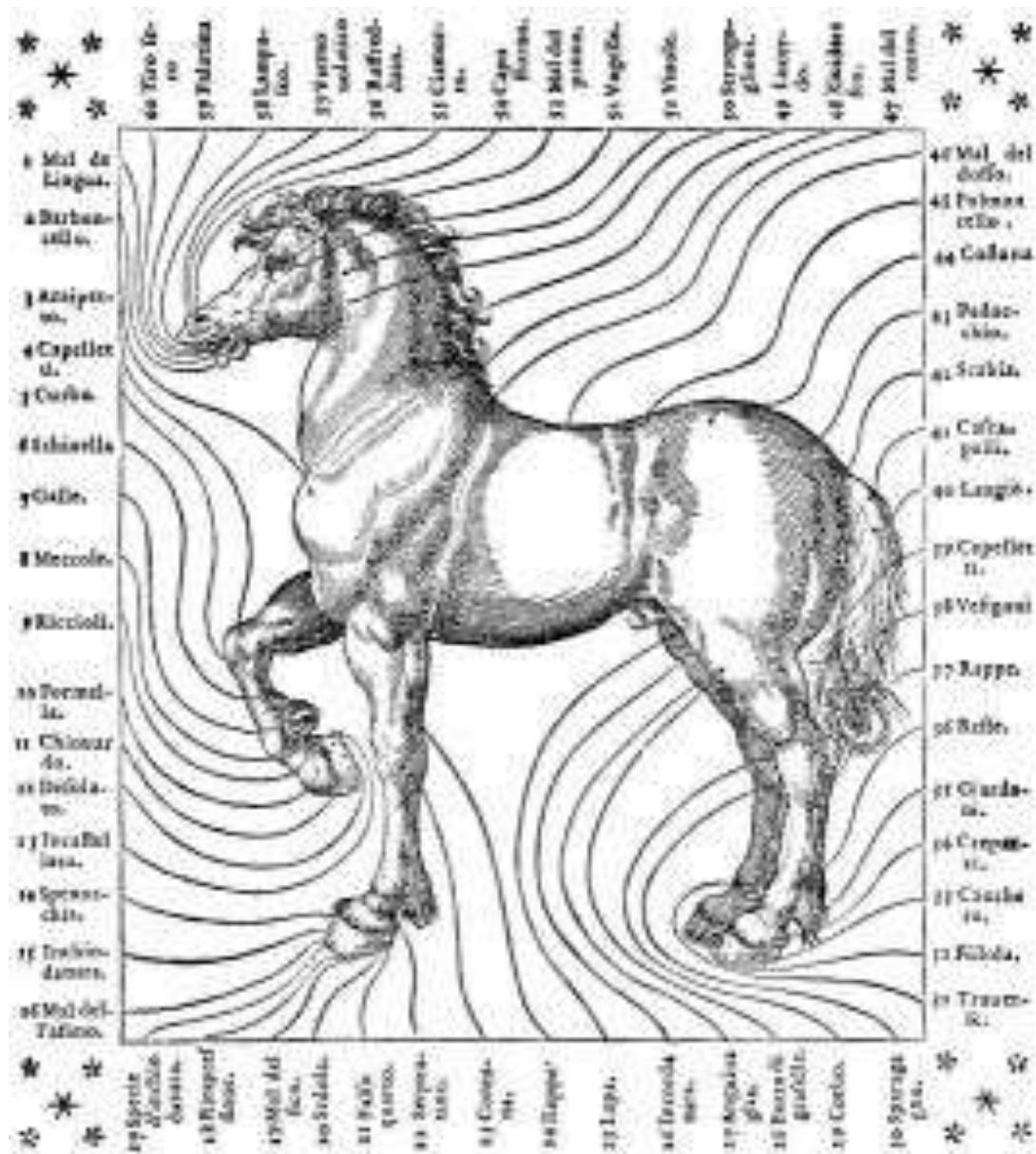


“After that the high-bred young colts, not yet trained or broken, "high-stepping with elastic tread". ” William Fitz-Stephens "Description of the City of London" (1170)

# Study\_of\_horse De Vinci circa 1490



# “Ordini di cavalcare” p253 1571



# Britannvs - The stable of Don Juan de Austria circa 1578



“Next packhorses, with robust and powerful legs.” William Fitz-Stephens “Description of the City of London” (1170)

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, roads were rough and many goods were carried by pack horses rather than wagon. Maneuvering these strong pack horses down roads and through crowded city streets could be a challenge.

“If you will choose a Horse for Portage, that is for the Pack or Hampers, choose him that is exceeding strong of body and limbs, but not tall, with a broad back, out ribs, full shoulders and thick withers, for if he be thin in that part, you shall hardly keep his back from galling. Be sure he takes a strong stride with his feet, for their pace being neither trot nor amble, but only a foot pace, he which takes the largest strides goes at the most ease and rides his ground fastest.”

Gervase Markham “The Complete Horseman”  
1614

# Bayeux Tapestry Detail 1070s



# St John the Baptist Mileham Stained Glass 1340-1360



# Grandes Chroniques de France, enluminées par Jean Fouquet, Tours, vers 1455-1460



# Olaus Magnus - Historia delle Genti 1565



“Then expensive war horses, tall and graceful,  
"with quivering ears, high necks and plump  
buttocks". ” William Fitz-Stephens  
"Description of the City of London" (1170)

“If you would have a Horse for the Wars, you shall choose him that is of a good tall stature, with a comely lean head, an out-swelling fore-head, a large sparkling eye, the white whereof is covered with the eyebrows, and not at all discerned, or if at all, yet the least is best. A small thin ear short and pricking is preferable, but if it be long, well carried and ever moving is tolerable while if dull or hanging, most hateful. He should possess a deep neck, large crest, broad breast, bending ribs, broad and straight back, round and full buttock, with his hip bones hid, a tail high and broad, set neither too thick or too thin, for too much hair shows sloth and too little too much choler and heat. Also to be desired are a full-swelling thigh, a broad, flat, and lean leg, short pasterned, strong jointed, and hollow bones, of which the long is best, if they be not weird, and the broad round the worst.

The best colors are brown-bay, Dapple-gray, Roan, bright-bay, Black with a white near foot behind and a white far foot in front, white streak or white star, Chestnut or Sorrel with any of these marks, or Dun with a black stripe. And of these horses for the Wars the Courser of Naples is accounted the best, then the German, the Sardinian, or the French.”

Gervase Markham, “The Compleat Horseman” 1614

# Bayeux Tapestry Detail 1070s



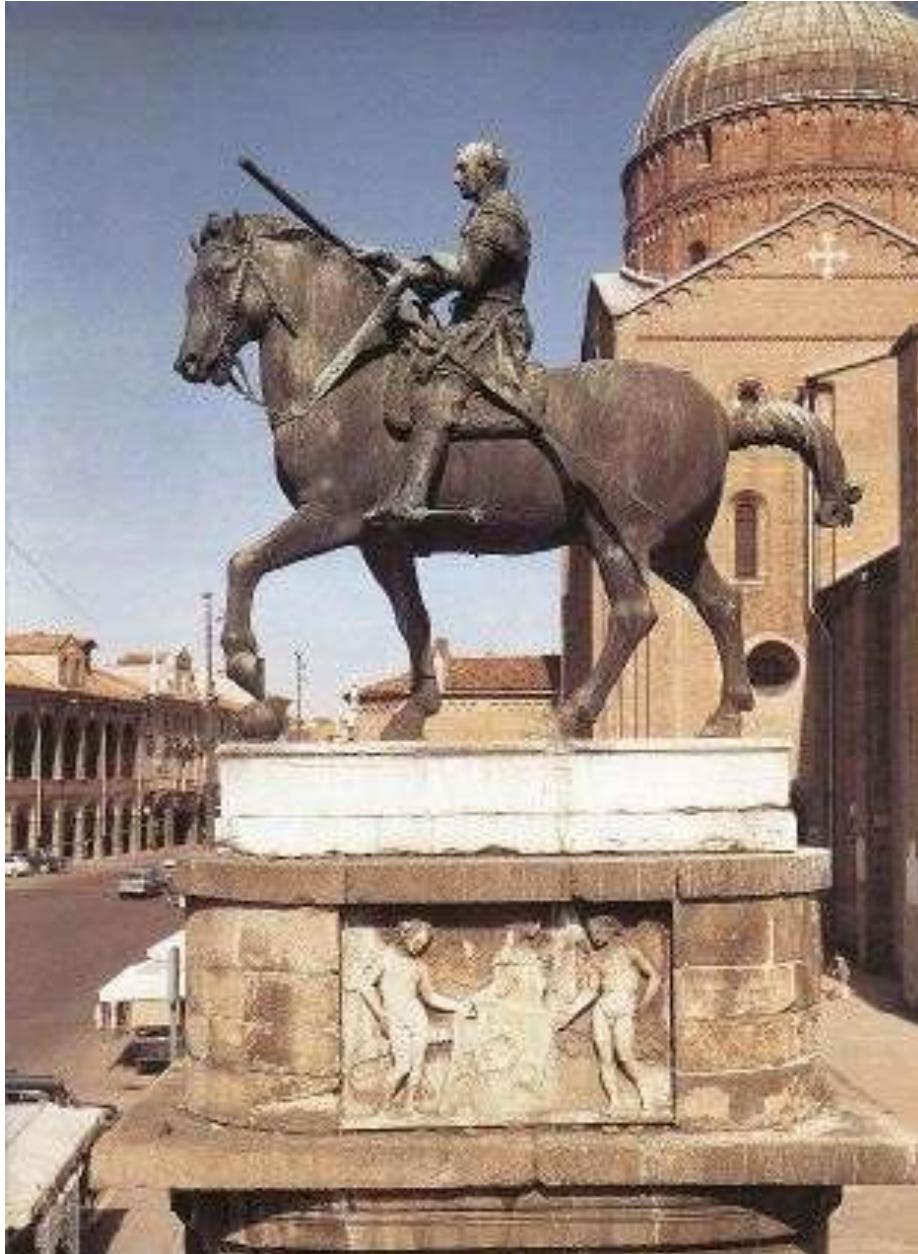
# Cantigas de Santa Maria 13th Century



# The Battle of San Romano 1438



# Gattamelata di Donatello 1453



# Walls of Venafro Castle Naples 1500-1525



# Large Horse Albrecht Dürer 1505



# St George on Horseback Durer 1505



*Knight, Death and the Devil.* Albrecht Dürer. 1513



# Armor of King Sigismund Augustus of Poland 1550s



# Equus Regis - The Stables of Don Juan of Austria circa 1580



“Prospective buyers watch as all are put through their paces: first, their trot, followed by their gallop (in which their two sets of legs, front and rear, are thrust out forwards and backwards, in opposition to each other).”

William Fitz-Stephens "Description of the City of London" (1170)

# Bayeux Tapestry Detail 1070s



# St. Peter and the Miracle of healing the lame Man

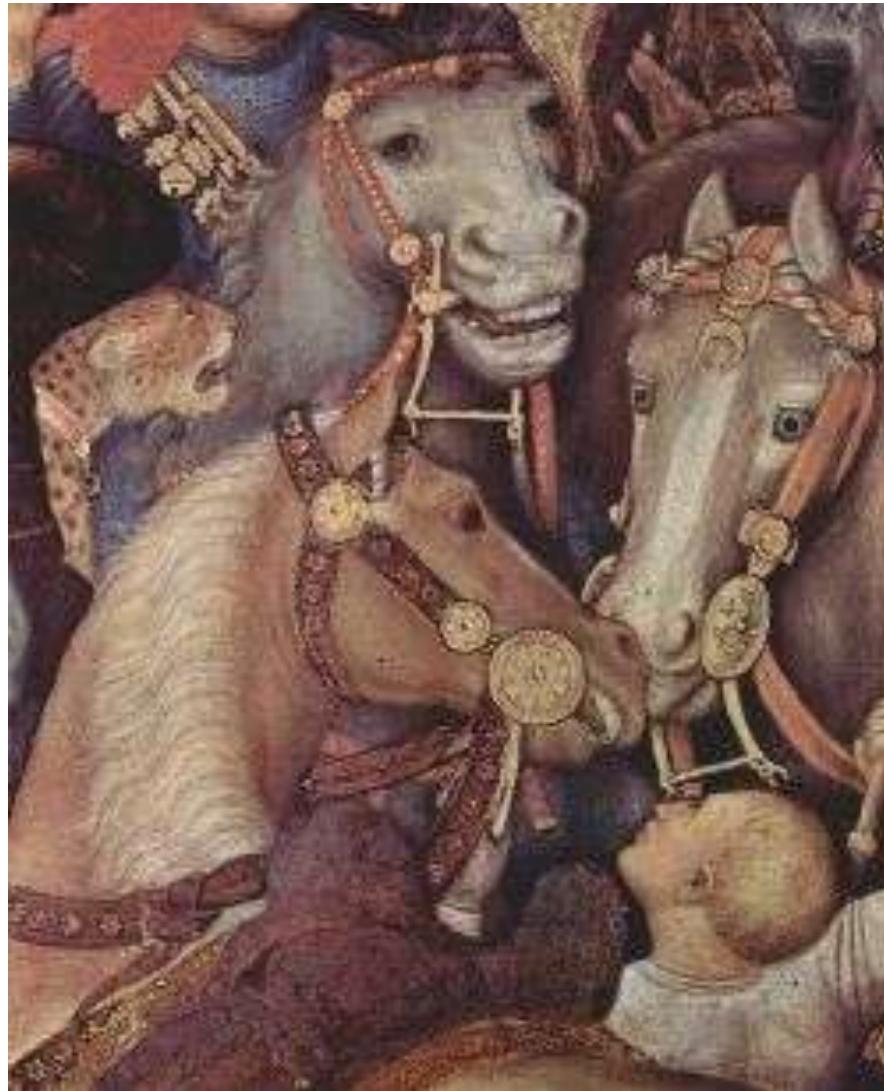
## France 13th Century



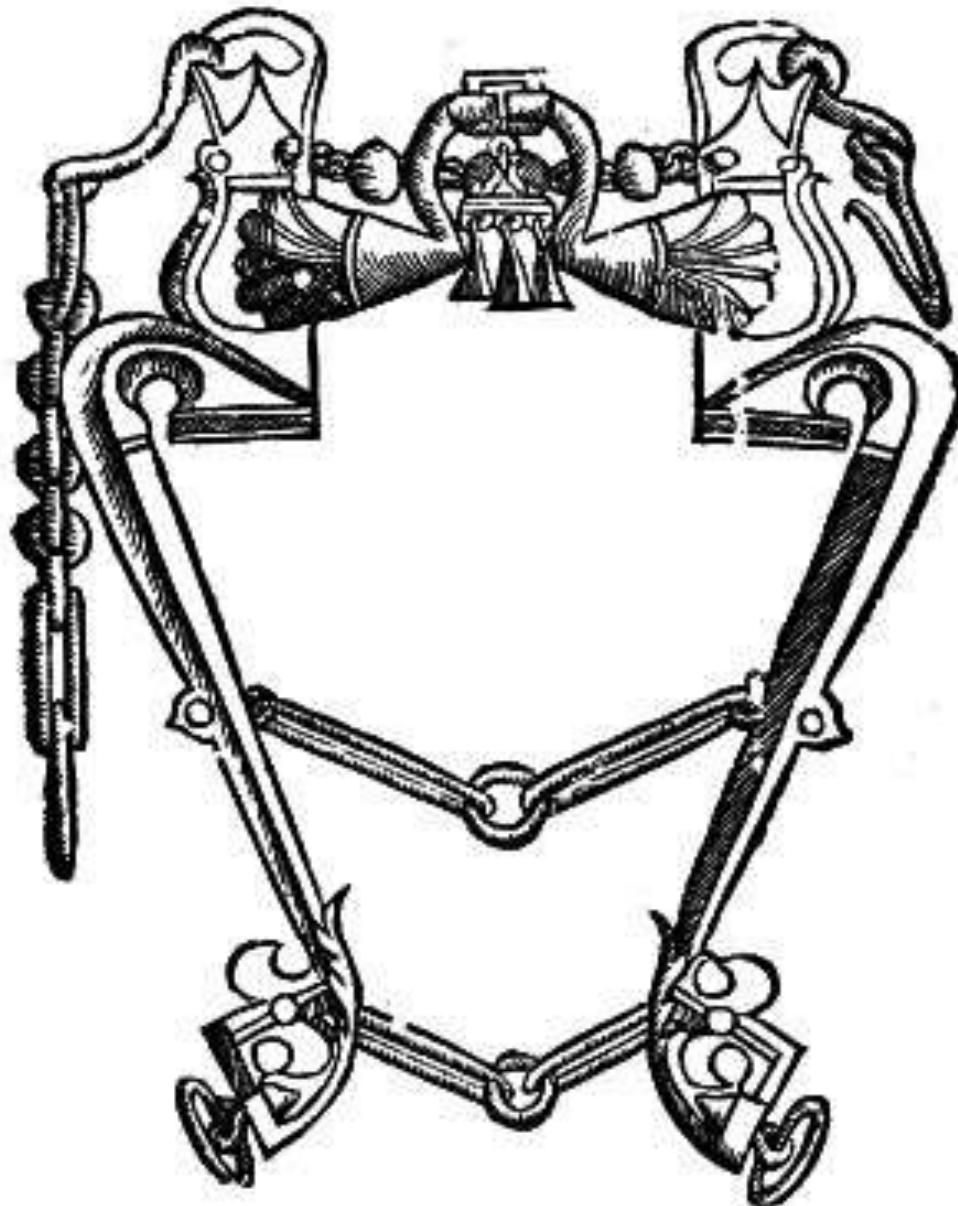
“On occasions when a race is about to be held between these chargers – or perhaps other steeds who, like their kind, are strong enough to bear riders and lively enough to race – the fact is loudly proclaimed and a warning goes up to clear lesser horses out of the way. Two or sometimes three boys prepare themselves to take part as riders in such contests between the fleet-footed creatures. Skilled in controlling horses, they "curb their untamed mouths with jagged bits"; their biggest challenge is to prevent one of their competitors from taking the lead in the race.”

William Fitz-Stephens "Description of the City of London" (1170)

# Anbetung der Heiligen Drei Könige, Haupttafel: Anbetung der Könige, Detail: Pferde 1423



“Ordini di Cavalcare” p160 1571



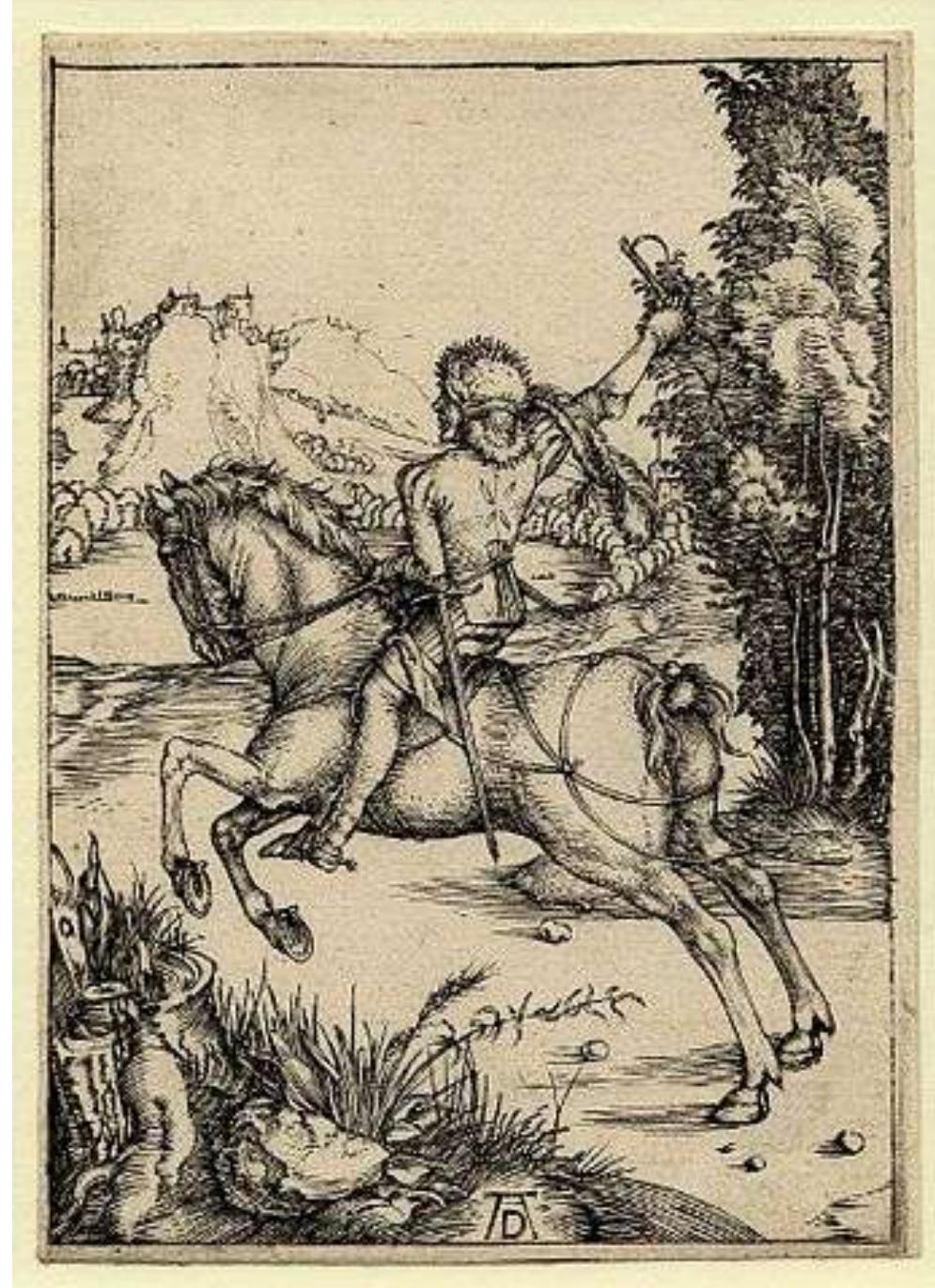
"The horses too, in their own way, psych themselves up for the contest: "their limbs tremble; impatient of delay, they cannot stand still". When the starting signal is given, they leap forward and race off with as much speed and determination as they can muster. The riders, eager for glory and hoping for victory, try to outdo one another in using spurs, switches or cries of encouragement to urge the horses to go faster. You start to believe that "all things are in motion", as Heraclitus put it, and lose faith in Zeno's theory that motion is impossible – so that no-one could ever reach the end of a racetrack!"

William Fitz-Stephens "Description of the City of London" (1170)

“If you choose a Horse for running, let him have the finest shape that may be, but above all things let him be nimble, quick, and fiery, apt to fly with the least motion. Long shapes are sufferable, for though they show weakness, yet they assure sudden speed. And the best Horse for this use is the Arabian, Barbary, or his bastard; Jennets are good, but the Turks are better.” Gervase Markham “The Compleat Horseman” 1614

# The Small Courier

## Durer 1496



Butteri Giovanni  
Maria, Ritorno  
dal palio  
Late 16°  
Century



“If you would choose a Horse for hunting, let his shape in general be strong, and well knit together, making equal proportions, for as unequal shapes show weakness, so equal members assure strength and endurance. Your unequal shapes are a great head to a little neck, a big body to thin buttock, a large limb to a little foot, or any of these contraries, or where any member suits not the whole proportion of the body, or with any limb next adjoining. Above all, let your hunting Horse have a large, lean head, wide nostrils, open jaw, a big throat, and the windpipe straight, loose, well-covered, and not bent in the pride of his Reining. The English horse bastardized with any of the former Races first spoke of, is of all the best. “ Gervase Markham “The Complete Horseman” 1614

# Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift circa 1340



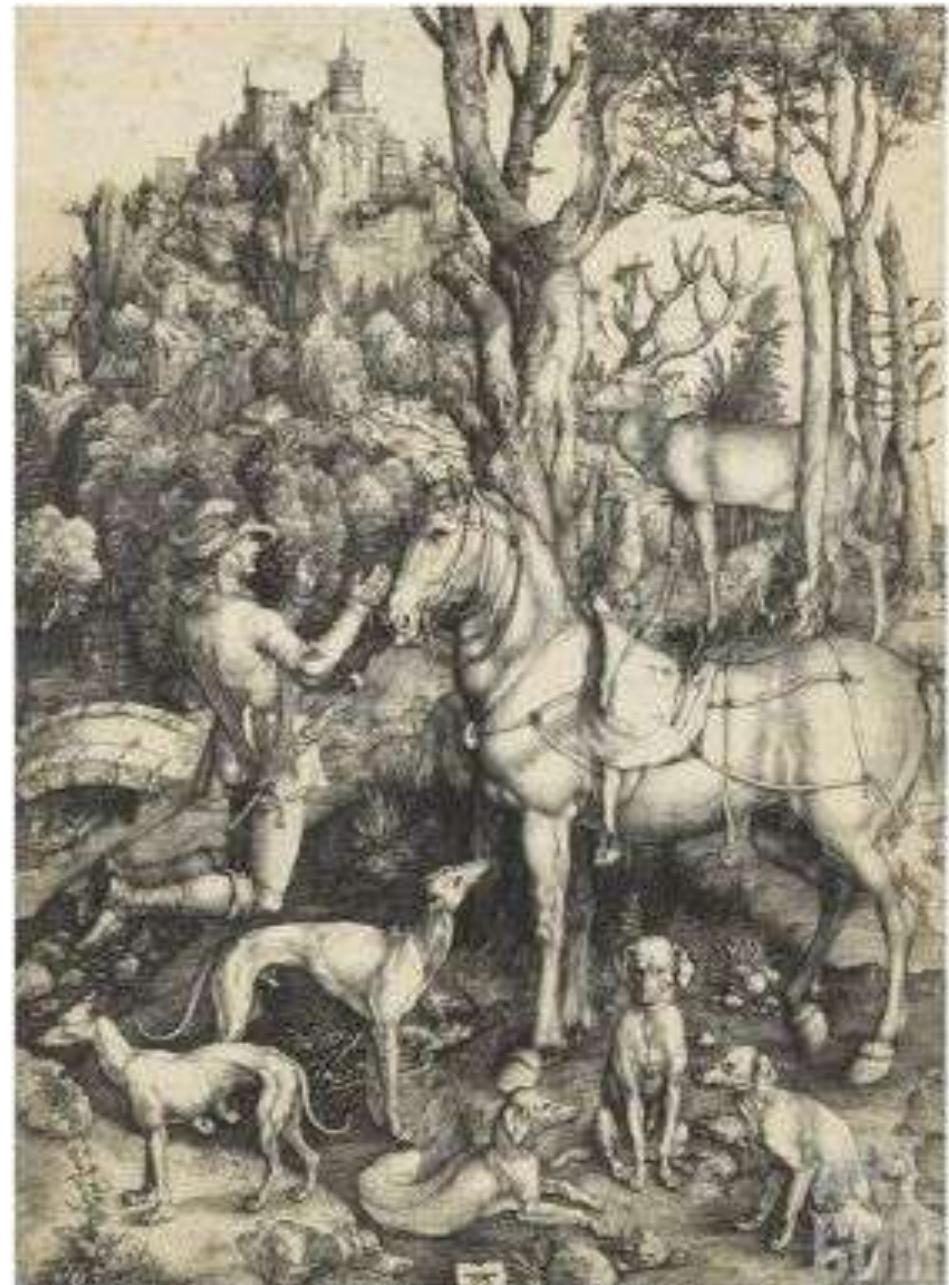
# Henri de Ferrieres - Livre du Roy Modus 1379



# Gaston Phebus – Book of the Hunt circa 1390



St Eustace Durer  
16th Century



“In a separate part [of Smithfield] are located the goods that country folk are selling: agricultural implements, pigs with long flanks, cows with swollen udders, "woolly flocks and bodies huge of kine". Also to be found there are mares suited for pulling ploughs, sledges, and two-horse carts; some have bellies swollen with foetuses, while around others already wander their newborn – frisky foals who stick close to their mothers.” William Fitz-Stephens “Description of the City of London” (1170)

“Lastly, if you will choose a Horse for Cart or Plow, which is the slow draught, choose him of the most ordinary height, for Horses in the Cart unequally sorted, never draw at ease, but the tall hang up the low Horse. Let them be of good strong portion, big breasted, large bodied, and strong limbed, by nature rather inclined to crave the whip, than to draw more than is needful.

For this purpose Mares are most Profitable, for besides the effecting of your work, they yearly bring forth increase. If you furnish your draught with Mares to breed, observe in this wise to have them fair-fore-handed, that is good neck, breast, and shoulders, for the rest is not so regardful, only let her body be large, for the bigger room a Foal hath in the dam’s belly, the fairer are his members.” Gervase Markham 1514

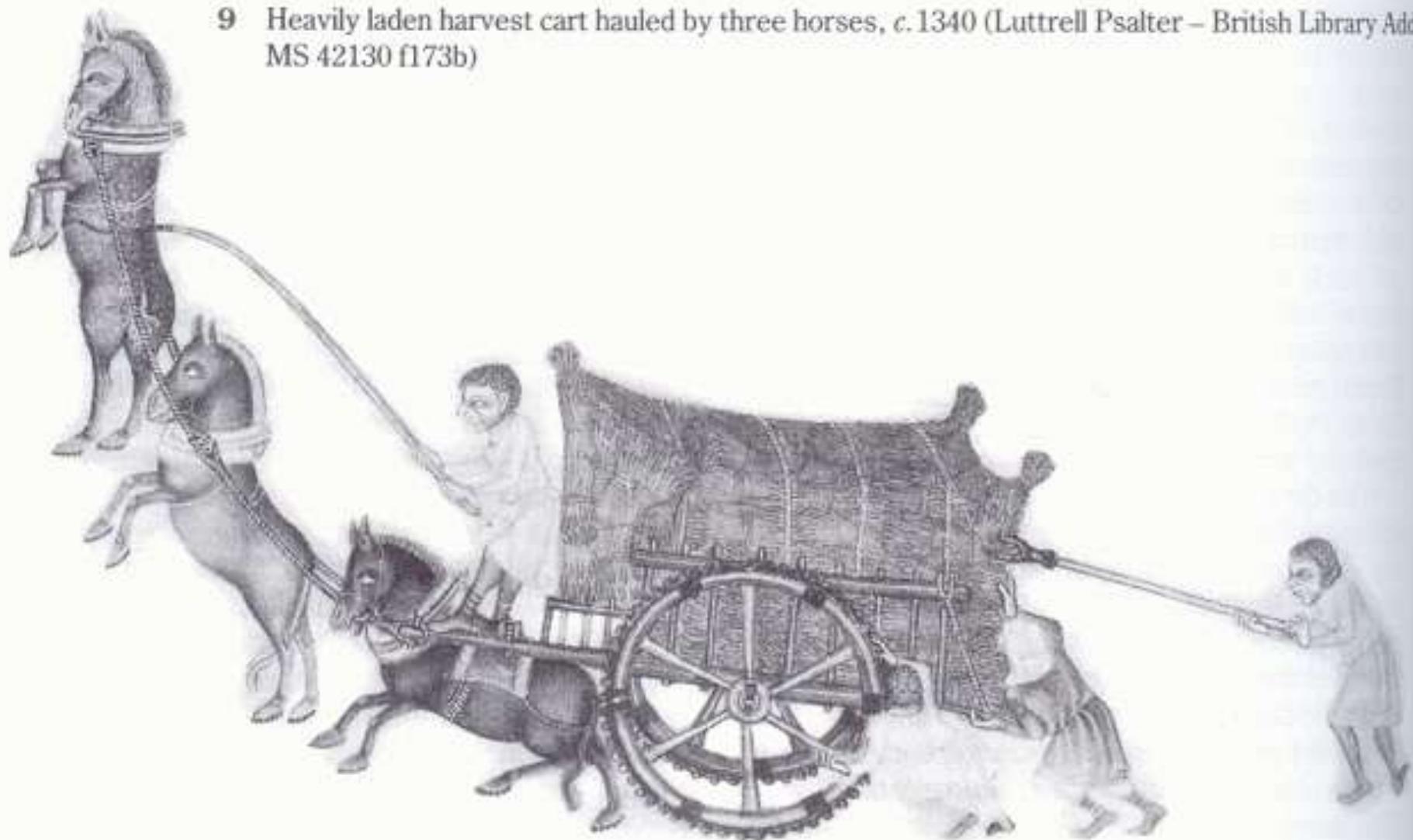
# Horse Cart Stained Glass

## Chartres 13<sup>th</sup> Century



# Luttrell Psalter 1340

- 9 Heavily laden harvest cart hauled by three horses, c. 1340 (Luttrell Psalter – British Library Add MS 42130 f173b)



# Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry 15th Century

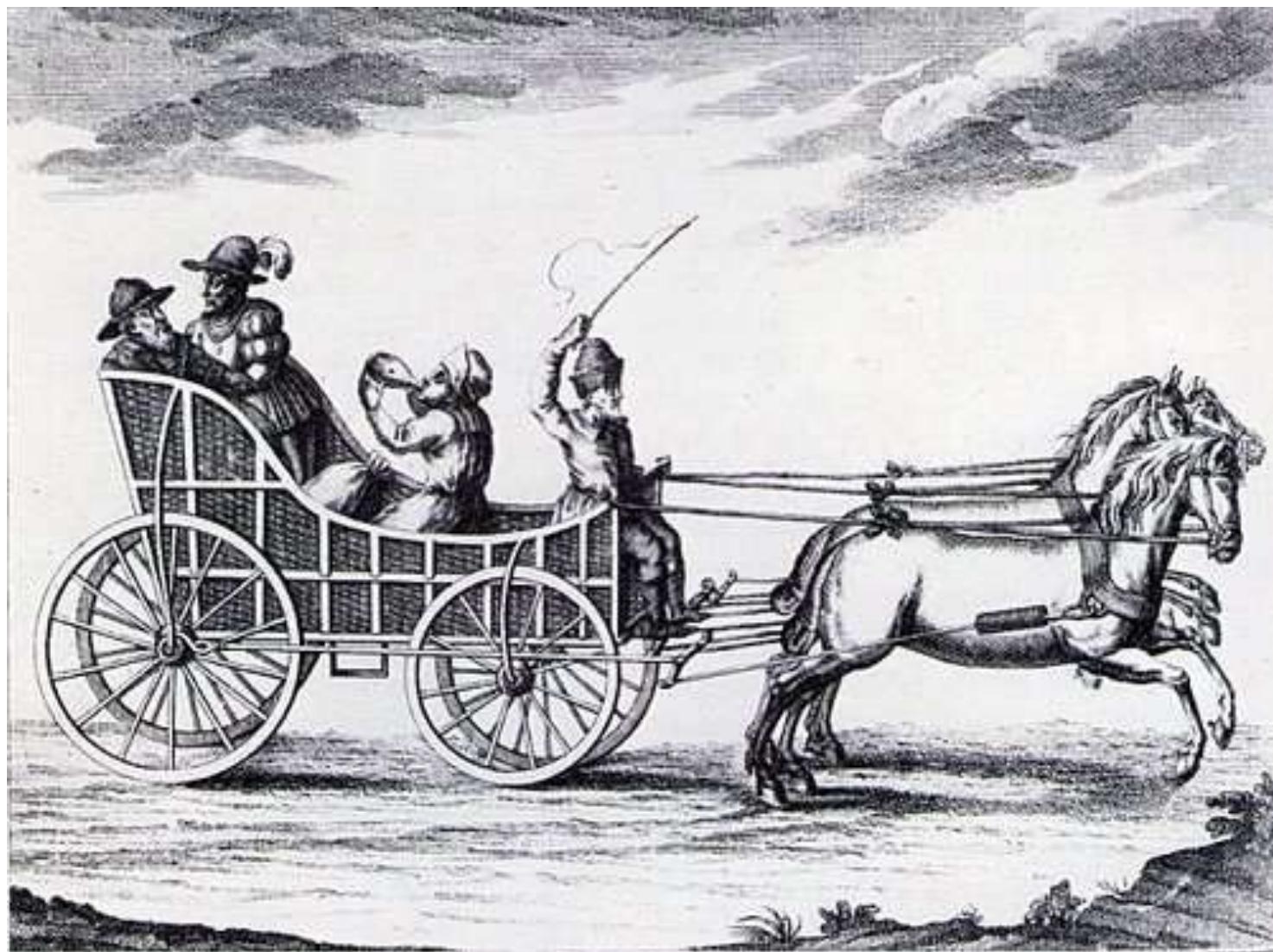


Coaches became more prevalent after the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when changes in traction systems and suspension allowed for lighter vehicles providing a more comfortable ride.

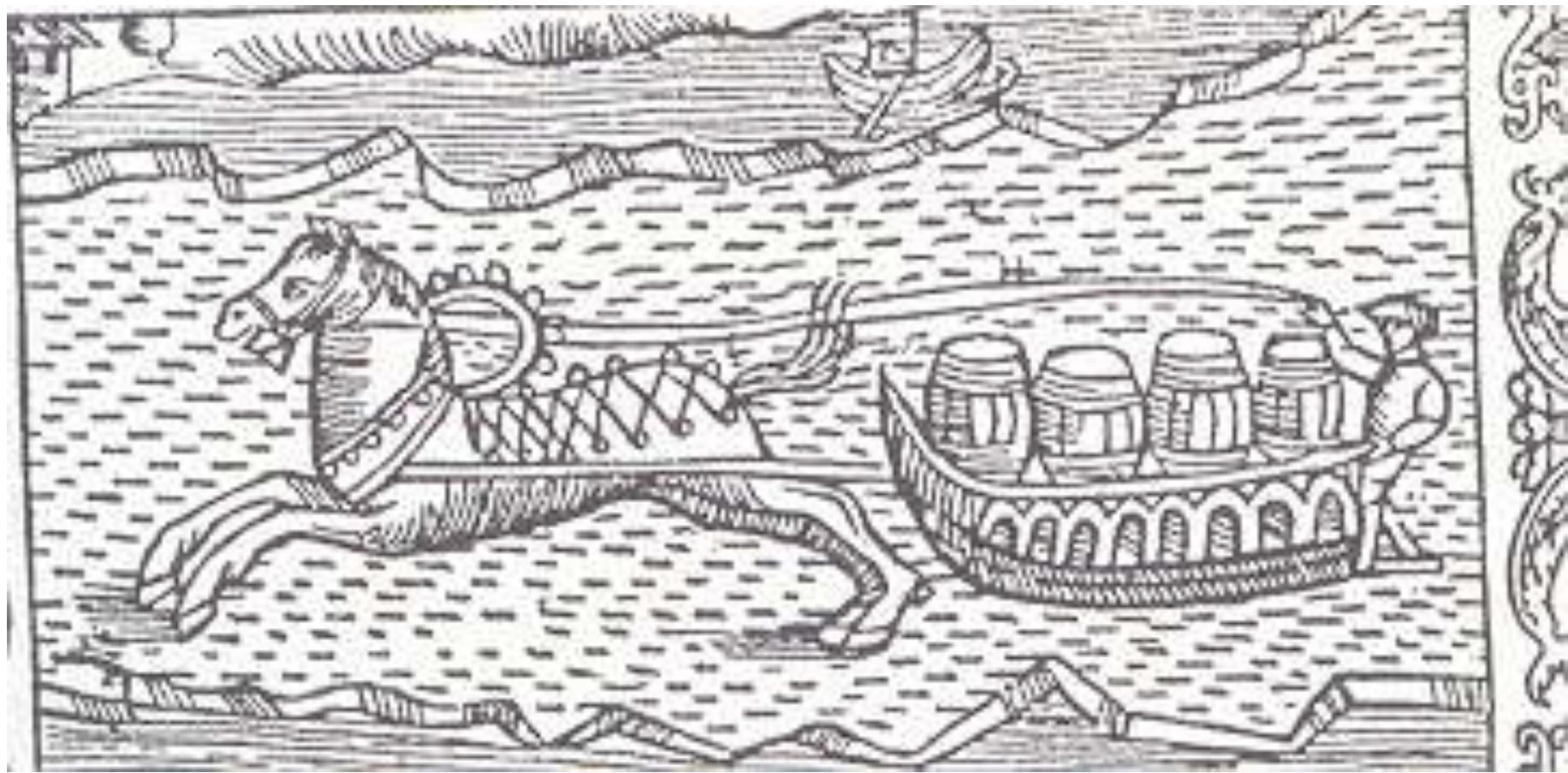
"If you choose a Horse for the Coach, which is called the swift draught, let his shape be tall, broad, and well furnished, not gross with much flesh but with the bigness of his bones. Especially look if he have a strong neck, a broad breast, a large back, sound clean limbs, and rough hooves; and for this purpose, your large English Geldings are best, your Flemish Mares next, and your strong Flemish Gelded Horses tolerable."

Gervase Markham "The Compleat Horseman" 1614

# Carriage. Vienna manuscript by Jeremias Schemel, 1568



# Swedish 16<sup>th</sup> Century



“Fountain of Youth” detail  
Cranch 16<sup>th</sup> Century



# Special Thanks for assistance with images to:

- Viscountess Gwendyn
- Mistress Theodora
- Viscountess Juliana
- Countess Eliska
- Lady Urtatim
- Lady Sofia