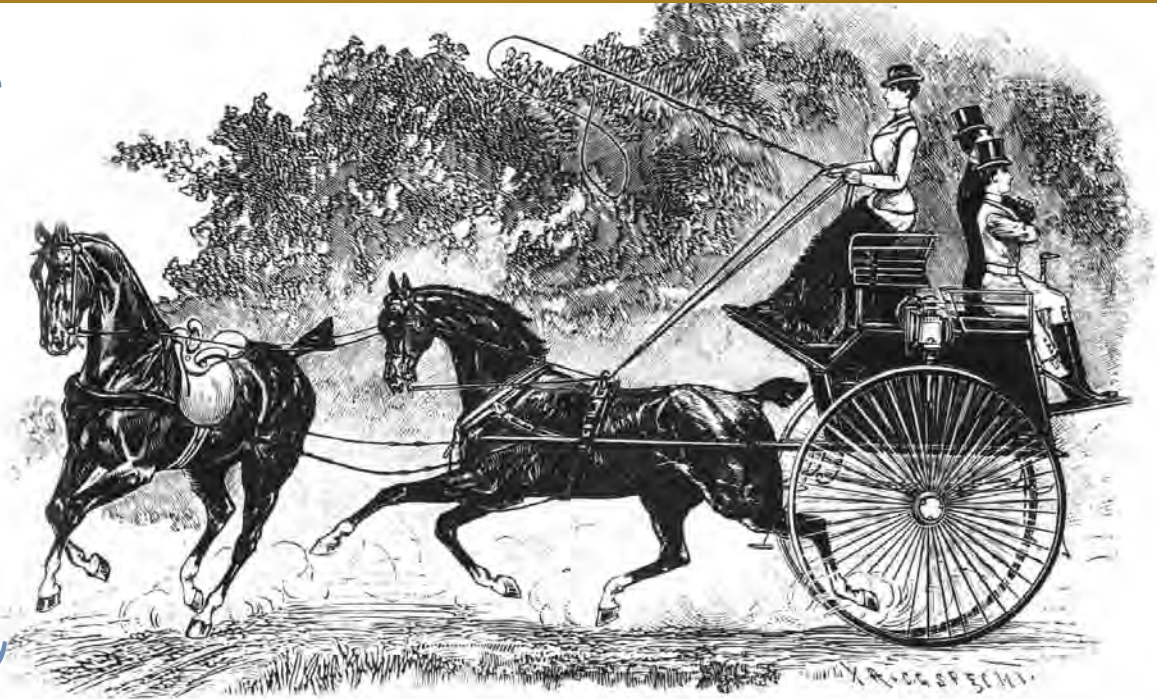


This drawing of an elegant tandem (with saddled leader) in the hands of a lady whip originally appeared in **Das Luxus-Fuhrwerk** by Count Carl Gustav Wrangel, published by Konrad Wittwer, Stuttgart, in 1898 and reprinted by Olms Presse Zuerich in 1992. Reproduced here with the kind permission of Georg Olms Verlag AG, Hildesheim • Zürich • New York



Tandem Driving Enjoys a Renaissance

BY JEFFREY WESTNEY

How did the tandem hitch originate?

Although there is evidence that driving one horse in front of the other goes back to the 12th century, it first became popular as well as sociably correct in the mid-1800s. The art of driving two horses in single file was perfected in 18th-century England by the well-born aficionados of “riding to the hounds” or the fox hunt. Hunt meets often took place at some distance from the participants’ residences, which presented the problem of getting the saddle horse to the meet without tiring him.

Since the fashionable sport of driving was widespread among the upper class, it became rather popular, as well as practicable, to *drive* one’s hunter to the starting point. This was accomplished by putting the draft horse to a two-wheeled cart; the saddle horse, outfitted with

a light breast collar harness, was hitched to the draft horse. Since the saddle horse (leader) was never really in draft, he arrived at the starting point fresh, warmed up and ready to go.

A special *tandem* cart was devel-

oped to meet the needs of the sportsman. The body consisted of two benches placed back to back atop a “boot” that housed the hunting dogs as well as the saddle and bridle. The body was mounted on rails so that it could be adjusted to the front or



Austrian driver Emil Koch negotiates a marathon hazard with a tandem.

Photo by Andrea Rathner



Albert Pointl of Austria driving a tandem in dressage.

foxhunting, and eventing is not your “thing,” the exhilarating thrill of negotiating a slender team down winding paths at a brisk trot is reward enough for taking up the sport of tandem driving.

The Horses

Not only does the overall success of your tandem adventure lie in the “hands” of your horses, but your life may as well. Nervous tension mounts rapidly when you suddenly find yourself face to face with your leader. Although you will never be able to eliminate all risks, you can certainly keep them at a minimum through careful selection and thorough training of your horses. Assuming your two horses are not exactly the same

rear as needed to balance the load directly over the axle. The bench facing the rear was for the grooms, one of whom drove the cart back home while his master rode to the hounds. As this hitch closely resembled half of a four-in-hand team, it was often referred to as a “poor man’s team.” The rein handling is the same for a tandem as for a four-in-hand, but the elegance and special tingle of excitement is much greater. (In Germany, driving a tandem is referred to as the *advanced school of driving*.)

The subtle rein handling, fine feel for the horses and steady nerves required for driving a tandem presented a challenge to gentry whips that was eagerly accepted. It became rather common to see spirited tandems being driven by elegant ladies and gentlemen simply for pleasure.

More than 150 years later, tandem driving is enjoying a modest comeback with an ever-increasing number of pair drivers adding tandem driving to their list of achievements. Here in Europe, an increasing number of show organizers are adding tandem classes to their programs.

The small Franconia town of Willersdorf traditionally holds the first driving event of the season in Franconia, and this year added, for the first time, two tandem classes. Five turnouts were entered and the



Painting of a tandem, by Benno von Achenbach, in a private collection, Used with the kind permission of ISKA Verlag, Switzerland.

high skill level of the drivers motivated the “spectator” whips and earned rather high scores from the judges. The Austrian Almtaler Riding and Driving Club, established in 1957, has held an impressive Tandem CDE for the past three years, the results of which determine the Austrian Tandem Championship. With an eye to nurturing the delicate re-birth of competition tandem driving, both clubs have graciously provided us with lovely photos.

The thrill and personal pride derived from driving in a tandem class cannot be explained, it can only be felt. If you are not into

size, the wheeler should be the bigger of the two. Your leader *must* be a dependable, self-motivated “mover” who does not require a lot of urging. A footloose, fancy free, *look at all the horse eating monsters behind every tree* type of leader puts the entire rig in danger. Remember, your leader is way out there (approximately 3 meters) and all by himself. He sees only straight ahead, and the only thing he has to rely on is the signals he receives through the reins. Since the reins to the leader are 4.5 meters long, often a simple weight shift can come across as a signal and cause disastrous results! It makes things



Albert Pointl's tandem in the marathon phase.

much simpler at the beginning if the horses are familiar with each other, stabled side by side, or, in the best case scenario, work regularly together as a pair.

Two Wheels or Four?

Although traditional tandem driving is done from a two-wheeled cart, I strongly recommend you start your tandem adventure in a four-wheeled carriage. If the vehicle of your choice is suitable for single driving, and you sit high enough to see your leader, it will do quite well for the time being. Out of deference to your groom, an easy-access vehicle (such as a marathon carriage) is a good choice, as he often has to get to the horses in a hurry! Once you have everything under control and enjoy a certain amount of dexterity on the reins, the next move can be in the direction of style with an elegant gig or, if you are fortunate enough to find one, a traditional Tandem Cart.

Harness

When getting started, it makes sense to make do with what you have. Generally speaking, both horses can be outfitted with a singles harness of your choice. Traditionally, the lead horse is harnessed in a light simple breast collar with the shaft

tugs and breeching removed. For stabilization, the leader traces can be run under the belly band. As a safety precaution you should use trace bearers, as this could well prevent the leader from getting a hind leg, or the shaft horse from getting a foreleg, over the leader's traces.

In a well-turned-out tandem, the shaft horse is outfitted with a single horse collar harness with a few alterations: The regular terrets are replaced with roller bar terrets or double terrets and the bridle of the shaft horse is equipped with a pair of guide rings, also known as "*Roger Rings*," to accommodate the leader reins on their way to the driver's hands. The shaft horse's bit should be equipped with a bar connecting the shanks at the bottom to prevent him from snagging the leader's reins.

The lead horse can either be harnessed to the shaft horse by means of simple *long lead traces* attached directly to the tug buckle of the shaft horse, or by employing "Tandem Bars". If you don't have a tack room full of equipment, the long lead traces offer the simplest solution. I went one step further, and simply lengthened my normal single traces with a piece of light chain, the end of which I attached to the tug buckle of the shaft horse. This has proven to

be (cost) efficient, as my single traces can now do double duty!

There is one more piece of equipment needed to drive a tandem that should be taken very seriously: the reins! Tandem leader reins are about 4.5 meters (14.76 feet) long and should be cut from the finest English leather. The width of the reins must be the same as your single reins for the shaft horse. In Germany, good reins are made to order, but the average is 0.78 inches. As the reins are your only direct contact with your horses, they must be of the best quality, and be comfortable in your hands.

The Four-Horse Whip

A driver has fewer means of communication with his horse(s) than his riding counterpart, as his tools are limited to reins, voice and whip. The whip is one of the most important aids a driver has as it replaces the rider's legs, and often succeeds when all else fails! Driving without the whip in your hand is like riding without the aid of your legs.

The whip used in tandem driving is the same as the one used for four-in-hand driving, and thus presents

Where My Interest Came From

In my very early years of driving I was greatly influenced by my very first driving teacher, Dr. Anton Hauke. Dr. Hauke was the reining "Achenbach Guru" and could recite any number of "Achenbach antidotes" at just the right moment. Dr. Hauke's love was driving horses; his passion was driving a tandem. After listening to him describe the eloquence of a well-moving tandem and the demands placed on the whip, I made it a personal goal to learn this unusual form of driving two horses.

Special online tandem driving demo: To ride on Jeffrey's carriage and hear his commentary as he drives his horses in tandem along local roads, go to the ADS Web site and click the link on the home page.

the same problems. The shaft of the four-in-hand whip should be approximately 1.5 meters (5 feet) long, with a lash of approximately 3.5 meters (12 feet 6 inches). The lash is “folded” around the shaft in such a manner as to create a loop at the end sufficiently long to act as a pairs whip. The real skill in using a four-in-hand whip is unfolding the lash, throwing it out and touching the leader. All too often this attempt ends with the lash wrapped around the neck of the shaft horse or hung up in the branches of a tree.

Although most leaders run little risk of ever being touched by the whip, the need to occasionally urge your leader on still remains. An American Wells Fargo stage coach driver in Würzburg, Germany unknowingly presented me with the answer to this problem 30 years before I needed it. Long before I knew I would one day drive horses, I had a Hanoverian dressage horse in Würzburg, where I was living and working at the time. Early one morning in 1969 I went to the stable and was confronted by an unforgettable sight: a stage coach pulled by six bays and driven by a short, wiry tobacco-chewing cowboy, roaring around our riding arena. The driver, who was from Texas, was delighted to see an English-speaking American



Roland Lannig, a friend of the author, drives his tandem in a German field.

Photo by Jeffrey Westney.

and invited me to join him on the box. I was impressed with all the reins he had in his left hand, but was even more impressed by the bucket of small stones placed next to his left leg. He cheerfully demonstrated their purpose by taking one and skillfully bouncing it off the near leader’s rump. “Beats a whip” was the only comment from the cowboy of few words. Thanks to this encounter more than three decades ago, I have developed a certain skill in urging on the leaders; however, I have never mastered the art of unfolding a four-horse whip.

Handling the “Ribbons”

One of the first schools of team rein handling was established around the mid-1800s by an Englishman named Edwin Howlett. Born in Paris

in 1835 of English parents, Howlett was the four-in-hand professor of the day. Mr. Crafty, a then well-known authority on sporting subjects, said of Edwin Howlett in his book *Paris au Bois*: “This man plays with a four-in-hand as Paganini played on the violin.”

One of Howlett’s more famous pupils was a German named Benno Achenbach who later slightly modified not only the system, but the reins themselves. Both the English system and the slightly modified German version have withstood the test of time, and are in wide use to this day.

Some 20-odd years ago, HRH Prince Philip of England developed a two handed system of team rein handling which is better suited for the requirements of modern-day competitive driving. In my humble opinion, the English or BvA system is best suited for Pleasure as well as Dressage driving, while the two-handed system shines in marathons as well as cones.

Both of these systems are well suited for driving a tandem.

A Word to the Novice!

It’s been suggested that I might want to give some helpful hints or tips to “would like to be” tandem drivers. My only tip is GET EXPERIENCED HELP!! Ask a seasoned tandem whip or trainer to help you on your first few drives. Learning to drive a tandem from a book or magazine is like learning brain surgery through a correspondence course—not likely to result in success. 🐾



A senior staff member of the Sachsen State Breeding Facility in Germany drives a tandem hitch of Heavy Warmblood stallions in a musical review, “Music and Stallions,” held in August 2009. Notice, however, that he has resorted to wrapping the lash of his whip around the shaft, another hint as to the difficulty of handling the four-horse whip.