

ASPECTS OF BALANCE

A retrospective study

DAVID W. GILL AFCL

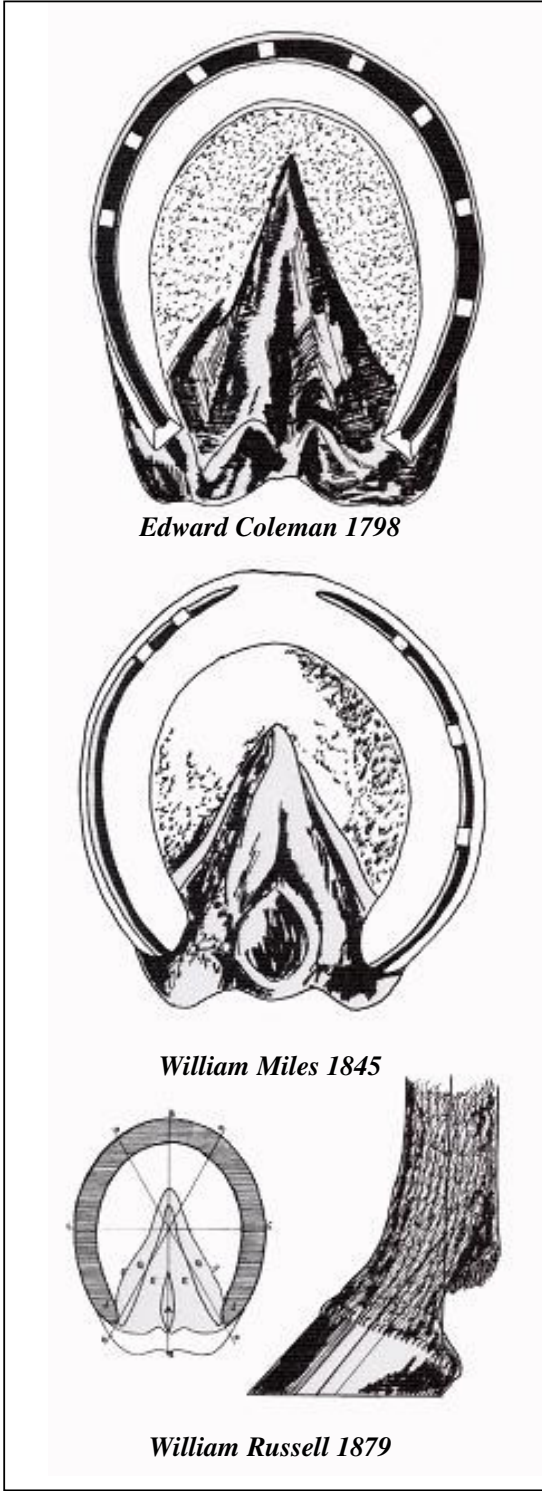
Theorists and practitioners have argued throughout the centuries over the art & science of horseshoeing. It is my belief and hope that through the journals of our very own Forge magazine many prejudices; misconceptions and misunderstandings will merely become part of the history and development of our craft

One of the many profound though unhelpful phrases used by those who extol the virtue of good farriery is the statement "The hoof is the basis of all movement and posture". In act the hoof left to those same natural influences will become a reflection of movement and conformation, not its creator. Each horse having its own signature of movement, so creating it's own fingerprint of hoof conformation.

It is both because of the horse's and the farrier's own individuality, that shoeing plans can tend to fail. After all farriers too are individuals, each excelling with their own peculiar qualities, each with their own interpretation of what is acceptable farriery.

The machine-made shoe has in my mind, no doubt revolutionised our craft, not only by allowing us the time to concentrate on the job for which we are paid, shoeing, but also by raising the overall quality of farriery today. Whilst there are those who would argue against that statement, they should remember, when it comes to any aspect of our craft, although we are all skilled some are more skilled than others.

In previous issues of Forge magazine I presented to the membership a shoeing plan, a blueprint drawn from the ideals set down by authors past and present. The plan, the "one and an eighth theory" provides us with the means to equate what is thought to be the ideal. However the plan like the machine made shoe may need tailoring to suit the animals needs. One cannot dispute that too long a shoe is likely to be lost and so a range of tolerance is required. I found those animals with small feet relative to the pastern length, were apt to suffer from collapsed heels, because of which, I chose to use the distance from the centres of the pedal and fetlock joints as a minimum shoe guide. I much prefer and recommend the use of the upright-heeled shoe but desperation may call for the use of sloping heels, where persistent shoe loss occurs.



Developing a better perception of the effects that trimming and shoeing have on the hoof capsule, should be one of our constant objectives, as although the act of farriery is a practical matter, the theories need to be properly expounded. It is insufficient to present a hoof and say, "this is correctly shod". So whatever type and size of shoe you may use, make sure the decision is a conscious one.

The form of the hoof is under constant change ideally with growth and wear counteracting one another. However the balance between the two is a delicate one. Hence the need for farriery. The farrier's role is to restore balance. Then where needed, preserve and support the hoof by the means of a shoe, in order to maintain the health and functional duties of the hoof and limb.

The choice of the type of shoe, along with the style and quality of fitting, is very much a decisive factor in maintaining the balance throughout the shoeing cycle. Too short a shoe will not only fail to accommodate new growth but could also lead to the hyperextension of the fetlock joint, during the stance phase. This, it is thought, predisposes the animal to navicular disease.

The welfare of these animals, at least in part, is in our hands. Let us not fail them.

David W. Gill RSS, AFCL Millfield Smiddy, Mill Lane, Aslockton, Nottingham NG13 9AS, UK Tel: 01949 850373 E-mail davidw.gill@thefarrierbox.co.uk Web: www.thefarrierbox.co.uk	
--	---

** Authors Note:*

At the time of writing these brief essays, few technical articles were present within the British farrier's trade magazine 'FORGE'. So these pieces were written with the aim of provoking both thought and debate.

Although some farriers were putting pen to paper, or fingers to keyboards, there would seem to be either a greater kudos or better incentives to write for equestrian and veterinary magazines, rather than for fellow farriers.

The Worshipful Company of Farriers and the 'Farrier's Association' had made some efforts to change this by initiating essay-writing competitions but the results of that were short lived. I hope the reader will find this collection helpful and inspiring. Regards, David

