Chapter Six
Thoughts on Long Reining

One of the advantages of long reining is that a young horse's education can be taken much farther than lunging in side reins. With no weight on its back, and without the need to work in small circles, the young horse can be worked at an earlier age than its immature bones would stand if it were ridden. Long reins - as

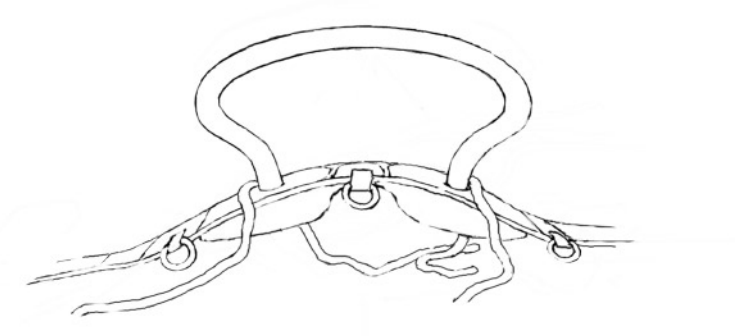


Figure 37 *Long reining saddle, author's version*

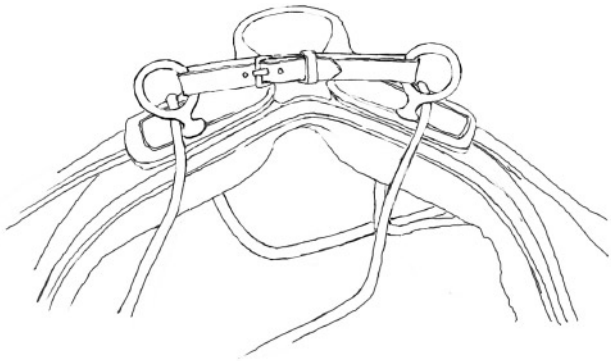


Figure 38 *Driving pad adapted for use as a long reining saddle*

opposed to side reins - can be loosened if the youngster attempts to rear, or contact increased if the he tries to rush off. If an older horse is unable to be ridden for any reason, its schooling can continue in long reins. Some people practise long reining up to high school work.

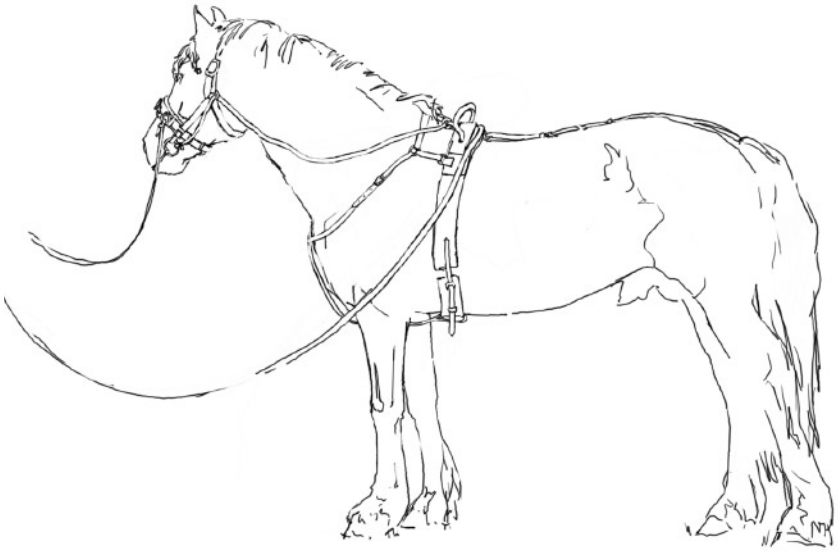
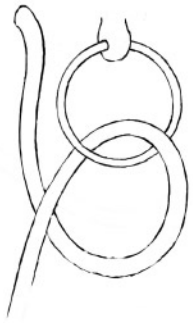


Figure 39 *Long reining gear*

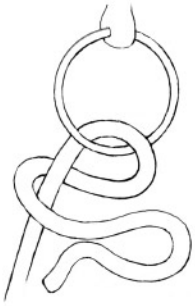
The long reining saddle, or a driving pad (figures 37, 38) is introduced to the horse in the stable. When a driving pad is used, it is beneficial to fasten a strap between the rein terrets as illustrated. This prevents the rein getting entangled with the rings and the trainer losing control of the horse.

A lungeing cavesson is fitted, to which a mild bit is attached by bit strap. Grass reins are put on, which should only be tight enough to prevent the horse getting its head down to graze. They should run freely through a ring on the driving pad, thus enabling the horse to bend laterally (figure 39).

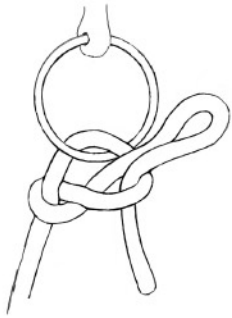
The long reins are attached to the noseband of the cavesson in the early stages. If the youngster leans heavily on the reins and tries to rush off, they must be attached to the bit. In general, rubber bits or double or single jointed snaffles are suitable for horses that are reluctant to take contact, and a thick half moon or straight bar snaffle often persuades the youngster to relax its lower jaw and go forward without leaning. In the initial training, the reins should never be threaded through the loops in a driving pad. As the young horse has previously been led in hand, it will invariably try to turn towards its trainer, thereby getting entangled in the reins.



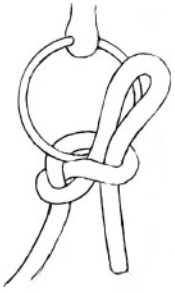
a) Thread end through ring and pass back under rope.



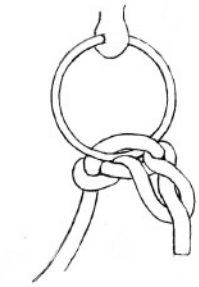
b) Take end over rope and make a loop.



c) Push loop up through knot as shown above.



d) Pull loop and rope firmly to form knot. At this stage, pulling the end will release the knot.



e) For security, pass end through loop.

f) Pull end and rope to secure knot. To undo, take end, pass back through loop and pull; it will loose as in d).

Figure 40 *Tying a plough rope to a ring*

The author finds that using the lungeing whip in conjunction with webbing reins is cumbersome. He prefers to use rope plough reins, or ordinary rope of similar weight (figure 40). With these one can apply a strong enough driving aid by flicking one or the other rein alongside the horse's flank. This is like an individual leg aid and prepares for that in later mounted training.

Training should begin on a circle, with the inside rein coming direct to the trainer's hand as in lungeing. The outside rein is passed over the horse's back and behind the loop on the driving pad (figure 41). As the horse circles around the trainer, the outside rein should play its correct role in equitation of controlling the pace

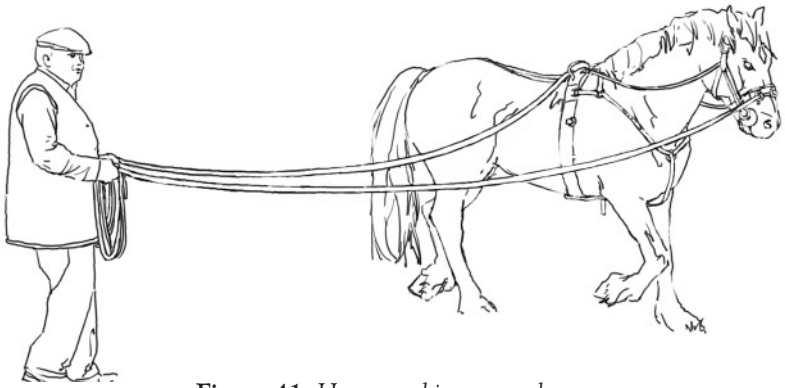


Figure 41 *Horse working correctly*

and preventing the neck from over-bending to the inside. The inside rein plays the role of an exaggerated open rein - similar to that used when riding - thus giving the horse a sense of direction.

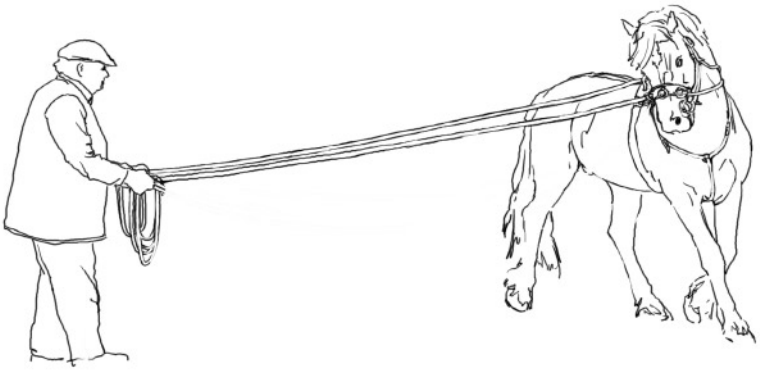
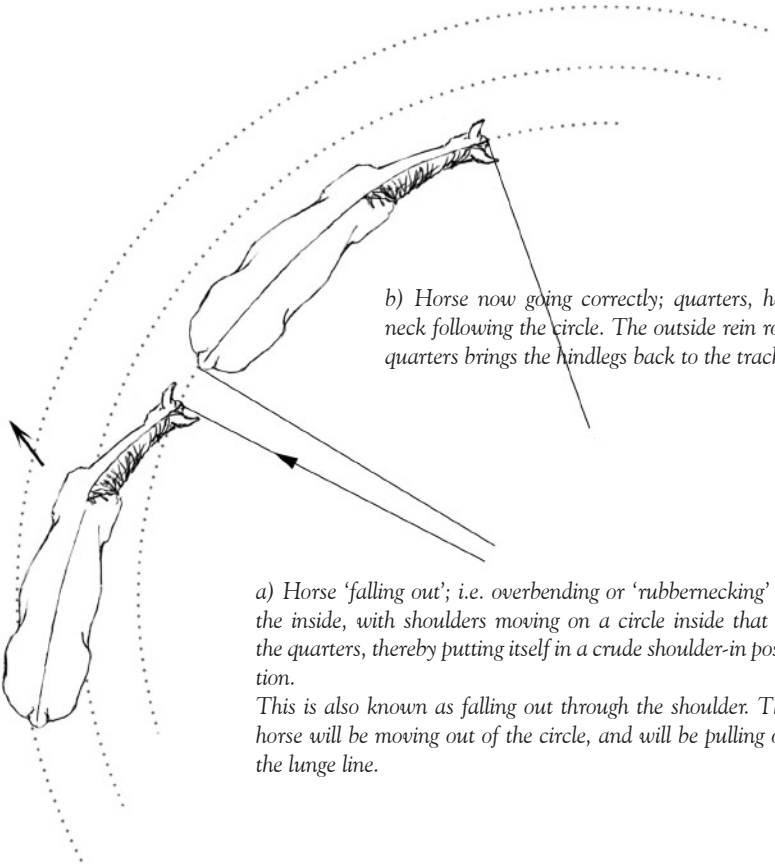


Figure 42 *Falling out on the lunge (shoulder-in evasion)*

Invariably, a young horse will soon find out how to escape contact. Assuming it is stiff on the left side and soft on the right, the youngster will overbend to the inside and swing its quarters to the outside when going in a clockwise direction, thus 'falling out' (putting itself in shoulder-in position) as an evasion (figures 42, 43).



b) Horse now going correctly; quarters, head and neck following the circle. The outside rein round the quarters brings the hindlegs back to the track.

a) Horse 'falling out'; i.e. overbending or 'rubbernecking' to the inside, with shoulders moving on a circle inside that of the quarters, thereby putting itself in a crude shoulder-in position.
This is also known as falling out through the shoulder. The horse will be moving out of the circle, and will be pulling on the lunge line.

Figure 43 *Falling out (from above)*

Conversely, in an anticlockwise direction the same horse will turn its head to the outside and carry its quarters in; 'falling in' (doing a rudimentary shoulder-out), whilst at the same time getting behind the bit (figures 44, 45).

To counter the latter evasion, the inside rein is vibrated until the horse goes out on the correct track of the circle and takes contact with the inside rein (figure 46). If the trainer is inexperienced, an assistant should persuade the youngster to sidestep back to track by pushing on its inside shoulder. The trainer continues to vibrate the inside rein, which will ask the horse to bend its head inwards. This will also prevent the horse from being tempted to rush past the assistant, cow-kicking as it goes .

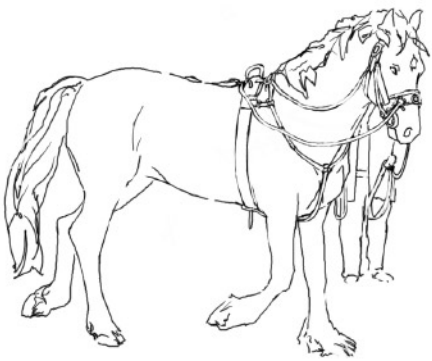
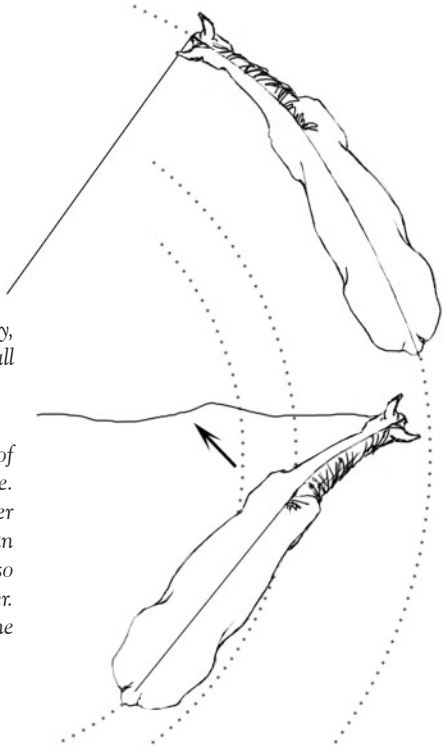


Figure 44 *Falling in on the lunge (shoulder-out evasion)*



b) Here the horse is going correctly, with the quarters, shoulders and neck all moving on the same circle.

a) Horse 'falling in' to the centre of the circle, head turned to the outside. The shoulders are moving on a larger circle than the quarters, thereby doing an elementary 'shoulder-out'. This is also known as falling in through the shoulder. The horse is also 'behiud the bit' and the lead rein will be slack.

Figure 45 *Falling in (from above)*

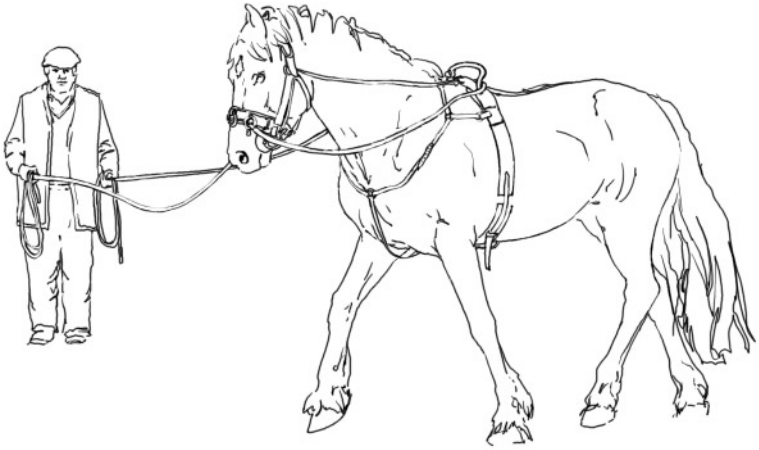


Figure 46 *Counteracting falling in (shoulder-out evasion)*

On the opposite (right) rein, where the horse overbends inwards and carries its quarters out, the outside rein must be placed round the quarters to persuade the horse to bring its hind legs onto the proper track (figure 47). Most horses kick

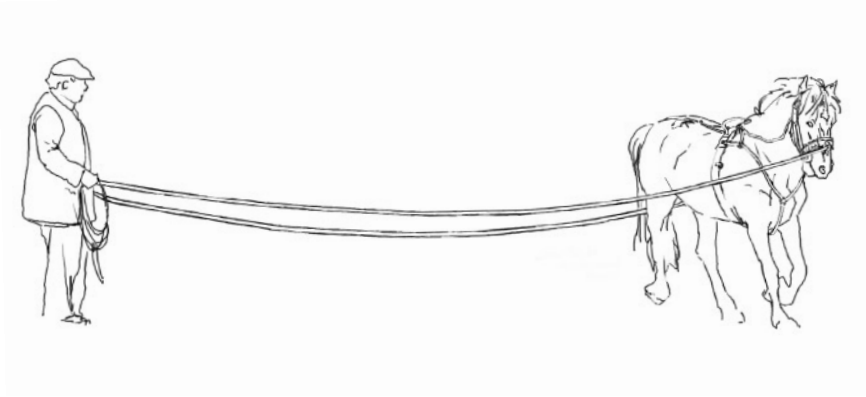


Figure 47 *Counteracting falling out (shoulder-in evasion)*

violently when first feeling the rein in that position. Care must be taken that any loose ends of the reins are properly coiled and can be quickly let go should they get below the hocks. Most youngsters soon settle down to the reins behind the buttocks and start to go forward with a steady contact.

Gradually the horse is taught to change direction by turning outwards and a correct contact established on the other circle. Little by little the changes become more frequent until they are done after every half circle. This is the first stage of driving in a straight line. When the stage of driving in straight lines has been reached, the horse is just short of submission: that is to say, it should relax the lower jaw to the pressure of the bit and come into outline (flex longitudinally)

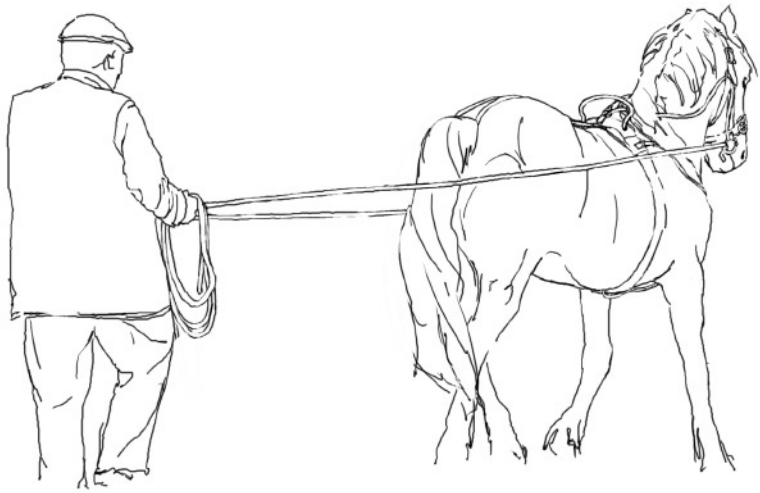


Figure 48 *Driving in a straight line, the horse just short of submission*

(see figure 48). Because young horses have not learned to relax the lower jaw in the initial stages of long reining, they will sooner or later try to escape contact with the bit. If they run back, the trainer should also walk back, maintaining the contact at least on the stiff side until the horse gets fed up and walks forward or at least stands still.

Driving aids should be very tactful, especially if the youngster is reluctant to turn away from home (i.e. he 'naps' - see Glossary, page 105). In this case, circling should be recommenced with the outside rein over the horse's back and behind the loop on the long reining pad. When the horse goes freely forward, driving on straight lines can be tried once more.

Frequently the trainer - quite correctly - applies a strong driving aid on the opposite side to the rein that is being resisted. The trained horse responds by going forward

into its bridle and relaxing the lower jaw, but the increased impulsion in a green horse may provoke it to rear. As the trainer is obliged to relax the reins, to avoid pulling the horse over backwards, the horse takes this as a reward and inadvertently an evasion has been taught.

Immediately the horse shows an inclination to rear, driving in straight lines should be temporarily abandoned and as always the basic training on a 20 metre circle resorted to.

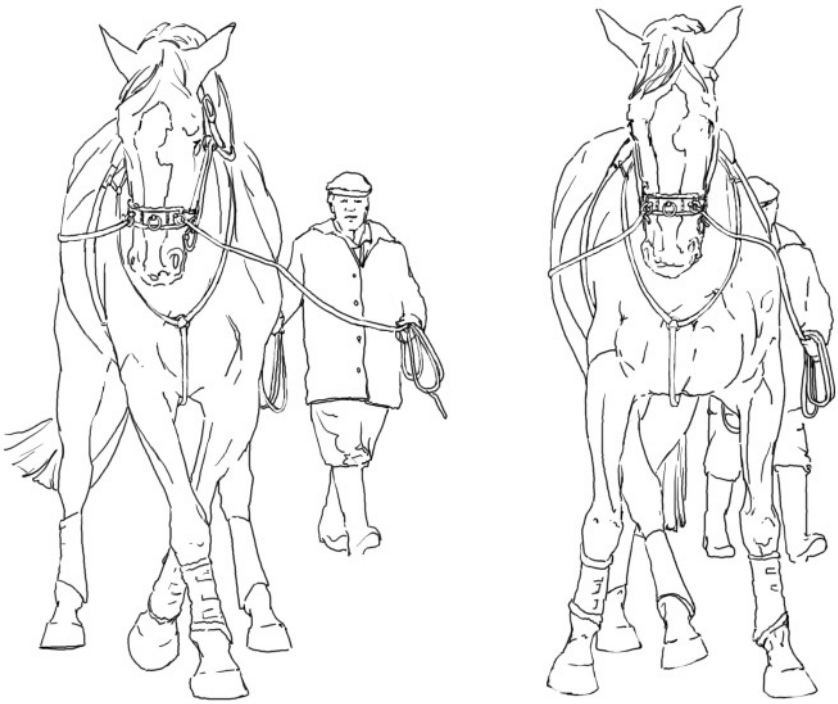


Figure 49 *Side-stepping*

By varying the work from straight lines to circles and back to straight lines the youngster will become more supple laterally and longitudinally. It will relax in its lower jaw and take a fairly even contact with both reins.

Side-stepping to and from the wall can be practised, although this will be shown more easily as leg-yields than half-passes (figure 49). Canter strike-offs can also be obtained on the circle bearing in mind the horse's tendency to fall into the circle. This is countered by applying the principles laid down earlier in this chapter.

Figure 50 *Long reining down a quiet lane.*