

# A Blast From The Past

*by Edith Rivers  
written around 1970*

## ***Salute to Australia's National Terrier***

We may not know the details of the origin of the first pure-bred Australian Terrier and this fact is shared by all breeds with very few exceptions, since all dogs descended from a common ancestor. It is alleged that no pure breed of dog was established earlier than 1873 until the Kennel Club of England instituted the registering of pedigrees and reliable records. These are preserved in the Stud Registrations of controlling Canine Bodies in Australia and elsewhere and pedigreed dogs may now trace their ancestry back for generations.

The Australian Terrier was known by various names until 1889 - when in that year a club was formed in Melbourne to foster the breed which had been variously evolved from several varieties of British Terriers brought out to this county by the free settlers in the very early days.

The dogs of the settlers were derived from British stock and sporting types capable of hunting and killing vermin were highly prized. In this new land another need was found for a small game dog - that of watchdog - especially for the lonely homestead in isolated areas, where evil white and marauding natives molested the settlers.

A loyal and devoted dog, game and hardy, able to withstand privations and the trials of climate; with the courage to attack and hunt for food for itself and the larder; an alert, keen-scenting dog to give warning of danger was an urgent need, and an animal with these capabilities was treasured and prized beyond price by those fortunate enough to acquire one.

As the progeny of various terrier types accumulated, it was realized that there was a potential for the country's need in the grand little dogs being evolved. Various names were given to the new type of sporting dog - Broken-Coated, Rough-Haired, Alliance and Rat Terrier were commonly used. Types, weights and colors were varied.

Dog shows began to be held as the country progressed, and the uniformity in this new breed striven for. This was apparently achieved in a couple of decades, as there is an entry of a Terrier, classed as 'Rough-Coated' Terrier, in the catalog of a show presented in Melbourne in 1868. While in the Jubilee Show of the Victorian Poultry and Dog Society held in July 1887 the entries classified as 'Rough-Coated Terriers - Blue' and 'Rough-Coated Terriers - Sandy' (weights listed as over and under 7lbs) are believed to be those of progenitors of some of our present-day Aussies. In this Jubilee Show classes for Dandie Dinmont, Skye, Fox Terrier (both imported and colonial -bred) Bull, Irish, and Toy Terriers were provided also, and are interestingly noteworthy of the terrier breeds existing then.

Of special local interest concerning the early days of the show Aussie is an entry in the Queensland Royal National Show in 1876 of a 'Rough-Haired Terrier' named Fanny, owned by P.R. Gordon of Milton,. Her color and weight is not detailed.

Another interesting point is the coincidence of July dates - as it was in July 1953 that the first step for founding of a Specialist Club for the Australian Terrier in Queensland was inaugurated, and in July 1957 received official sanction and affiliation with the Canine Council (QLD). 1957 was also the year when NSW and America (USA) formed Specialist Australian Terrier Clubs, all of which are progressing for the advancements and popularizing of the breed.

It is difficult to retrace and garner lost history and the actual breeding of a strain is unrecorded except for that supplied by the late Mrs Bertha M Burt of NSW, the breeder of the well-known Kingswood Aussies. Mrs Burt stated that her grandmother vouched for the accuracy of the development of purebred Australian Terrier from the progeny of a little Yorkshire Terrier bitch smuggled in a lady's muff on board a sailing ship and which was mated to a Scotch Terrier type of dog resembling a Cairn, named Tom. This type of terrier had coats of various colors, including red or sandy.

The little Yorkie stowaway was named Biddy and she bore two puppies to Tom, these were called Jo and Josie. Later the dog Jo was mated to Minnie, the daughter of a cross-mating of a Dandie Dinmont sire and a Black and Tan Terrier dam, and one dog and two female puppies resulted.

These female puppies were later mated to Tom and four puppies resulted for line-breeding cross-breeds, which were mated back to Josie and Jo - eventually producing a strain with identical percentages of blood-lines establishing a type developed from the same proportion of breeds, but were out-bred.

Unfortunately, Mrs Burt's illness and death prevented complete investigation of the only breeding chart of the days where dogs were smuggled out to Australian on sailing-ships, instead of being allowed to enter as permitted imports.

The Breed's future progress, despite storm and opposition, was assured when a Standard was formulated in 1896 and an Australian Terrier Club was formed in Melbourne in 1889. The Breed rated on 75 points in the first Standard. This was revised in 1947 and total points elevated to 100, in keeping with those of the many other breeds of dogs in competitive exhibition.

There is little variation in the requirements of the earlier Standard and that of the present which was adopted and approved by the National Kennel Council of Australia in 1962.

Admirers of the smart Australian Terrier so eminently desirable as an all-purpose family and show dog (and their numbers are legion the world over) are proud that the breed so typically Australian in history and character holds its own with the rest of other breeds in winning top honors from knowledgeable judges assessing merit.

Typically and Proudly = Australian's National Terrier