

A Blast From The Past

by Mr. J.K.T. Watson,
courtesy of Richard Watson
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The Origins of the Breed

When I started to exhibit in 1927 I was given a copy of a standard taken from the dog column of a weekly publication *The Leader*. This allowed the two types of ears, but preferred pricked ears, while black and tan was introduced as an allowed colour but no mention was made of sandy.

In 1928 in the kennel column of *The Leader*, a standard for Australian Terriers was published which it was stated was the result of consultation and agreement between breeders and clubs in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. In this, the only changes were the disallowance of ears dropped forward, the deletion of black and tan, and inclusion of sandy. This standard has remained unchanged and was apparently adopted by the controlling bodies some time after 1928.

Although the origin of the Australian Terrier is not actually known, we do know that a terrier-type dog known as the Tasmanian Rough Coated Terrier was developed in Tasmania the early days of the colony.

Some time ago I discovered in an early book of the Cairn Terrier that an Ensign MacDonald was posted to 99th Regiment of Foot in Hobart Town. He was the son of MacDonald of Neish, one of the very early pioneers of the dogs we now know as the Cairn Terrier. These Cairn Terriers were the forebears of the Scottish Terrier and West Highland White, while the Skye Terrier is believed to be the result of out-crossing the original Cairn in the Hebrides.

Ensign MacDonald brought to Hobart six terriers from his father's kennel. When the regiment was transferred to Cork only two of the terriers returned with him. These dogs could probably have been used to produce the Tasmanian Rough Coated Terrier by crossing with Yorkshire Terriers which would almost certainly have been brought out in the early fleets. There are certainly marked similarities between Cairns and Australian Terriers.

There is no doubt that the Tasmanian Rough Coated Terrier was, by selective breeding, developed into the Australian Terrier.

In the late 1920's Australian Terriers in some of the Tasmanian kennels were becoming a little light in bone structure due to in-breeding and at least two breeders in Hobart, who had heard that a Scottish breed of terrier had been used early in the development, assumed that the Scottish terriers, as we know them now, was used and crossed a Scottish Terrier into their kennel with disastrous results. As a result, both these breeders - Mr. D Saunders and Mr C Hosper - ceased breeding Australian Terriers and concentrated on Scottish Terriers.

Another breeder and exhibitor, Mr James Hogan of the Athelmore prefix, imported from the U.K. a Manchester Terrier, which was bred to Australian Terrier bitches. Photographs from the *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*, dated from 1923 to 1932, indicated the deterioration of type in this kennel in 1932 with the disastrous result of this Manchester cross. This kennel disappeared from the show ring in the early 1930's, although judicious use of stock from this kennel may have helped improve the tan colouring in stock from other kennels.

In 1928 I purchased my first Australian Terrier bitch from Mr. F. Richardson. She was Medorah Julie, by Northumberland Punch from Northumberland Trixie. Prior to my purchasing Medorah Julie, she had produced a dog Medorah Pat, who won best of breed at six months of age and, up till the time of Mr. Richardson's death in 1932, was never beaten by any other Australian Terrier. In my opinion this dog was the best Australian Terrier I have seen, even up to the present time.

In Mr. Gil. Brown's book in the Australian breeds, he states that Mr. A.A. Laidlaw of Ararat purchased the Parkville kennels from Mr. McGowan in Launceston which then ceased to exist and the Ripon kennel came into being. This cannot be correct for the following reasons:

After the death of Mr. Fred Richardson I acquired an outstanding bitch - Medorah Trixie. This bitch was bred from a bitch Royston Trixie, purchased by Mr. E. McCracken from Victoria (for the then large sum of sixteen guineas), and sired by Northumberland Punch.

At this time I was living at Lilydale just out of Launceston. I later gave this bitch and a dog Durnsford Bill (out of Medorah Julie by Medorah Nip, a litter brother to Medorah Pat) to a Mr. A. Brooks. These two terriers were given to Mr. Brooks to his uncle, Col McGowan, who established the Parkville kennels using these two terriers as his foundation stock. This was in 1933.

In 1929 Mr. Fred Richardson purchased two bitches from Victoria, one of these was Ripon Rosie, from the Ripon kennels and another from a kennel in Ballarat with the kennel name Sturt. So it is clear that Ripon Kennels were in existence at least four years before Parkville. Further, Parkville kennels were still operative up until the end of World War II A very nice dog Shwebo Tiger, out of Trixie by Parkville Tiger, bred and owned by Capt. George Cooper, was being exhibited with a lot of success, winning Best in Show and many Group awards.

