

An interview with **Norman Berry (Rendorn)** established 1965

by Chris Kerrigan (Leadstaffs)

Established in 1965 this is the all time UK winning Kennel ever with 80 CCs and RCCs and 26 stud book numbers, this from a total of 37 litters.

Norman made it very clear from the start that The **Rendorn** kennel was not about him but is and always has been a full partnership between himself and his wife Dorothy. Although there is only Normans name as the ownership both are not only fully involved in all aspects of the kennels breeding program but included themselves in other outside activities within the bred by having served more than thirty years on the committee of their local Staffordshire Bull terrier Club.

might be a useful addition to the set up has a guard /protection. The question what breed should we buy? A friend suggested a Stafford, being a medium sized dog and easy to maintain. Never having heard of the breed this set us off on the search high and low for someone who bred them. After walking a few streets and knocking on a few doors came across a man who was a well known professional handler who kenneled and exhibited dogs for various well heeled owners. I must add at this point; (in our home town as it turned out there happened to be just one breeder of Stafford's), having put the question to the man in he replied with a cynical

was reluctant to sell. Being determined to have a stafford we left

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it a couple of weeks and called back, this being just before Christmas and knowing he had two small children he might change his mind. Well we got the dog, having to pay over the odds, the price being 10 guineas; the normal going rate at that time was 5 guineas. The pup was born on the 5th of November and fittingly his name was 'Vengill Firecracker', interestingly, my very last dog bred ourselves was himself born on same 'Guy Fawkes' day. The previously mentioned was never a great guard dog; however, he kindled the flame to start us on the long path of 50 years within this unique breed. However. it must be said; neither were any of the others with regard guarding until our last one, he, the most suspicious dog I have ever known, and thus, it would seem, it to be a long time to wait for our original requirement.

We formed a partnership with Norman who introduced us to the local club and duly attending our first show never dreaming it would extend to the present. However, after 5 years in partnership we decided very amicably to go our separate ways and the Rendorn kennel was established in 1965.



Chris K **Q:** How did you start in Staffords and where did you get your first dog?

Norman **A:** The period was 1960. We had started a new business which was not in the most salubrious part of the town giving us the thought that a dog

smile, which to us, read "who the hell wants to buy a Stafford" directed us to the said person I was searching for.

The person Mr. Norman Entwistle of the Vengill/Venchristo affix as it happened had a litter, unfortunately, just one puppy, a dog. At the time he

Chris K Q: How long did it take to make up your first Champion?

Norman A: We bred our first champion in 1976 CH Deadly Nightshade and she was handled and made up by Dorothy, so she was the first of the two of us to make up a champion. Dorothy was determined to show this dog to success as she had been told by someone viewing the litter that we would not be able to sell this dog as no one would buy it. This struck a nerve with Dorothy and she set out to prove them wrong and prove them wrong she did as she went on to gain 8 CCs and a BOB at Crufts 1980, handled by Dorothy. Later she went on to campaign Ch Rendorn Devils Timpany to her title.

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Chris K Q: How soon after getting into showing Staffords did you start Judging?

Norman A: I started judging in 1969 but I was a very reluctant judge and after the first time I said "never again".

Chris K Q: Why was that?

Norman A: Because I thought they all looked the same and I didn't have a clue which one to chose. So thought, "I am not going through that again". A couple of years followed when I was approached by Mr. Harry Latham of the famous 'Topcroft' affix who pointed out that by my reluctance I was letting the side down and after thrusting my arm up my back he persuaded that I should have another go. This time I suitably armed myself by studying finer points which I thought may come up.

Chris K Q: How did you study; there are no courses for this kind of thing.

Norman A: I read every book I could get my hands on about the breed and bent the ear of every person I could who would give me the time, I was always to be found at the ring side studying the dogs and putting all the information together, I formed my own opinions.

Chris K Q: What in your opinion is a good one?

Norman A: I like Staffords that are middle of the road in terms of build, they are much more than just a head and I dislike exaggerations. Good solid construction, style, balance. clean out line and most certainly, good movement are my priorities. You ask me to describe style: I think the term represents how a given task is made to look easy. In the case of the Stafford it should have the necessary refinements and appears to be enjoying its self without too much help from the handler.

Chris K Q: Are you still a reluctant judge.

Norman A: No I enjoy judging now but no matter how long I have been doing it I still prepare for my appointment the same as I always have by spending days before by reviewing the breed standard, etc along with various points of ring procedure which may leg one up if not prepared. This happens before every show I judge.

Regrettably, Dorothy no longer judges. Her last appointment was Crufts 2001 and she made the decision to bow out while she was at the top and still in good health, rather than go on and run the risk of taking that one judging appointment too far and rather than allowing her name to go forward for an appointment then finding herself having the unenviable task of having to cancel.

Chris K Q: Do you still breed

Norman. No, we no longer breed and our last litter was 11 years ago, we just have the one dog at home now from that litter of which I earlier described. Our reasoning being; we considered that when one approaches a certain age it is not fair to load dogs onto reluctant relatives and friends and particularly rescue societies who are bursting at the seams. Sorrowfully we just don't know what we will do when our last of the line leaves us.

Chris K Q: When you started out with your first Stafford did you imagine you would have done the things you have done and achieved the success you have?

Norman A: No, I just loved going to shows and could not wait until the next one (a week, then, seemed a very long time) never really had the thought of what would happen in the future.

Chris K Q: Did you have any objectives in your mind when you were breeding and do you believe you have achieved them?

Norman A: Yes when it came to breeding we always set out produce healthy typical Staffords and in most part we achieved that objective, ok there were some that perhaps weren't the best in terms of confirmation but not that many as the statistics will show in terms of litters bred and success achieved from those litters. We pride ourselves we were never numerically top breeders as our record shows; we produced a champion ever fourth litter without having more than one champion in any successful attempt

Chris K Q: You have written a few articles over the years, what sparked your interest in these subjects.

Norman A: I have written a few that have been published in various books and magazines. The subject matter and my interest have been sparked by

various experiences over the years. I became interested in genetics and especially were it relates to colour. I recall a veterinarian in the 1970s who was working with the view of achieving a 'master's degree' by his study of colour transmittion in the Stafford. He finishing with a written dissertation of 500 foolscap pages of the subject – I recall him having a small pair of scissors and going round to people during a show asking if they wouldn't mind if he took a snip of hair from their dog for him to carry out his findings.

There are articles on handling, genetic colouring of the Stafford, the choice of stud dog, construction and movement, etc. All inspired by my own personal experiences and recently; an explanation of the Merle gene described in layman's terms.

I have also given many seminars for the benefit of several breed clubs on various topics relating to our breed.

Chris K Q: If you were starting over again would you do anything different and if so what would it be.

Norman A: I would bide my time and not rush out and buy the first dog that came along. I would learn from the people who are winning consistently, and go to them for the best bitch you can get from the best stock. Does not have to be the pick of the litter because the breeding will still be there (the pick of the litter does not guarantee the best producer) and start with that. I am a believer in breeding like to like keeping pedigrees tight and be careful not to introduce faults. I believe genetics can be a great tool in helping to prevent mistakes but can be a little unpredictable to rely on entirely when forming a breeding program.

Chris K Q: Thank you for your time and perhaps if we ask nicely we can republish some of you articles.

Norman A: Be my guest

Norman Berry



CH Rendorn Right Marker

Photo courtesy Ian Cook



CH Rendorn Drummer boy of Kazemick

Photo courtesy Ian Cook



CH Rendorn Apollyon

Photo courtesy Ian Cook



CH Rendorn Deadly Nightshade

Photo courtesy Ian Cook