



LINKING THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

By Clare Robinson-Cox (HAMASON)

The origins of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier as a breed is somewhat shrouded in mystery. It is agreed that there is a mixture of different terrier breeds involved but there has been much debate over the years as to what those different terrier breeds are. A major factor in this quandary is that historically, dogs were bred primarily for fashion, to fulfil certain functions or to partake in various sports and there was little importance placed upon maintaining records such as pedigrees. Without pedigrees, dogs are unable to be registered with the Kennel Club and therefore cannot be recognised as a pure breed.

Joe Dunn, from Quarry Bank near Cradley Heath, Staffordshire – in the heart of The Black Country – had owned and bred dogs, including Staffordshire Bull Terriers, for many years and during 1932 and 1933 he decided to try to get them recognised as a pure breed by the Kennel Club.

At that time the Kennel Club ruling regarding registration of dogs was that dogs could be registered as a pure breed with the K.C. providing one or both parents were named on the pedigree, even if one or both of the parents were unregistered with the K.C.

Early in 1935, Mr Dunn sought permission from the Kennel Club to hold a variety show as a “feeler” to see how many Stafford owners

would enter their then unregistered dogs. These dogs could not compete to beat other terrier breeds entered at the variety show so Mr Dunn offered cash specials to the Stafford owners to attract entries.

The show was held on the bowling green at the Conservative Club, Cradley Heath in April 1935 with Mr F.W. Holden as the judge.

The show was a great success with twenty seven Staffords on show that day including:
Shaws Jim (Jim the Dandy), Birche’s Monty (Vindictive Monty), Peggs Joe (Fearless Joe), Harpers Dreadnought, Silver Queenie, Our Paddy, Foxalls Lady, Tranters Bessie, Brindle Tigress, Brindle Thelma, Hardwicke’s

Flossie, Smiths Brindle, Brave Nell, Shell Of Gold, Laws Queenie and Quick The Devil. The dogs that competed that day have since been made famous by the progeny they left behind them.

Following the show, Mr Dunn decided to form a club and enlisted the assistance of those owners who had kept and bred the breed for years. A meeting was held at the Old Cross Guns Hotel in Cradley Heath and the name “The Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club” was agreed as the name of the Club by those present. The name was subsequently granted by the Kennel Club in July 1935 and so, our wonderful breed “officially” began.



The first elected officers and committee of the SBTC were as follows:

Mr Jack T Barnard - President
Mr H N Beilby - Chairman
Mr Joseph Dunn - Hon. Secretary

Other members/Committee: Jack Dunn, Harry Peg, M Smith, Joseph T Mallen, J Skidmore, Fred W Holden, S Grew, S W Poole, B Hardwicke, J Birch, C Grosvenor, Horace Priest, G Homer, H Hough, G Williams, A Forrest, M Hill, A Demaine, A Slater, N Dunn, H Boxley, T B Bishop, J W Wood, T W Barnard, A Foxall, W Shakespeare, A Griffiths, F Silvers and Gerald A Dudley.



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Mr Dunn has said "without the co-operation of these persons it would have been impossible to have formed such a club and these should be considered as the pioneers of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club."

So, how do the beginnings of our illustrious breed link to me today, sat here, writing this article – how do I link to the past and what story is there to be told? Well, here goes.....

My father, Harry Robinson, was born and raised around Staffords by his Grandparents, who lived in Rowley Regis, near Blackheath. He came from a family of workers in the iron and chain industries of the Black Country – the traditional owners and breeders of the Fighting Terrier, Bull and Terrier or Pit-Dog as the Stafford was more commonly known outside of the Black Country. It had long been known as the Staffordshire Bull Terrier or Stafford (**not Staffy, Staffie or Staff – it's a Stafford!**) by us Black Country folk!!

In 1969 Harry's uncle, Dick Siviter, a keen Stafford enthusiast himself (but an even keener pigeon flyer!), gave Harry, and his new wife Maureen, a Stafford puppy as a wedding present. This didn't go down too well with Maureen, a cat-lover, but she quickly grew fond of the white and brindle pied bitch they had, aptly named Patch – Kennel Club name Patchy Lass. During 1970/1971, Harry began to attend various dog shows as an observer, thinking this dog-showing may be something he would like to try. From his upbringing and experience of Staffords, he already knew that, though Patch was loved, she was not of show quality, so his search for a suitable pup began.

He and Maureen went to visit several breeders and looked at quite a few litters but decided, from his knowledge of the

breed, that none of the puppies he saw were of the quality and breeding that he wanted for his first foray into the show ring.

Newcomers to the breed should take note here – by all means have a Stafford, love a Stafford, even show a Stafford if that's what you want to do – but to own a truly show-worthy specimen and a potential founder of a breeding line, you need to do your research thoroughly and don't necessarily

buy the first puppy you see and expect to be the owner of a Champion in a couple of year's time – anyone who has been in this "game" for more than 5 minutes will tell you, it doesn't work that way!!!

During 1971, Harry had seen a dog on the show circuit he admired greatly – CH Rockmere Rip-It-Up, a stunning red dog owned by Jim McKellar. Harry began to make enquiries to see if there were any puppies out of this dog that may be available. Through his searching, early in 1972 he contacted a lady he had got to know a little around the show ring, a lady who many people will still know today – Joyce Shorrock of the famous Eastaff Kennel. Joyce explained to Harry that she did not have any puppies due but a gentleman who lived in the Midlands had mated his Champion bitch to Ch. Rockmere Rip-It-Up and suggested Harry made contact with him.

Now, this is where the links to the past are starting to be forged, for that gentleman in the Midlands was none other than Gerald Dudley – one of Joe Dunn's "pioneers of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club". Harry contacted Gerald, and his wife, Gwen, to make enquiries about the litter and Gerald confirmed he did have puppies out of his CHAMPION bitch, Sanville Red Rhapsody and Jim McKellar's dog, Ch. Rockmere Rip-It-Up. Gerald said he had one red puppy bitch remaining and Harry was quite welcome to visit and have a look, after Mr McKellar had been and had his pick of the litter, as owner of the stud dog.





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Harry and Maureen decided to take up Gerald's offer and duly went to visit the famous Wychbury Kennel in Pedmore, near Stourbridge. Incidentally, the name of this Kennel was taken from Wychbury Hill, one of the Clent Hills, situated between the parish's of Hagley and Pedmore. It is the site of the Wychbury Ring, an Iron Age hill fort, and the Wychbury Obelisk.

When Harry and Maureen arrived at Gerald and Gwen's, Gerald confirmed that Mr McKellar had indeed been and collected his "pick" of the litter. "But don't worry" said Gerald, "he's left the best one for you"!!! And, as it turned out, Gerald was right – Harry and Maureen brought home their first "show dog" who was to be registered at the Kennel Club using their newly acquired "HAMASON" affix – Red Rapture Of Hamason.

She went on to gain her Junior Warrant with almost 50 points (25 being the requirement to attain the title) and became Harry and Maureen's first Champion in 1974. But enough of such "recent" events, that's a link for another time. The purpose today is to share with you some of the

pictures and memories and memorabilia of the past that have travelled to the present via the link that was Gerald Dudley and his friendship with Harry Robinson.

After purchasing Ch. Red Rapture Of Hamason from Gerald and Gwen in 1972, Harry became a good friend, helping them out with odd jobs around the house, cutting the lawns (and they were BIG lawns!) and general DIY during his weekly visits, as well as chauffeuring Gerald and Gwen to shows as observers or to fulfill judging appointments when Gerald was no longer confident to drive. As Gerald and Gwen had sadly not been blessed with a child that reached adulthood, their daughter, Geraldine, had died at the



age of 5, they welcomed Harry's company, help and support during the last 10 years of their lives. Here is a picture of Gerald with Geraldine and another one of Geraldine, shortly before she died of meningitis.

When Gerald died in 1982, shortly after Gwen had passed away, his niece, Pearl Wood (nee Dudley), who knew Harry quite well through his friendship with her Uncle and Aunt, invited Harry to have whatever Stafford memorabilia he wanted when the Dudley's house was cleared.





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Some older Stafford enthusiast may remember Pearl as she used to handle some of the Wychbury dogs, including Ch. Wychbury Kimson, who used to live with Pearl, but pictured here being handled by Gerald.



Pearl was an amazing artist, even though it was only a hobby. This is her original oil painting of Ch. Brindle Crescendo Of Wychbury:



Speaking of oil paintings, Gerald purchased an original oil of a very early specimen of the breed painted at sometime during the 1800's. This painting had hung in the Dudley's house for many years but, after their death, the house was sadly burgled. When Pearl arrived at the house, she found this oil painting on the floor and it had been trampled upon, which accounts for the damage you can see today.



You may be able to see on this painting, that the dog wears a metal collar, the type that the fighting dogs of old used to wear outside the ring for show – I assume the better the fighter, the better the collar!



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There are many other items that are of historical note that Gerald and Gwen left behind and a great place to see such memorabilia is at the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Heritage Centre, Albert Street, Wednesbury, WS10 7EW. The Centre has recently opened at this new venue and there is a separate article in The Stafford Knot covering this prestigious event.

But for now, I will leave you with the words of Gerald Dudley himself, the link for me from the past to the present – a true gentleman of whom I have fond memories:

***“Once a Stafford owner, always a Stafford owner, is a very common remark to be heard in all spheres of life, so what better compliment can be handed out to any Breed.*”**

This dog has certainly proved himself to be “The Sportsman” and we have to thank our predecessors who bred and passed such a specimen along to us, so let us, therefore, keep him as such, however much our opinions may differ with respect to any progress made in appearance etc., and we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our part and be able to pass along the most Loveable, Intelligent, Fearless and above all, The Greatest Pal man, woman or child ever had.”

