

A Brief History of The Bull Terrier Club of New England

The year was 1931. Raymond Oppenheimer had yet to appear on the Bull Terrier scene, and the list of England's top breeders included Mrs Gladys Adlam (Brendon), Mrs DH Robbs (Cylva), Mr WJ Tuck (Gladiator), Dr GM Vevers (Regent), Mrs ML Grey (Howsden) and Mr HK McCausland, whose white dog, Ch Ringfire of Blighty, was to be awarded the Regent Trophy that year. In the United States the ear-cropping controversy raged on, and the Colored Variety of Bull Terriers had yet to be introduced. "Popular Dogs", the American weekly for kennel, field and ring featured breed columns as well as show results and critiques and in its issue of August 8th, carried the following item:

"On Wednesday, July 29th, a new dog club, the Bullterrier Club of New England was formed in Boston by admirers and breeders of 'the White 'Un'. The club enjoyed a very auspicious beginning as thirty-eight prospective members appeared. It was formed for the purpose of furthering the interest of our own breed; to induce Bullterrier lovers to own them and to encourage those who do own them to exhibit them. Judging by the enthusiasm shown at this initial meeting, the club is bound to succeed. Membership will be open to all lovers of the breed in the New England states. Meetings will be held each fourth Wednesday of the month at the University Club, Boston, Massachusetts. --Edward C. Law"

A set of by-laws and a constitution were drawn up and the official Club seal, featuring a likeness of the English Champion, Howsden Bailfire, was adopted. Still active today, this regional club figured prominently in the Bull Terrier world of the 1930s and 40s, at one time boasting a larger membership than the parent Club.

The driving force behind the BTCNE in its early years was Mrs. Drury L. Sheraton, its founder and first President. "Bud" Sheraton of Hingham, Mass., who used the kennel prefix "Queen Anne", is described as a fantastic person who ran an enormously successful and prosperous Club. She was, it would appear, the 'darling' of the Bull Terrier fancy, a very powerful woman who also served as the Secretary and the Treasurer of the Bull Terrier Club of America, and who was, in 1932, elected into Honorary Membership in the Bull Terrier Club of England. She was the author of many articles which appeared in breed periodicals and for many years wrote the breed column for the American Kennel Club Gazette. She became an AKC Judge and continued to hold office in the BTCNE until some time in the 1940s.

Another Charter member of the BTCNE was Mr. T. Dickson Smith. Mr. Smith was a prominent Boston attorney, a graduate of Harvard University and the Boston University Law School. He was a distinguished judge of all breeds, although his special interest was Bull Terriers. He was, for over 30 years, a member of the BTCA and long its Vice President. In 1931 he helped to organize the BTCNE in which he held office as Second Vice President and Chairman of the Board of Governors. He was also a founding member of the Eastern Dog Club; its President for three years, a member of its bench show and executive committee since its inception and, at the time of his death, served the Club as Secretary. Every year since 1938, the Bull Terrier Club of New England has offered a Trophy in his memory for the Best White Bitch. Originally, the Trophy was offered at the Eastern Dog Club show, but since the Ladies Dog Club

show in June was designated the Club's 3 point ROM show, the Trophy has been offered to the White Winners Bitch at that show.

Throughout the 30s and 40s reports of Club luncheons, business meetings, clinics and puppy matches appeared regularly in "Popular Dogs". Typical of the publicity afforded the Club is the following excerpt from the March, 1938 issue:

"As we go to press, we have a flash from Boston! Topping all entries, for the first time in history at any major dog show, Bull Terriers were out in front with 71 entries to their credit for the 26th annual show of the Eastern Dog Club on February 21-22. Almost every member of the Bull Terrier Club of New England is represented by an entry. This is indeed a remarkable event and is a notable example of what can be accomplished in our breed by an ardent group of fanciers - a group which puts aside all personal likes and dislikes for the unselfish advancement of the Bull Terrier to that topmost niche where he belongs. We salute, with doffed hat, the Bull Terrier Club of New England."

--J.M. Creighton

And the membership continued to grow. Seventy members were listed at the end of 1932 and by February 1938, when an amendment to the Club Constitution permitting non-resident members was passed, there were 148. Counted among these were a number of prominent fanciers whose effect on the breed would be profound and who would devote years to furthering the best interests of the Bull Terrier, through both this Regional Club and the Bull Terrier Club of America.

Dr. L. Cabot Briggs (CALENDAR) was long a member of both the the BTCA and the BTCNE, serving on various committees for the former and on the Board of Directors of the latter. His book, "Bullterriers, The Biography Of A Breed", of which only five hundred copies were printed in 1940, is a true collector's item. His first Bull Terrier was a gift from his wife and marked the beginning of his interest in the breed. Dr Briggs was the donor of the "Ch. Bubbles Gift Challenge Bowl" which, for many years, was presented in honor of his first Bull Terrier, to the best Bull Terrier (if white) at the Ladies Dog Club Show in Wellesley, Mass. The list of famous Bull Terriers he owned included English & American Ch. Maldwyn, Eng. & Am. Ch. Rebel of Blighty (the controversial color-bred white) and the white bitch Eng. Ch. Isis of Vabo who had completed her championship at seven & 1/2 months of age, but died shortly after being imported to the U.S. Dr. Briggs is undoubtedly best remembered to exhibitors as the donor of the "English Ch. Isis Vabo Memorial Trophy" which, until the emergence of the Silverwood Trophy for the Best American Bred Bull Terrier, was the most highly prized award a Bull Terrier could win. Dr Briggs passed away in 1975 and although the club attempted to secure the Trophy, it has sadly been lost.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Wallace Mollison imported the first Colored Bull Terriers in 1934; the brindle dog Brigadier of Blighty and the black bitch Tisman's Tango, and were instrumental in eventually securing recognition for the colored's. They had previously imported the Best In Show winning white bitch Ch. Faultless of Blighty. Although they resigned their membership in the BTCA over the Colored Controversy, they persevered along with Herbert Stewart in the fight for acceptance. The illustration is from an ad they ran in the BTCA annual in 1939:



Lindley R. Sutton (ELLARESS) was a breeder judge for nearly 50 years and the AKC delegate from the BTCA until 1977. He was a staunch supporter of the BTCNE, serving as President of the Club for nearly 30 years and striving to keep the Club going during the fifties and early sixties when the membership had dropped to only six. The BTCA presented Mr. Sutton with the Bar Sinister Trophy in 1975 in recognition of his many years of service and his devotion to the breed.

Al Bibby (HOLCROFT), whose association with the breed began in the thirties, was an active member of the Club until his death in the 80s. Although his membership was interrupted in the 40s, he rejoined and, along with Mr. Sutton, struggled to keep the Club alive during its leanest years. Through the years Al bred and owned a number of outstanding Bull Terriers, notably the imported stud dogs Eng & Am Ch. Kowhai Uncle Bimbo, Ch. Krackton Robin of Wentworth and the Regent Trophy winning White Knight of Lenster. His special service to the breed however, was always his willingness to befriend and advise the novice, and for this he was awarded the Bar Sinister Trophy in 1976.

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Ford (BEDFORD) were members of both the BTCA and the BTCNE since the 40s. A past President of the BTCNE, Mr. Ford was an AKC judge who officiated at many Specialties and several Silverwoods. Bitches bred or owned by the Fords won the T. Dickson Smith Trophy a record 10 times during the 11 show period between February 1953 through November 1962.

Dr. and Mrs. Harry Otis (WINSTED) also appeared on the Bull Terrier scene during the 40s. Their interest in the breed included both varieties, with a special emphasis on versatility. Dr. Otis owned and trained the first Bull Terrier to ever earn the title UDT and through the 50s he put Tracking and Obedience degrees on a number of his dogs. A licensed AKC judge, Dr Otis was also a past President of the BTCA. The BTCA, in recognition of Dr. Otis's work in Obedience, offers an annual award in his name to the Bull Terrier who obtains an Obedience Title with the highest average score. BTCNE member Dr. Elizabeth Hennessy and Sarah of Wendigo, CD were recipients of the Harry Otis Obedience Trophy in 1986.

I must pause at this point to mention that most of the information I've recovered about the history of the BTCNE has been gleaned from old show catalogues, BTCA periodicals and annuals, and from the pages of the now defunct "Popular Dogs". It is indeed sad that no written records from the Club's early years exist; if such records were kept, they have vanished. One can only guess, therefore, what circumstances surrounded its decline and near demise. Beginning in the late 40s and lasting through the early 60s the Club was virtually inactive, with membership

limited to little more than the Club officers! Renewed interest in the breed seems to have surfaced in the New England area during the 60s with the people like the Arnauds and Marilyn Drewes acquiring their first Bull Terriers. (ed. note: Perhaps the influence of Disney's "The Incredible Journey", released in 1963, was a contributing factor?) By 1970, things were definitely looking up. The Colket Memorial Book, published in that year by the Bull Terrier Club of Philadelphia features a full-page ad in which a group of enthusiastic Club members are pictured with their dogs. Marilyn Drewes is listed as Secretary, and the caption "Now In Its 40TH Year!" sits proudly under the Club seal.

Mike and Peggy Arnaud (RAGGED HILL) had by that time bred several litters. Their "Ch. Killer Joe", named after a dancer friend of theirs, marked the beginning of what was to be more than a decade of successful breeding by winning the inaugural Silverwood Trophy Competition in 1970. Bull Terriers bearing the their kennel prefix are behind many top winning Bull Terriers in the ring today. The Arnauds served as hosts for the BTCNE Silverwood qualifier and annual picnic for years at their home, Ragged Hills, and Mrs. Arnaud was V.P. of the Club for several years. Both of the Arnauds passed away "back home" in England in the 90s.

Marilyn Drewes (NIPPY'S) has been breeding Bull Terriers since 1969. She succeeded Lindley Sutton as President of the BTCNE in 1973 and held office until 1980. Miss Drewes was also the AKC Gazette columnist for many years, served as a Health Committee and Board member of the BTCA. In November 2000 she judged her last AKC assignments, after becoming a popular Terrier breed and Group judge. Miss Drewes became interested in Miniature Bull Terriers during the late 80s, and has also served on the Board of the Miniature Bull Terrier Club of America.

It was during the 70s that the Club seemed to have come full circle, once again scheduling regular meetings and supporting local shows. In 1975, the BTCNE Newsletter was inaugurated by Drue King of WESTBROOK Bull Terriers, who for 6 years served as its editor. (Future Club historians will be glad to know that a complete set of these newsletters is now being kept.) Mrs. King was an active Board member for many years, and her home-bred Champions, Westbrook Wild One, ROM and Westbrook Windborne, ROM, took home Silverwood Trophies in 1981 and 1983. Membership continues to rise steadily, and has topped 100 since 1977. In that year, the Club added another major Trophy to its list, "The Adams Bowl" a huge sterling bowl donated to the Club by Greg & Helga Senko to honor their "Adam", Ch. Humphries. The Adams Bowl is presented at the Ladies Dog Club Specialty to the Best of Variety (Colored) Bull Terrier. In 1998, the Club added another perpetual Silver Bowl, the Ragged Hill Trophy, which is presented at Ladies Dog Club to the Best of Variety (White) winner.

The Club also annually presents to each Bull Terrier, who wins a title in Performance or Conformation, a plaque bearing a replica of a medallion recovered from the estate of Dr. Briggs. The annual Spring Match attracts entries of close to 50 Bull Terriers, and the Club offers tattooing, Agility workshops, games and sales tables at both the Spring Match and the Fall Fun Day. Members are successfully showing at the National and local levels; Silverwood Finalists in 2000 included four New England Bull Terriers from the Corsaire and Wendigo Kennels, and three New England-bred Bull Terriers received BTCA Recognition of Merit Awards in 2000. Rescue in New

England is active and successful, and the Club also supports Rescue efforts nationally with donations of time and money.

In 1994 The BTCNE once more hosted Silverwood, at the Ramada Rolling Green Hotel in Andover, Mass. With a record 70+ dogs in the Silverwood Trophy, and over 100 in the BTCA Specialty the following day, the Club was thrilled by the enormous number of happy guests and participants from all three North American countries and the world.

The Club will celebrate its 70th Anniversary on July 29, 2001. This quote is by Christine St. Cyr, who was the writer of this history at the time of the BTCNE's 50th anniversary, July 29, 1981:

"Congratulations to the Bull Terrier Club of New England on the event of its 50th anniversary. This regional club, which enjoyed its heyday during the 30s and 40s has resumed its role as an active member of the Bull Terrier world and has recaptured the vigor and enthusiasm with which its founders were blessed. It can count among its members both devoted long time fanciers and enthusiastic newcomers, and from the venerable "HOLCROFT" to the fast rising "WESTBROOK", a select number of dedicated breeders. A forward moving club, to be sure but one which still holds true to the ideas of its originators, that its objects shall be "to further the interest of the Bullterrier, to support dog shows and to promote a spirit of good sportsmanship among the owners." May it continue to flourish for another half century."
---Christine St. Cyr