

Word Picture of a Bull Terrier by Raymond Oppenheimer (reprinted from the Summer 1997 Bull Terrier Club Bulletin)

(In Dog World of January 31st, 1949, Mr. Raymond Oppenheimer replied to an anonymous Bull Terrier enthusiast who asked: ‘What exactly, is meant by make and shape?’ The article which answered that query was not only complete and erudite, but was written with a simplicity of expression which may never be bettered. We appreciate permission to reproduce it here, and to supplement it with an extension, written to complete what is, in fact, a narrative picture of the complete Bull Terrier.)

From Dog World, January 31st, 1949:

- Beginning at “the front end”; a well made and shaped dog should have a straight front with clean shoulders, i.e. ones that are not rounded or bulgy when looked at head on, they should be firmly attached to the dog’s body and the shoulder blades should be well laid back , that is to say, that a line drawn from the front and bottom of the shoulder blade to the top and back of it should point up over the middle of the dog’s back and not directly upwards only just behind his head. When the shoulder blades are thus laid back, the dog’s neck comes into its body at a pleasing angle and not at that very unattractive near right angle which spoils so many quite nice reachy necks.
- Looking down on the dog’s back the spring or bowing of its ribs should be plain to see and he should be much wider across his back than across his loins.
- Looked at sideways, the dog’s brisket should be much nearer the ground than its belly, and it is this formation which gives the appearance of lowness to ground as opposed to the ill-balanced stunted appearance of so many with too short legs.
- Continuing to look at the dog sideways its back should be short, strong and level until the loin where there should be a slight rise, or roach as the term is, after which the line should curve smoothly downwards and be set off nicely by a tail which should be attached to the dog low down, it should taper from base to tip and be carried parallel to the ground. Beneath this should come really well muscled broad hindquarters leading on downwards to a well bent stifle and a well-angulated hock, giving almost an impression as if the dog were crouched to spring.
- Another important attribute of a well-made dog is that the various parts of the body should be in proportion to each other, that is to say, the length of the leg to the width of the dog, to its length of back and so on, and it is of paramount importance that the dog should not appear disconnected.
- Finally, when the dog moves, the front and hind legs should travel in parallel straight towards the observer, and straight away, and the dog should cover the ground easily

and with a swinging springy stride, his front legs reaching out well in front and his hind legs flexing well and easily at the stifle and hock and moving smoothly and strongly from the hip, the dog carrying himself proudly and in one piece.

- There are, of course, other points, but what I have written so far will do to go on with. I am aware that I have made use of certain terms which are not technically entirely accurate, but I believe they will make more clear what I am trying to describe than the use of the more accurate term would, and those who already understand the subject will not be misled.'

From 'Ormandy' White Waltham, January 31st, 1950:

At the request of the Editor of the *Annual* I am going to try to describe the correct Bull Terrier head in equally simple language.

Looked at full face, the head should appear long and strong and it should be oval or egg-shaped, that is to say it should be filled up everywhere so that the surface has upon it no hollows or bumps, and there should be no loose skin, especially around the throat and mouth, while the forehead should be flat between the ears and neither domed nor peaked like a gnome. The cheeks should be flat and clean and not lumpy, while the ears should be on top of the dog's head and close together and should be capable of being held by the dog stiffly erect, when they should point upwards and neither outwards nor forward. When all these features are present the head gives a general impression of smoothness, almost as if it had been 'blown up' with a bicycle pump.

In profile, the head should form nearly an unbroken line curving slowly downwards from the top to almost the end of the nose where it should for the last half inch or so curve down a little more steeply producing that feature generally referred to as the 'Roman finish': continuing in profile the head should give an appearance of depth and should look neither shallow nor bird-like, nor should the curve of profile be so exaggerated as to cause the dog to look like some kind of sheep, and lastly the head should be in proportion to the rest of the dog.

To end, there is one other feature in the head which is of paramount importance and that is the dog's eye and expression. The eye itself should be as dark as possible and it should be well sunk into the head; the opening into which the eye is sunk should be high up the dog's head so that the distance from the nose to the eye is perceptibly greater than that from the eye to the top of the head; further the opening should be small, and it should be triangular or almond shaped and above all, obliquely placed i.e. slanting so that it points upwards and outwards; with these features the dog will have

the true Bull Terrier expression which, for me, contains something of the gay, proud and brave, and much of the impassive, repelling and inscrutable.

I have here only dealt with make and shape and with head, but if, to what I have written, we add big, but not coarse, bone, round strong 'cat' feet, sufficient length of fore-leg to make the dog active, a temperament obedient but full of go, and muscles rippling beneath a shining coat we shall have gone a long way to describing a dog in which every feature is in proportion to all the others so that the predominating impression will be, not of some outstanding point but of a general level of all-round excellence, approaching the standard's description of 'a strongly built, muscular, active symmetrical animal with a keen determined expression, full of fire but of sweet disposition, amenable to discipline.'

No one has ever bred the perfect Bull Terrier, no one ever will, but in the struggle to approach more and more nearly to the unattainable lies the source of so much happiness to so many of us.