

# SCOTTISH DOGS

In our last issue, we looked at the origins and characteristics of fifteen Scottish dog breeds. We saw working dogs like the different Collies, hunting dogs like the Golden Retriever, and five different terriers, or “Earth Dogs.” In the second part of this article, we’ll look at how these breeds work and play today.

## Working for a Living

While any Scottish breed of dog can most often be found in the homes of loving families, the traditional working dog has not disappeared. Some of the Scottish dog breeds are still employed in their original roles, such as herders, hunting dogs, and watchdogs.

The time-bred instinct to work is not far under the surface of most dogs. Those that are given a job are pleased to oblige.

## Herding

Herding dogs can be found all around the world, from Australia to North America, and the British Isles. The Scottish breeds are quite popular and have been the seed to many local varieties of herding dog.

“In all varieties of the shepherd’s dog sagacity and high intelligence are prominent features. A trained collie, when beyond the reach of the shepherd’s voice, will work entirely from signals given by him, and obey every gesture, as if he heard the com-

mand from his master’s mouth.” - D.J. Thomson Gray, *The Dogs of Scotland*, James P. Mathew, Edinburgh, 1891.

Scottish collies still herd sheep around the world, due mainly to their unmatched abilities. No man on foot, on horseback, or in a vehicle can match a collie in herding. A well-trained, talented stock dog can sort off one animal without having to corral the whole herd, accurately count livestock by streaming them past a fence, and gather a herd in rough or easy terrain.

## Hunting

Scottish dogs have been used for hunting for centuries, some becoming specialized to hunt small rodents, some to serve hunters with firearms, and others to track prey.

Earthdogs are hunting dogs bred to pursue quarry into burrows or otherwise underground. The diminutive Scottish terriers are quite specialized for this task. Their piercing bark and ferocity is used to drive the prey out of their lairs for the hunters. You can travel to the Hebrides today and find Cairn Terriers gleefully pursuing farm rodents as they have for centuries.



A Bearded Collie playing with a flock of ducks. Photo courtesy of the “Page for Bearded Lovers” web site.

A gun dog is a breed trained to assist the hunter by pointing to prey, flushing it out, and retrieving the slain quarry. Many different breeds have been bred to perform well under particular conditions. The cold and rocky Highlands brought us the Golden Retriever, double coated to resist icy waters or winds.

Trackers are dogs who hunt by following the scent trail. A dog like the Gordon Setter has an incredible sense of smell and can detect traces of the track over a large area by sniffing the winds. It will pursue, first left then right to home in on the prey.

## Modern Roles

### Explosives, Arson, and Evidence

A dog's keen sense of smell has found use in the location of explosives or commonly-used arson materials. A dog can search an area by smell far faster than a police officer can visually. In the case of explosives, time is critical and a trained police dog can mean the difference between life and death.

In the investigation of fires, a dog's nose can penetrate and identify the hundreds of strong smells left behind. Once trained in the smells of target materials (gasoline, flammable chemicals, etc.), a dog can locate possible evidence of arson.

Most breeds can be trained for these kinds of work, but the Gordon Setter and Golden Retriever excel at it. The Setter is popular in police departments primarily in the western portion of the United States.

Dogs can be trained to alert their handler to hidden substances by barking, or pawing. The dog's sense of smell is so acute, they have been known to locate drugs concealed in gasoline, rotting food, skunk oil, and many other pungent substances.

Evidence dogs are trained to search for items bearing human scent, sometimes a specific human scent. They are utilized in crime scenes to find evidence thrown away by a suspect.

## Guard and Patrol

The use of patrol dogs, in an organized fashion, began in the US in 1907 by the South Orange, New Jersey, and New York Police Departments. Many other departments have since created programs of their own to utilize dogs in police work.

Patrol dogs are used by law enforcement agencies to safeguard locations and work with officers to chase suspects and bring them down. They are sometimes referred to as "Schutzhunds" (German for protection dog).

Training for these dogs is demanding and difficult. They must obey instantly to an officer's command to attack or back off. A dog trained to attack without rock solid obedience becomes an uncontrollable danger. Dogs which are unbalanced or unable to accept the regimen are not accepted for active duty.

Many police departments are training their dogs to use a "bark and hold" approach where the dog threatens the suspect, but does not attack unless the suspect attempts to flee, attacks the dog, or attacks another bystander.

## Messenger

Using dogs as messengers began during World War I as a way to save human lives on the front lines. Dogs would be attached to certain units and often came away with an honorary rank. Today the use of dogs as messengers is seen more in rural or wilderness communities or during exploration of hostile terrains. Collies are a favorite for this kind of work.

## Rescue

Search and Rescue (SAR) dogs are trained to search for victims in



"Bonnie" (Bar-Jac Touch of Class, BPD, CGC), wears a standard cargo pouch for backpacking or messenger duty. Courtesy of the American Working Collie Association.

rubble due to natural disasters, and search wilderness areas for missing persons. SAR is often linked with local law enforcement, as SAR dogs can trail escaped convicts or suspects from a crime scene.

There are two major ways to follow the trail of a person. Tracking is the process where the dog follows the person's exact path. Trailing is the process where the dog follows the person's scent, which may or may not approximate the path the person took because of factors affecting the dispersal of scent such as wind and temperature.

A Water Rescue Dog's primary task is to retrieve objects from water. They work with a handler on the shore who can direct them to the target. Sometimes they are required to pull a line or rope to a victim in the water. Or the dog can bring the person to shore by swimming with the victim holding on to the outer coat of hair.

More highly trained water rescue dogs can also dive to retrieve objects, tow boats to shore, or perform a rescue starting from on-board a boat.

Any breed with excellent scent abilities can work in Search And Rescue. Dog breeds who swim well, like

the Golden Retriever, can serve as Water Rescue dogs.

## Service Dogs

Dogs that are trained to aid people in close contact at all times are called service dogs. They serve as companions as well as being trained for specific tasks.

The breeds commonly used for this kind of work are black and yellow Labs, Golden Retrievers, German Shepherds, and Lab/Golden Retriever mixes.

## Guides to the Blind

Dogs can be trained to guide blind people through the routines of daily life. They serve as, quite literally, the eyes for their owner. The training for such dogs is quite demanding. The dog must be able to navigate all obstacles, including overhead ones that may injure its owner but not itself. They must be able to ignore all distractions while doing their work.

The breeds most commonly used as guide dogs are Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers and German Shepherds. Approximately 60-70% of all working guides in the U.S. are Labradors. Other breeds, such as Border Collies, are occasionally used by some programs.



"Gentleman Cole" leading owner and president of the American Working Collie Association, Jean Levitt. Photo Courtesy of the AWCA.

## Signal Dogs

Corgis and Border Collies are commonly trained to assist people with hearing disabilities. They alert their owner to a variety of sounds, usually by coming up to the person and going back to the source of the sound. They will signal for the door bell, knocking, phones, smoke alarms, crying babies and much more.

In the U.S., they enjoy the same rights of access as guide dogs and are to be permitted anywhere, although since they are not as widely recognized, their owners often have to display an identification card.

## Dogs for the Disabled

Some service dogs are trained to assist people with other physical handicaps, mental handicaps, or emotional problems.

For people with paralysis or limited mobility, dogs can be taught to retrieve a variety of things — even to distinguish between specific items — and to manipulate a variety of objects. Given some extensions, such as rope handles on doors and light switches, dogs can give a disabled person complete mobility within her or his home.

A service dog for the classroom is an innovative teaching tool. These special dogs can be used by teachers working with developmentally disabled children. The dogs help teach basic concepts like up, under, and down.

## Therapy

For thousands of years dogs have brought pleasure and companionship to humans. Some nursing homes, halfway houses and psychotherapy centers permit formally certified Therapy Dogs to visit their residents.

Children with histories of sexual or physical abuse often need a catalyst to prompt disclosure. A Therapy Dog: gentle, quiet, and unconditionally loving, often helps the children talk about their experiences.

Since many of the Scottish breeds are known for their friendly, accepting dispositions, they make some of the best Therapy Dogs.



A Rough Collie consoling a patient. Copyright 1997 Frostfire Farm Action Photos

## Time to Play

Many of the original skills of the Scottish dogs are kept alive today in friendly competitions. These are sponsored by breed clubs and some corporations such as Kal-Kan and Purina. New games and 'dog sports' crop up from time to time.

## Working Games

Many of the ways dogs compete are modelled on their original working roles.

## Sheepdog Trials

The first sheepdog trial was run on October 9, 1873 in Bala, Wales. First prize went to a "Scotchman, James Thompson with his dog Tweed." The first trials in the U.S. were held in 1880.

Performance tests are work related, and are staged in different degrees of difficulty. A good example of an event would be to have the dog herd 25 sheep as fast as possible from a starting pen to another pen over a winding obstacle course. The dog is not allowed to harm the sheep for obvious reasons. Commands are given by calls, hand-signals, or a whistle.

In competition, dogs vie to earn titles, or letters that can be listed after their name. For a particular set of letters, there is a set of skills the dog must master and exhibit to judges. For example, a dog may earn its Utility Dog (UD) title if it performs well repeatedly in Scent Discrimination (2 ver-



"McEwan," a Scottish Deerhound, coursing. Copyright 1996 The Dog Homepage

sions), Directed Retrieve, Signal Exercise, Directed Jumping, and Group Examination trials.

During a sheepdog trial, the different breeds will each herd using their distinctive styles, but they are required to achieve the same results. The Rough Collie will circle the flock while the Border Collie will crouch and wait. The style in which Border Collies work is generally referred to as "fetching" or "gathering" because their primary function as herders is to "fetch" the sheep to the shepherd.

The herding style of the Border Collie is most commonly associated with a sheepdog trial. The Border Collie runs very wide in order to gather large groups of animals at one time. He stays far out from the stock and creeps up slowly so as not to spook the sheep and make them break into a run.

While trials for Border Collies



Terrier hunting in an Earthdog trial. Courtesy of Billy Hustace Photography, 510-430-

usually mean herding sheep, you might see a variety of live-stock . For example cattle and sometimes even ducks are used.

The course of the trial is set by the placement of panels (single sections of fence). Four panels are ar-

anged to create a pen and others are set out singly or in pairs as individual course markers. In addition to the basic pen, American trials sometimes have "bridges" or "chutes" (narrowly spaced pairs of panels) in other parts of the field. Some trials are held in arenas or on racetracks instead of in fields, making for a smaller, more compact course.

Some may think that the appearance of a dog in show terms would have a strong correlation to a dog's performance in herding trials. Experience has shown this to be false. Recall that the cheetah, at rest, appears to be a creature with a swayback, shoulder set forward of the chest, wrists close together and front paws pointing in opposite directions to the cat's sides.

### Earthdog Trials

These competitions are designed to test the abilities of breeds that "go to ground" for badger, fox, otter, and other animals. All of the Scottish terriers are suited to this type of trial.

The trial begins by having the dog track the quarry by scent to an artificial lair. The lair is a wooden tunnel underground that leads to a caged animal. The animal is usually a laboratory rat, since it is impractical to obtain real foxes and the like.

The dog runs the length of the lair to reach the caged quarry. It then must "work," or dig, bark, growl, lunge, and bite at the quarry.

### Lure Coursing

Lure Coursing is a humane sport which attempts to imitate the coursing, or running, of a rabbit or hare by sight-hounds without endangering any rabbits. Coursing tests dogs who were born to be sight-hunters, chasing and keeping pace with the prey until the hunter catches up for the kill. Being a "Sighthound," the Scottish Deerhound is best suited for this type of competition.

To run a trial, a lure operator remotely sends an artificial lure along a set track, keeping it an enticing distance from the dog. The lure is usually a white kitchen garbage bag, sometimes tanned rabbit skins, or fake fur strips.

Dogs are judged on their speed, agility, eagerness for the chase, and staying power. The race awakens the buried hunting instincts in the dog, keeping them fit, trim, and more healthy.

### Obedience Trials

Obedience trials test a dog in its compliance to basic commands such as "Stay" and "Heel." It has developed into a intricate sport followed by devoted participants and fans.

Following World War II obedience-only clubs were organized and became members or sanctioned clubs of the American Kennel Club. Until the middle to late 1970s all obedience training tended to be of the punishment avoidance type (generally called "jerk and pull") which discouraged some people and did not work well with some breeds. A "choke chain" is still used to correct dogs, but not to cause pain.

The introduction of independent obedience tournaments such as the Gaines Tournament in 1980 has done more to revolutionize AKC obedience than anything. Once these tournaments started the level of performance competition increased dramatically. The standards were raised causing people to search for training techniques which would produce an exacting 'happy' performance. Positive motivational techniques began to appear.

Around that same time private obedience schools became more numerous and obedience seminars became more popular. Today it seems as if most competitive obedience people train at private schools where earlier, most of the training was done by kennel or obedience clubs.

The types of activities the dog is required to perform vary greatly. The novice class of obedience trials include activities like "Heel on Leash and Figure 8," "Stand for Examination," "Heel Free," "Recall," and "Long Sit." More advanced trials introduce tests like "Drop on Recall," "Retrieve on Flat," "Retrieve over High Jump" and "Broad Jump."

### Obedience Freestyle

A new performance sport began in the early 1990s. Obedience Freestyle is a choreographed routine set to music. It draws much of its spirit from Olympic Freestyle Figure Skating. Costumes are allowed but no props and emphasis is on teamwork between handler and dog, showmanship, technical precision, originality, and talent of the dog.

So far, the sport is truly in its infancy but it has the potential for an exciting and entertaining future.

### Agility Trials

Dog agility is a sport in which a handler is given a set amount of time in which to direct a dog off lead through an obstacle course. Handlers may give any number of commands or signals to their dogs, but may not touch either the equipment or the dog. Dogs of similar heights compete against each other, no matter their breed.

Some of the unusual tasks the dogs are trained to complete include a jumping through a vertically-suspended tire, walking over teeter-totters, and leaping bar hurdles like the ones used in equestrian jumping competitions. Variations on the basic "through the course" timed trial include Knockouts (two dogs race each other on identical courses), and pairs relay.

It's no accident that the obstacles in a dog agility course are reminiscent of jumps and barriers on a horse-jumping course – the dog sport was born in England to provide entertainment during breaking in horse-jumping competitions.

"Almost any dog can do agility. Giant breeds and those with a wide 'wheelbase' may have trouble with some obstacles, but if the dog is game, it can be done. (An Irish Wolfhound

competed in the agility trial at the Louisville, Kentucky spring show!) The most popular agility breeds are the medium-to-large dogs that are quick on their feet — Border Collies (of course), Pulis, Shetland Sheepdogs, Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers, Australian Shepherds, etc. — but almost any dog, including mixed breeds, can learn, enjoy, and earn agility titles." (from the World Wide Web Dog Owner's Guide)

### Flyball

Flyball is a team sport for dogs that was invented in California in the late 1970s. Legend has it that Herbert Wagner first showed it on The Tonight Show to millions of Americans. Soon afterwards dog trainers and dog clubs were making and using Flyball Boxes. In the early 1980s, the sport became so popular that the North American Flyball Association (NAFA) was formed and they are the worldwide authority for Flyball.

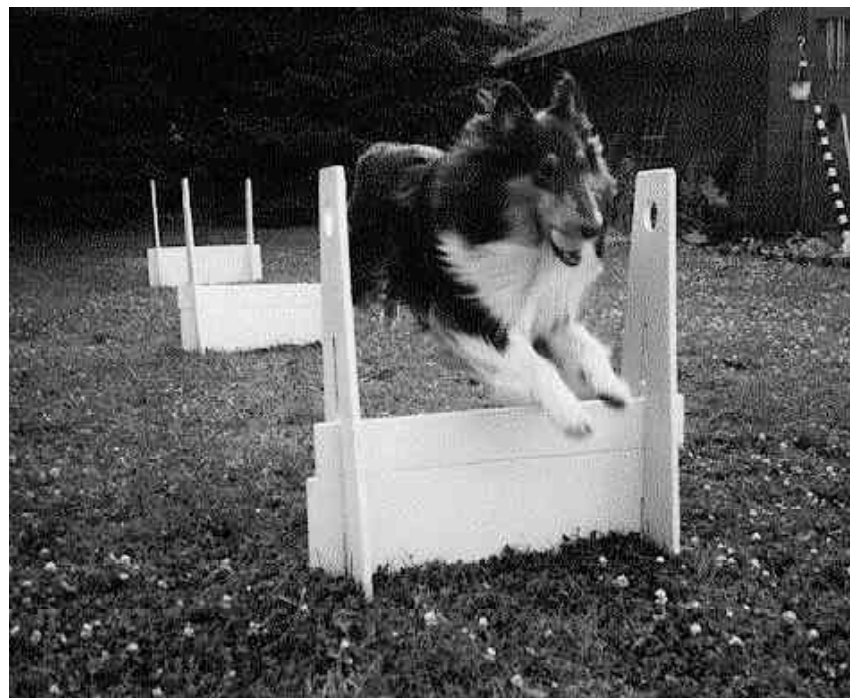
Flyball is a relay race with 4 dogs on a team. The course consists of a starting line, 4 hurdles spaced 10 feet apart and a box. The first hurdle is 6 feet from the start line and the box is 15 feet from the last hurdle for a 51 foot overall length. The dogs jump the hurdles and steps on a spring loaded box that shoots out a tennis ball. The dog catches the tennis ball and then runs back over the 4 hurdles. When the dog crosses the starting line the next dog goes. The first team to have all 4 dogs run without errors wins the heat.

Tournaments are usually organized in either a double elimination or round robin format. Double elimination is usually best of 3 or best of 5. Round robin is usually best 3 out of 5 and the first team to win 3 heats receives 1 point towards their standing in the tournament.

The fastest time in the world is 16.75 seconds by the Jets team from Southampton, England.

### Today's Issues

As companions or workers, dogs are as much a part of our modern society as they have been through history.



"Charlie" running in a flyball competition. Photo courtesy of Of the American Working Collie Association

