



a **Lamb** *on a* **Leash**



Despite that stuffed-toy exterior, the Bedlington Terrier is one of the sturdiest and most versatile of dogs.

By Dominique DeVito and Mara Bovsun

If you've ever seen a Bedlington Terrier, you probably stopped in your tracks because these dogs have such an unusual appearance. In fact, many people don't even realize he's a dog.

Standing at slightly over a foot tall, the Bedlington's unique coat has earned him the nickname "lamb on a leash." He is covered with super-soft hair like lamb's wool, and his narrow body seems almost fragile. But you'll know he's plenty of dog when you catch the unmistakable terrier gleam in his eyes.

"We like to say a Bedlington has the head of a lamb and the heart of a lion," says AKC Board member Ronald H. Menaker.

Some 50 years ago, Menaker was considering getting his first dog. After researching various breeds, he decided on the Bedlington. "The first thing that attracted my attention was the look," he recalls.

He thought the breed would fit nicely into his world. "I lived in an apartment at the time, and I wanted a dog that did not need a lot of space," Menaker says. He also had young children, and wanted a good family dog, as well as one that was hardy enough to handle the hustle and bustle of city life. The nonshed coat was an added bonus.

He contacted a breeder. Then another. And another. Fiercely protective of their dogs, the small group of Bedlington breeders was suspicious of the young man who had no dog experience, no yard, and two kids in a New York City apartment.



Lithe and long-legged, the Bedlington soars in agility. Top: Coats are dark at birth, but lighten as puppies age.



No one would sell him a puppy.

Menaker was about to give up when he was shopping in Gimbels department store, and passed by the store's pet shop (department stores of that era often sold puppies). An appealing doggy in the window caught his eye. A Bedlington. He bought the pup on the spot.

After registering his pet with the AKC, the newcomer started to enter dog shows. While his department-store pup did not have what it took to become a champion, he played a major role in his owner's life.

Digging for Roots

Historians have advanced many theories regarding the origin of the breed. In the *Centenary Book of the National Bedlington Terrier Club*, published by the British breed club in 1998, author Ian Phillips lamented: "Canine books and journals from the 1860s to date contain almost as many opinions of the origin of the Bedlington Terrier as there are chapters written." One of the most popular beliefs is that



Above: Morris & Essex BIS, 1948—
Ch. Rock Ridge
Night Rocket. Left:
Cover dog Intl. Ch.
Canis Prior, 1947.

they were, Phillips wrote, "peculiar to the gypsies [sic] in the Rothbury Forest area in the 18th Century."

Bedlington history starts to come into focus around 1820, with a female named Cotes Phoebe, widely regarded as the matriarch of the breed. Her original owner was a young man, Ned Cotes, son of the town's vicar. Cotes went insane, wrote Elizabeth Curran Cooper in a chapter in the book, *The Bedlington Terrier*. Among his more outrageous actions,

TOP: AKC FILE PHOTO; BOTTOM: ISABELLE FRANCAIS



Edwin Megargee, Ch. Lancelot of Rowanoaks and Ch. Tyne-side Taraleeds, c. 1941, Collection AKC Museum, gift of Elsie McMillin, Frederick Rockefeller, and William Rockefeller.

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before he landed in an asylum where he died young, was to pit one of his terriers against a captive bear, “with predictable results,” Cooper noted.

Luckily for Phoebe, she ended up in the home of a mason named Joseph Aynsley (often spelled Ainsley). He bred her to a liver-colored dog, Anderson’s Piper, owned by James Anderson.

One of Aynsley’s later breedings produced a pup, also named Piper, who was renowned for his pluck and hunting prowess. The dog lived to 15, and was pursuing badgers to the very end, even though he was nearly blind and toothless. Piper also earned fame as a lifesaver, when, in 1835, he fought off an enraged sow that was attacking the Aynsley’s 4-month-old baby. Some believe that it was Aynsley who named the breed after the town where he lived.

The first Bedlington Terrier was entered into the American Kennel Club Stud Book in 1886. In 1936, the Bedlington Terrier Club of America became a member club of the AKC.





Therapy dog Sparky has a talent for reading human moods and connecting with all kinds of people.

Natural-Born Winners

One of the most famous Bedlingtons was Ch. Rock Ridge Night Rocket (Timmie), owned by Mr. And Mrs. William A. Rockefeller. Timmie stands as the only Bedlington in history to win Best in Show at Westminster, in 1948. Until that time, no member of his breed had even taken a Terrier Group win at the Garden.

Bedlingtons also shine outside of the conformation ring. Agile, intelligent, balanced, sure-footed, and lean, they are sensible and methodical thinkers, possess a keen sense of smell, are natural retrievers, and have strong prey drive. They also love to please their owners.

Melody Guiver trained one—Ch. MACH7 Serendipity's Heartbreaker, ME (Hunter)—to compete in several sports. Therapy-dog work filled the little spare time that was left over.

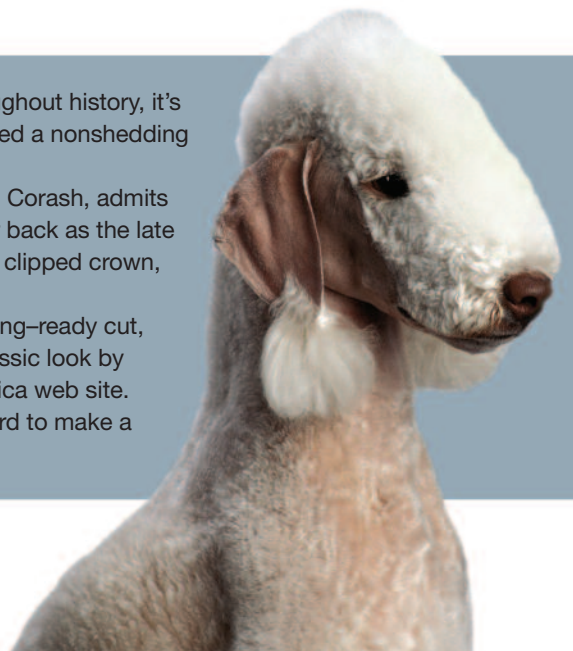
Guiver believes Bedlingtons are “naturals” at agility and earthdog. “His hunting instincts are strong, and as a result

Shear Joy

Even with the many talents that helped distinguish this breed throughout history, it's still the Bedlington's coat that sets him apart. Although he's considered a nonshedding breed, that doesn't mean that the coat needs no maintenance.

The president of the Bedlington Terrier Club of America, Dr. Dennis Corash, admits that the origin of the grooming style is something of a mystery. As far back as the late 1800s, Bedlingtons were being groomed with the unique ear tassels, clipped crown, and shaved face, neck, and tail, but it's not clear why.

Most people are sheepish (couldn't resist) about creating a show ring-ready cut, but Bedlington owners who are game can find out how to get the classic look by going to the grooming section of the Bedlington Terrier Club of America web site. Luckily, the club's site also has tips for a “pet clip.” Either way, it's hard to make a Bedlington look bad. —**Erika Mansourian**



On the Lambs

Dr. Dennis Corash has been happily co-existing with Bedlington Terriers since his father brought one home more than half a century ago. FD asked him why he has remained captivated by this breed for all these years.

"I saw my first Bedlington when my father opened the crate door to the dog that he just received. This was in the late 1950s. I was a young boy at the time and I truly was fascinated. The dog had boundless energy to play with me but would also curl up on the pillow next to me in my bed. As many others do, I thought it looked much like a sheep but with a long tail. I have been around Bedlingtons for the most part ever since."

"I remember seeing how very protective Bedlingtons can be when the trash men would come to the backyard and collect the cans to empty them. Our dog saw them and went through the plate glass on the back door thinking my mother and I were in danger from the two strange men. ... Like any young boy, once in a while I would get into trouble. If my dad would ever start to talk loudly to me, Patrick, one of our males, would come and position himself between my father and me and bark. ... My parents resorted to locking Patrick up in the bathroom when they needed to 'discuss' my behavior. I solved that by teaching Patrick to open doors using his mouth and turning the old round door handles to let himself out."

"My father died when I was young, so I would sit in the doghouse to be alone. But I never wound up alone because two of our Bedlingtons would come to the house. One would sit in the door and the other would snuggle up to comfort me and give me good old dog kisses."



the title was easy for him," she says. "Bedlingtons are aggressive hunters, but they don't go crazy."

Many Bedlingtons today strut their stuff in wide variety of activities, from the elegant world of dog shows to down-and-dirty competitions.

The Bedlington Terrier Club of America (bedlington-america.com) recognizes their quick minds and athletic bodies with its Versatile Dog Awards, honoring dogs who have earned titles in multiple events.

Well-socialized Bedlingtons get along with everyone, and have an extra-special bond with their owners. Typically weighing less than 25 pounds, Bedlingtons are easy to take everywhere, and they love coming along for the ride.

Their soft coats, lamb-like appearance, and sweet dispositions make them perfect for therapy work, as Amy Hudoba's Bedlington, Sparky, has proven again and again over years. He's helped all kinds of people—such as hospice and pediatric burn patients—who need a little cheering up.

His sensitivity to human moods—a hallmark of the breed—is what has made him such a remarkable therapy dog. "He's so loving and cuddly, he can tune into people. He makes instant eye contact with those he meets," Hudoba says. "I have learned so much about people from him." 🐾

Dominique De Vito is a writer and editor living with her family in New Jersey.

Hunter emerges from a tunnel in an earthdog trial.