

BEDLINGTON TERRIERS: BRED FOR THEIR GAMING PROWESS

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SHORT HISTORY

The roots of the Bedlington Terrier can be traced to the latter part of the 18th century, to a collection of terriers that existed near Rothbury Forest in the county of Northumberland in northern England known as the Rothbury Terrier. This particular strain of Terrier was highly esteemed by the local community for their excellent qualities, especially for their gameness. In rural England, a good hunting dog could provide food for the family, rid the fields of vermin that competed for the crops that the people depended on and provide animal skins for shelter and clothing. At that time, and long before, were some very staunch and sporting terriers in the district. Procuring the best and gamest of them, the local people produced the gaming dogs relied on for their effort and cooperation to provide game for food. This meant survival for their proud owners. The outcome of these matings in this area is thought to have produced the Dandie Dinmont as well as the Bedlington Terrier. The early histories of these breeds are closely intertwined with many of the same dogs and people.

During this period in history, dogs were bred to perpetuate their hunting qualities: strength, courage, endurance, nose, even barking—to identify their

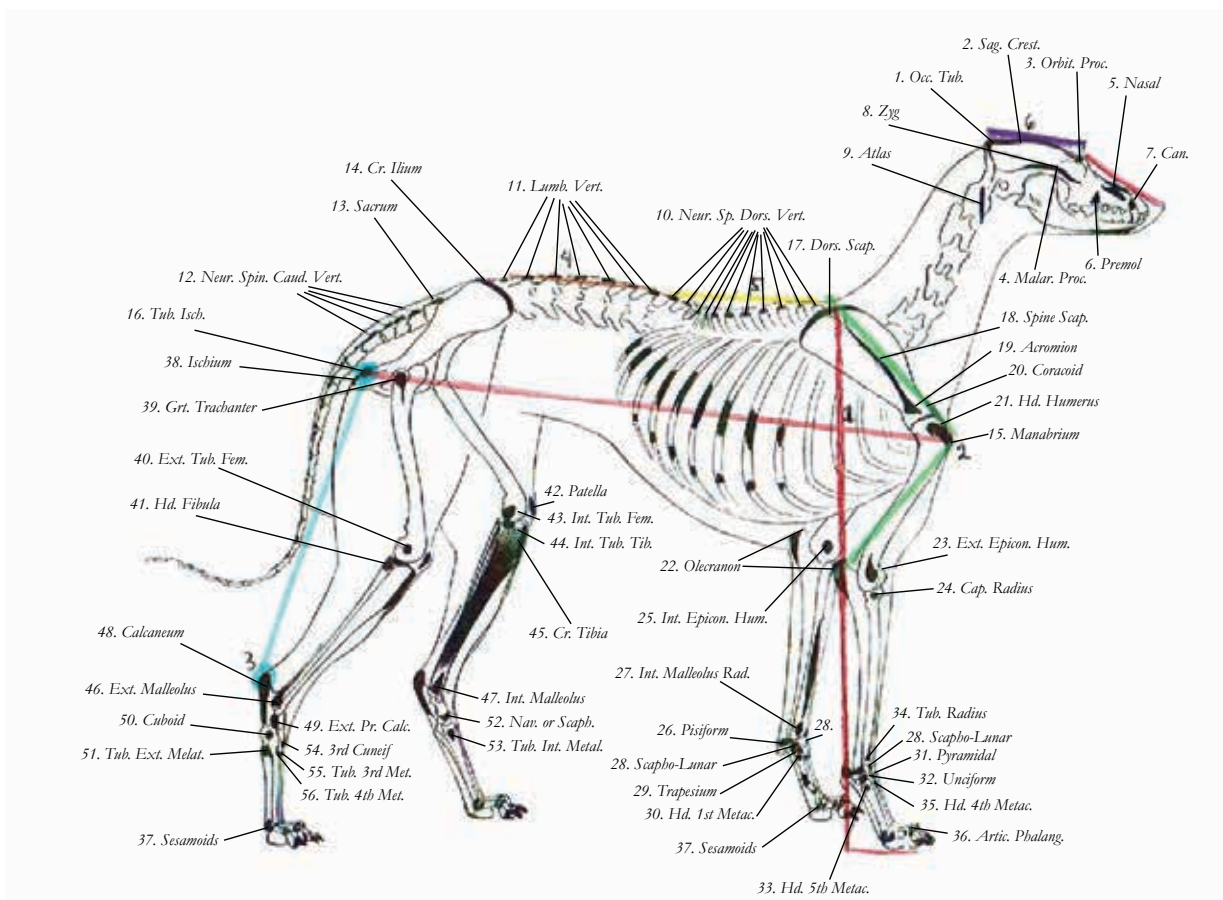
location underground. To get badger, fox or other vermin, the dogs would often work as teams, some would go to ground (terra—terrier.) These dogs would need to be able to chase the prey into the tunnels and holes. To hunt above ground (pursue and catch rabbits, etc.) the dog must not be too short on leg. His principal vocation (though sometimes considered poaching) would require a dog small in stature with a powerful, punishing jaw, strong neck and good strong teeth. The Bedlington Terrier became well-known in this location for being a “generalist”—able to go to ground and also adept at overcoming prey in the open field or working in teams to chase and deliver the sought-after vermin. These dogs, which were working in and around Rothbury became recognized and highly prized for their prowess in the field. At this time, it is believed their appearance to be rather rough and not always uniform or alike in physical characteristics, however, what they were prized for was their ability to work in the field and underground.

The first Bedlington Terrier can be traced back through pedigrees to Old Flynt. Old Flynt was born in 1782 (1792 by some accounts) and belonged to Mr. Trevelyan, the squire of Netherwitton, a village south of Rothbury. The

Bedlington is thought to have one of the longest continuous pedigrees of any breed recognized by the American Kennel Club. In 1825, a man named Joseph Ainsley (Aynsley) mated two of his terriers and he called the result, Bedlington Terriers. This was the beginning of the name, Bedlington. He is believed to have lived in or near the town of Bedlington (UK) and named the breed after the English Village. The town of Bedlington lies about 18 miles from Northumberland. One of these pups was named Piper (or Young Piper) and is said to have started hunting badger at only eight-months-old. He had a long and notable career; he lived up to his intended purpose and was admired by the neighbors and townspeople.

BEDLINGTON TERRIERS, THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL BARN HUNTERS?

In 1872, Mr. Holland writes in the first edition of *Dogs*, “I have heard the Makepeace’s, especially Old Nicholas, were celebrated rat-catchers. (who lived near Howick and made their living going from gentlemen’s house to another to kill vermin. They always had first-rate terriers, most of the small wiry sort, who were splendid ratters)”. In old England, Bedlington Terriers were employed to clear the mines of rats. Today’s terrier enthusiasts, take to the streets of urban New York City to thin out rat infested populations. The modern-day Bedlington Terrier is still



quick to find a rat whether it be in Barn Hunt or Earth Dog Tests. Little training is required; hunting is embedded in their DNA.

Illustrations document the gameness of the Bedlington Terriers of the 19th Century. CH Tyneside was whelped in 1869. She was a very famous bitch in her day, belonging to Mr. T.J. Pickett. She was entered in Vol. I of Kennel Club Studbook as number 3433 bred by Sir Thomas de Wheatley. She was by Spoor's Rock out of Breeder's Nimble. The Kennel Club, founded in 1873 featured Tearem and Tyne in the very first volume of the Kennel Club Studbook. Brother and sister were mated, and it is said that William Clark fairly gloated over their offspring. The pedigree of Scamp connects the dogs of today (1935) and the dogs of the pre-show past. (1)

Edwin Megargee, (1883-1958), a very prolific dog painter, is probably the most beloved painter of our breed. He produced several works of the Bedlington Terrier. His art of the breed is well known and deeply respected because his illustrations are very accurate depictions of the soundness and structure of the Bedlington Terrier. Known for "the Head of a Lamb, and the Heart of a Lion" the Bedlington Terrier is fearless, with intense prey drive, once engaged in a hunting expedition. Drive and determination is why they excel in test events. As discussed, the Belington Terrier is one of the oldest of the terrier breeds. Historically bred as a hunting dog, this breed's loyalty, intelligence,

tenacious personality and keen working ability make them very fine companion and performance dogs.

THE BEDLINGTON TERRIER EXCELS IN RUNNING COMPETITION SUCH AS AGILITY AND COURSING ABILITY TEST.

Overground, the Bedlington Terrier kicks it up into high gear. This gait is known as the rotary gallop, also utilized by the Greyhound, Whippet, Borzoi and Cheetah. It is the fastest, but also the most fatiguing of all gaits (double suspension gallop; jumping gallop). Suspension periods follow lifting of the second impacting hind limb and lifting of the second impacting forelimb. The pattern of the limb impact rotates: right hind, left hind, extended suspension, left fore, right fore and collected suspension. The Greyhound and Saluki using this technique can achieve speeds of 43 mph. Some have been clocked even higher. The running speed of a horse is around 25 to 30 mph with the fastest horse ever clocked at 43 mph. Flexion and extension of the vertebral column greatly increase the effectiveness of the stride length, thus compensating for the shorter limbs thereby, able to overcome prey.

Trunk flexion (abdominal muscles) enables the hind paws to impact far ahead of the spot where the fore paws impacted the ground. Trunk extension during hindlimb propulsion produces a leap that enables the forelimbs to impact far ahead of their static anatomical reach.

Epaxial and hamstring muscles support body weight and elevate the body's center of gravity during the leap suspension phase. Abdominal wall muscles bring the pelvis forward during trunk flexion. The trunk muscles are significantly involved in locomotion. This also gives the Bedlington Terrier excellent jumping abilities. It is rare for the Bedlington Terrier to knock a bar in a jumping event unless exhausted by the length and pace of the run.

Although the rotary gallop serves the Bedlington well in short sprints and jumping, if she cannot transition into the more traditional traverse gait for the weave poles, execution of this obstacle is not efficient. Bedlingtons excel in the flat-out sprint. Lure Coursing can be physically challenging and commitment to conditioning is necessary. The lengthy course is primarily reserved for the young and well-conditioned Bedlington. However, Course Ability Tests (CAT) and Fast CAT are rewarding for the athletic, well-maintained Bedlington Terrier that enjoys showcasing their speed.

TODAY'S HUNTING AND VERMIN CONTROL

In recent years there has been renewed interest in the United States in using the Bedlington for the purpose originally intended, that being hunting and vermin control. Although it is well hidden under the styled and manicured coat, the Bedlington Terrier's ability to work seems to have survived. When hunting rats the dogs seem



to choose whether to work close in to bolt rats from their hiding place (push dogs) or stand back, ready to snatch up the runners (catch dogs). When hunting larger quarry, the Bedlington most often serves as a lurcher, ready to catch bolted quarry escaping the burrow. It is a fearsome fighter, ready to dispatch quarry previously located by the hole dogs.

Perhaps because of its roots among poachers, the Bedlington hunts mostly in silence and give little or no warning when it attacks. It is for this reason that the Bedlington Terrier should never be sparred in the conformation ring. Many of the breed have succeeded in Barn Hunt and Earth Dog Tests and are quick to learn the tricks of the trade. The hunting instinct is different and takes longer to develop.

CORRECT PROPORTION OF THE BEDLINGTON TERRIER: FORM AND FUNCTION

These points all relate to the bone structure of the Bedlington and all serve a functional purpose.

1. The Bedlington should be measured with a wicket for absolute accuracy. The height of the dog is measured from the top of the withers to the ground. Our standard calls for a dog to be 16 and ½ inches tall and a bitch to be 15 and ½ inches tall. Deviation from the ideal size is normal and there is no disqualification on either sex when the specimen presented in the ring is of obvious quality. The standard also calls for the animal to be slightly longer rather than tall and a square dog is incorrect despite being appealing to the eye of many judges. A longer dog is usually a faster runner and better able to catch rabbits for the pot. (Red lines).

2. To achieve correct movement, the Scapula and Upper Arm should be of the same length and the return of the upper arm should equal the layback of

the shoulder angle. This is very important for the desired front movement because a shorter upper arm equals a hackneyed gait. The standard calls for a springy gait but severely criticizes hackney movement. The width between the legs at the chest should be greater than at the foot because of the depth of chest needed for lung capacity, again a reference to a good running dog. (Green line).

3. The Femur and Fibula in the hind end should be of equal length. This is easily measured by lifting the leg until the hock touches the ischium exactly. A longer leg bone giving a sweeping rear to the dog is incorrect. It is also a weak structure that will break down in dogs doing performance events like agility, racing, and coursing. (Blue line).

4. The arch should be the highest right above the tuck-up. In the loin these seven lumbar vertebrae are fused and are important for stability. This is not to say the dog should look like a croquet wicket, but rather have a nice easy arch over the loin. (Brown line).

5. The thirteen thoracic or dorsal vertebrae along the back between the withers and loin are very flexible. This is important for dogs used to go to ground as it gives them the great flexibility to turn in very tight quarters. It is also essential to the double suspension gallop where a dog demonstrates once again the flexibility so necessary for speed. (Yellow line).

6. & 7. The back skull is measured from the occiput to the slight stop in the front of the face. The fore face is measured from the slight stop to the end of the nose. These should be at least equal and preferably longer in the fore face. This longer fore face gives immense strength to the jaws which house extremely large teeth. This characteristic has made the Bedlington one of the most formidable hunters and fighters in its size category. (Purple and pink lines).

BEDLINGTONS IN THE SHOW RING

Dog shows in the United States and Canada predated the formation of governing bodies. The American Kennel Club formed in 1884, began publication of its official Stud Book in 1887. The Stud Book registering 2,221 dogs is known now as Volume 4. Previous stud books from other registry organizations predated this work. The Bedlington made its mark on these early, hectic years of registration history. The first Bedlingtons in the U.S. were imported from England in 1880 and the first registered Bedlington is found in Volume 1, a registry effort of Forest and Stream, predating AKC.

Three Bedlingtons were shown in a special Bedlington division of the class for "Rough Haired Terriers" at St Louis on October 9, 1880. The first Champion was shown in 1884. Ch Blucher was a dog born in 1882 in England and brought to the United States. Champions of the time were dogs who won three blue ribbons. Ch. Blucher won the ribbons in shows in the United States and is recognized as the first Bedlington Champion. Few breeds can actually boast of so many years in active show classes and Champions of Record.

There have been many outstanding Bedlingtons of note in the show ring, however the only Bedlington winning Best in Show at Westminster did so in 1948, Ch Rockridge Nightrocket. He was owned by Mr. and Mrs. William A. Rockefeller. ■

REFERENCES

1. Redmarshall, et.al, *The Bedlington Terrier. Comprising a Short Account of the Early History and Origin of the Breed, and Stud Book. 2nd edition, (1935), Bedlington Terrier Club of America.*
2. Seton, Ernest Thompson, *Art Anatomy of Animals.* (1977), Running Press Philadelphia, PA. (Figure 1)