



# **To Make The Collie Popular**

***By***

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As the canine world returned to normality after the First World War, the reduction in both registrations and show entries made it apparent that the Collie's popularity had waned from its high point in the first decade of the twentieth century. Collie stalwarts of the day deemed the amalgamation of the two premier clubs would consolidate the breed's position, and so the '*British Collie Club*' was born in 1924, out of the ashes of '*The Collie Club*', and '*The Northern Collie Club*', bringing the centre of Collie management northwards.

Almost ten years on, towards the end of 1933, a group of Southern enthusiasts, including Mrs Nadine George [*BEULAH*], Miss Clare Molony [*WESTCARRS*] and Mrs Rhys [*HUGHLEY*], considered the time was right for a new national breed society with a southern base. So an application to register the '*Collie Association*', complete with the necessary 21 shilling [*£1.05*] fee was received by The Kennel Club on 2 December 1933, with approval granted on the 16 January following.

From its outset the club has enjoyed a remarkable degree of continuity, its current secretary being only the fifth, all women, in its seventy year history. Mrs Nadine George was the first to hold this important post, which she combined with treasurer, but on the outbreak of war in 1939 the '*Collie Association*' appears to have entered a period of hibernation. With an end to conflict, and Mrs George's elevation to Chairman, this position was entrusted to a professional in this sphere, for Mrs S. F. Kearns' letterhead lists a total of nine secretariats, including '*Richmond Dog Show Society*', and '*The Kennel Club Council of Representatives*'. In 1951 the well known and respected Miss Margaret Osborne [*SHIEL*] assumed the role of secretary, a position she held for 21 years prior to passing the mantel to Mrs Aileen Speding [*ANTOC*] whose term mirrored that of her predecessor, before handing the reigns to the present incumbent.

The committee too has always had a predominance of female members, but even more remarkable is the degree of experience its combined ranks display. Throughout the club's history, committee members have been drawn from the breed's elite, with a predominance of highly successful breeders and exhibitors who have attained considerable status as Specialist Championship Show Judges. Today this committee is drawn from the whole of the British Collie world; with members residing throughout the major collie communities, but this was not always the case for the original constitution included this rather curious clause:

*"The association to be a club with members drawn from the British Isles; but the members of the committee, other than the President, to be elected from members living within 100 miles of London"*

The founding members came from both the Rough and Smooth worlds, and, as was then customary, the club catered for both varieties. In its original application for registration, the stated aims were given as:

*"To try and again make the collie one of the popular British breeds"*

and the founding committee were not slow to understand that for this to be achieved they must approach the task on several levels. Initially adopting the then time honoured expediency of guaranteeing classes wherever members were resident, continuing this practice today with a Supported Show in the South West region.

In the early post war period they aimed to encourage every collie breeder and/or exhibitor in all disciplines. Including those who were attempting to rebuild the Bearded Collie, which has long since grown and developed along its own lines with dedicated clubs to furnish their needs. A South West section was formed in 1968, which flourished for eight years before being wound up. Its trophies and specials, which are confined to club members, transferred to the Supported Show.

In 1980 the CA committee considered the Smooth Collie's requirements were adequately served by their own dedicated breed society, and accordingly sought KC permission to delete them from the list of breeds it supported, thereby making the 'Collie Association' the only National Breed Society dedicated to promoting the Rough Collie.

Margaret Osborne, who brought her energy and journalistic skills to the post of secretary, persuaded the club to adopt a policy of breeder/exhibitor education. The first venture being the now much sought after 'Handbook' of 1952, a first for the breed, which remains unique in collies for the amount of information collected into a single publication of this type. A newsletter 'The Collie Quarterly', edited and produced by the club secretary using nothing more sophisticated than a Gestetner Printing or duplicating machine, followed the handbook. A small booklet titled 'The Collie Fault Finder', intended to help novice owners understand correct collie type, was introduced in 1957, this largely funded from the profits of a sweepstake, which increased club funds by the then staggering amount of £80. Sadly few of either publication have survived the ravages of time.

The next major publication came in the form of the 'Rough Collie Champions Pedigrees for 1970 to 1974' inclusive. Recording each year's shows listing CC winners and judges, with a summary of champions broken down into sex and colour, adding the pedigrees of all collies gaining a title during each year.

These followed by a yearly update in the form of cards, which were inserted into a loose-leaf ring binder. A 'Show Results' booklet giving the names of those placed 1st

to 3rd, with owner, in each class at all Championship shows for the previous year, being a companion publication, that has since become invaluable as a cross reference to the '*Stud Books*' for those years where Show by Show results are not included.

Both these publications continuing until the end of the twentieth century when the popularity of the Internet, and Champion Galleries published annually in both Collie Handbooks made them superfluous.

Today the emphasis is on educating future judges rather than exhibitors, and the CA have not been slow to adapt to this change, with the publication of their 'Guide to Becoming a Show Judge', whilst further publications on understanding basic confirmation, the breed standard, stewarding and the A2 procedures are planned.

For all this the club show remains the principal means of promoting a breed, and we know that the CA's first show, an Open one, was held at Tatterstalls, Knightsbridge, London SW1, on the 19 April 1934, for an announcement to this effect appears in the April 1934 edition of '*The Kennel Gazette's* calendar of shows.

Championship Shows returned in 1946, but because of continuing logistical difficulties these were confined to Breed Club events, with Rough Collies allocated just four sets of Challenge Certificates, and here the choice of Mrs Kearns as secretary proved fortuitous, placing the CA in such a prominent position that they were allowed two shows for both this year and the next. In an effort to encourage and support General Championship Show Societies, the KC confined ticket allocations to these events for both 1948 and 49, but by 1950 common sense had returned to KC thinking, and tickets were once again returned to Breed Clubs, with the Collie Association awarded one of the two sets allocated to Collie breed clubs. Since when the club has hosted one of the Rough Collie's best supported, and most popular Championship Shows on an annual bases, with the single exception of 1952, when the only breed club allocation was awarded to the British Collie Club.

Many were the efforts to increase the popularity of club shows. These early shows, like those held prior to the war, took place in a variety of venues throughout the country, thereby ensuring all members could attend at least some of their shows. More recently the advent of the motorway network, and popularity of the private car, have made it possible to adopt the more convenient approach of hosting each show at the same central location.

Most of these early shows catered for a wide spectrum of interests, scheduling classes for Rough, Smooth and Any Variety Collies, as well as Obedience, which must have made them quite spectacular events, compared with today's rather stately single breed show confined to confirmation classes.

Specials were another device commonly used to attract exhibitors, and in this the CA was fortunate in having Mrs George as one of their benefactors. The Silver Spoons she donated for major prize winners, much valued at the time, are now viewed with awe by those fortunate to have seen them.

It is regrettable that no record remains of who judged the club's first show. However we do know that their first Championship show, held at the London Scottish Drill Hall, Buckingham Gate, London SW1, on 4th May 1946, which they shared with the '*National Whippet Association*', was judged by the well known all-rounder Mr Leo C. Wilson, who was officiating in Rough Collies for the first time at this level. Established breed specialists judged the CA's next two shows, whilst their fourth kick started Mr Harold Cliffe's [*LYNCLIFFE*] championship judging career. In these four shows we can detect a pattern of employing predominantly well established breed specialists, whilst encouraging experienced and interested all-rounders, with the occasional introduction of a first time specialist judge.

Only once in its history has the club looked beyond these shores for its judge, when in 1953 Mrs V. Francis Crane, a Pyrenean Mountain Dog specialist, licensed to judge the Working Group in America, made the trip from her home in Bolton, Massachusetts, giving the tickets to Ch Ugony's Golden Son o'Lad of Riffelsee and Selstoma Whitelea Wildcat.

The next momentous development must be the previously unheard of decision to engage two judges for the 1968 Championship show, after Mrs Speding had drawn a record entry the previous year. This feature becoming a fixture of the CA shows, which has since been imitated by every other Collie breed club.

With a committee that has always been in tune with current exhibitor expectations, developments have been too numerous to mention, but one of the more popular must be the decision to discourage committee members from exhibiting at club shows.

Today the CA with its small experienced committee headed by Mrs Franklin [*PATTINGHAM*] in the recently created post of Patron, organise two of the breed's foremost shows. The highlight of each year being the annual championship show, where its centrally situation, dog friendly venue, and proximity to Christmas all contribute to its unique atmosphere, and high entry. In addition each March sees a well supported Open Show, which follows the AGM. This judged by either one of the country's more experienced all-rounders or a respected breed specialist, who may be looking for a breed club appointment to complete their CV, alternatively an established Championship Show judge, whom the committee consider has been too long over looked, may be invited to cast their eye over an entry that is invariably in excess of 100, even in these days of lower entry levels.

These attractions further enhanced by trophy tables groaning with a wide array of silverware for the winners of each class, many a lasting memorial to a great collie, kennel or important enthusiast with strong CA connections. Specials continue to form an important part of the show, and although the famous Beulah Spoons have long

since passed into history, principal winners still receiving a permanent memento of their success. Nor is the rank and file exhibitor forgotten, with each receiving a copy of the CA's annual 'Show Diary', which records all Championship Shows, with their venues, dates, and judges for the coming year, this invaluable aid to show planning introduced in 2000, and provided free of charge to all members.

The recently introduced 'Roll of Honour' is a further attraction to the Championship Show that contributes greatly to its end of term atmosphere. Here members are invited to celebrate the show accomplishments of the preceding year. With the achievements of successful collies, whether in puppy, breed, group, or stake classes, recorded in blue gold and red, for all to view, and permanent mementos of their record presented to owners who contribute to the feast.

As to the future, well none of us enjoy the benefits of foresight, and few would argue with the statement that the canine fancy is going through troubled times. Rough Collie registrations and entries have been falling on a year by year basis over an extended period, although we continue to attract one of the Pastoral Group's highest entries. However of one thing we can be certain, the '*Collie Association*' will continue to promote, and support one of the world's most popular breeds in this, its country of origin.

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