



The homeland of the Poltalloch, Roseneath and Pittenweem terriers – the Highlands in Argyll, Scotland.

PART 9:

Col. Edward Donald Malcolm, 16th Laird of Poltalloch, and the West Highland White Terrier

Most dog breeds were developed after hundreds of years of evolution and lengthy selection by breeders. However, some breeds owe their existence to just one person.

PUGNACIOUS, IRRITABLE AND GRUMBLING

In the 15th-century *The Boke of St. Albans*, Dame Juliana Berners mentioned “teroures,” earth dogs. It is not the oldest record of terriers, but certainly one of the earliest on English soil. In the famous book of Johannes Caius – *De canibus Britannicis* (1570) – these earth dogs were called “terrars.” After more than a century, Blome described hunting with packs of terriers in *The Gentleman’s Recreations* (1686). In the 1760s, a more precise description was published in *Field Sports*: “... two sort of terriers. Rough and short legged, long backed, very strong, normally black and tan in colour or yellowish.” And about the other sort: “... smooth-haired and beautifully formed having a shortened body and more sprightly appearance. It was generally reddish brown colour or black with tan legs.”

The first comprehensive description can be found in *Cynographia Britannica* (ca. 1800), where Sydenham Edwards ob-

served that the terrier temperament was pugnacious, irritable, grumbling, extremely intelligent and attentive.

More recent authors writing about terriers in Scotland mostly mentioned rough-haired and long-haired terriers. In their descriptions, we can extrapolate breeds of today: short-legged terriers, sometimes with a long back (Skye and Dandie Dinmont Terriers), terriers with a long foreface (Scottish Terrier) and terriers with a white or sandy-coloured coat (West Highland White Terrier, Cairn Terrier).

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the terrier breeds of Scotland were developed from a multiplicity of types, sizes and colours due to the efforts and involvement of various breeders.

THE DUKES OF ARGYLL

The West Highland White Terrier is eternally associated with Col. Edward Donald Malcolm (1837-1930), but the Campbell

family – the Dukes of Argyll – must be mentioned here too. A contemporary of Col. Malcolm, George John Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll (1823-1900), bred the Roseneath Terriers. The Dukes of Argyll and Col. Malcolm were mentioned in the same breath when it came to white Scottish Terriers. We don't know if the Duke and the Laird cooperated in breeding, but we do know that they knew each other. The name "Rose-neath Terrier" dates from the beginning of the 19th century, when the Dukes of Argyll owned a castle at Roseneath.

This article will restrict itself to Col. Malcolm and his Poltalloch Terriers.

16TH LAIRD

The 1st Laird of Poltalloch received his title in 1562. At that time, the family lived at Kilmartin House. Around 1850, Neill Malcolm, the 13th Laird, built Poltalloch House in the neighbourhood of Loch Crinan.

Edward Donald Malcolm, the 16th Laird of Poltalloch, was born in County Argyllshire on November 13, 1837. In 1867, he married Isabella Wyld Brown, born in Australia in 1846, and eight children were born between 1868 and 1883.

Clan Malcolm owns Duntrune Castle as well as the Poltalloch Estate on the west coast of Scotland. Edward Donald preferred Poltalloch House (also named Malcolm House) to Duntrune Castle. Unfortunately, Poltalloch House is now a ruin.

Like many other members of the Malcolm family, Edward Donald was predestined for a military career. After his education at the Royal Military Academy, he gained the rank of lieutenant in 1854, captain in 1867 and colonel in 1883. He became Companion in the Order of the Bath in 1881.

Col. Malcolm served in India in 1857-58, and was also stationed in China and Canada. He retired in November 1894, at 57 years of age, after which he had more than 30 years to dedicate himself to terriers and hunting.



Col. Edward Donald Malcolm and his Poltalloch Terriers, circa 1905



Cairn Terrier (1856) by Eugène-Joseph van Boeckhoven – the type of terrier Col. Malcom used for hunting before he decided to breed only white terriers.



Terriers by William Luker (1862-1934).



West Highland White Terrier and Scottish Terrier by Herbert Thomas Dicksee (1862-1942), a contemporary of Col. Malcolm.

HIGHLAND TERRIERS

Various authors have different opinions about the precise relationship of the Scottish terriers we know today. Overall they agree about the origin of these terriers: all are descendants of old Scottish hunting terriers found everywhere in the Highlands and on the coasts in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, these dogs varied in coat colour and appearance.

A small type of terrier could be found on the east coast of Scotland. Terriers on the west coast had to work in rough and rocky moors and heath. A sturdy terrier, short-legged and with great stamina, was ideal in these vicinities.

There was a class for “Scotch Terriers” at a show in Birmingham in 1860. The dogs that won were described as “White” and “Imported Skye.” In 1871, the first dog show in Scotland had six terrier classifications.

OFF-WHITE TERRIERS

During the 18th and 19th centuries, several types of terriers developed regionally. It even happened that strains were developed by groups of farmers, or by a clan. Without exception, these were working terriers that hunted foxes, badgers, martens, weasels and other vermin. Some families could afford packs of dogs and bred their own strain.

Personal preferences played a role in the development of terriers. The story goes that, one day while hunting, a reddish-brown terrier owned by Col. Malcolm was mistaken for a hare or fox and shot. The Colonel decided to breed and work white terriers, because they are more visible in the field.

At that time, light-coloured terriers already existed in the Highlands. Thomas Bell, in his *History of British Quadrupeds* (1837), described their coats as off-white. However, white terriers were not popular and were usually destroyed at birth. Col. Malcolm’s decision to breed white, short-legged, rough-haired terriers resulted in the development of the Paltalloch Terrier.

The first Paltalloch Terriers were described as rough-haired (coat three to seven centimetres) with a yellow or sandy shade to the coat, well boned and with strikingly straight front legs. They had a relatively short muzzle, a big nose, big teeth and erect ears.

PITTENWEEM

A friend of Col. Malcolm, Dr. Flaxman from Fifeshire, bred white terriers out of an Aberdeen (Scottish) Terrier bitch. Flaxman’s terriers became known as Pittenweem Terriers. History is

vague about crossings between Poltalloch and Pittenweem terriers. In *The Practical Dog Book* (1931), Edward Ash stated that crossings took place, but others said that Col. Malcolm would not consider breeding Pittenweems with his Poltallochs.

Col. Malcolm didn't want to be considered the sole creator of the breed and in 1903 he insisted that the Poltalloch Terrier be renamed. The name West Highland White Terrier was recorded for the first time in L.C.R. Cameron's book *Otters and Otter Hunting* (1908).

WORKING CLOTHES

Unfortunately, we know little about the Poltalloch Terriers and their pedigrees. We do know that Col. Malcolm's terriers had to be willing to attack the prey. They had to be strong enough to fight in the earth, and withstand a harsh life and merciless climate. Malcolm used to say, "These terriers must be shown in working clothes. Only a bit tidied up, washed and brushed and in possession of their valuable undercoat."

Today, Col. Malcolm is regarded as the man who not only bred the right type, but brought the Westie to public notice.

RECOGNITION

The breed club was founded in 1904; the Duke of Argyll was the first president. In 1906, a second breed club was founded with the Countess of Aberdeen elected chairman. The countess was succeeded by Edward Malcolm. The Kennel Club (U.K.) recognized the breed in 1907, and that year a West Highland White Terrier appeared at Cruft's for the first time. The Westie was recognized by the AKC in 1908. The first breed registration with the CKC was in 1909.

Until 1924, many Westies had – with the permission of The Kennel Club – Cairn and Scottish Terriers in their pedigrees. By 1930, the year of Col. Malcolm's death, a stable type existed, with a short back, erect ears, a well-carried tail and white coat.

The first champion in the breed was Ch. Morven (Brogach x Callaig), born in 1905 and owned by Colin Young. The dog was originally registered as a Scottish Terrier. At the age of seven months, he won his first championship at the Scottish Kennel Club show, but because the breed was not yet recognized, the championship didn't count.

Edward Donald Malcolm died on March 20, 1930, at 92 years old. He was fortunate to have witnessed the development of his breed into not only a working dog, but a show dog and popular pet worldwide. ●



Roseneath Terriers in 1899 – also called Scottish Terriers at that time. The strain was bred by the Dukes of Argyll who owned a castle at Roseneath.



The first champion of the breed, Ch. Morven (Brogach x Callaig), by Frederick T. Daws circa 1908. As a stud, Morven was an early influence on the breed.



Mrs. C. Pacey (Wolvey) and five of her champions in 1935. Uniformity had improved compared to the old Poltalloch Terriers.