



Sealyham House

# Capt. John Owen Tucker-Edwardes and the Sealyham Terrier

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

It's no coincidence that almost every dog breed creator descended from a military or noble family. These families had the time, money and opportunity to develop a breed and work the dogs. John Owen Tucker-Edwardes (1808-91) was no exception.

It is said that the first Tucker travelled to England with William the Conqueror in 1066. Around 1356, when Thomas Tucker was a captain in the army of King Edward III, the king gave him land in Sealyham, Pembrokeshire (Wales). Thomas and his descendants became known as "the Tuckers of Sealyham."



Capt. John Owen Tucker-Edwardes

family had been connected to Pembrokeshire for more than six centuries.

John Owen Tucker-Edwardes' father was William Tucker-Edwardes, Esq. (1784-1858) of Sealyham, High Sherrif of Pembrokeshire and representative of the monarch in that part of Wales.

John Owen's mother, Anna Martha Phillipps (1788-1878), was the second daughter of George Phillipps, Esq., of Cwmgwilli and Istradwrallt, Member of Parliament. William and Anna Martha married in November 1807; their eldest son, John Owen, was born in 1808.

John Owen and his brothers and sisters grew up at Sealyham (also "Sealy Ham")

## Family

The Edwardes family was one of the oldest and wealthiest in Wales. The brothers John, Richard and Thomas were the first members to use Edwardes (son of Edward) as a surname.

Thomas married Ursula del Holme and the couple built a house in the neighbourhood of Haverfordwest (Pembrokeshire). In the 18th century, Mary Tucker, heiress of the estate, married John Owen Edwardes. At that time, the Edwardes

Estate, located between Haverfordwest and Fishguard, on the banks of a small river, the Sealy.

## Sealyham House

As a young man, John Owen joined the 23rd Regiment, the Royal Welch (archaic spelling, not Welsh) Fusiliers, one of the oldest regiments, dating from 1689. His military career



'Duck,' an early example of the breed (ca. 1910)



Sealyham Terrier by Maud Earl, from *The Power of The Dog* (1910)



The Pembrokehire Hunt Hound Puppy and Sealyham Terrier Show, held in May 1914 near Slade (Swansea, Wales)

brought the young Tucker-Edwardes to Gibraltar, where he had the opportunity to hunt with the Calpe Foxhound pack. Back in Wales, he bought a pack of Otterhounds.

In 1840, Tucker-Edwardes married Anna Jane Jones from Letterston (Wales). Only one son was born: John Tucker-Edwardes (1845). John Jr. married Hester Phillips and died in 1891, the same year his father died.

Because there were no other children, Sealyham House was inherited by John Owen's brother, Owen, who died two years later (1893). Owen's son, Charles Gustaves Whittaker Edwardes, inherited the estate. Charles died in 1902 without offspring. His widow, Catherine Octavia, was the last Tucker-Edwardes to live at Sealyham House.

### Otterhounds and terriers

Tucker-Edwardes retired in 1848, and in the years to come devoted his life mostly to hunting foxes, otters, badgers and polecats, especially in the woodlands and farmlands around Sealyham House.

Various authors describe John Owen Tucker-Edwardes as "an eccentric sportsman." Other than Otterhounds (some authors say he had as many as 16 packs!), Tucker-Edwardes owned small terriers, described as local terriers, Pembroke-shire Terriers or mongrels.

We don't know what they looked like; some sources say black and tan, others are convinced they were white. Terriers used for hunting in Wales in the 1850s were most likely the old Devonshire Terriers, and short-legged terriers resembling the Fox Terrier.

### Small terrier with strong jaws

Whatever these dogs were, Tucker-Edwardes was not satisfied with their hunting skills. He wanted a smaller terrier with stronger jaws, shorter legs, a white coat and an energetic temperament – a terrier that could join him hunting on horseback with the Otterhounds.

There is a striking comparison with another English gentleman, Rev. Jack Russell, who also enjoyed hunting on horseback and was looking for a terrier that could fulfil his specific requirements. Rev. Russell and Tucker-Edwardes were contemporaries in 19th-century England.

Another contemporary was James Hinks, who created and developed the Bull Terrier in central England. In Scotland, Col. Edward Donald Malcolm was developing the West Highland White Terrier.



Sealyham Terriers arriving at a show early in the 20th century



The breed at Crufts, February 1930 – “big, heavily boned dogs”



Sealyham Terriers in 1955

## White, short-legged terriers

We don't know exactly what types of dogs Tucker-Edwardes used for breeding his ideal terrier. It is assumed that he crossed his own terriers with Welsh Corgis – another type of local dog – to get more length of back and shorter legs. Like Hinks and Malcolm, Tucker-Edwardes knew exactly what he wanted: a short-legged terrier with a harsh, white, weather-resistant coat. A white coat was a necessity, otherwise Otterhounds could mistake the dogs for the prey. (This theory is disputed by hunters; white dogs hunting underground aren't white after chasing the prey into their holes.)

Tucker-Edwardes' other requirements were that the dog should be strong, well muscled and not too big, able to hunt in the steep and rugged landscape of Wales. Last but not least, his ideal terrier should have strong jaws and a brave temperament. This was an important condition because the prey – a badger or otter – is bigger than the dog itself. Without hesitation or fear, the terrier must follow the quarry into its hole.

## In and around Pembrokeshire

Another ancestor of the Sealyham Terrier could be the Cheshire Terrier, a small kind of Bull Terrier that is now extinct. It is assumed that Tucker-Edwardes used this terrier to improve the working abilities and for stronger jaws. Furthermore, he could have used a type of Dandie Dinmont Terrier, white terriers from Scotland, Wire Fox Terriers and the Bull Terrier. The Bull Terrier sounds a bit odd, but the English dog writer Freeman Lloyd mentioned the breed in his article *Dogs and their Owners*. I think we must believe him because of his close contact with Tucker-Edwardes. Lloyd wrote, “It is thought that your present correspondent is the oldest of the living public writers on dogs and kindred subjects who had the pleasure of knowing the late Capt. Edwardes, his son Mr. “Johnnie” Edwardes, their hounds and terriers, and hunted with them.” Freeman Lloyd was not only a contemporary, but a reliable eye witness.

## Breeding begins

Tucker-Edwardes started his breeding in 1848 in an isolated part of Wales. The arrival of strangers must have been sensational in those days, let alone the arrival of an unknown type of terrier.

In his *The Complete Book of the Dog*, Robert Leighton stated that the Bull Terrier and Dandie Dinmont Terrier were certainly *not* used when breeding the Sealyham Terrier. How-

ever, the author had a valid reason to believe that the West Highland White Terrier was used. Tucker-Edwardes was a good friend of the Marquis of Bute, owner of properties in Wales. At the same time, the Marquis was a close friend of Col. Malcolm in Scotland, the creator of the West Highland White Terrier... He may have been the link between these two terrier breeders.

Unfortunately Tucker-Edwardes didn't leave any information about the basis and development of his breeding. Because his only son passed away in 1891, details are sparse and dog writers are dependent on contemporaries and assumptions.

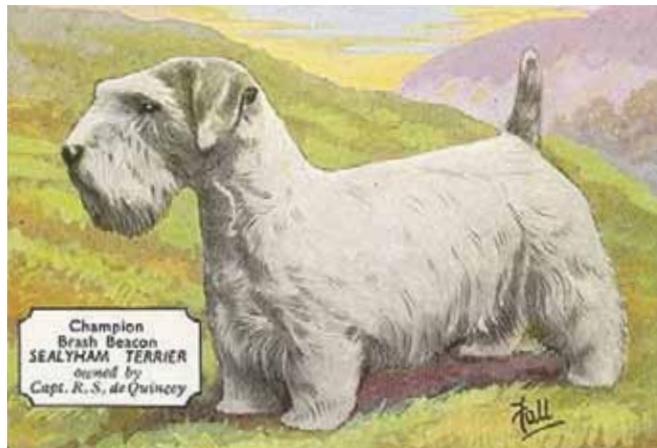
However, we do know how the Tucker-Edwardes' dogs were entered at dog shows. In a catalogue from one of the first shows in Haverfordwest, we read: "Working Terrier: Capt. O.T. Edwardes' Tip, pedigree known for a hundred years, warranted to go to ground to fox, badger, and otter; £5." It was common in those days to mention the price of a dog in a show catalogue when it was for sale, since dog shows were also venues for buying and selling dogs. The information "pedigree known for a hundred years" is especially interesting. Obviously, the exhibitor wanted to emphasize that terriers like 'Tip' were already known in Wales.

### A purely working terrier

The Sealyham Terrier was well known in Wales from the 1860s. However, the breed's popularity really began when it became known outside Wales. In 1911, the breed was recognized by The Kennel Club and its name officially recorded: Sealyham Terrier. In dog show catalogues dating before 1910, Tucker-Edwardes' dogs appeared as *Any Other Breed* or *Variety* or simply *Working Terrier*.

The Sealyham Terrier's development was the same as other working terriers. They were originally bred for hunting small game – for example badgers and polecats – but over the years they evolved into show dogs and pets. The present-day Sealyham Terrier barely resembles its 19th-century ancestors. In 1935, Hutchinson's *Dog Encyclopaedia* stated: "The Champion Sealyhams of to-day are big, heavily boned dogs, much too large and much too clumsy for the work they were originally bred for, and they would not have the ghost of a chance of getting even their heads into an otter's bolt."

While John Owen Tucker-Edwardes only wanted a "pure working terrier"...



Ch. Brash Beacon depicted on a 1934 'Champion Dogs' Ardath trading card. The drawing is based on a photograph by Thomas Fall.



The rough little working terrier is now an elegant, stylish show dog.



Canadian-bred Am., Can. & Swe. Ch. Efbe's Hidalgo at Goodspice, Best in Show at Crufts in 2009.



Two Lucas Terriers bred by Sir Jocelyn Morton Lucas, who crossed small Sealyham Terrier bitches with a Norfolk Terrier.

## Breed pioneers

John Owen Tucker-Edwardes was well known in Haverfordwest. Thanks to Freeman Lloyd, we know that he was always accompanied by at least two small terriers with rough, harsh coats. When he presided over political meetings in Fishguard, two terriers were usually sitting on stage.

Baron Kensington and Fred Lewis were among those who valued Tucker-Edwardes' heritage and became pioneers of the breed under the affixes Kensington's and Bach. Lewis's Sealyhams were pictured in nearly every contemporary dog book.

## of Sealy

John Owen Tucker-Edwardes died in 1891, at 82 years of age; his only son, John, died six months later. The daughter-in-law of John Owen's brother Owen – Catherine Octavia Tucker-Edwardes (later Mrs. Victor Higgon) – tried to breathe new life into the breed and for several years donated prizes for the Haverfordwest dog show.

In 1903, Sealyham Terriers were entered at a dog show for the first time. The judge was Miss Borrowdale, a niece of Capt. Tucker-Edwardes. However, some sources state that Mrs. Victor Higgon was judging. Anyway, we know that the judge had a lot of trouble putting “the mixed bunch” in the right order.

In the same period, four terrier fanciers came together at Sealyham House: Catherine Higgon, her husband Victor, Capt. J.H. Howell (Master of Foxhounds) and Adrian Howell. During this meeting, they laid the foundation for the first breed club, founded in 1908; Catherine Higgon was elected as the first president. This was followed by The Sealyham Terrier and Badger Digging Association, founded in 1912. A

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few years later, both clubs merged into The Sealyham Terrier Breeders Association. Catherine Higgon bred and exhibited Sealyham Terriers under the affix “Sealy” until World War II.

## Lucas Terrier

Another name that must be mentioned here is Sir Jocelyn Morton Lucas, an army officer who bought his first Sealyhams in 1909 – 12 small Sealyham Terriers from Capt. Jack Howell and a pack of working Sealyhams from Mr. Gladdish Hulk. These dogs formed the foundation stock of his famous Ilmer line.

Over time, the dogs became too big. In the 1940s, Sir Jocelyn and his kennel partner, Mrs. Enid Plummer, decided to cross the smaller Sealyham bitches with a Norfolk Terrier. These crosses formed the beginning of a new type of terrier, the Lucas Terrier. Since 1986, this breed has had a separate club in England, but is not recognized by The Kennel Club. To emphasize that it's a working terrier, the Lucas Terrier became known worldwide as the Sporting Lucas Terrier.

Today, John Owen Tucker-Edwardes would not recognize his own breed. The rough little working terrier is now an elegant, stylish show dog. The Canadian-bred Sealyham Terrier Am., Can. & Swe. Ch. Efbe's Hidalgo at Goodspice was Best in Show at Crufts last year. At the same time, Tucker-Edwardes' creation is now an endangered breed with only 47 dogs entered into The Kennel Club Stud Book of 2009. ●



### Further reading

[dogsincanada.com/breeds-histories](https://dogsincanada.com/breeds-histories)

[dogsincanada.com/breeds/sealyham\\_terrier](https://dogsincanada.com/breeds/sealyham_terrier)