

The Irish Terrier

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This wonderful breed originated in Ireland many years ago, exactly how long is not known but it is thought to be one of the oldest of the terrier breeds with some records dating back as far as 1880.

Originally bred by men of little means (usually small holding potato farmers) the Irish terrier was a hardy dog that could meet many criteria. He was equally superb as play mate for the children or defender of property, he was as good a hunter as any other dog, being able to supplement the dinner table (and his own feed bowl) with rabbit and other game. There are early stories of females leaving their litter to despatch a fox then return to maternal duties with all the gentleness of a caring mother.

The Irish Terrier gained much respect as a war dog during WW1. They were used primarily as messenger dogs, a job at which they excelled. It is true that many of them never made it home but most of them made it back to their trenches, despite dreadful and often fatal injuries (Pictured dogs are 2 Irish Terriers during WW1, they have had their feet burned by mustard gas). Their success in this role could well be attributed to their turn of speed, which comes about from their racy elegant lines, or their bravery in the face of danger and injury, perhaps it is even their incredible loyalty to the people they love or maybe it was because they are sturdy dogs that suffer very few ailments. Most likely they succeeded for all of these reasons.

According to many books on the breed you could be left with the impression that the Irish Terrier is an ill-tempered breed, given to picking fights all too easily. Many books refer to them as 'The Dare Devil'. The reality is that this is a reasonably easygoing breed that gets on well with people and most other animals. They are fairly discerning in the company of strangers, quietly placing themselves between their loved ones and those they don't

yet know well enough to trust. Their reputation for 'dashing headlong into adversary regardless of the consequences' has come about from their desire to protect rather than attack. It is true that many of this breed will stand their ground if provoked and they can resent uninvited interference from other dogs but generally speaking this is not a street fighter that goes out looking for trouble.

There has been a dedicated following of the breed in Australia over the years. Royal show entries were probably greater in the early 1900's but numbers dwindled somewhat after the wars. The dog had started to become a fashion

statement rather than a working companion, with terrier breeds losing popularity to more exotic breeds that were now more readily available.

Despite this turn of events, Irish Terriers maintained a presence in Australia. Having never gained fashion status this relatively unknown breed never suffered the consequences of being 'flavour of the month', which often results in amateurish efforts by backyard breeders. The breed has remained fit and healthy and has only one catalogued health problem, corny feet (hyperkeratosis) which has not been seen in Australia since the early 1970s.

In the last 50 years there have been many significant imports into Australia. From late 1950 – 1970s saw the importation of Artel Wicked Uncle (UK), Drumcorrie Rogue (UK), Slemish Selected (Ire), Drumshaw Rosa (UK), Ch Breezy Burning Bright and 5 dogs from the famous 'Pathfinders' kennel in England, these dogs include Eng Ch Pathfinders Two Step, Eng Ch Pathfinders Leapfrog, Eng Ch Pathfinders Daffodil, Pathfinders Cuff Link and Ch & Eng Ch Pathfinders Dressage, all of these dogs have been very important in establishing the breed as it is known today. The 1980s saw two new and exciting dogs imported from USA they were Ch & Am Ch Aeriemars Riley and Ch & Am Ch Tralees Tramp of Coolaney, both dogs were sired by the well regarded Am Ch Rockledges Mick Michael, one of the leading dogs of his time.

During 1990 we not only saw the import of live dogs, Ch Adamton Choir Boy (UK) and Carac Cwest For Success (UK), we also saw the use of new technology with frozen semen being imported from Am Ch Glennamaddy Galway Gossoon (USA) and Am Ch Mullaghboys Colin Murphy. Gossoon's semen was successfully used not long after arrival.

The new millennium has seen 4 more imports into Australia being Tubereasa Royal Result (UK), Ch MerryMac X-tra to Talk About (Swd), Am Ch Rockledges Ned Kelly (USA) and Ch Culford Squire at Roismar (NZ). Many of the imports (from 1980 – present) have been preserved by the use of frozen semen technology and, with luck, they will be producing puppies again in the future.

