

# For a top winning trim you must know your dog

Joe Cartledge

*"Dear Joe, will you please write me a little article on terrier trimming for a future edition we are doing on terriers? Roughly about a thousand words, the lady says!" \**

Now, if I'm honest, I don't think one could teach trimming by post in a thousand years let alone in a thousand words. At the same time in a thousand or so words I think I could give the newcomer a bit of an insight into what I consider one of the most fascinating aspects of the dog sport.

The trimming of Terriers has intrigued and fascinated me from a very early age – in fact it was one of the first things which did interest me as far back as the late twenties and early thirties. School, I'm afraid, never did interest me . . . and in those far off days girls never did either! Come to think of it I've now done a complete circle.

I must have been about 10 when I first donned an old butcher's apron of my father's and was given a set of trimming knives by my uncle, that world famous Terrier handler of yesteryear. On these knives were clearly stamped the name Arthur Cartledge, so I thought in my innocence how could I possibly go wrong with tools that had belonged to Britain's top professional handler since the turn of the century? The man I idolized and whose name I read in the dog paper I bought every week at the corner shop for tuppence, saying that the dogs he handled were all "put down to perfection", not a hair out of place", "presented as always by this great tonsorial artist" . . .

## First Fokie

I was given my first Fox Terrier to pull holes in on a clapped out old mangle that had been standing at our back kitchen door in north east Derbyshire waiting for the local rag and bone man to drag it away since Adam was a lad. Not much of an article on trimming so far you must be telling yourself, and maybe you'd be right. But I am not doing this for effect or just bragging about my famous forebearer, though I must admit that I have now got to the stage when I do enjoy going down Memory Lane from time to time. No I'm telling you this because my first and best advice to you must be for you to attach yourself to a "star". It might not be possible for you to get a job or be born into famous Terrier kennels like lads and lasses or if my generation were able to do.

The two likely lads who are at the moment judging for you (1980) had their first introduction into Terriers working for great and famous Terrier kennels. Albert Langley, before he became a millionaire in Italy (don't worry, Albert, my old cobber, I'm collecting your old age pension while you're away!!), worked first for the famous breeder of Wires, Mr Browne Cole of Travella fame.

Later, before starting on a career of handling which lead him to be the most successful professional handler of all times in both Britain and on the Continent, Albert was kennel man with George Bartley, the greatest of us all in the art of trimming.

Peter Green was, like myself, fired with the dog bug by his uncle, the late Harold Snow, owner of the top Welsh Terrier kennels (Felstead) in Wales for some thirty years.

One of the best presenters of a Wire in England today is Edgar Sarginson, who learned his skills from none other than the late and great Billy Mitchell. Another leading handler in Britain at the present time is Yorkshireman Frank Kellett who served his time with his father, the late Albert Kellett, a very successful handler in the '40s and '50s. The baby of the professional ranks here in England is young Andrew Hunt who spent his school holidays and weekends here at Ryslip and on leaving school was Albert Langley's right hand man until Albert left for sunny Italy and further fields to conquer.

In Australia you don't have professional dog handlers in the same way as we have in Britain but you newcomers to the terrier scene

do not need to despair. You have some very knowledgeable Terrier folk in most parts of your country, who although not interested in taking on a permanent student maybe would be delighted to help and advise someone who had the look of a future breeder and exhibitor. Discussion and practical experience is the thing.

In Britain these days the Terrier group is numerically smaller than any other, yet I would think that terrier breeds win more Best in Show awards than any other group. It is always said and understood here in Britain that the best All Rounders come from the Terrier ranks. This may be because we have always been so much larger in numbers although times have changed. I'd like to feel that it is because we of the Terrier breeds, particularly so the trimmed Terriers, know so much about anatomy, and particularly about the breeds we have spent hours trimming, that we are not so easily fooled.

## Terrier Judges

At this stage and just to prove a point: when it comes to judging Terriers we hear a lot said about certain judges: "What does he/she know about judging the trimmed breeds? He/she couldn't even trim his/her fingernails!" Not necessarily. Some of our best Terrier judges have never trimmed a Terrier in their lives, but when it comes to putting the exhibits in the right order of merit they are in the top flight.

The same applies to breeding. "Good judges must have bred champions". Again absolute nonsense. Over the last 30 years I have judged all Groups at championship shows in Britain and many countries abroad but I have bred only a few champions in one breed – Wire Fox Terriers – and that was in partnership. I have never laid an egg either but I trust I know a good 'un from a bad 'un!!

What I'm getting around to is this: you can't possibly think of trimming a breed for show unless you are able to judge. Not in the ring I don't mean but to be able to sort the wheat from the chaff. To show trim one must have in one's mind's eye what the finished article should look like. No harm in starting off with pet trims; in fact to get you accustomed to using the tools of the trade, the more pet trimming you can get in the better. Learn the parts of the anatomy on which to use your trimming knife and where to bring your combs and scissors into operation.

## Trimming Easy!

Trimming a Terrier for show is so easy: you only take off the hair you don't want, but the art is knowing what you don't want! That knowledge can only be acquired by experience. Travelling round the shows, asking questions of the experts (when they are not busy) and so getting the picture at the back of your mind what that champion of champions looks like. The "perfect" is only to be found in

your mind. There has never been a perfect dog, you will hear the would-be authority say. Of course there hasn't. To have a perfect dog everyone would have to agree it is perfect and I can't see that ever happening, can you?

Trimming articles with diagrams are, I suppose, all very well in their way. They create interest and set you thinking, that can't be bad. But, and I make no excuse for repeating the fact, one must be continually amongst top dogs to develop and maintain what we describe as "an eye for a good 'un".

I shall refrain from mentioning the Terrier breed in the following discussion as I have no wish to be unkind. A few years ago in Britain we had an outstanding Terrier doing the rounds of our championship shows. For about 18 months it whipped everything in its breed, not to mention Groups and, I think, the odd Best in Show. A really great one and always put down hair perfect, it had the sort of hard coat you could stick oranges on, easy to trim and keep in trim for ever and a day.

At the moment this same exhibitor is showing another dog, and although put down in immaculate form this exhibit looks like the "Wreck of the Hesperus". The dog possesses a number of faults and though cleverly put together, are all there for the whole world to see. This exhibitor has never learnt to trim out faults and is scratching his head and wondering why he is always down the line.

Faking? I suppose it could be called that but surely in our coated breeds that's what it's all about. Don't beauty contestants have their hair and eyebrows tinted to suit their face? I'm sure they do. Accentuate the dog's virtues and hide his faults, that's what a good pro should be able to do. Conditioning must also play a big part – be sure that your dog is fit and hard as well as beautifully presented. Don't take him to a show if he isn't looking right even though you may have wasted money on entry fees – it won't do you any good and it won't do the dog any good. It isn't just the judge that will be looking at your dog – it will be the whole ringside as well as your competitors.

In many Terrier breeds, in particular Wires, Airedales, Lakelands and Welsh Terriers, it is always something to marvel at the way the experts are able to grow the abundance of leg and face hair that they do, and also the way they manage to keep it on from show to show. Some will tell you to brush in rain water, some olive oil, others almond oil, and many other weird and wonderful potions. But use your common sense. If you go around the Terrier tables at all your shows you will see the enthusiastic amateurs combing the hell out of the dog's legs and face hair. What else do you see? After about ten minutes of this treatment you'll find more hair in the comb than on the dog's legs and face! The answer is don't comb it so much in the places where you are short of hair and even then with a very wide toothed comb or dolly pad.

I'm going to finish this column off with a little true story about one of our great trimming experts. The late Billy Mitchell was in his hey day one of the greatest at growing hair on the Terriers he handled. I always used to swear he could have grown hair on a billiard ball!! Like myself, Billy was a north countryman, and I can tell this story much better than I can write it. However, here goes.

Back in the '50s I was visiting the well known Cockington Terrier kennels of Mr and Mrs Cooper. Being invited into the trimming department to look at some Wire or other my nostrils picked up a very strong smell of eau de cologne. Passing some remark that it was an expensive way of making the kennels smell sweet the owners told me that Mr Mitchell had told them that it was the best way to grow leg hair. They had great quantities of this perfume in a dog bowl and were, with the aid of a brush, conscientiously rubbing it into the dog's legs.

Now this was new to me and at the next show I thought I'd ask Billy about this very unlikely treatment. When I tell you that Billy was stone deaf but very good at lip reading you can imagine it wasn't easy to get the message through. After a while repeating the word "eau de cologne" Billy's expression changed and he said: "No Joe, I never said eau de cologne, I told them to leave it alone . . ."

*\*(ND/RL EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS LADY WOULD BE FRANKIE SEFTON, Editor of National DOG at that time!)*

*Joe Cartledge was involved in dogs since he was a boy. He spent many years as a top professional handler, specialising in Terriers, and taking out major wins, including Crufts. Retiring from handling he took up judging, awarding challenges in a wide range of breeds.*

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**Eng Ch Harrow hill Huntsman  
- BIS Crufts 1978 with Leonard  
Pagliero and Gwen Broadley**

