

From All about the Jack Russell Terrier by Mona Huxham

## What is a Jack Russell Terrier?

Here's Devon and Somerset's Terrier Pack!  
Every one bred from 'Lynton Jack'.  
Narrow and straight, with natural coats,  
Possessing pluck worth many groats.

- English Life Arthur Heinemann (1925)



The question 'What is a Jack Russell Terrier?' is a much harder one to answer than would at first appear. If questioned, most people would have met one, seen a picture of one or grown up near one. When asked to describe this well-known 'breed', everybody's description is contradictory to everybody else's. They disagree about colour, size, coat, marking, character and vices, but all are describing the same 'breed': All know they are describing a Jack Russell and no other breed.

Jack Russell Terriers have been featured extensively in **NationalDOG – The RingLEADER Way** over the past twelve months, so this time we will provide space for some information on Parson Russell Terriers.

*From Denise Harvey's Breed lecture presented to the RNSWCC Judges Training Scheme, September 2001.*

The UK has renamed the breed – Parson Russell Terrier, effective 1 August 1999.

In a "poem of the chase" written in 1359 the word "terrier" first appears in print – intimating that, by the middle of the fourteenth century, "terrier" types were being used to drive their quarry from underground retreats. By available evidence, white terriers existed at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and it seems that by the end of the eighteenth century white and parti-coloured terriers were common.

A quantum leap now – to May 1819 when a young man, John Russell, studying for his Orders at Oxford, became the owner of a white bitch terrier – TRUMP – purchased from a milkman on the way to Marston. John Russell, to all accounts was a keen, passionate sportsman, with a particular passion for hunting, to which, along with his filial and parish duties, he devoted his considerable energies to for the next 60-odd years.

He was acknowledged to have been an influential breeder, breeding and working a distinctive type and style of fox terrier from which the modern Fox Terriers have been derived.

The Reverend John (Jack) Russell was a regular judge of both terrier and hound in the West Country shows, as well as a keen exhibitor long before the founding of the Kennel Club in 1873. He became a Foundation Member and in the mid 1870's he judged Fox Terriers at the Crystal Palace for the Kennel Club. However, he always declined to become involved in the fledgling Fox Terrier Club which was founded some 3 years later.



He had used the famous fox terrier foundation sires – Old Jack and Tartar as stud dogs in his kennels, and the third of the famous old Fox Terriers – Grove Nettle is a product of his breeding.

The May 1883 issue of The Kennel Gazette contained an affectionate obituary to him, almost certainly written by his old friend, Murchison – a fellow Fox Terrier breeder who, in this same issue registered a puppy in the name of "Jack Russell" – even though the terrier itself was not of the old-fashioned parson type to which the Reverend Jack had always remained faithful.

*So now – to today – what exactly is a Parson (Jack) Russell Terrier?*

A Working Terrier with the ability, agility and athleticism to travel great distances with the pack of Foxhounds, descend into the depths of the warren or den, and then, assertively using his initiative and tongue (voice), work the crafty Reynard from his den to enable the work of the hounds and hunters to continue. It was not his job to dispatch the fox in the den, rather to remove Reynard to enable the chase to go on.