

Which came first, Jack or the Parson?



Gentlemen's Recreation said that the fox was taken with hounds and terriers and "that of terriers there are two sorts". W B Daniels in **Rural Sports 1801** say "no species of dog will fight the badger and fox so resolutely and fairly as the terriers of which there are two kinds". T H Scott in the **Sportsman's Repository** in 1820 said that the Fox Terrier was not a modern dog for those times, but he said "history shows that they were evidenced right back to the first century".

The Reverend John Russell was born in Dartmouth in 1795. As hunt master he kept his terriers for the sole purpose of hunting the fox. In 1815 he founded his own notable strain of working Fox Terrier. He was breeding Fox Terriers sixty years before the kennel club was founded in 1874. His foundation bitch was Trump and a painting of Trump hangs in the Royal Harness Room at Sandringham. The painting clearly shows that Trump was a straight, longer legged type of terrier. None of the dogs we see pictured with the parson in those early drawings were of the short crooked legged type. The parson was a founder member of the kennel club in 1873. The first classes specifically for Fox Terriers were held comparatively late - not until 1863. Thus, until 1863, the Fox Terrier was exclusively a working terrier.

The parson was a personal friend of Mr S E Shirley, founder and chairman (later president until 1904) of the Kennel Club since its formation. Mr S E Shirley obtained one of the parson's bitches 'Pussy' for his own kennels in Stratford On Avon. As the most experienced and successful Fox Terrier breeder the parson was very particular about the pedigrees of his dogs. Russell was known and highly respected through the length and breadth of the country. He was breeding a pure line of Fox Terriers - there is absolutely no way in which he would have permitted strange blood into his own pure blood lines. Idstone, the famous canine author of **The Dogs** published in 1872 was told that his terrier was "of the pure blood line that John Russell had bred for forty years" and that "it was a Fox Terrier". It is quite clear that John Russell was a breeder of working Fox Terriers and not the commonly known Jack Russell Terrier.

Hugh Dalziel in **British Dogs 1881** describes Russell as "the father of Fox Terrier breeders".

The parson bred and exhibited many fine show terriers. Juddy was one of his terriers. His bloodlines can be found in many fine terriers in South Africa today. The foundation of smooth Fox Terrier were laid by old Jock, Grove Nettle, Tartar and Old Foiler.

Old Foiler was born in 1870-71 and had such an influence on the breed that more than a century later many smooth Fox Terriers can still boast going back to him.

Russell's first love was always the hunt and later in life he became disheartened and disillusioned with the show scene. As the popularity of the Fox Terrier grew and their monetary value increased, breeders became loath to work their dogs fearing injury. So they began breeding to please the eye and not for the hunt. The split between the show type and the old fashion-ed working dog quickly became quite marked. At one of the shows he attended Russell said "In fact I rarely see a real Fox Terrier, they have so intermingled strange blood with the real article". Many different breeds were introduced to the Fox Terrier in an effort to develop a sophisticated show animal. Fashioned in hunt kennels such as the Grove and Belvoir, Fox Terriers of the type bred by John Russell are direct ancestors, not only of the modern smooth and wire hair Fox Terrier but also of the Parson Jack Russell Terrier of today.

The introduction of strange blood - Beagle, Corgi, Sealyham and the like led the Parson's good friend, Vernon Bartlet, to write in the magazine **The Field**: "Recently my fellow but famous Devonian, the Reverend John Russell returned on a short visit from Elysium, where

Suddenly on the canine scene in Australia there emerges a new name - that of Parson Jack Russell Terrier. But many breeders and exhibitors pose the question: **which came first - the Jack or the Parson? The chicken or the egg?**

Both the Jack Russell Terrier and the Parson Jack Russell Terrier are recognised by the ANKC but only the Parson is recognised world wide, having been accepted by the English Kennel Club. (editor's note, no longer true of course the "Australian" JRT is now known and shown all over the world)

For the last twelve years I have owned, hunted with, bred and exhibited the Australian Jack Russell Terrier and I have known and taken a keen interest in the Parson Jack Russell Terrier for over forty years.

In 1667, Nicholas Cox in his well known work **The Gentlemen's Recreation** says that at the time there were two sorts of terriers, some with short coats and more or less crooked legs, others with longer coats and straight longer legs. The smaller were said to be "turnspits"; dogs that worked in a wheel that turned the spit on which meat was roasted. The longer legged ones were the best workers, chasing the game through the fields, going to ground and driving it out of the earth.

In 1686, Blome writing in **Gentlemen's Recreation** said that the fox was taken with hounds and terriers and "that of terriers there are two sorts". W B Daniels in **Rural Sports 1801** say "no species of dog will fight the badger and fox so resolutely and fairly as the terriers of which there are two kinds". T H Scott in the **Sportsman's Repository** in 1820 said that the Fox Terrier was not a modern dog for those times, but he said "history shows that they were evidenced right back to the first century".

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The introduction of strange blood - Beagle, Corgi, Sealyham and the like led the Parson's good friend, Vernon Bartlet, to write in the magazine **The Field**: "Recently my fellow but famous Devonian, the Reverend John Russell returned on a short visit from Elysium, where

he tells me he has enjoyed good hunting since April 28, 1883. He appealed to me to request hospitality of your column in which to protest strongly at the many queer animals sold today as Parson Jack Russell Terriers by 'cashers-in' on his name. He asked me to send you his own specifications of 1871.

Many of the cross bred variety were used to hunt and keep barns free of vermin. Short in leg they were, but they were not in spirit, having inherited an excellent hunting instinct they made good workers. The jack Russell, as they were then commonly called, were diversified in type. They varied in size, shape, colour, coat and ear carriage. Although diversified, a distinctive type gradually emerged.

I was in Sussex in 1949 and owned a Jack Russell Terrier called Chum. He was typical of the breed seen in Australia today. They were known as ankle biters and could be seen in town and country almost on every street corner.

Clifford Hubbard, one of the best known authorities on dogs, author of **The Observers Book of Dogs** and **Dogs in Britain** writing in 1946, specifically states, "The true Parson Jack Russell Terrier is seldom seen today - at one time it was feared that the race was extinct but although confined to the sporting counties of Devon and Somerset to a large extent, it is still bred in a small way". There is no way in which Hubbard could have missed seeing the hundreds of so called Jack Russell Terriers all over England. Obviously, he was referring to the specific working terrier bred by the Reverend John Russell and he called them Parson Jack Russell terriers.

The popularity of the small cross bred terrier continued to increase and in England the owners of these dogs banded together and in 1975 formed the Jack Russell Terrier Club of Great Britain. Application for recognition as a pure breed was made but rejected by the Kennel Club. The Jack Russell was introduced to Australia and the formation of a club initiated in 1972, by Alan and Michael Gwyther having brought with them from Wales a dog called Swithun and a bitch named Fern. Bim, Skipper, Saville, Peter Piper and Caesar Di Roma were some of the early influential sires. Caesar Di Roma was recorded as being nine and a half inches tall.

Within a few years of the death of Russell, Fox Terriers had begun to change considerably from the type he had bred. However, while the elegant type of Fox Terrier became one of the great successes of the showing, the terriers (of identical origins) left in the hunt kennels were still bred with care, but with conformation, coat, markings and temperament suited more to a worker than a showman.

In 1985 the Parson Jack Russell Terrier Club was founded, one of its aims being "to encourage the breeding of the old fashioned type of North Devon Fox Terrier brought to prominence particularly through the terriers bred by the Rev John Russell".

It is to Arthur Heinemann, for many years master (secretary) of the Parson Jack Russell Terrier Club, the credit must go for continuing the interest in the Parson Jack Russell Terrier after the death of its creator. Heinemann's policy was to collect as many terriers as he could where he knew that the dogs traced back directly to Russell's stock.

Heinemann drew up a standard for the PJRTC and judged several times. Indeed, one of his appointments was at Crufts in 1909 where he judged classes for 'working Fox Terriers' - classes put on to encourage the breeding of the type bred by Parson Russell.

Mrs Harris took over Heinemann's kennel and secretaryship of the PJRTC after his death in 1930. She continued in this post until after World War II. Her terriers were in strong demand and she did, perhaps, breed more truly to Russell's ideals.

On January 9, 1990 Kennel Club approval was given for the breed's recognition as the twenty fifth member of the terrier group. In the first year nearly 500 were registered with the club.

R MAKEEF



Above **The Parson Terrier with longer legs and taller, and right the Jack Russell Terrier**

