



1st IG Specialty in NSW - Challenge Dog - Ch Wondoan Razamatuzz (right), Challenge Bitch & BOB Ch Minaken The Town Talk (left) 1980. The judge is Cec Rigg.

Why the breed seems to have vanished completely from the scene around 1900 is unknown. Probably lack of imports and the fact that the breed was at an all-time low in the UK due to the fact that they tried to breed smaller and smaller specimens which resulted in dwarfism and the breeding potential which caused many problems. It was only the formation of the Italian Greyhound Association and a few keen breeders that saved the Italian Greyhound from extinction in the UK. It was 1961 before the breed was entered at the Sydney Royal Show.

In 1958 Mrs Sapio, Cruchfield Kennels in Queensland imported Chichele Proserpina and Noways Hermes from the UK. They produced a litter of 3 females the following year- these were named Eufrosine, Aglaia and Talia (The 3 Graces). Talia joined the elTazzi Kennel then resident in Tasmania and Aglaia later founded the Althahallach Italian Greyhounds in Victoria. Although Mrs Sapio entered the Sydney Royal in 1961 her entries were absent - though I understand her IGs were shown in Brisbane prior to this. It was 1962 when I exhibited my home - bred Eltazzi Anna Maria that once more Italians were seen at the Sydney Royal.

Mrs Sapio made several other imports from England to get the breed established here. One of those namely - Noways Mark (a full brother to Eng Ch Noways Matthew) mated to Chichele Proserpina produced Ch Cruchfield Nefertiti - the first top winning Italian Greyhound here whose many wins included RUBIS at Brisbane Royal in 1964.

Shortly after Mrs Sapio's first imports arrived, Noways Dinkle accompanied her owner from England to NSW. She was mated to Noways Mark and produced a male - Pickett Willem Ruys and female Pickett Merrylegs. Both went to Mrs Sapio when Dinkie returned to England with her owner. Willem later joined Talia at elTazzi and in 1961 was shown at Melbourne Royal for a challenge & Best of Breed.

From the time I brought Talia into Tasmania - a few Italians were shown during the '60s - early '70s often winning at Group level. However, when I moved to NSW not much breeding took place and it was several years before the breed again appeared in the show ring though few in number.

It was in Victoria that the breed became most firmly established with entries steadily climbing to 61 at the 1974 Royal Show. Since then there has been a decline in numbers. At the present time entries vary considerably from show to show.

In South Australia the breed became established when David Roche imported Medlifs Maria and two Chandrey bitches from England around 1962-63. Maria's progeny became fairly widespread throughout Australia though that of the Chandrey bitches remained in South Australia and Victoria. Since the rising popularity of the breed the number of Italians bred in South Australia has increased dramatically.

The first Italian Greyhound I know of in Western Australia was, as far as I can ascertain, Eltazzi Antonio (Noways Mark xTalia) in 1961. Later Ardmere Kennels obtained stock from Bela (Qld) which was founded on stock from early imports to Cruchfield.

In QLD the breed has fluctuated in numbers and breeders over the years - but again the rising popularity has seen corresponding rise in owners and breeders. There have been Italians in the Northern Territory from time to time since the '60s but Wondoan Jazz was the first to be shown through to his title in 1981.

In NSW there have always been a few enthusiasts who kept the flag flying for the breed. A Club was formed in 1980 with myself as President and David Sales (Dartland) as Hon Secretary. It was the only Club for the breed and we had members from all States and New Zealand. Our annual Championship Shows had entries from most States competing. We achieved a record entry for the breed in Australia at the 1989 Specialty with Lilian Barber (La Scala USA) judging. Unfortunately the Italian Greyhound Society was disbanded in 2000 due partly to the club having to be registered "of NSW" which upset interstate members - also the lack of support and infighting among members.

However, this did not affect the increasing popularity of the breed - and there has been an influx of imports from America. As with most breeds who suffer an upsurge in popularity - it is not always to the betterment of the breed and often breed characteristics are lost in the quest to outdo each other in the show ring.

ITALIAN GREYHOUND HISTORY IN AUSTRALIA

Barbara Skilton

The first records I have been able to trace to date, on Italian Greyhounds in Australia are in early Journals and show catalogues which showed that representatives of the breed were shown between 1868-1900 at the Sydney Royal Show. Unhappily I have not been able to find any photographs of these early show dogs. One female (or slut as they were referred to in those days) was entered in 1873 with the following particulars-Beauty. 1 year old, height - 1 foot, weight - 6lbs. The last entry recorded for that period in NSW was in 1899 with that of the female Topsy. 7 years old, by Sting x Nettle!

I also found records of them being shown in South Australia and Victoria in the 1880s. One can assume they were probably shown in the same period in Tasmania and maybe Queensland.

How the breed arrived in this country in those early days of Australian history remains somewhat of a mystery. Maybe some of the wealthier settlers brought their little dogs with them. Certainly the breed was popular in England at that time. One can't help wondering how they fared on the long sea voyage and how many were lost at sea. Possibly, if they were the pets of the wealthy settlers, they lived in the cabins of their owners in comparative luxury for the duration of the trip.

Our breed is not for everyone - in the words of Annette Oliver *"While addictive to some - they would never be suitable to others. Be thoughtful to have discovered them for yourself, and take their custodianship seriously"*



The Three Graces, Cruchfield Eufrosine, Aglaia and Talia



Ch Eltazzi Anna Maria



The first Eltazzi litter

Frank Skilton with Cruchfield Talia and some Afghan Hounds

