

THE BLOODLINES

The Ancestral Profile of Synve Lundgren's Whenway Celtic Tradition

Bloodlines ventures to Austria for this issue to feature the very interesting profile of Synve Lundgren's Celtic (Whenway Celtic Tradition). Now seven years of age, this very strong and focused dog is a mixture of 'traditional' Scottish and Welsh breedlines, coupled with some New Zealand blood which descended from our most revered collies of the distant past. Without question, in breeding terms...we are what we were!

By J.R.Griffith's 1992 & 1993 International Brace Champion Moss 188389 and out of Bruce Kilsby's Whenway Roison, Celtic's pedigree promises to be one of the most interesting to dissect since this series began.

As Whenway Roison was not registered with the ISDS (only the Kennel Club) Celtic himself is also not registered, although it is Synve's intention to apply for a Merit registration with the ISDS in the very near future. One thing is certain...he certainly won't fail on his attitude to his work or his outstanding lineage.

Moss, who was also the 1994 & 1996 Welsh National Brace Champion with his sire Sweep 159685, descends from very traditional lines which has always been the backbone to the most successful dogs seen both on our trialling fields and back home at the farm.

Sweep, who was also the 1992 International Farmers Champion, had already won the 1990 Welsh Brace Champion, but this time with Sam 130163. He was also in the Welsh Team in 1989 & 1996 and was the sire of R.Howard's Ben 205637 himself sire to Hayley Howard's Diona ABC 141403, winner of the 2001 North American Nursery Final and 2002 Western States Regional Championship.

Sweep's sire was another of John's good brace dogs in the shape of Glen 116643. I liked Glen a great deal and he shows up regularly behind many a good dog aside from Sweep. He was the sire of Del 164460 herself the dam of T.E.Elliot's 1994 English National Team Member Roy 183001 who in turn was the sire of Stuart Davidson's 2002 International Supreme Champion Star 211076. Some other good offspring of Glen were S.Jones' 1990 & 1994 Welsh National Team Member Mirk 164457 and his full brother from a repeat mating, R.Brooks' 1990 Welsh National Team Member Ben 159684.

Glen's sire was that great achiever, Alan Jones' Welsh National Champion Craig 72717. Winner of the Welsh National in 1976, Craig was also a Reserve International Supreme Champion, a triple Welsh National Driving Champion, a dual International Driving Champion and a dual International Farmers Champion. It therefore goes without saying that he was some dog and this is some line!

Sweep's dam was Fly 138050 who descended on her paternal side from a line well known dog to this series...Brocken Robbie. Fly was sired by Colin Gordon's Robbie 103968 who was in the Welsh Team in 1984 placing 12th in the Supreme Championship. Robbie in turn was sired by T.J.Watkins' Robbie 38315 a littermate to

Ollie Ollerenshaw's Taffy 38314 who was himself to sire Alan Jones' 1971 Welsh National Champion Lad 44675 and to Thomson McKnight's Jaff 38313 the 1977 Scottish National Brace Champion. Their sire was the wonderful aforementioned 1966 West of England Champion Broken Robbie owned by Barbara Carpenter.

Robbie was a litter brother to H.J.Worthington's 1963 Welsh National Driving Champion Hemp 24641 and E.Powles' 1971 Reserve English National Champion Jan 24637. As we have seen many times before, history has proven to us that as a sire Robbie was amongst the very best. Amongst his many other fine offspring were R.E.Nicholls' 1972 Welsh National Champion Moss 41957; his litter brother G.A.Lewis' Welsh National Farmers' Champion Jim 41958 and E.Powles' Floss 48501, the dam of Bosworth Jim 52007 who twice won the Irish National, was an International Farmers' Champion, an International Driving Champion and twice an Irish Driving Champion.

Brocken Robbie was also mated to C.Cook's Tess 24831 and a resulting son, W.F.Miles' Don 36535, was in the Welsh Team in 1968 & 1971 finishing third in the Welsh Farmers' in '71 and eleventh in the Supreme. Don in turn was to sire G.T.Bates' 1969 Welsh National Shepherds' Champion Kay 40803. Yet another successful offspring of Robbie out of Herbert's Floss 29772, was Fly 2. 46113, a Welsh Team Member in 1970 and Welsh Driving Champion for that year.

Robbie's sire was Herbert Worthington's 1960 & 1961 International Brace Champion Hemp 13132. Hemp, who was also the Welsh National Shepherds' Champion & Welsh National Brace Champion in 1959, finished in fifth position in that years Supreme Championship. He was also to sire Herbert's Juno 17815, the 1963 International Supreme Champion, out of Fly 12570 the 1959 International Shepherds' Champion and 1960 & 1961 International Brace Champion with Hemp.

Robbie 103968's dam was Mel Page's 1973 Welsh National Champion Nell 65799. She was a daughter of Clarence Storey's 1972 English Team Member Roy 45152 out of John James' 1968 English Team Member Fly 34035, a breeding bitch of some repute.

Moss 188389's dam was H.L.L.Griffith's Queen 176986 who was a daughter of R.V.Hughes' Moss 150072 out of Fly 143549. Her breeding returns to John Thomas' 1977 International Supreme Champion Craig 59425 on both sides of her line...both through Don 108889 the 1984 English National Shepherds Champion.

Fly was a daughter of John James' Ben 123761 who was an English National Team Member in 1985 and 1986 when he was the reserve English National champion. And it was Ben who was also the sire of G.Howells' 1989/91 Welsh National Team Member Jock 158606, himself sire to Bobby Dalziel's 1994 Scottish National Shepherds Champion Jim 195051.

Moss 150072 had the most superb lineage. His sire was the aforementioned Don 108889 while his dam was J.Wheaton's Gem 110452. Gem was a daughter of R.N.Haworth's Wardstone Rex out of a bitch seen so many times before in the series...J.G.Hadwin's Quen 56602.

Rex was a son of Ollie Ollerenshaw's Reserve English National Champion Ken 47974, himself a son of T.Longton's 1966 International Supreme Champion Ken 17166 out of a Wiston Cap daughter, Susan 42639. Rex's dam was W.H.Hutchinson's English National Team Member Maddie 67709 who was another offspring of Wiston Cap out of Bett 55233 who was also sired by the 1966 Supreme Champion Ken 17166.

Quen of course was out of Tot Longton's Reserve International Supreme Champion Gyp 38336 and by my old favourite Bosworth Coon 34186 that I take every opportunity to mention, as regular readers will already know!

Celtic's dam is Bruce Kilby's Whenway Roison, a litter sister to Show Champion and Crufts winner Whenway Royal Highlander. Bruce and his wife Sheena are renowned breeders and judges in the showing side of the Border Collie although Bruce does trial successfully as well. It was in fact Roison's dam Ma Biche of Whenway (Polly) 226598 that Bruce was able to register on merit after winning trials with her.

As Roison's sire, Johnny Wilson's great dual Supreme Champion Spot 161819 has been featured so many times before, I can concentrate on Polly's breeding, which, on the surface, will be nothing like we are used to at all and extremely interesting.

Her sire was the New Zealand and English Show Champion Clan-Abby Blue Aberdoone (Blue) who I featured in my book, *'The Principal Show Lines'*. And it is through this book that I reproduce the 'Blue' story.

'From a quite superbly line-bred pedigree, it is no surprise that Blue has done so exceptionally well as a show and stud dog within the U.K. His 'U.K. connection' began when Mrs. Collis of the Beagold Kennels judged at the Waikato Collie Club in New Zealand late in 1988. Her dog CC winner was CLAN-ABBY BLUE ABERDOONE, a two-year old dog at the time who had been rarely shown due to his slow maturing bloodlines.

Following Mrs Collis' return to the U.K., Bruce and Sheena Kilsby viewed the video of the show in New Zealand and they recognised in 'Blue Aberdoone' a number of attributes they believed which could help the breed in the U.K. Subsequently - and after much discussion amongst the Vos family - they decided to let Blue go to the U.K. where they hoped he could help with development of the breed.

The New Zealand dogs have been breeding to a 'type' for many years since it was New Zealand who formed the first Breed Standard for the Border Collie in the world - back in 1927. This standard was made between the New Zealand Kennel Club and the New Zealand Sheepdog Trial Association.

Many of the top trial dogs in the U.K. during the early 1900's were exported to New Zealand. One who had the most influence on the breed in New Zealand was Moss 22 - who, when exported, became known as "Border Boss" and was the winner of the International Supreme Championship in 1907. Others who went to New Zealand were the 1910 & 1912 Supreme winners Sweep 21 and Don 17.

Having the standard of the Border Collie as a guide, breeders in New Zealand and Australia throughout the years have made extreme advancement toward the development of the breed within the two countries.

Blue is a son of top producing bitch New Zealand Champion Clan-Abby Lorna Doone. A tightly line-bred bitch, Lorna Doone was a top dam with champion progeny in New Zealand, England and Finland. Her parents both being imported from Australia, namely New Zealand Champion Cheviot Gay Lord (Aust) and New Zealand Champion Cheviot Joanne (Aust). The Vos' imported these two dogs from the late Jack and Joannie Thompson in Melbourne, Australia.

The Thompson's were the owners of the famous bitch Australian Champion Checkmate Gay Lady. Lady was an icon within the Australian show ring during the early 1970's having won 6 Melbourne Royal Challenges, plus becoming the first Border Collie in the world to win Best In Show (Allbreeds Championship Show).

She was admired by the late U.K. judge, Major H.Glover, whilst visiting in Australia. Upon returning to the U.K., Major Glover's subsequent respect for the breed as a show dog and Gay Lady in particular, saw his assistance in the quest for the recognition of the Border Collie in the U.K.

His involvement was paramount with the English Kennel Club and Major Glover was very proud of the part he played in fighting for the breeds recognition in the U.K. The Major was to make history by having the honour of being asked to be the first ever judge to award Challenge Certificates to the breed in the U.K. in 1982, but sadly he was too ill to officiate, and died later that year.

It is ironical that Lady's great grand-son, Blue Aberdoone, was the first import of the breed back to the U.K. - along with New Zealand & English Show Champion Francesca Of Clan-Abby - who is also a descendant of Lady.

Due to her obvious love of the show ring and outstanding showmanship and subsequent recognition by judges, Australian Champion Checkmate Gay Lady only whelped two litters in her lifetime. From her first litter - sired by half-brother and top sire Australian Champion Epsom Thunder - came Cheviot Joanne. Unfortunately, as Joanne grew up, Gay Lady did not see room for 'another' bitch in her home. Judy Vos from the Clan-Abby Kennels in New Zealand had always seen Gay Lady as her 'ideal' Border Collie and that from which she desired to base her kennel upon.

Through contacts, the Vos' approached the owners of Gay Lady and were fortunate enough to purchase from them her daughter Cheviot Joanne.

Gay Lady's only other litter was to Victorian dog Mollara King Nero. From this litter came New Zealand Champion Cheviot Gay Lord who the Vos' imported a few years after Joanne has arrived in New Zealand. With her ideal bitch in mind, Gay Lord and Joanne were bred (a mating line-breeding on Gay Lady) and New Zealand Champion Clan-Abby Lorna Doone was born - who was to consolidate the attributes the Vos' saw and desired for their kennels' future breeding programme.

Blue Aberdoone's sire was New Zealand Champion Aberdeen Boy Of Clan-Abby - a multi Best In Show winner in New Zealand and top sire himself. Aberdeenboy sired the first litter of Border Collie pups born in quarantine in England, as he was mated to the U.K. bitch Merrybrook Sophie who was sent back to England in whelp in the mid 1980's. Aberdeenboy is a son of New Zealand's first all breed 'in-show' winner, New Zealand Champion Thunderboy Of Clan-Abby. 'Thunder' was the Vos' first inspiration of what their kennels could achieve by blending the top consolidated Victorian lines.

Thunder was another offspring of New Zealand Champion Cheviot Joanne - who as we have already seen was also the dam of Lorna Doone. When Joanne was imported from Australia, the Vos' were fortunate enough to have her sent to New Zealand in whelp to top Victorian sire and show dog, Australian Champion Crestvale Son Thunder. From this litter, four New Zealand Champions were born, including Thunderboy.

After this solidification of the imported dogs from Cheviot Kennels within New Zealand breeding programmes, the Vos' knew what they needed to improve on and contacted certain people in Australia. Through the help of friends and an understanding of what was needed at the time, the Vos' purchased Australian & New Zealand Champion Rullion Joy (Aust). Joy possessed a superb front and ears and helped to consolidate these two problems in the breed at that time. She was later mated to Thunderboy and from this mating many champions appeared, including Aberdeen Boy Of Clan-Abby.

The mating of Aberdeenboy to Lorna Doone was planned by the Vos' who desired to incorporate the attributes that Gay Lady and her subsequent progeny had incorporated into their breeding programme, as well as combining the constructional and genealogical attributes offered by the paternal grand-dam Rullion Joy.

With the tracing back of Blue's pedigree, it is interesting to see the great U.K. trial dogs of the late 1880's included within his lines, right back in fact to the first dog recorded in the International Sheep Dog Society Stud Book - Old Maid, plus of course Old Hemp 9.

It is now a matter of record, that since 1989 when the first two Clan-Abby dogs arrived in the U.K., 10 in total have now been imported and of these, 9 are now U.K.Champions (August 1996)'.

The following pedigree charts of New Zealand & English Show Champion Clan-Abby Blue Aberdoone - and his ancestors, lead us right back to those wonderful dogs of

yesteryear that for many are just names and numbers in the I.S.D.S. Stud books. For followers of bloodlines and also for those not convinced that the make-up of the New Zealand collie has any bearing on the traditional U.K. bred Border Collie, it is an opportunity to understand more and to familiarise themselves with the facts - because that is what they are.

PEDIGREE OF BLUE INSERTED HERE PLEASE ANDREW

Observing the coded letters on the right-hand side of Blue's pedigree chart indicates how far removed the early ISDS dogs are from the dogs in his fifth generation. These are the dogs first found, when tracing back through the generations.

A+E+U+CC. Six generations removed from T.Roberts' Lad 2419.

B. Five generations removed from Lad 2419.

C. Six generations removed from Lad 2419.

D. As C.

E. As A.

F+J+R. Five generations removed from Lad 2419.

G+I+Q. Seven generations removed from Lad 2419.

H. Four generations removed from Lad 2419.

I. As G.

J. As F.

K. Seven generations removed from Lad 2419.

L. Eight generations removed from P.Brotherstone's Beat 3897.

M+N. Five generations removed from Beat 3897 & Lad 2419.

O. Six generations removed from Beat 3897.

P. Five generations removed from Lad 2419.

Q. As G.

R. As F.

S. As K.

T. Six generations removed from Lad 2419.

U. As A.

V. Seven generations removed from Lad 2419.

W+EE. Three generations removed from Lad 2419.

X. Not Registered.

Y. Seven generations removed from Lad 2419.

Z. As C.

AA. Three generations removed from Lad 2419.

BB. Five generations removed from Lad 2419.

CC. As A.

DD. As V.

EE. As W.

FF. Not Registered.

It can be seen quite clearly that T.Roberts' Lad 2419 and P.Brotherstone's Beat 3897 cast a significant influence upon Blue's pedigree, and as such, he is seriously line-bred. There are of course many other I.S.D.S. collies held within the pedigree, but Lad and

Beat are the earliest and most common traced back in generation terms. Amongst the other registered and often U.K. exported dogs were Don 17; Lad 19; Sweep 21; Yarrow 23; Moss 28; Fenwick Jed 33; Winks 373; Ben 891; Sprig 2881 and Jean 2884.

There are also a small number of unregistered exported collies from the U.K. included within his pedigree, but I would say without the slightest hesitation, that Blue had an early pedigree that compared favourably with any other Border Collie/Working Sheepdog of it's time in the U.K.

Although we cannot study the pedigree of Lad 2419 who was born in 1935 in any great detail or certainty as neither his sire D.M.Roberts' Cap, or his dam Meg were registered, we can however look at the pedigree of P.Brotherstone's Beat 3897 and re-introduce ourselves to one of the earliest I.S.D.S. registered collies that was the founding force behind Clan-Abby Blue Aberdoone. I never had any doubt that there would be some great names linked with both Beat and Lad, but to discover that one of the most famous collies in the history of the breed - J.M.Wilson's Cap 3036 - was Beat's sire, was for me, a great moment. It took a long time, but Blue has finally returned 'home'.

PEDIGREE OF BEAT 3897 POSITIONED HERE PLEASE

Finally we explore the lineage of Polly's dam Lucy 171531. She was sired by Sheena and Bruce's wonderful Show Champion Tork of Whenway 121117 (Skeets) who was very powerfully and beautifully bred.

He was a son of Fred Thomas' Clun Roy 1. 92944 out of S.Baylis' Belle 69675. Entirely of I.S.D.S. registered ancestry, he was a litter brother to Megan of Barnsdale, who was herself the dam of Show Champion Barnsdale Nell of Hillsdale.

Bruce says that Clun Roy used to work in the livestock market moving everything from cattle and sheep to pigs. Fred, who was his last owner, lived on a smallholding in Shropshire where Roy worked cattle. Bruce actually handled Roy on one occasion at the LKA Championship Show where they placed second in Open Dog, only being beaten by the top dog of his day, Show Champion Tilehouse Cassius of Beagold. Bruce described Roy to me as a, *"Very good looking, hard, honest dog that 'took no prisoners' whilst working"*!

His sire was Sydney Price's Dave 65455, himself a son of John Templeton's 1972 International Supreme Champion Cap 50543 and his dam was T.Swan's Phil 51336, a daughter of John Gilchrist's famous sire, the 1965/66 Scottish National Champion Spot 24981. Cap, who claimed the 1972 Scottish Farmers' Championship, was also that years International & Scottish National Brace Champion with Fleet 37588. Tragically, Fleet was to die in a motel fire in the U.S.A. in 1973 soon after finishing in Reserve position at the first ever World Championships. Cap's sire was the undisputed 'sire of the century' the 1965 International Supreme Champion Wiston Cap 31154. Sire of two further Supreme Champions, three National Champions, two National Brace Champions, an International Driving Champion and a staggering total of 28 National Team Members his record speaks for itself.

Clun Roy's dam Fly 33034, was a daughter of W.J.Evans' 1963 English National Champion & Reserve International Supreme Champion Ben 12953 out of R.Gwilliam's Smit 20339. Ben was again from J.M.Wilson's legendary stock - in this instance -

Scotlands 'power dog', the 1955 Scottish National Champion Whitehope Nap 8685. Smit was bred by R.Gwilliam out of his Spot 7966 by Ben 2. 17060, himself a son of M.Jones' 1959 International Supreme Champion Ben 13879.

Skeets' dam, S.Baylis' Belle 69675, was certainly bred along very powerful lines. Her sire was that 'tiger of the trialling field' the 1968 International Supreme Champion Bosworth Coon 34186 whose lines, like Spot's we have studied many times before. Smut 51704, Belle's dam, was of breeding on her sires side that is not seen too often, although we are still looking at quality dogs. Her sire was T.Longton's really handsome Ken 17166 the 1966 International Supreme Champion. I don't know the reason why, but Ken features in very few pedigrees that I have compiled over the years, so to have him thrice in one pedigree is something really special. He is another to have the benefit of Davy Dickson's Ben 5592 in his line, being his maternal grandfather. Quite the opposite can be said for Smut's dam Dell 46443, as she was a daughter of that most prolific sire, Wiston Cap! Dell's mother was R.Gwilliams' Spottie 37430, a daughter of the 1964 International Supreme Champion Craig 15445 with L.R.Suter.

Bruce and Sheena had these further comments to make on Skeet's:

"Skeets was a lovely natured dog who always lived in the house, was full of life - and was a real handful to show. He was delightful outside the Breed ring, but once you entered the ring for his class - what a difference! He was the total opposite of a statue - I don't think he ever stood still once, but he did well enough to win 5 CC's including two at Crufts, where he was Best of Breed in 1983. It was such a pity that he died at only seven years of age as he was a really wonderful dog"

Lucy's dam, Sheena 123210, was a daughter of Mary Miller's Show Champion Asoka Navajho of Firelynx (Buck) 98518 out of Sheena Kilsby's Wisp 109509.

By Danny Wilde's Shep 73359 and out of Mrs.M.J.Litton's Asoka Cloud, Buck was another fine example of the type of dog first seen at the grass roots of showing and was the breeds second male show champion.

Shep, who was a litter brother to the 1976 International Supreme Champion Shep 73360 with G.Jones, was bred by Harry Thomas out of his Tamsin 66472 by Shep 2. 49061. Shep 2, who Harry bought in from Llyr Evans, was another son of the legendary 1965 International Supreme Champion Wiston Cap 31154 out of J.Irving's Kim 39897. Kim was a great-granddaughter of J.M.Wilson's 1955 International Supreme Champion Bill 9040, the last in a long line of champions to come into the hands of this most famous of Scottish handlers.

Tamsin was a daughter of J.G.Nixon's 1978 English National Team Member Rex 58295 out of Queen 41968, herself a daughter of A.G.Bonsall's 1970 English National Brace Champion Roy 21287. Rex, who placed twelfth at the 1978 National, was a maternal grandson of Wiston Cap 31154 through his dam Jill 46568 and a paternal great-grandson of both W.J.Evans' 1962 English National Champion Don 13392 and E.J.O.Evans' 1966 Welsh National Team Member Jaff 17731 who placed fifth in that years National.

Wisp 109509 was a daughter of G.Jones' International Supreme Champion Bill 51654 out of G.P.Pierce's Langloch Jenny 102007.

Well, what can one say? What a super pedigree with just about everything including looks and ability thrown in. I hope you have found the inclusion of 'Blue' the New Zealand dog as interesting as I did. It does just go to show that brains and beauty can work well together and the fact that Johnny Wilson's great dual International Supreme Champion Spot was the first Supreme Champion to sire a Show Champion provides ample evidence for this.

It was my pleasure to meet Synve and her partner Wolfgang recently on their visit to England when they spent a week in Cornwall. Celtic I liked immediately. An imposing looking dog, his obvious talents when working sheep were quick to reveal themselves. It was interesting observing a dog that had been used to dealing with heavy sheep now confronted with light (in comparison) Scottish Blackface. At first, as one would expect, he was completely taken aback at the speed of them but his cleverness soon had them worked out. This became very apparent when after just one week Synve and Celtic attended a local trial as 'visitors' and placed third in this section. If she is successful in obtaining a Merit registration for Celtic then it will be the breed that will benefit most, for he is a very articulate, intelligent and temperamentally sound dog with good certification for eyes and a 4-5 hip score.

However, in the traditional manner, the last words rest with Synve: -

"I started training Celtic on my own sheep when he was about a year old. In 1996 there were still very few Border Collies in Austria and I was eager for a dog with a good herding instinct. I had been working my 17 sheep with my sheltie Robin and even entered him in sheepdog trials.

Robin was a brilliant sheltie with a pronounced herding instinct. He was really useful with his own sheep, and a great help with small lambs, which he would gently nudge towards me with his nose when asked to fetch them. But in the trials the sheep would usually give him a very hard time indeed. I had been training him with Christl Kurzbauer's class of Border Collies and I admired the style and concentration of the Border Collies at the trials.

When I finally got Celtic I had been longing to own a Border Collie for years - but he had to be from Great Britain, from real working lines and getting in contact with the right breeders wasn't as easy then as it is now - what with the Internet and e-mails!

I had been studying Border Collie bloodlines for some years and when I heard that our most successful Show Border Collie breeder Heidi Poschacher was ordering a bitch puppy from Bruce Kilsby the famous English breeder and show judge, I immediately loved the pedigree of the unborn puppies and ordered a dog puppy from the litter for myself.

I nearly couldn't wait for Celtic to become old enough to start him on sheep. He had lots of instinct obviously, and when he was half a year old he became quite a nuisance as he would herd cars! When we walked along a street he would make every effort to throw himself in front of every car that passed. He wanted to head and stop them!

Luckily this behaviour stopped without trace once I started to train him on sheep!

Finally I had a dog with natural balance and the power cope with unwilling sheep! I am training my second sheltie by now - just to see how much ability there is left in this breed, and both were lacking in natural balance and have no power over sheep that have no intention of doing what you want them to do.

Celtic was very exuberant and quite pushy in his youth, rather difficult to stop - and I think if I hadn't been so fascinated by his natural abilities in comparison to my sheltie, I should have used more training time in teaching him discipline, instead of enjoying to watch him do things his own way! I loved sending him out and seeing him cover the sheep without command and bringing them to me by the power of his instinct instead of helped along by fifty commands, as would I would need with the sheltie. I am afraid Celtic is still much too fast on his fetch and doesn't like to take commands there, because he feels, this is really his responsibility that I have nothing to do with.

As Celtic is a very strong dog, very positive and quite sure of himself. This made him - not exactly stubborn, but certainly difficult to impress by anything I did. But on the other hand I feel I can really rely on him when it comes to moving difficult sheep. He never loses his nerves, trusting in his ability to move them eventually. He has never gripped unnecessarily or hung on to a sheep in frustration. If he needs to grip it is always a decisive little nudge or nip. Austrian trainer Christl Kurzbauer likes to use Celtic to "break in" difficult training sheep that will face a dog looking for a fight.

Well, really eager to get trialling after some years of trying to trial a sheltie, I tried to run Celtic in his first trial at 17 months - and he went wild on the course, chasing the sheep all over the place - I had a job catching him in order to retire as hastily as possible! I think I had about expected him to win straight away, since he was working very nicely at home. So I was quite shattered and decided to train him a lot more before trying again. So I went to every training course in Austria (three all in all) the following year and entered him again. Now he won Class 1 (That is an Austrian nursery trial without any driving)

Meanwhile I had also been training him for Agility - I had been very involved in Agility with the sheltie Robin, who was really brilliant at it (he was European Champion 1993)

Celtic was also quite a good Agility dog. He got into the National team for the Agility World Championship 1999 and the Austrian team came forth.

Then I moved to Vienna, had to give up my sheep and Celtic had three years where I didn't have much time to compete in shows or sheepdog trials until last autumn (2002) when I decided to enter him in the two working tests for Border Collies that had been installed by our breeding club by then and are held twice a year.

There is an easy test for the show dogs, the "Championprüfung" with only a 30 metres gather and no driving, which is ment to give the show Border Collies the opportunity to show whether they have any herding instinct left.

Then there is the "Hütehundeprüfung" which is similar to the "Interrace course".

A puppy whose parents have passed the "Hütehundeprüfung" will be sold as "from herding lines" (Leistungszucht)

Celtic came second in the Hütehundeprüfung and worked so well that I decided it would be a pity not to give him the chance to train again. I have been trying to give him some sheepdog training once a week since, mostly at Christl Kurzbauer's place. (Industrial site in the outskirts of Vienna) I had been planning to enter him in every Austrian trial in 2003 but he fractured a little bone in his front paw in April. So I could not run him before July, when he won Class 2 (driving class) in the two-day "International Alpentrial". International in this case meant that German and Swiss handlers were competing, too.

This was one of our few driving class trials. Of our 4-5 trials we have per year about half are Interrace courses and the other half are driving classes of the usual British kind.

In August 2003 we went on a holiday to England with our dogs.

We went to fetch a puppy from Roy Goutte, a lovely little bitch called Belle, by Roy 235516 out of Seirian Lou.

I was also able to see two sheepdog trials. The first one - the Sevensisters trial- I found by accident and the organizers were kind enough to let me and Celtic have a go after the last competitor. This was a great experience for us, firstly because neither me nor Celtic had worked on such a big field yet. The sheep were out of sight to the dog - I could only see a tiny dot on the other side of the hill!

I was really thrilled when he did a very nice outrun over a distance much bigger than anything he had ever encountered before!

(Well his first thought was to fetch the sheep from the exhaust pen, which he had to pass at the beginning at the outrun, not being used to be sent for sheep out of sight, but once he got past them he was all right!)

At the end of our holiday Roy organized to let us have a run at a trial in Devon, and unbelievably we were lucky enough to get a rosette for third place in the visitor's class (which Roy won)

I have got the feeling I learnt a lot during my stay in England. Those English sheep seemed so sensitive and flighty to me that I realized I have to get Celtic to respond to his commands much more exactly because there will be no time for corrections. With slow, heavy sheep much less

precision is needed. I also found that to be able to slow him down much more, instead of letting him chose his own pace. I am also trying to get him to get to his feet slower, so as not to scare sheep be a quick move.

Interestingly I also found that I need a command to get him to flank less wide in some circumstances. I had been so proud on his square flanks, but sometimes with those quick sheep they moved off faster than Celtic could cover them because he flanked too squarely.

Back in Austria I ran Celtic in this year's last trial (September 2003), the National trial at Dietrichsbach and he came third. It was an Interrace course with only a short gather and drive but lots of other shepherding tasks.

My next aim is to qualify Celtic for the National team for next year's Continental. In two year's time the 2005 Continental is going to be held in Austria again! Since Celtic is very fit and doesn't seem to show any signs of age –he is seven, but he seems like four - I am really looking forward to it!

By the way - my thanks to Roy for letting us train on his sheep, giving us the opportunity to compete at the Devon trial and selling us a great little working dog sired by his wonderful Roy 235516 (Belle tried to work Roy's sheep at 8 weeks of age like a grown-up Border Collie would-style, eye, she's got it all!)

My thanks also to Working Sheepdog News (International Sheepdog News) I've read every single word in every issue since I've been a subscriber (seven years) and have had more pleasure from it than I can describe, especially when I had very limited access to sheep".