



The Barrington champion water spaniel, 'Fynder Rustum', shown here on this 1983 Irish stamp.

Irish Water Spaniel

UK and AKC Standards, Height 21-23in (53-58cm), 20-22in (51-56cm)

Origin/history: As the name implies, the Irish water spaniel, of ancient lineage, was developed in Ireland. The tallest member of the spaniel family and particularly good at retrieving in water, the coat being naturally water-resistant.

Characteristics: Strongly built and compact, very intelligent, eager, and bred for work in all types of shooting. Face should be smooth, and high-domed skull covered with long curls. Muzzle squarish, eyes small, brown and alert. Back short, broad and level, barrel-shaped in appearance. Coat composed of dense, tight and crisp ringlets free from woolliness. Tail short and straight, covered up to 3-4in (7-10cm) below root with close curls, the remainder with straight fine hairs. Colour, rich dark liver.

Temperament: Very loyal and devoted to his master and family. A good sense of humour. Drawbacks: Coat needs careful attention.

(The Complete Book of the Dog, 1985).

THE BARRINGTON DOGS: IRISH WATER SPANIELS

Irish water spaniels are thought to have existed in the Limerick area for several centuries. It has been suggested that they originated in the East and found their way to the Irish shores via Spain and the shipwrecked boats of the Armada.

Whatever the precise origins, these dogs were popular with the fishermen of

by *Mary-Rose
Barrington-Manuel*

the south-west for work with nets and also for catching rats. They were used also in the Shannon Estuary for finding duck eggs and retrieving waterfowl.



Lady Mary-Rose Barrington, with 'Grouse' and puppies, 1908.



Captain C.E. Barrington and Miss G. M. Bligh, (later Barrington) with 'Skipper' at Rainscar Moor, Yorkshire, 1931.

During the last century, they were a common sight at Watergate in Limerick, where the washerwomen found that the soap attracted rats to the banks of the River Shannon. The dogs were used to control the vermin.

The Barrington family has long been associated with these dogs. In fact, local people still often refer to them as 'Barrington dogs'. Family records, which date them back to the early nineteenth century, show that in the early days they were used for vermin control and also for informal sport, when they flushed and retrieved game, such as hare and snipe.

References to these dogs exist in the correspondence of Sir Matthew (1788-1861) and also in a journal of Sir William (1815-72). As the Glenstal estate was consolidated and landscaped, so the sport and shooting evolved and became formalized. The great rhododendron plantations and woodland coverts grew to form the basis of the Glenstal woodcock beats, where record bags at the turn of the century exceeded 200. The family used Irish water spaniels exclusively on the shoot, for both Sir Croker and his son, Sir Charles, main-



tained that 'the smaller land spaniels were of little use, having neither nose nor brain for woodcock'.

The dogs generally were bred and kept in the stable yard, and some with the keepers at the back lodge. During the last century they were, of course, not registered, and it is difficult to follow the respective keeper's pedigrees, for the names were usually repeated. The dogs that the keeper O'Neill kept were generally called 'Paddy' and 'Duchess', and the later ones that the keeper Verront had were generally called 'Punch' and 'Judy'.

When Mary-Rose Bacon married Sir Charles, then one or two of the dogs began to play a larger part in family life. 'Grouse' was a family favourite in the early 1900s; she was a great worker on the shoot but also travelled extensively with the family, and my father (the late Sir Charles Barrington), regularly took her with him when fishing, for she was very clever at pointing and retrieving fish.

My cousin, the late Miss Florence Barrington, with her great Annagh dogs, is a name that has become almost synonymous with the breed. Although the family always had the dogs, the first that Miss Barrington actually owned was 'Paddy' (No. 1), who was bred in 1918 by Brian Day, the gamekeeper at Ballinagard and went back in time to Sir Charles' 'Paddy' of 1893, and John Barrington's 'Tweedie' of 1906.

Miss Barrington subsequently dedicated much of her life to the breed, and at one time had as many as sixty-four dogs in the kennels at Clonshavoy. Today, the legacy of her work features somewhere in a great many I.W.S. pedigrees throughout the world.

Her brother, Captain C.E. Barrington, also had several Irish water spaniels; he married Miss G.M. Bligh, who, although known throughout the world with her Brittas German shepherds, is also very well known internationally for her Brittas Irish water spaniels.

The most prominent kennel in the United Kingdom for over a decade has been 'Fynder'. It has produced a dozen U.K. champions, two Irish champions and two Canadian champions; it has produced also dogs that have surpassed many of the breed records established by the late Trench O'Rorke with his Breiffny dogs.

The Fynder Kennel carries on the Barrington legacy, for it is founded on an outstanding dam, show champion Brittas 'Willow Wren', bred by Mrs. G.M. Barrington and whose sire was 'Slipper' of Annagh, bred by Miss Florence Barrington. 'Willow Wren' goes back directly in line to the great Barrington dogs of yesteryear.

Barrington dogs are indeed a small part of the family heritage and one that I feel will continue surely well into the future.



Florence Barrington (left), with 'The Cutty Sark', and Gwen Barrington (centre) with 'Snipe of Gurteen', Rainscar, 1931.



'Friendship in Irish water spaniels'. The well known Limerick nationalist and water spaniel breeder, John Danford (2nd left), and Florence Barrington (2nd right), pictured at Clonshavoy House, August, 1966, with the Kennedy family. Water spaniels: 'Hornpipe', 'Mountain Ash', 'Mermaid', 'Mr. Jones' and 'Snowdrop'.



Mary-Rose Barrington-Manuel, with 'Kerry', best puppy at 1st Irish Water Spaniels Show, Kitebrook, 1973.



Jessie Barrington-Manuel with the 'Fynder' dogs.