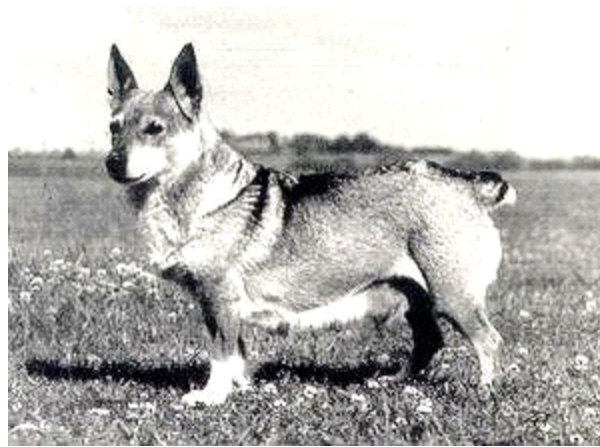


A few pages from the history of the Västgotaspets



When I, a few days ago, had a letter from headmaster Nilsson, where he asked me to write an article for The Magazine, preferably about the Västgotaspets, I was a bit hesitant. It is not so easy to tell about these dogs without (to my mind) putting my humble person too much in the headlight.

Well, my dear ex- pupils, you will therefore have to forgive me for appearing rather a lot in this article .

You, who have had me as a teacher, know that I have always been very interested in animals. When I was 8-9 years of age, my dream was to become a cattleman, and my oldest and clearest memory is when I one day came into the kitchen and to my delight found "neighbour-ma'm" with a little kiddie for me. I could tell you a lot of funny stories about that male goat.

In the end he became so vicious – but not with me – that he had to be slaughtered.

After that I had several different animals, but no dog, because my father was of the opinion that the only dogs who had any justification for existence were huntingdogs.

As he for some years had a rather big farm, horses and cows became a great interest of mine.

However – you can not have cows and horses indoors, and therefore it came naturally that I in due time got myself a dog – some of you might remember the Scottish Terrier Essan, who certainly was no beauty but an excellent companion for Ingrid.

Already in the beginning of my stay in Vara I had noticed a small, alert, stubtailed dog – you could sometimes see them in the monthly markets. When I then was told what splendid cow-herders they were, I started to think about applying to the Swedish Kennelclub , to get permission to show a few of them in a show, but these plans were never realized.

During the summer -42 I saw a note in a paper, that count Björn von Rosen wished to be contacted by owners of, what he called , stubtailed Västgötaspets. I had met him once at

the Bjertorp school of rural economics and knew that he was one of our very best judges of terriers. I became of course very interested and wrote to him, that I indeed did not own one of these dogs, but had for several years been very interested in the breed, and that I was willing to help him to the best of my ability.

To succeed with a mission one must have some luck sometimes, and I was lucky, otherwise I would never have been able to contribute to the acknowledgment of this breed.

The thing was that the girls of the JUF-section (agricultural youth association) had a weaving-course at the peoples high school – so of course I went down there and asked if they knew anything about the Västgötaskets.

Yes! I got several tips about where I could find some dogs.

So I started to tour around the neighbourhood with my camera and took pictures of, what I considered being typical Västgötaskets, and also of some less typical.

When I arrived at the home of Gunborg and Anders Andersson "Nils-Ers-gården", the father stood by the well with his dog – this dog was so ideal, it really gave me chock.

The dog was Topsy, who later came to be the standard-dog for the entire breed.

But this was not all – I was directed to Paul and Alice Jonsson of Karstorp, Naum. Their bitch Tessan played the most important part of all bitches in the breeding, since Topsy was 13 years old and therefore could not be used as a mother.

In Karstorp I was directed to their cousin Britta Skaar of Hålltorp, where I also found a bitch of good quality.

Now I had three – to my liking – very typical bitches, but the most difficult part remained – to find a suitable male dog. We reasoned for a good while in Hålltorp and then Mrs Skaar suggested that I should visit Mr Bertil Dahlén of Duskebo, who possibly would have a male dog.

His male Mopsen was not as good as the bitches but quite acceptable. I had the pictures developed and copies sent to Count von Rosen. After a few days I had his answer, he declared that we obviously shared the same opinion about the breed.

When Count von Rosen a few weeks later visited his old schoolmate agronomist Littorin at Bjertorp, he got in touch with me (I suspect it was Mrs Littorin who got him interested in the Västgötaskets-breed. She was a wellknown breeder and a popular judge in shows)

We now decided to go on our bikes together and "inspect" the dogs we had found suitable. Except for my answer Count von Rosen had two others, one from the Skoog family at Rännagården, Vedum. The bitch they had was of great interest because she was reddish-yellow, while the ones I had found were grey.

When we came to the second person who had answered, we turned around before we even met someone at the farm – the dog that met us was a typical white Samojedspitz, who happened to have a stub-tail.

Like me Count von Rosen was very taken with Topsy at the Nils-Ers farm and he still "sings to her praise" when we meet. During the two days we went on our biketours the Count

took numerous pictures of the beautiful dogs - these pictures were later used in a detailed article published in the Swedish Daily News , where the count regularly wrote about dogs - useful also when he called upon the secretary of the Swedish Kennel Club, in order to obtain permission to show the typical dogs at the autumn-show in Gothenburg.

After a while it came to my knowledge that mr Artur Rygell in Salstad also had a Västgötaspets-bitch. She was a bit on the small side but besides that very typical. Well, now we had four bitches and one male dog to show in Gothenburg.

You can well understand our excitement, when the dogowners and myself travelled to the show - and I assure you that the Västgötaspetses attracted a lot of attention.

All experts were astonished by the evenness of the dogs being on show, and in 1943, the following year, the SKC recognized the Västgötaspets as a breed and count von Rosen was given the commission to write the first standard. The breed was now rescued!

I had no intention myself to start breeding this new - but in reality very old - breed, but when the SKC had inquiries about puppies they referred to me and hence I had no choice but to take care of the breed - and I have never regretted that!!

I was still looking for new dogs and on a bicycletour to Eling, I found the bitch Tyra, who alongside of Tessian should be in most västgötaspetses pedigrees, above all through her son Ch Borghällas'Ajo, whom a great deal of you probably have seen since he lived with headmaster David Olsson.

He had (like any other dog) his faults but he has meant a great deal to the development of the breed.

Luckily enough the breed soon saw a number of very serious breeders, but unfortunately there were also less scrupulous people "dealing in dogs". These people managed to bring discredit to the breed for some time - this is luckily enough a passed episode.

In England there is a breed called Welsh Corgi, you can see two types, one is stubtailed. I knew this and I had even wrote a small article in the SKC-magazine about the stunning resemblance between the Västgötaspets and the Corgi. One day I received a letter from the SKC in which I was asked to send a few good pictures of Västgötaspets to mr Clifford Hubbard, a wellknown English writer of books about dogs. When he got the pictures he was, to say the least, surprised, and immediately wrote me along letter in which he declared that the two breeds must share the same origin.

The Corgi is mentioned in Wales already in the 900 century, and now English experts discuss whether this breed has got its stubtail from the Västgötaspets, during the vikingdays, or if it is the other way around.

Clifford Hubbard has been so involved in this question that he has visited Sweden , one reason for his visit was to see me and to study my dogs.

I did not want to take a stand myself in this question, but when I, this spring, went to the big interantional show in Brussels with my Garr, I saw for the first time a fulltailed Corgi,

and I came to the conclusion that this was the original type, which through inbreeding with the Vsätgötaskets became stubtailed.

If I am right will be another question!

I can add that in the county of Pembroke (which most probably is the place of origin of the stubtailed Corgi) names of local places ending with -ford and -by are not uncommon - and these are memories from the vikingdays

.
As you well can understand, this is very interesting, especially to me.

A few weeks ago a breeder told me that she had heard of a runic stone, found in the county of Västergötland - on this stone there is a picture of a dog.

If this dog should happen to be stubtailed, maybe this question would get closer to its solution.

I would therefore be most grateful, if someone would inform me, in case he/she has made any observations.

As I have mentioned before, several serious breeders have helped to make the Västgötaskets more and more appreciated and wellknown. At the show in Gothenburg this month, not less than 23 dogs were entered, and splendid breedinggroups were shown.

I have myself experienced many proofs of appreciation in my work with this breed.

In 1948 the SKC bestowed me their most eminent award - the Hamilton plaquet !
Edshammar, Storvreta in September 1961

K G Zetterstén