

Valdemar

In 1975, the first Swedish Vallhunds came to New Zealand. Mrs Cartledge, who bred Pekingese, and at that time lived just outside Tauranga brought in Ryslip Fabian, and a bitch called Margot. A friend of hers, Miss Hyslop, also imported a bitch, but it developed Ovarian Cysts and had to be spayed. Mrs Cartledge, who was no relation of the Cartledges of Ryslip Kennels, became interested in the breed because her daughter had gone to the U.K. for her overseas experience and had worked as a kennel maid at Ryslip Kennels!

In the early 80s, my husband, Ian Gray, was looking forward to retiring at the end of 1984. He was looking for some interesting activity to take up his retirement. He had been a Teachers College senior lecturer and a primary school headmaster. We got a small glasshouse - I look after it. We investigated Orchids. We still have a few. When he went to Pottery night classes we knew we had found an answer- Even before he retired the output was amazing.

One day he said, You know, if I got a dog, I'd have to take it for walks, wouldn't I? I can't be sitting at this wheel throwing pots ALL day! I, having been brought up on a farm, had always said that a dog in town couldn't get enough exercise. Also we had a yacht, so any dog would have to be able to go on the boat. (We had seen plenty of people rowing ashore in the mornings with an eager sea dog in the dinghy's bow). Our boat had a fairly high gunwale; one might have to lift the dog with one hand from dinghy to boat and vice versa. It had better not be too big a dog!

We went to some shows. We decided that the smallish dog should have an easy care coat that didn't need trimming, and ears and a nose that had not been bred into unusual shapes. My husband came home from the local library with an armful of dog books. We studied the pictures and descriptions of the dogs of the world, and we both liked the Vastotaspets (West Goth Spitz) or Swedish Vallhund. We went to some more shows hoping to see some, but alas there were none.

We wrote to the Australian Kennel Control but drew a blank. We then wrote to The Kennel Club in England, asking for our letter to be forwarded to the Secretary of the Vallhund Society, if there were such a body. We entered into a long and exhaustive correspondence with Nicky Gascoigne of Rosern Kennels. She sent us the 1982 Swedish Vallhund Societys Handbook, and we began to get our eye in, on the good points and faults of the breed.

Nicky had a bitch that she had run on, that she thought might be suitable. She sent out her pedigree. We asked Nicky to look for a suitable dog puppy to send with the bitch, who was 9 months old. She found us Santa, who had been bred by the Countess of Inchcape, who had become a patron of the Swedish Vallhund Society. She had got Santas mother, Hildrek Helena, from the Edmunds. Helena had been mated to Gralotens Urax , the Edmunds latest import from Sweden, and Santa seemed promising. In due course, Santa, 4 ½ months old and Vancy 9 1/2 months old made the long flight from England to New Zealand.

At our first glimpse of their little grey coats through the gratings of their crates, we thought there was some mistake. Wed been sent a couple of little possums! On closer inspection, it was all right. They were two beautiful Vallhunds. We were fortunate that they didnt have to be quarantined but only to be confined to our property for 30 days. 31 days after they arrived, Vancy came into season for the first time.

CH Rosern Vancy had 3 litters and was an excellent mother. After we had made Santa and Vancy, and their daughter Alpha up, as Breed Champions, we turned to Obedience, as these are working dogs and need something to think about and work towards. Practising our Obedience exercises gives focus to our early morning walks. It makes a great start to the day.

Valdemar Aster was the last puppy born in our first litter. She was smaller than the others but she was such a go-er, that she was the same weight as all the others at 6 weeks. She has been a go-er ever since. She was sold, but owing to

circumstances beyond her control, came back to us a year later. She had done no Obedience or Agility, but took to both like a duck to water. She obtained her CDX at the same time as her sister Alpha, at the Palmerston North RNDDA. Tracking was so exciting Dad. Lets hurry and get to the end was her motto. This was refreshing for her handler who had worked only with Santa who is very careful and methodical in his tracking. Aster is inclined not to notice articles on the track, she is so busy getting along the track in double quick time. The same eagerness is apparent in her Agility and whereas Alpha spent a long time being correct and not quite fast enough, so that she was placed in Starters, Novice and Open, but never won any of them. Aster soon found herself with Santa, only able to enter Open and Senior.

Lesley Gray