

Profile

Tony Killy-keen Doyle **Interviewed by Elizabeth Murphy**

Q: Were Irish Wolfhounds your first Breed?

A: No, the family kept Irish Setters and shot with them, my Grandfather ran Greyhounds.

Q: Were the Irish Setters shown?

A: They were real Setters, not the animals to be seen in the Show Ring, all glamour and no substance. Our dogs were as different as chalk from cheese, powerful dogs with great fore and hind quarters, plenty of bone and could work all day.

Q: When did you become interested in Irish Wolfhounds?

A: We lived with my Grandmother, Catherine Fitzpatrick Richardson-Smith, a grand-daughter of Hugh D. Richardson, who did so much for the breed in the 1840's. He helped keep it going through the famine—the Kilfane and Ballytobin kennels were founded on Richardson's stock. Granny was proud of this, until her death a few years ago in her 90's, she still referred to the breed as Irish Wolfdogs!

Q: When did you get your first hound and how old were you?



Tony at 11 years, when he got his first I.W.

A: I was 11 years old when Emer came from Dr. May in 1954. She cost £40, a fortune then. The parents were Joe of Ballytobin & Cill Dara Moushla. Joe and Moushla were dark brindles, with white chests, paws and tips to their tails which hung to the ground. Their coats were like steel wool, small ears, dark eyes and full face furnishings. In retrospect, it was lucky that the first hound came from such good parents of correct type and soundness. Very often one gets their first hound bred by novices whose stock is not first rate, the unfortunate buyer has much to learn, or should I say **unlearn**, as their values are based on their puppy's dam.

The first prize ever won at a Show was under that great judge, Miss Loughrey, alas no longer with us. It was best Puppy at the Kennel Club Show. We arrived to find Miss Loughrey had finished judging, four puppies were lined up and she was about to mark her book. On being told that the absentee had arrived, she said to bring it in. She went over my exhibit and told me to go to the top of the line, and announced to the exhibitors that there were three types of Irish Wolfhounds: The Cart-horse, the Hunter, and the Thoroughbred. The Thoroughbred arrived late, but won! In later years I won Green Stars and a Hound Group under Miss Loughrey who would add "it's only because this hound is a thoroughbred, and not a cart-horse."



Tony with Emer (on the right). The young lad next to him looks familiar, yes it's J. Behan.

Q: Were many hounds shown then?

A: Only a handful, the main exhibitors being Dr. May, Miss Seale, Miss Gardner, Mrs. O'Flaherty, Mrs. Harper, Mrs. Tyrell, Billy Kerr Donnan and Miss Twyman. However, the hounds were good. Most were dark or grey brindles except for the Ballykellys, who always have a few wheaten's.

Q: How did the exhibitors take to an 11 year old child?

A: Bill Kerr Donnan who showed her Ch. Fuath of Ulaid, Ch. Taraheen Tartan and Flanning of Ballykelly, Sean O'Flaherty showed his mother's Taraheen's and Jim Behan was showing for Dr. May. They were not much older than me and we made up the younger generation. We worked hard on our hounds, a five or six mile walk every evening after school, rain or shine, no wonder our hounds were in hard condition and had muscles.

You would not dare take a hound into the ring that had not been washed a week before. I have no time for children's handling classes, which are valued on the children's performance. We had no concessions, you earned your prize by showing a good hound well and in condition, and I don't mean pig fat. Too many dogs are shown fat and soft now—the Judges then would give you hell if you did.

Q: In your opinion, has the breed improved since you started?

A: The best hounds of 25 years ago could more than hold their own to-day. Remember, the breed was in the hands of a few dedicated people who followed the standard and knew it backwards. They did not wish to change it. They worked to produce hounds of type and soundness as demanded by the Breed Standard. When you realise how few owners and hounds were around, to list some of the hounds, shows how well the job was done. In Ireland, you had Ch. Sheelagh of Ballytobin, Ch. Fuath of Ulaid, Ch. Molony of Ballykelly, Ch. Boreen and her brother Ch. Brannigan of Ballykelly, Ch. Antostal of Ballykelly, Dr. May's Ch. Donegan of Ballykelly, Ch. Taraheen Tartan, Ch. King of Coolafin.

In England were Ch. Kathleen of Bradfield, Ch. Sulhamstead Manna, Ch. Sulhamstead Freda, Ch. Sulhamstead Fellus, Felcara, Ch. Rippingdon Rathgelert, Ch. Urla of Arraghlen, Conal of Eaglescrag and Ch. Sanctuary Rory of Kihone. Some of these came over to the Irish Shows.

Q: Did you breed from Emer?

A: She went to three Champions, but never conceived. During the next few years, I spent summer holidays with Sheelagh Seale in Avoca. Sheelagh taught me so much, and it was a joy to be with her magnificent hounds. I'm sure she would agree that during the 50's her kennel housed her best stock, Ch. Molony, Ch. Boreen, Ch. Brannigan, Ch. Antostal, Ch. Diarmuid of Dunamaise, Int. Ch. McGilligan, the beautiful Tessagh and so many others.



Ballykelly Kilkeny of Killykeen (7 months)

I returned home the summer of '58 with 'Finn', Ballykelly Kilkeny of Killykeen, a daughter of Fergus and Casbah of Ballykelly. She was the only brindle in a black litter, Casbah being jet black. Kilkeny was no glamour girl but she was an

honest hound, well made, very sound, with great angulation, small ears and long tail that reached the ground.

Her first litter was to Finnigan of Ballykelly, a small, well made hound, a son of Ch. Malonk and Ch. Boreen. This was his only litter and through this the only descendants of Ch. Boreen. It was a good litter born December '59. Aidinn of Killykeen went to Jennifer Townson of the Kelperland Kennels, England, as a yearling. She won her class at Crufts 1961 under Mrs. Nagle. Taken to Ch. Eaglescrag Clonroe of Nendrum, she produced Kelperland Dignity who was bred to Ch. Sulhamstead Match and produced Sulhamstead Delia and Rossut Domnick of Edeyre. Aidinn's sister, Aishling of Killykeen had a litter to Int. Ch. McGilligan of Ballykelly; a daughter, Meadhb, is behind a number of Mrs. Woodbury's Eaglesnest Champions in the U.S.A.

Kilkenny had a litter to Ch. Diarmuid of Dunamais, a hound of size and type, but his hind quarters were not his fortune. However, Kilkenny being so sound, I took the risk and the gamble paid off. She had four puppies, Blarney of Killykeen who was the foundation of Dr. and Mrs. Mainwaring's Sarlsgate Kennel. Killykeen Breiffne went to Mrs. Woodbury and sired a number of Champions including Ch. Phantom Finbarr of Eaglesnest.

When I was showing Kilkenny, Miss Twyman was also in the ring with her beautiful Carol, later to become Int. Ch. Carol of Eaglescrag, bred by her sister, Mrs. Jenkins. At Dundalk, Ch. Show, classes were held up waiting for Twymie whom we knew was coming and which a telephone call to her mother confirmed. The pair arrived an hour late, Carol covered in mud. Twymie had stopped near a wood to exercise the hound, who saw and took off after a hare! A quick rub down and brushing, into the ring, and our huntress won Best of Breed!

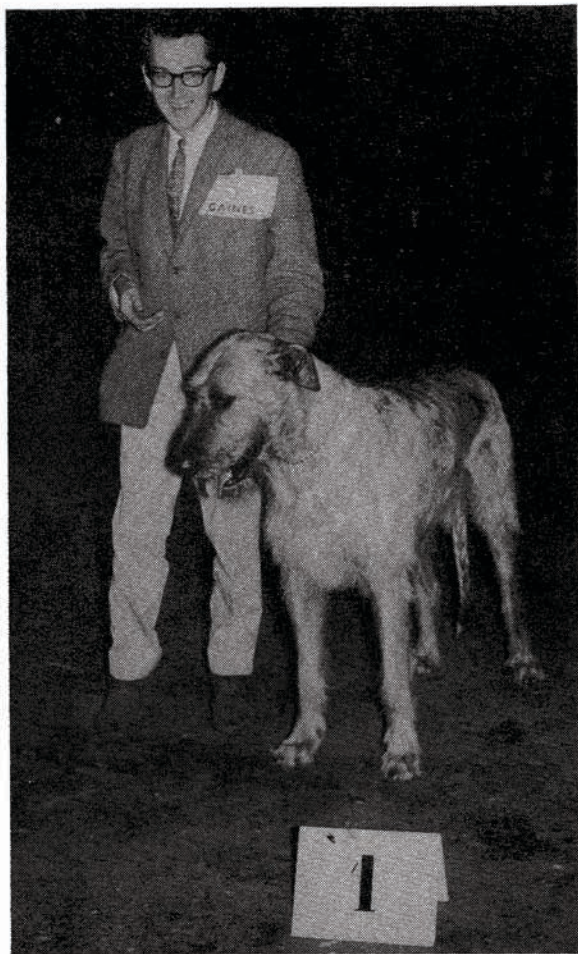
When I went abroad, Kilkenny returned to Miss Seale. She had a litter to a son of Ch. Sulhamstead Merman, Ballykelly Kilpadraic of Boroughbury and produced Ch. Ballykelly Portmagee owned by Mr. Thomas O'Leary and was the start of the Dunleary Kennel.

Kilkenny, whom I picked from a litter of 12 produced better than herself when taken to good dogs. However, she was well made, sound in body and temperament with no outstanding faults and that is half the battle won.



Ch. Killykeen Roshin of Woodenbridge with her son Killykeen Torram.

My next good bitch was Ch. Killykeen Roshin of Woodenbridge, possibly one of the best daughters of Ch. Connel of Nendrum, out of Dana of Aru, a daughter of Int. Ch. McGilligan and Little Mo of Ballygran. She won her first points under Miss Twyman. Again, not a big bitch, but very beautiful and sound. She had courage and with her son Killykeen Torram, hunted red deer. Torram could not be shown as he broke a hindleg across the stifle, but he could work. So much for running around a Show Ring! Roshin's first litter was to a son of Miss Twyman's Int. Ch. Colin of Nendrum, Cavin of Ballykelly. That litter of five contained Ch. Killykeen Micky Finn, Ch. Killykeen Mavourneen of Killybracken, Ch. Killykeen Malaci and Int. Ch. Killykeen Molony. The bitch I kept died from an accident at ten months old.



Int. Ch. Killykeen Molony

In my opinion, her best puppies were to her half brother, Ballykelly Connor of St. Doulaghs. Their son, Torram, mated to his mother, gave me my best bitches. Roshin mated to Mrs. Harper's Jan of Ballygran, gave me Killykeen Michael. It's not often that one gets such a good bitch—treat them like gold dust.

I suppose to late I have bred 17 or 18 Champions, I must have soundness and good angulation. Without that, you don't have true type. Size can take care of itself. It always has.



Killykeen Michael

Temperament is an important part of breed type. One can, in most cases, correct an aggressive puppy in the next, but I do hate to see a hound afraid of its own shadow. Imagine depending on them to hunt and defend you. They would drop dead at the sight of a mole, let alone a wolf.

Q: How do you see the future in Ireland?

A: Thank God, we now have a great group of keen, hard-working breeders, with good sound stock. There has been too much breeding from faceless people with third rate stock.

I cannot talk about a breed I love so much without making an appeal to breeders to preserve the characteristics which have made it the King of the Canine World. We don't want super elegant, fine drawn, high stepping dogs, with narrow bodies, narrow fronts and flat sides and quarters. We want a hound with substance, combined with quality and grace, with staying power to do a hard day's work. Please keep the head and expression which is hard to describe but is unique; that look of kindness, wisdom and great dignity, the eyes looking at you from behind brows. These eyes share your sorrows and joys, will play with children or protect you with his life.