

Richard Edwards

"Lasgarn", UK

My parents owned and showed dogs before I was born, my Father bought my Mother an English Springer Spaniel in the 1930's.

I always liked the dogs as I was growing up. We had Cockers and some Terriers, but at one stage in the 1950's, my Father had Basenjis including a son of USA Ch. Kingolo whose pedigree was simply "unknown parentage - imported from the Congo". They were barely domesticated dogs, they just never did as they were told, and did even less for me! Then, in the early 1960's, my Father bought in a yellow Lab from Mrs. Williams (Nokeener) and I was immediately hooked. She was not a show specimen but she had that brilliant Lab temperament, was easily trained and took to me following me everywhere. I have loved Labs ever since, absolutely certain that they are the best breed of dog one could ever own.

In partnership with my Father, we stated to show Labs under our prefix Lasgarn about 1965 but it was a while before we got very far which was a good thing really because we were able to appreciate success when the big wins started to come along. In 1971, knowing that Mrs. Williams had mated a very well bred bitch to Ch. Sandylands Mark I asked if I could buy a male puppy from the litter but she had made up her mind to keep a dog herself and did not want to sell me a male. I went to see the litter anyway and there looking up at us was a superb yellow bitch - quite stunning. I said to my wife "she will never sell us that little yellow bitch" because it was obvious even to a comparative novice that she was far and away the pick. Cis Williams let me have her for the princely sum of 21 guineas I showed the little bitch at six months and got fifth out of six so we decided to put her away but by ten months old she started to win nationally and we made her up very easily as Sh. Ch. Nokeener May Blossom of Lasgarn. Over the next twenty years we made up five UK champions and had other C.C. and Res. C.C winners. Their breeding was mainly Sandylands-Nokeener. Cis Williams (Nokeener) was really my mentor and Gwen Broadley and Bridget Docking (Ballyduff) were also very kind when they realised I was seriously interested in the breed.

In the early 1980's, Father, who was also a Championship show judge of Labs, became seriously ill and it was never quite the same going to shows without him and by 1995 I pretty much finished showing.

I started judging in 1972 with an open show. I first awarded C.C.'s in 1978 and although I do not accept all invitations I am offered, I have judged at championship show level for The Labrador Retriever Club (twice), The Lab Club of Wales, Northumberland and Durham Labrador Club, The Yellow Labrador Club, Kent Surrey and Sussex Lab Club, Midland Co's Labrador Retriever Club, National Gundog

Association, Scottish Kennel Club and a number of general Championship shows. I judged Labs at Crufts in 2012. I judged abroad regularly in the past though less so now, including Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, France, Finland, Hungary and the Republic of Ireland.

Although I became less active in showing and judging I was always interested in the history of the breed. A group of us - members of the committee of the Labrador Retriever Club - were asked to compile a history of the breed and the club to celebrate its 75th anniversary in 1991. The book was very well received. Later, I realised that I had a huge amount of information that I had to exclude from that book due to lack of space so I wrote it up as *The Show Labrador Retriever in Great Britain and Northern Ireland 1945-1995* in two volumes - over 500 pages. Later I wrote the history of the Sandylands kennel and published it privately, many people have been kind about the book and Erica Jayes allowed me to use many of the private Sandylands photographs which had never been published before. I have contributed to other books on the breed and written articles for Year Books. I have done a lot of research into the origins and the early days of the breed, a lot of it from original sources never before used, with the idea of publishing it, either as a book or online, in 2016 which will be the 100 year anniversary of the foundation of the (British) Labrador Retriever Club, it is very much a work in progress and so much yet to do. I hope to complete it. In this way I feel I am putting something back into a breed that has brought me so much pleasure.

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