

The “Scottish” Deerhound

The Deerhound has been a recognised breed since the mid 1800's, and has as such been recognised as a Scottish breed. This is reflected by inclusion of the breed in the Scottish Breeds Canine Club and the Hound Association of Scotland Championship Shows all held under the auspices of the Kennel Club. However the origins of this wonderful hound are not recognised in its name in the United Kingdom.

Internationally this is not always the case, the Scottish Deerhound Club of America, officially recognises the breed as the Scottish Deerhound. Across the world many know the breed as the Scottish Deerhound even when it is not officially known as such. Sadly in its home country the breed does not have the same profile despite its iconic status in the literature, landscape and iconography of Scotland. It is common when walking the hounds to be asked “are they Irish Wolfhounds?”. At a time when the Kennel Club of the United Kingdom lists the Deerhound as a “vulnerable native breed” it is time to acknowledge the roll it has played in Scottish history and art and officially recognise the breed as the Scottish Deerhound, and help to raise the profile and status of the breed in its native country.

Exactly when the hound we now called the Deerhound came into existence is unclear, there are references to Scotch Greyhounds, Rough Greyhounds, Scottish Deerhounds, Irish Greyhounds and Highland Deerhounds, even the Royal Hound of Scotland. Even as late as the mid 1800's there were still two distinct strains, the Highland and Lowland Deerhounds. But throughout the history of the Deerhound it has always been recognised as part of the cultural heritage of the Highlands in landscape, art and literature.

There are references as early as the 3rd century to greyhound type dogs being used for hunting. Sighthounds were used for hunting in the 15th century in Scotland, England and Ireland and seem to be developing along similar lines. But in Scotland the rough ground and weather encouraged the breeding of heavier more powerful hounds than the lighter faster dogs further south. They proved to be such effective hunters, these hounds achieved great value and were kept in the exclusive ownership of the Highland Chieftains. With the demise of the clan system the numbers collapsed, but they came back into prominence in the nineteenth century when deerstalking in the Highlands became the must have experience for the great and the good. Indeed Queen Victoria and Prince Albert owned Deerhounds which made them very fashionable for a time.

Fortunately these days of deerstalking were celebrated in their own accounts of their exploits and were, of course, recorded by many artists such as Landseer. However, what has come down to succeeding generations is essentially voices of the incomers rather than the perspectives of the people themselves, many of whom lived through great deprivation, social upheaval and political unrest. Their stories also need to be told. The kennels of the great estates produced the famous hounds whose exploits are celebrated in contemporary accounts. So the gillies, stockmen and others responsible for the care and training of the hounds are also part of the story. Many reminiscences of these times and subsequent developments in the breed's history continued to be written and discussed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. These offer valuable insights into the heritage of the breed.

Latterly with the advent of improved firearms the use of dogs for deerstalking went out of fashion. It was the show world that kept the breed going and in 1886 the Deerhound Club was formed.

The many admirers of the breed nationally and internationally have played a major role in ensuring the breed's popularity. It is time now to formally acknowledge its heritage, to pay tribute to the dedication shown by the early guardians, and to raise the profile of the breed in its home country, through a re-designation to Scottish Deerhound by the Kennel Club.

This is the objective of [the petition](#). This is the narrative of our time - your voice needs to be heard. Please [support the petition](#).

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