

SHOOTING & Country magazine

TIMES

MAY 14-20, 1981 45p



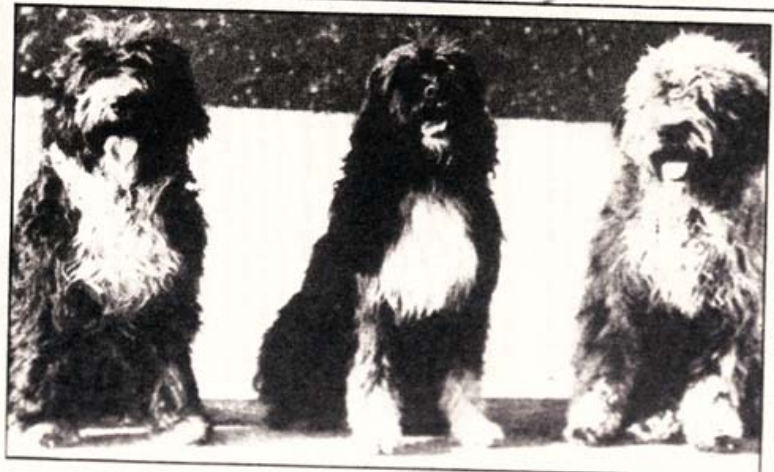
SHOOTING TIMES & COUNTRY MAGAZINE MAY 14-20, 1981

David Hancock looks at the remarkable Portuguese water-dog

THE SEEMINGLY infinite variety of climate which each day offers us in Britain, irrespective of the time of year, has given us thick-coated retrievers, rough-coated deerhounds, smooth-coated greyhounds and pointers, and wire-haired terriers, and this variation in climate together with the great variety of terrain encountered has developed our specialist breeds from leggy Gordon setters to the more ponderous Clumber spaniel and from the rough-coated Welsh hounds to the sleek-coated Cambridgeshire harriers. Our regional differences, too, have produced six different varieties of spaniel, three different setters and a dozen varieties of working terriers, whilst the proximity of the Continent brings fresh breeds to our sportsmen every decade. In Portugal however, despite individuals importing British pedigree dogs as companions, the sporting breeds of dog are almost entirely restricted to three — a water-retriever, a bird-dog and a utility hunting dog.

Of these three, easily the most distinctive is the water-retriever, *Cão de Água*, the Portuguese water-dog. A purely Portuguese breed which can be traced back to very remote times and shares common ancestry with the Irish water spaniel, it is largely unknown outside Portugal but is carefully preserved by the *Clube Português de Canicultura*, the Portuguese Kennel Club, which commendably does a great deal to protect such traditional national breeds. Clipped mid and aft but with the end plume of the tail retained, they have a rather leonine appearance with their shaggy fore-quarters and shaven muscular torsos. There are not many of them these days, the Province of Algarve now being considered to be their home, but before fishing methods were modernised they could be found throughout the Portuguese littoral areas.

Very individual, more versatile than any of our specialist breeds, they are swimmers and divers of quite exceptional ability and stamina, jumping voluntarily and instinctively from fishing boats in retreat.



The traditional water-dog clip.

A trio of unclipped dogs.

as sacred in pre-Christian times — any person killing a water-dog was subject to a most severe count of a Portuguese water-dog is a most