

SPORTING GUN

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Such a dog i

David Hancock takes a close look at the history of the retriever.

"TRAINE him to fetch whatsoever you shall throw from you . . . anything whatsoever that is portable; then you shall use him to fetch round cogell stones, and flints, which are troublesome in a Dogges mouth, and lastly Iron, Steele, Money, and all kindes of metall, which being colde in his teeth, slippery and aill to take up, a Dogge will be loth to fetch, but you must not desist or let him taste food till he will as familiarly bring and carry them as anything else whatsoever."

So advised Gervase Markham early in the seventeenth century on the subject of training a 'Water Dogge' to retrieve. In the sixteenth century there is, in *The Sketch Book* of Jean de Thournes, published in France, a most valuable illustration of such a 'Water Dogge' — a sturdy shaggy-coated dark-coloured dog striking out across a river to retrieve a duck as bidden by the attendant hunter.

These water-dogs were in fact known throughout Europe. As early as the thirteenth century in Portugal, a monk recording a black long-haired rough-coated dog, in the very 'water-dogge' poodle-style clip described in great detail by our own Gervase Markham, bringing a drowning sailor in from the sea.

Not surprisingly such dogs were favoured by the sea-going fraternity, the fishermen, sailors and traders. The dogs were trained to retrieve lines lost overboard and used as couriers between ships, in the Spanish Armada for example. In time such dogs featured in the settlements established along the eastern sea-board of the New World by British, Portuguese, Dutch and French traders.

Water-dogs exist today in those countries, the Barbet in France, the Wetterhoun in Holland, the Portuguese Water Dog and the



Portrait of the artist with his favourite Newfoundland, by Ben Marsl (1811).

incorrectly-named Irish Water Spaniel in the British Isles. The Portuguese Water Dog, still favoured by fishermen in the Algarve, has either a long harsh oily coat or a tighter curly coat. The Barbet has the long coat, the Wetterhoun the curly coat.

General Hutchinson in his classic *Dog Breaking* of 1847 considered that the best retriever was obtained from a cross from the heavy, large-headed setter, lacking in pace but with an "exquisite" nose and the true Newfoundland . . . "the far slighter dog reared by the settlers on the coast, a dog that is

quite as fond of water as of land, and w in almost the severest part of a N American winter will remain on the edge the rock for hours together, watching inte for anything the passing waves may c near him. Such a dog is highly prized. V out his aid the farmer would secure but of the many wild ducks he shoots at ce seasons of the year."

At the end of the eighteenth cen Captain Cartwright had recorded in journal of his travels in Labrador . . . "for the weather and water were so cold, the

