

# Wullie Welsh Senior



## David Rees looks forward to Llandeilo and ponders on the master of the turn back whistle



Wullie Welsh and Don 73710

It is hard to believe on this mid March morning as I look at the dark grey clouds careering madly across The Black Mountains, like some wild Roman chariots, across to the limestone spangled slopes, and away over the sky line, past the imposing façade of Carreg Cennen Castle and headlong into the valley of the Towy, that in less than six months' time the nations of the world will converge on the picturesque market town of Llandeilo for the 2008 World Sheepdog Trials.

Many of the supporters from across the world are eagerly awaiting this, their first foray into the west of Wales to see the world's best handlers compete on the rolling grasslands of Dinefwr Park for the ultimate prize, the title of World Champion. For many of them the highlight of the week promises to be the final day of the trial: The Double Fetch Final.

For many more of them it will be their first experience of seeing some of "the household names" of world trialling cast their dogs back for the second gather. That moment will invoke for me memories of some wonderful outwork from yesteryear: of seeing Jock Richardson and the incomparable Wiston Cap at Cardiff in 1965, described by one of the judges on the day, the late R J Richards, who was seeing Cap for the first time, as "The Wonder Dog"; Jock Murray and the mottle fronted Wiston Cap son, Glen, again at Cardiff in 1971; Jock Richardson's black coated, Sweep eating up the flat ground on the seaside course at Towyn in 1968, Wyn Edwards with Bill, his double supreme champion running off against H G Jones and Bwlch Taff for the Supreme championship on a tricky course at Armathwaite in 1981; or Norman Davies and the eleven year old Hemp, making light of the daunting course at Carmichael in 1991.

In this modern era, and set to provide a mouth-watering banquet of dog work, Llandeilo will play host to some big course specialists comprising the two most recent World Champions, Aled Owen and Gordon Watt; Nigel Watkins, runner up at the

2005 World Trial; Bobby Dalziel, who has carried home the Supreme silverware on three occasions; Richard Millichap, reserve International Champion on two heart-breaking occasions - so near and yet so far; Serge Van Der Zweep, Mosse Magnusson and Tony Ottesson representing Continental Europe and Alasdair MacRae and Tommy Wilson, the two exiled Scotsmen who will be competing for the USA, both experts at the hill shepherds' art of the double fetch.

Whenever the subject of the double fetch is mentioned my mind rolls back to the wide expanse of York Racecourse and to the incredible outwork of Wullie Welsh and the tan-faced Don 73710. Wullie flicked the agile hill worker, from the coal scarred herding at Minneyvey, Dalmellington in the Valley of the Doon in Ayrshire, back for his second drove of sheep, so efficiently and so effectively that those seated in the grandstand who blinked, or wiped a tear from their eye at the price of whisky that day, could only gasp in astonishment to see the rangy work dog run effortlessly to the back of his second ten sheep, in one smooth flowing pear shaped arc. As the late Johnny Wilson told me on so many occasions in later years, "Wullie added a new dimension to outwork that day at York and we haven't really seen anything better, before or since." There was almost a telepathic understanding between man and dog that was to influence breeders and trial men when selecting a dog to breed their bitches to, for many years following Don's great performance that day.

Wullie picked Don up from Willie Jardine, who bred him out of his Bosworth Coon daughter, Mist of Thornby, sired by Rogerson's Cap, with bloodlines back to Bob Frazer's Corrie, the son of Whitehope Corrie, on a May morning in 1972, thus forging a bond that saw Don and Wullie compete for Scotland on four separate occasions in the 1970s, culminating in his becoming International Shepherds' Champion in 1979. Wullie brought Don out of retirement briefly, when he was eleven years of age, to win a mini international double fetch trial at Keswick in 1983, when six dogs from each of the home countries were selected to run on the big course.

As well as being a wonderful trial dog Don was also capable of all the everyday work that Wullie undertook at Minneyvey. He was equally good on the big gathers, in the lambing pens, or pushing sheep into the catching pens on shearing day. I was fortunate to see him on many occasions but I was never more impressed than when I saw him handling several hundred ewes and lambs on some drained ground on the hill at Minneyvey.

During Don's heyday, in the seventies, the M6 motorway leading into Scotland, was familiar territory to handlers and breeders from the whole of the United Kingdom. In the euphoria of Bobby Dalziel's second Supreme Title triumph with the white headed Wisp and the hundred or more open trials won by John Thomas and the popular Don, maybe we tend to overlook the impact the tan faced Dalmellington dog had on the breed? Don bred well to many different bitches, but probably the best mating was to Wullie's own Gael; a team member for Wullie in 1985 and 1988. From this mating came the much fancied James Brady's Jim and also the little Fly bitch who was sold by Wullie to the American Handler, Bob Childress, who went on to win the North American Finals with her.

Wullie's first trial dog was the unregistered Bob, a grandson of Hogarth's Glen, whom Wullie ran at his first trial in 1955. He has had a dog capable of running at Open level ever since. This can be testified to by the fact that Wullie has won the Carsphairn open trial on twelve separate occasions, despite running against handlers like Peter Hetherington, his brother Jock Welsh, David Shennan, David Brady and former Supreme Champions, Bob Shennan, John Templeton and Bobby Dalziel.

A measure of the man is the fact that, despite being offered

big prices for his dogs when they were at the peak of their performance level, the list of dogs that became pensioners in the Welsh home is almost legendary. I have listed just a few of them for interest's sake. Don, Gael, and her daughter, Sal, when she was mated to John Thomas' Don; the grey faced Moss, - the power dog; Rob, 1996 Scottish Team member; Craig 1997 and 1999 team dog, and now Tweed, rapidly approaching eight years of age and almost ready to collect his pension. Last but by no means least is the diminutive Wiston Cap daughter, "wee Nell", whom Wullie speaks of with such affection. "She could go around the course and never go off her feet - just like old Don. I never once saw her turn tail." Says Wullie. "She ran in her last trial at twelve and a half years of age - and she won."

Wullie Welsh was born into a shepherding family. He learned his craft on the family farm of Barholm in the glens between Creetown and Gatehouse of Fleet, where he spent his early years among his family of six brothers and four sisters. All of his brothers have been shepherds at some time in their lives and four of them, Wullie, Anton, Jimmy and perhaps the most famous of them J R (Jock) Welsh, a member of the Scottish team on numerous occasions, have all been competitive sheepdog trials men. The family tradition is being carried on in some style as Jock's son, Billy, is already an established International handler, while Anton's grandson, Robbie is following in his father Tony's footsteps by being the Scottish representative in the Young Handlers Competition in One Man and His Dog's 2007 series.

I have known Wullie and his wife, June, for more years than I care to remember. We have shared some wonderful times - some highs and some lows. We have seen our hair grow grey and fade together over the years and I am proud to say we have remained the best of friends. He would give away his last penny for a friend but somehow I feel you would have to apply the thumb screws before he would tell you the secrets of that amazing turn-back whistle.



The Welsh Boys: Wullie Welsh and brothers.



Don in the handling pens

**Don 73710** Dog, Rough B, W & T, 07/03/1972, CIB = 1.2% (average, normal), 412 registered pups from 60 Bitches  
W. Welsh, 1979 InQ 3, 1979 S Nat 2, 1978 S Nat 5, 1979 InSh 1, 1978 D Sh 1

Parents	Grand-Parents	G.O.-Parents	G.O.G.-Parents	G.O.G.G.-Parents
<b>Cap 52841</b> A.M.C. Rogerson 1971 E.Sh 5	<b>Mintrum Corrie 31439</b> R.S. Fraser 1968 InSh 1 1969 E.Sh 2 1965 E.Sh 3	<b>Washhope Corrie 12706</b> J.W.L. Mullin 1963 L.Fa 1 1967 L.Fa 2	<b>Glen 12917, H.K. Porter</b>	<b>Jim 9886, W.A. Evans</b> <b>Pia 9928, J.A. Thomson</b> <b>Garry 9919, J. Anderson</b> <b>Nell 9886, J.R. Fraser</b>
		<b>Mintrum Tattie 18524</b> R.S. Fraser	<b>Bob 12884, J. Gilchrist</b>	<b>Sgt 7298, J. Gilchrist, 1968 InSh 1</b> <b>Nell 10141, G. Hunter</b> <b>Bob 9513, R.S. Fraser</b> <b>Nell 9147, R.S. Fraser</b>
	<b>Midge 33950</b> A.M.C. Rogerson	<b>Tip 14608</b> D. Rogerson	<b>Benny 12343, D. Rogerson</b>	<b>Wiston Robbie 8 8994, P.M. Hogburn</b> <b>Beak 10795, P.M. Hogburn</b> <b>Cherry 9538, D. Rogerson</b> <b>Swampy/Gweeny 8796, D. Rogerson</b> <b>Wick 10206, R. Thomas</b> <b>Wick 13364, R.C. Rogerson</b>
		<b>Mit 22727</b> D. MacDermid	<b>Teddy 13386, A.M.C. Rogerson</b>	<b>Cherry 9538, D. Rogerson</b> <b>Swampy/Gweeny 8796, D. Rogerson</b> <b>Wick 10206, R. Thomas</b> <b>Wick 13364, R.C. Rogerson</b> <b>June 9519, A.M.C. Rogerson</b> <b>Jan 11446, A.M.C. Rogerson</b> <b>Whitehope Reg 9985, J.M. Wilson, 1968 InSh 1</b> <b>Tattie 6882, R.S. MacKay</b> <b>Ben 5882, D. Gilchrist</b>
<b>Mist of Thornby 60944</b> W.M. Jardine	<b>Boaworth Coon 34196</b> L.I. Evans 1960 InSh 1 1960 InSh 2	<b>Boaworth-Best 22120</b> L.I. Evans 1962 E.NW 4 1962 InQ 1	<b>Ben 13684, R.S. MacKay</b>	<b>Nell 5426, D. Dickson, 1961 S. Nat 2</b> <b>Speed 4393, J.R. Miller, 1962 InSh 4</b> <b>Fly 9188, J. Dunlop</b> <b>Pat 9531, T.S. Roberts</b> <b>June 8889, R.J. Davies</b> <b>Sgt 7298, J. Gilchrist, 1968 InSh 1</b> <b>Nell 10141, G. Hunter</b>
		<b>Fly 13724</b> L.I. Evans	<b>Maig 8190, T. Jones</b>	<b>Miss 9176, J.M. Wilson, 1968 InSh 2</b> <b>Ann 4345, W.S. Hawthorn</b> <b>Rock 77425, J.H. I. Ballgale</b> <b>Jed 29205, Wm. Pringle</b> <b>Glen 14443, J.M. Wilson 1968</b> <b>Nell 9 14436, A.J.R. Coulburn</b>
	<b>Fly 52123</b> P.I. Seaton	<b>Spot 24881</b> J. Gilchrist 1960 InSh 2 1960 InQ 1	<b>Bob 12664, J. Gilchrist</b>	<b>Wiston Nan 8 8896, P.M. Hogburn</b> <b>Spot 31900, D. Hall</b> <b>Queen 34398, J.M. Laing</b>
	<b>Trim 29634</b> J.M. Laing			

Compiled by Teun van den Dool - www.scdb.info - 15 Apr 2008

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