



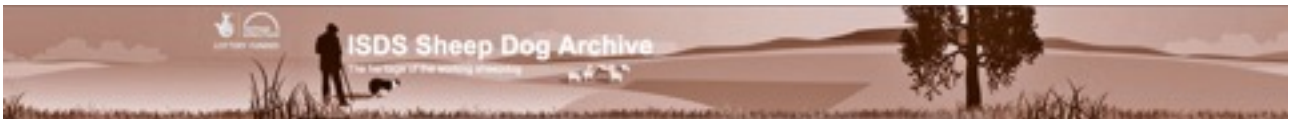
Mel Page from Llangadog in Wales

Born in 1935, Melville Rees Page lived his early life at Bryncapel, the family smallholding in Gwynfe near Llangadog. One of ten children, eight of them boys, Mel left school at fourteen, working on farms right away for he was destined to be a shepherd. Many people considered him to be the best stockman you could ever know, whether it was with cattle or sheep. As well as being a true shepherd and stockman, Mel was a skilled countryman who could turn his hand to many talents, he was a craftsman. He could hedge, fence, wall, all to the high standard that he demanded of himself. Whatever Mel did, he had to do it right, there was no cutting corners, he put in one hundred percent. A tremendous worker, Mel often worked for his friends, though often leaving no doubt who was in charge, for he liked to hold the reins. Gathering, fencing, a huge help at lambing time because he just got on with the work, Mel was always welcome wherever he went, because he was a pleasure to have around.



His first major success was with Sweep 23470, a dog bred by Tommy Swan in Scotland, a grandson of John Templeton's Roy 8993 with lines to several of J. M. Wilson's International dogs. Initially running Sweep in the Hired Shepherds Class, which was held separately from the Farmers Class in those days, Mel got into the Welsh team in 1966. Known for being a shepherd all his life, few people remember that when Mel won the Welsh National for the first time in 1970 with Sweep, he was working at the cement works in Llangadog, along with his older brother Ifor (who had won the Welsh Shepherds' silverware twice in 1955 and 1957 with Meg 11144). So Mel won the Welsh Farmers Cup at Newport that year, but he was soon back working with stock full-time, and ran Sweep again in the Hired Shepherds' Class in 1972. The following year, he gained his second Welsh title with Nell 65799 in 1973 at Llandysul, and won the Welsh Shepherds' trophy for the first time. In 1974, he won the same trophy again with Nell, as well as the Welsh Shepherds Aggregate Trophy at the International. This winning partnership won both trophies again in 1978. Then Mel achieved one of his ambitions, probably considering it his

greatest achievement, when he won the Welsh National Brace Championship in 1980 with Nell partnering her daughter Fly 108143.



Mel worked for over twenty years for Gwilym Jones at Llystyn in Brechfa near Carmarthen, as his shepherd and stockman, living in with Gwilym and wife Mary. Gwilym being one of the best brace handlers, not just in Wales, Mel considered it an honour and a pleasure to have beaten him in the brace competition, they were good friends and great rivals. Gwilym liked to beat Mel and Mel liked to beat Gwilym, there was that competitive edge to their friendship. Mel's next successful dog was Cap 108145, Fly's litter brother, winning his third Welsh National in 1982, his fourth Welsh Shepherd's title and the Welsh Shepherds Aggregate trophy for the third time. Mel also won the Welsh Driving Championship and the Challis shield for the best Welsh bred dog that year, having bred Cap himself.

Shepherding for Dai Jones at Llanilar for a few years, Mel retired back to Llangadog, having made up his mind that when he stopped work, he would give up the dogs. His main reasoning was that dogs are for work, first and foremost, and that it is work that makes the dogs what they are. He thought if he could not give of his best, it would not be fair on the dogs, and he did not want to bother other people to go and run on their sheep. In essence, Mel did not really approve of hobby trialling. No one could get Mel to change his mind, to convince him that he could enjoy running his dogs in his well-deserved retirement. Nevertheless, Mel continued to contribute full-heartedly, at all levels, as he always had done. Whether it was a local trial, or the National or International, he would do anything he could, he always had done, taking on whatever role was required. Many people had a lot of time for Mel and his views, but not everyone was aware of his dedicated commitment. Always having the society's interests in his heart, Mel put in more than he took out. Taking great pleasure watching the major trials, it is a pity he missed the World Trial when it was on his own door step.

Colin Gordon travelled with Mel to many Nationals and Internationals, and has many good memories. He remembers 1982, he went to Brechfa to pick up Mel and his dogs, having borrowed a trailer. There was only room in the car for one set of dogs so Mel asked "Which dogs are going in that then?". When told it was his dogs, he replied "They're not going to do very well if they are bouncing about in that, all the way up to North Wales". Mel went to the top on the first day with Cap, staying on edge for the rest of the National. He would wake up in the early hours of the next two mornings, looking out the window, getting told in no uncertain terms to get back to bed, Mel just could not believe that he was still at the top. On the way back to South Wales, with a car full of silverware, Mel was reminded of his remarks about the bouncing trailer and took all the comments in good humour.

Keen to encourage others, Mel got Colin his first dog years ago, and as he spent a great deal of time with Ifor Owen, so he did too with Merion Owen and Merion Jones. Mel was considered a close family friend. A great travelling companion, he always gave good advice and fair criticism. Always one to watch, Mel was a good trainer and competitor, at trials he would watch the lines and turns, and always have a good finish. Taking judging seriously, Mel would not judge abroad as he would not fly.



A determined character, Mel was very straight forward and genuine, he would say exactly what he thought, and it would be the truth. He had a favourite phrase in a discussion ‘hold your horses’ when it was his turn to give his opinion. Not one to hold back his opinions, Mel would tell you straight to your face and not behind your back. He was a typical bachelor, set in his ways, with fixed ideas. Quiet to live with, if he stayed with you, you wouldn’t hear his comings and goings. Mel could be private, sometimes disappearing off somewhere, without a word before he went or when he came back. He was good friends with Michael Perrings, and liked to escape to visit him every so often. Trustworthy by nature, he would carry no gossip and not take any gossip away with him. Mel was good company. There were some things that he disapproved of, but if asked, he would still offer his opinion, good advice and help, and he would give it willingly.

Being a shepherd all his life it gave him certain outlooks on life. Mel was very uncompromising in many ways, he held his views firmly and always expressed them. However, he did not bear grudges, he knew only one way to go and that was forwards. Mel liked to see his own qualities in his dogs, preferring dogs that always went forward. All of his dogs had authority, and he liked absolute command over them. Mel had great respect for his dogs and their abilities. He was faithful to his friends and family, and liked that quality in his dogs. Those were the type of dogs that he was successful with. All of them were favourites in their own time, Nell was a challenge, she was powerful and strong. She was by Clarence Storey’s Roy and out of John James’s Fly. Mel thought a lot of Cap too, he took great pride in the fact that he had bred Cap. Mel would only breed for a purpose, he could have sold many pups from Nell and Fly but he did not believe in breeding for the sake of it. Saying that, the litters that Nell did have, she left her mark. She was the dam of Mel’s Cap and Fly, by T. Watkins’s Robbie, a son of Barbara Carpenter’s Brocken Robbie and line bred to H.J. Worthington’s Hemp. Distinguished dogs that go back to Nell are many, and for this reason, she must be regarded as a key breeding bitch: Tommy Brownrigg’s Nap; Chris MacNaughton’s Jess; Michael Perrings’s Craig; J.R. Griffith’s Sweep, Moss, Nan and Fan; David Bristow’s Bess; Roland Fernyhough’s Tiny; Stuart Davidson’s Star; Serge van der Zweep’s Roy; Gerard Graham’s Roy; Derek Lloyd’s L’Minster Moss; Toddy Lambe’s Craig and Sweep; Ian Jones’s Sooty; Andy Carnegie’s Lark; John Casey’s Jill; James McGee’s Becca; Thomas Longton’s Kep and Merion Jones’s Joe. Serge van der Zweep’s Glen 244489 goes back to Mel’s Cap.

Well presented at all times, with his deerstalker in place, Mel would always wear a collar and tie. More often than not, in a tweed suit, he dressed properly for the occasion. Always well turned out at the post himself, Mel did not like to see working clothes at the post, his train of thought being that if handlers looked shoddy, their work would be shoddy. This extended to the dogs and Mel liked to see dogs presented well at the post, his dogs were always clean and looked a picture. If he looked the part and they looked the part, then they were in with a chance.