



THOMPSON TARN from County Durham

We are grateful to Hazel Cleasby for sharing memories of her father Thompson Tarn, with the ISDS Sheepdog Archive project. Hazel sent us a photograph of the 1964 English team that belonged to one of the team members, William Todd.



1964 English National team:

top l-r Chris Todd, ? , Tot Longton, Tim Longton, Bob Seaton, and William Todd (from Beaumont Hill)
bottom l-r Wilf Hardisty, ?, Fred Morgan (won the National & English Shepherds Cup with Moss 14902), Clarence Storey, and Eric Elliott.

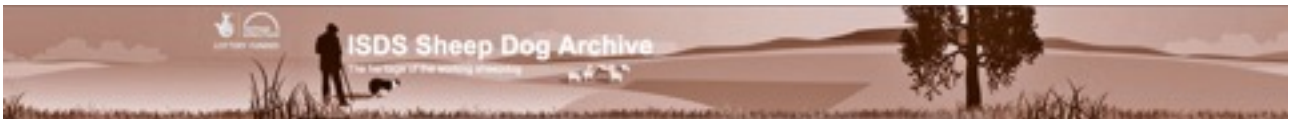
Where did Thompson live, and was he from a farming background?

My Dad was William Thompson Tarn. He was born 1911 at Hill Gill Farm in, Baldersdale, near Barnard Castle. This is not far from where Hannah Hauxwell lived. Dad later farmed at Park Farm at, Lartington, also near Barnard Castle.



Thompson with Jack in the 1950's

Courtesy of the ISDS Sheepdog Archive/HLF Project,
Written by Pauline Hall
Photos courtesy of Hazel Cleasby
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How many dogs did he have and were they predominantly used for work? Did he breed from his own lines?

He had four to six sheepdogs but only needed two for the farm, as he only owned 60 odd acres, but it was enough ground to make your living in those days (1940s to 1970s). He trained the other young dogs and then sold them on, but always kept those he thought had trial potential. He mainly bred from his own bitches often sending them to stud dogs.

Which do you remember as his best dog?

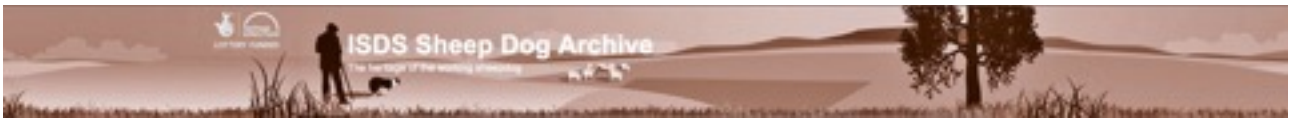
His best dog was Jack. He was predominantly white which my Dad thought was a bit of a disadvantage as 'wild' sheep could startle on seeing him. I'm really disappointed that I did not find any pedigree papers regarding Jack's genetics among my Dad's effects after he died in 1993. So I don't know how Jack was bred. He was such an affectionate dog and I spent lots of time with him as a kid. I have pictures which I will send when I get them sorted out.



Did your dad travel much to judge and/or compete?

My Dad only judged at small fairly local shows, but he did travel around the country as a spectator with his cousin's husband, William Todd. They were great friends, but Willie was quite hopeless when it was his turn to navigate and every time they came to a junction and Dad needed to know the way Willie always said 'straight on' and thus they often got lost! Sometimes Dad's cousin Frank Tarn accompanied them to trials. Frank trialed dogs also and I think William Todd & Frank Tarn did hold some official titles in the ISDS in the 1950's. My cousin Caroline Velvick will be able to tell you more.

Hazel with Jack in the 1950s



Do you have a particular personal recollection of your father's interest in sheepdogs?

I particularly remember my Dad making his own whistles and my Mother and I used to have to endure him testing out the whistles in the house, especially in the evenings after supper. It drove us bonkers as the sound was so loud & shrill, and seemed to go on forever, and you couldn't get away from it even though we had a fairly big farm house.

Has the farming tradition continued in your family to the present day?

My son has a small farm, and has one working sheepdog, but has not inherited the trialling bug. He has other farm connected work as he hasn't enough land to sustain a living. Sad to say he is the only one in his generation in our family tree who is farming. Not many young folk seem to be continuing or entering farming now so I wonder if this is reflected in the number of people trialling.



*Thompson Tarn and Roy Bainbridge
- interesting to see them hand clipping and smoking at the same time!*