

Breed Type Development in Cardigan Welsh Corgis

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The question truly is whether they change for the better or not."*

By C. Patrick Ormos (Phi-Vestavia Cardigans)

Breed type: is it fixed once and for all time? Does it develop? Does it change over time? Does it develop? This article is an attempt to begin formulating an answer to some of these questions for one breed: the Cardigan Welsh Corgi.

First, the caveats: As a relatively recent North American breeder-judge (I owned my first Cardigan around 1980, and bred the first Phi-Vestavia litter with Cathryn Ochs-Cline in 1984) many of my conclusions about breed type development are necessarily done from photographs, especially of the older dogs. Those of you who actually knew some of the older dogs may have different sentiments.



Fig. 1. "Mon", one of the drop-eared, deep-chested and heavy working dogs from the Cardiganshire hills. From "The Cardiganshire Corgi" by Clifford L.B. Hubbard.

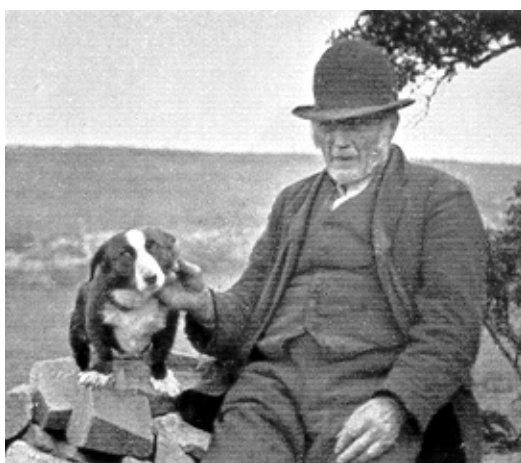


Fig. 2. "Mon II" with Mr David Jones at his Bronant home, circa 1932. Ibid.

I have suggested elsewhere¹ that there is difference between preservation, development and/or change. It cannot be argued with any logic that breeds do not change over time. The question truly is whether they change for the better or not. Only when it is judged that breeds have indeed changed for the better, can we speak about breed development. German Shepherd Dogs are one of the prime examples of this difference. As a recently man-made breed, they have undergone much change since the original *Horand v Graftath* was first registered as SV1. We can watch through pictures as the dogs lengthen or shorten, deepen or become more

shelly, add substance or become more willowy. Eventually we end up with the dogs of the 1960s, who were recognizably from the same breed no matter from which country they originally came. I believe that this international uniformity of breed type was a positive step in the development of this breed, though I acknowledge that there was some slight variation in type which led to loose talk about a British type. However, this never gathered international or local support. But by the 1990s, we discover a breed in which you can identify the country of origin by the outline and style of the dogs. While this is clearly a change, I would argue that this is not a good development for a breed.



Fig. 4. "Bob Llwyd". From "Cardigan Welsh Corgi Association" (CWCA), 1966.

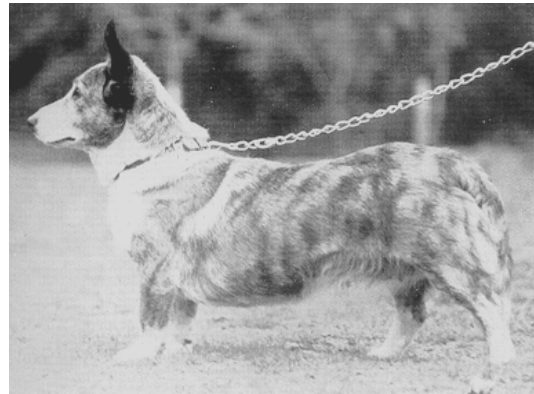


Fig. 3. The blue merle bitch "Fancy", a daughter of "Mon", in the early 1930s. Ibid.

Cardigans have indeed changed over time. We are lucky that no one has taken seriously attempts to designate North American type or Welsh type or English type or Australian type. A good Cardigan is a good Cardigan no matter what country it finds itself in. All attempts to move towards a distinctive nationalistic sub-type have been defeated by a general consensus of the international breeders with the support of the "old-timers" within the breed. These old-timers have often served as repositories, not just of history, but also of older blood-lines which have been maintained to the enhancement of the overall gene pool. These people serve the vital function of preservation, that is keeping the old still available to the breed as a whole.



Fig. 6. Eng.Ch. Withybrook Brock.
From CWCA, 1976



Fig. 5. Am.Ch. "Megan".
From "The Welsh Corgi" by Thelma Gray.

How do we assess breed type, and its changes? Let us concentrate on just a few areas:

- head and ears
- outline
- fronts
- temperament



Left: Fig. 8. Eng.Ch. Hannaford Budge. By Eng.Ch. Withybrook Brock x Mari Llwyd Lawen. *Ibid.*
 Right: Fig. 7. Eng.Ch. Withybrook Brock, a celebrated stud force born in 1940. Hubbard.

We cannot assess movement from still photographs, and in any case, movement requires good conformation and temperament first. The Cardigan head is stronger than the Pembroke's, without being either cheeky or coarse. The planes should be parallel, with a noticeable eyebrow ridge. The ears are set slightly wider than a Pembroke's and, with the eyes, give an inquisitive expression to this breed quite in keeping with its temperament. The outline should flow from the occiput to the tail tip without any break or noticeable changes, and the bottom from the throat to the rear. The front has been dissected, discussed and argued over for many years now. Suffice it to say that this breed's front must show its achondroplastic heritage, which means that the radius and ulna will curve around the chest, and the chest/ribbing will fill in the space so created.

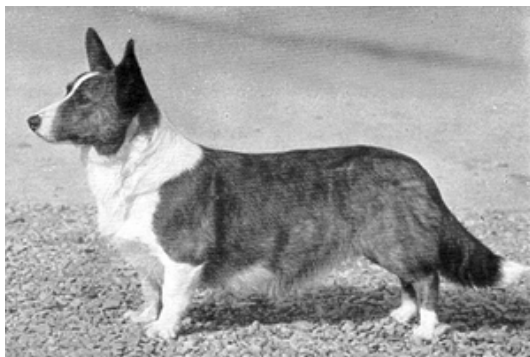


Fig. 9. Eng.Ch. Withybrook Jill.
 By Eng.Ch. Withybrook Brock x Catrin Bach.
Ibid.



Fig. 10. Eng.Ch. Kentwood Dewin. *Ibid.*

While Cardigans are postulated as an old breed, certainly older than Pembrokes, it must be acknowledged that little objective proof for such statements exists. Indeed, perhaps they are the "fairy steeds" of legend, but how do we discover objective proof of this? We do know that by the end of the nineteenth century two short-legged and robust herding-driving dogs existed in neighbouring Welsh counties, Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire. The local farmers seemed to differentiate between the two types on the basis of size, tail and color. The Cardigan was originally drop-eared, deep-chested, long-bodied and substantial (see figures 1 and 2). Looking at the photo of "Fancy" (figure 3), we immediately see a bitch from the early 1930s who would not be out of place in the show ring 60 years later. Certainly, she has some weak points, judged from this point in time, noticeably her topline. But she is just as clearly a Cardigan, right to the slight Roman bump on her muzzle. "Bob Llwyd" (figure 4), a dog from the 1920s "taken as a model when the Breed Standard was first drawn up,"² again shows a

dog who is recognizably a Cardigan. The big rounded ears, the curved radius and ulna, the low tailset – all are Cardigan type. "Cassie"³ was a bitch of this time period (pre-WWI) who not only left a legacy in the UK, but who came over to the U.S. to found the breed here. AmCh.Megan (b. 1933), first champion in the U.S. (figure 5), is another of that early era in Cardigans. Hubbard suggests:

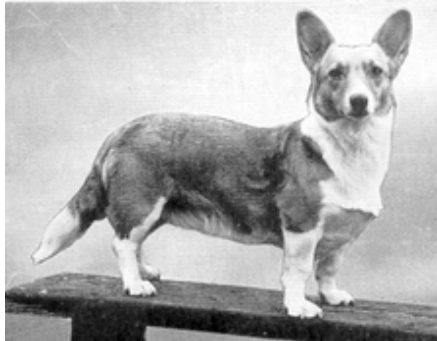


Fig. 11. Mari Llwyd Lawen, famous brood bitch. CWCA, 1962.

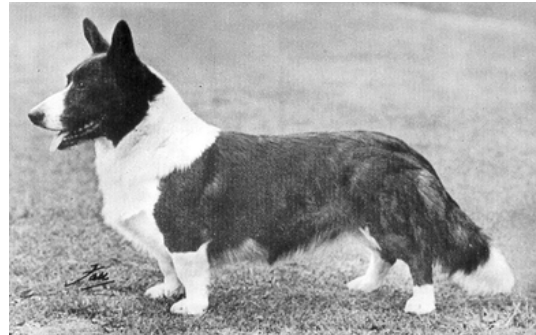


Fig. 12. Eng.Ch. Kentwood Cymro. CWCA, 1983.

"If you study the illustrations in this book you cannot help but appreciate how the Cardiganshire Corgi has kept pretty well to the aboriginal design. To the purist differences between the dogs of the past, the near past and the present are apparent enough . . . but all in all you can at once see how the breed has retained the original form . . . In contrast the Pembrokeshire Corgi has veered off so much from the aboriginal form that he is now a Spitz."⁴

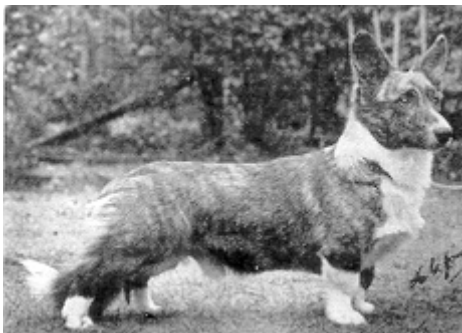


Fig. 13. Eng.Ch. Parmel Dambuster. CWCA, 1960.



Fig. 14. Eng.Ch. Parmel Pilot. CWCA, 1960.

Cardigans continued along these lines, adding substance, until WWI. Hard-hit by the austerity measures, the breed took a step backwards. But in 1940, a dog was born who was to have great influence on post-WWI Cardigans, Eng. Ch. Withybrook Brock (figures 6 and 7). This dog shows the correct height to length ratio, big bone, low tailset and upstanding ears. You will note that his ears are not his fortune, and that you can find the same fault in modern ears, that is, too soft at the base with little folds partway up the outside of the ear. Please note the full, rounded muzzle. He shows his clear and positive impact on the breed in two of his get, Eng. Ch. Hannaford Budge (figure 8) and Eng. Ch. Withybrook Jill (figure 9). Note the stabilization of type with these two dogs. Height to length proportions are better, tailsets, ears and heads showing the proper inquisitive expression of a Cardigan. Another important son was Eng. Ch. Kentwood Dewin (figure 10), the first Kentwood champion Cardigan. Note the wonderful prosternum and depth of ribbing on this dog. From the photos, this is a dog who could successfully compete today. He is the sire of Am. Ch. Kentwood Dilys, who became an important brood bitch for the Springdale Cardigans in the U.S. Another important brood bitch of this era is Mari Llwyd Lawen (figure 11). This bitch again shows a proper Cardigan rear,

strong yet feminine headpiece, slight shorter length than desirable and somewhat straight radius and ulna, a fault with which we are still struggling. Dam of six English champions, she lives on through her descendents.

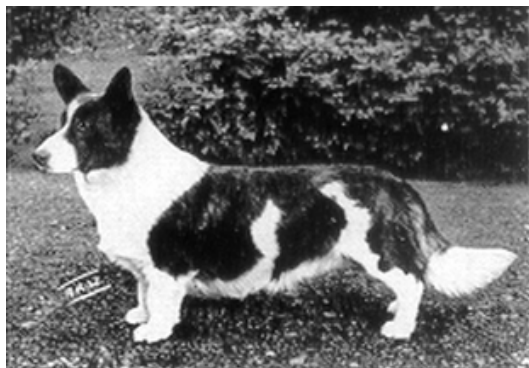


*Fig. 15. Eng.Ch. Pantyblaidd Pip.
CWCA, 1966.*

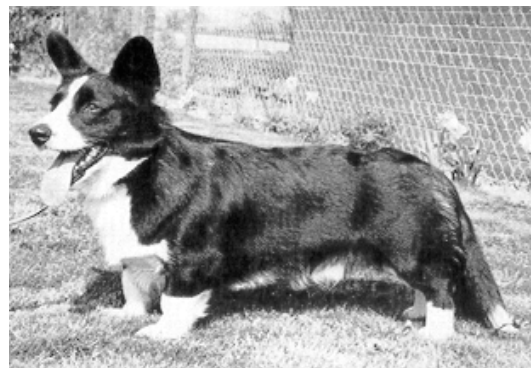


*Fig. 16. Eng.Ch. Parmel Digger.
CWCA, 1972.*

Eng. Ch. Kentwood Cymro (figure 12), a Dewin son of the late 1950s, took the breed by storm. In 1982, the Committee of the CWCA chose his picture as the illustration of the breed standard. Note the masculine strength of his neck, the prominent forechest, deep and long ribbing and low tailset. Again, a Cardigan who could compete today!



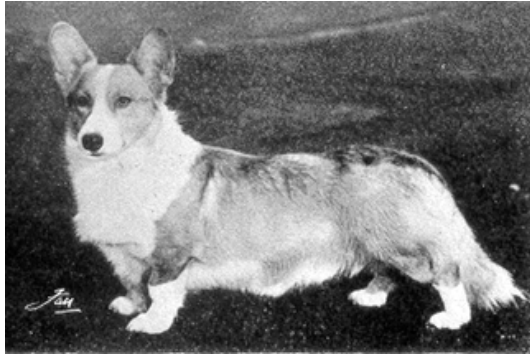
*Fig. 17. Eng.Ch. Echium of Hezelclose.
CWCA, 1970.*



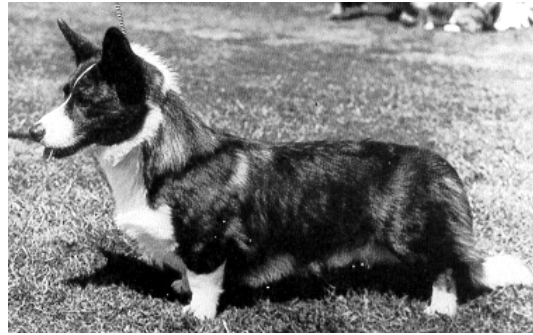
*Fig. 18. Eng.Ch. Wendac Robgwen
Midnight Special. CWCA, 1972.*

The early post-WWII era saw the start of many kennels which were influential in the breed: Rozavel, Kentwood, Pantyblaidd, Parmel, Dilwel, Robgwen and others. In Eng. Ch. Parmel Dambuster (figure 13), a dog eventually exported to Australia, we see a dog of "modern" type - long and low, elegant neck, level topline. A Brock grandson, his line continues down through Eng. Ch. Parmel Pilot (figure 14), a dog of somewhat more substance. The Parmels were influential not only in the UK, but around the world.

The 1960s were a disastrous time for this breed. PRA was discovered in the breed. Responsible breeders tried hard to check their dogs and to stamp out this debilitating disease. Kennels were decimated. Luckily, the breed lived on through dogs such as, Eng. Ch. Pantyblaidd Pip (b. 1962, figure 15). By this time, we can see the head and ears we look for, the sweet expression, projecting prosternum with correct height to length proportions, low tailset, good rear angulation with perhaps slightly longer hocks than desired. Other dogs, like Eng. Ch. Parmel Digger (b. 1963, figure 16), Eng. Ch. Echium of Hezelclose (b. 1966, figure 17) and Eng. Ch. Wendac Robgwen Midnight Special (b. 1969, a dog inbred on the Dilwel bloodline, figure 18), show the consistency of type which resulted in the UK.



*Fig. 19. Am.Ch. Dilwel Rowland.
CWCA, 1974.*

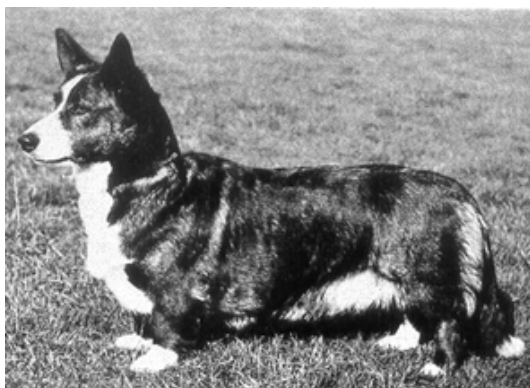


*Fig. 20. Eng.Ch. Joseter Mudwin.
CWCA, 1976.*



*Fig. 21. Am.Ch. Brymore's
Taliesin. CWCA, 1976.*

During the 1970s, several dogs rose to prominence in the UK. Am. Ch. Dilwel Rowland (b. 1970, figure 19), was exported to the USA. Eng. Ch. Joseter Mudwin (b. 1971, figure 20), a Pantyblaidd Pip son, became the founder of a long line of Joseter dogs. Am. Ch. Brymore's Taliesin (b. 1973?, figure 21), a Pantyblaidd Piper son, was successfully shown in the U.S., and is behind the Pluperfect bloodline. Eng. Ch. Deb's Delight of Grangefield (b. 1970, figure 22), a Midnight Special daughter, began to set new CC records for the breed. Soon followed by Eng. Ch. Ringinglow Mory's Treasure (b. 1976, figure 23). Beautiful ears and head, feminine, level topline, good prosternum, deep brisket, all combine to give exquisite breed type. We will end this discussion of breed type with a picture of Eng. Ch. Joseter Joson (b. 1982, figure 24), a lovely dog with level topline, good size, beautiful head, bone and substance. Compare this dog with Eng. Ch. Parmel Dambuster, Eng. Ch. Kentwood Cymro and further back with Eng. Ch. Hannaford Budge. Cardigans have developed but not at the expense of breed type!



*Fig. 22. Eng.Ch. Deb's Delight of
Grangefield. CWCA, 1976.*



*Fig. 23. Ringinglow Mory's Treasure.
CWCA, 1983.*

We have seen some stabilization of breed type since the 1970s, and we hope for more. Heads are overall better, with good ears and good earsets. We continue to watch for small ears and

for blocky, cheeky heads. Toplines continue to be a struggle, but the basic outline of the breed is established. Fronts have improved drastically with the move towards a good prosternum and the front legs well under the dog. This continues to be a problem as breeders do not understand the relationship between shoulder assemblies and front assemblies, and as breeders confuse breeding for turned out feet with breeding for correctly bent radius and ulna. Rear assemblies are at this point doing badly, as we try to balance the knee for a strong driving rear, flexibility, and low tailset. The relationships between croup, pelvis, tailset, bone lengths and hock lengths seems to be difficult to balance.



Fig. 24. Eng.Ch. Joseter Joson. CWCA, 1986.

Let me say just a few words about temperament. My own kennel is well-known for the good temperaments which we produce, yet I would be amongst the first to admit that we have selected for temperaments which are probably not really consistent with the breed's inheritance. As a herding-driving dog, the Cardigan needed to be attached to his/her master, wary of strangers and therefore stand-offish, easily trainable and perhaps a bit sharp. Selling puppies with this kind of temperament in the North American "pet" market is both difficult and perhaps irresponsible. We, and many others, have chosen instead to select for dogs which are easier to live with, friendlier and perhaps a bit softer.

Is this a breed development? Certainly. It is a change in the breed's temperament, one which I see slowly extending across the ocean. Time will tell whether this has been development, or merely change. On the positive side, we can see many of the modern dogs who still exhibit their ancestral herding instinct. Many conformation dogs in North America are now able to compete in performance venues as well. This encouragement of the total dog is to be applauded.

I hope that this picture tour of the breed has been helpful to you.

¹ Article printed in *Cardifair* 1998.

² CWCA, 1996

³ Hubbard, Clifford L.B., *The Cardiganshire Corgi*, Nicholson & Watson (London), 1952.

⁴ *Ibid*, page 19

Article originally published in *The Welsh Corgi Annual* 1998.