

History

The Valley of the Aire in West Riding, Yorkshire, was the birthplace of the Airedale Terrier. The exact date is unknown but indications are that the breed began to be developed in the middle of the nineteenth century. They were bred as an answer to the average factory workers desire to hunt otter. To hunt this game properly required a pack of Otterhounds and a "Terrier" or two.

The Airedale is believed to be the "Old English Black-and-Tan Terrier," the "Broken-coated Working Terrier" and the "Rough-coated Black-and-Tan Terrier" outcrossed to the Otter Hound among others. All accounts of the "creation" of the point to a possible cross with a Border Collie or some other sheepdog. Some accounts also point to the Bull Terrier, while others insist that this outcross never took place.

These dogs were known for their gritty ability to take on any adversary and give a good account of themselves. They were broken to guns and trained to retrieve. They were fierce competitors in the water-rat matches. Albert Payson Terhune sums up the Airedale concisely: "Among the mine-pits of the Aire, the various groups of miners each sought to develop a dog which could outfight and outhunt and OUTTHINK the other miner's dog. Out of the experiments emerged the modern Airedale. He is swift, formidable, graceful, big of brain, an ideal chum and guard. There is almost nothing he cannot be taught if his trainer has the slightest gift of teaching. Every inch of him is in use. No flabby byproducts. A PERFECT MACHINE--a machine with a BRAIN, PLUS." The first Airedale known to come to America was Bruce brought over by C. H. Mason. Bruce was the sire of Bess, who was the dam of Airedale Jerry, root of the family tree.

Airedales have successfully mastered everything from big-game hunting, coon-hunting, being excellent police dogs to obedience work. Not every Airedale excels in every area but over time many have done a variety of duties very well.

Today Airedales are still used as hunting dogs, watch dogs and even obedience and agility dogs, but they are, first and foremost, faithful, loyal and entertaining companions.