

- **What first attracted you to ISCW T ?**

When I started to look for a dog, I lived in the city and I thought that a medium size breed would suit better my environment. I bought different dog magazines looking for a long haired breed and one day I saw the photo of a dog that really caught my eyes for its look. I had never heard of this breed, the breed name was complicated "Irish Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier" and I decided to give a phone call to the breeder to get more information. What the breeder told me on the phone seemed to match my requirements and in top of it I was very pleased to learn they didn't shed. A few days later, I drove to his kennels to see his dogs. A few dogs were in the yard and they instantly run to greet me... On my first meeting with the breed, I experienced right away the "Wheaten greetings". One more thing I didn't expect but I really enjoyed. This dog was Ardymon Andy, imported from Ireland and bred by Art and Dympna O'Neill. There was a litter out of him and I fell for a male puppy "Irwing". And then that's how it has all started....



*This was my first Wheaten, Ch. Irwing de la Brionnerie and above his sire Ch. Ardymon Andy*

**How many years have you been involved with the breed ?**

I have been involved in the breed since 1994.

**Are Wheatens your original breed ?**

Yes, they are and they definitely are the perfect dogs for me. Beside the fact they are dogs you can easily take for long walks off leash in the fields and in the wood, I love their happy temperament, their unconditional loving nature and their loyalty. But what really makes them special is their smartness. After all these years, I am still amazed to experience that they have more than one funny idea a day... life with Wheatens is never boring. They definitely cheer people up and that's great !

- **In your opinion which is the best Wheaten owned or bred by you ?**  
**Other than those you have been personally involved with, which two or three Wheatens would you describe as the best ones you have seen and why ?**  
**What kennel within or outside of the breed has impressed you and why ?**



How many times I heard breeders saying "Oh ! it is so difficult to make a choice". Indeed it is. When we work our combinations, we should get more than one good puppy in the litter to match our expectations... or we missed something... It is often easier to select the one we like the less than the one we like the best. For that reason I won't name one of my dogs (owned or bred) as it would not do justice to the others, including those who went to pet homes and didn't have a chance to be shown. Ribbons and titles don't make a good dog, they only make a happy owner. Too many dogs have titles when they should not and too many pets would deserve to have titles when they don't... That's reality.

For the same reasons, I won't promote dogs and kennels. Yes, I have seen beautiful Wheatens bred by other breeders. And fortunately, there is much more than one good breeder and a few good dogs. So I don't think it is my duty to put in the light one kennel and a couple of dogs to the detriment of others. First it would not be an easy thing to do and second it would end by being unkind maybe partial and unfair. When I got involved in Wheatens, I learnt about the breed type problem. All these years later, it is still there. I would say even worse than before as we have more and more mixed lines breedings. But through years, I have met some wonderful people, genuinely dedicated to the breed, working hard and doing their best to preserve the breed and the Irish lines. All these people have bred beautiful specimens from their breeding programs and each kennel has produced more than one "excellent" dog. All these people deserve respect and recognition. I would take advantage of this interview to tell them all : Thank You !

Now, I think that some Dutch people by working together and not competing against each others have achieve a real great job with their new breed club. For each country where it is authorized to have more than one breed club (unfortunately not permitted in France), I think the Dutch Club is an example to follow. Well done guys !



***Louise Borst with Teague***

***Right "A.k.a. Teague The soft Irish  
Wheaten" (4 weeks old)***

In 2005, Anne Holohan came to my home to pick up her puppy co-owned with Jolijne Ubbink. While she was there Louise Borst and Rob Hubner came to visit me and to see the litter I had at that time out of Irwing de la Brionnerie and Briankeen Pollyanna. Louise told me it was years she didn't see "old type" puppies. I took it as a very nice compliment and I still value it very much.

We had a pleasant time altogether and it took half a day to decide which one among the six males would be for Anne and Jolijne. Finally Green Ribbon "Teague" was selected.

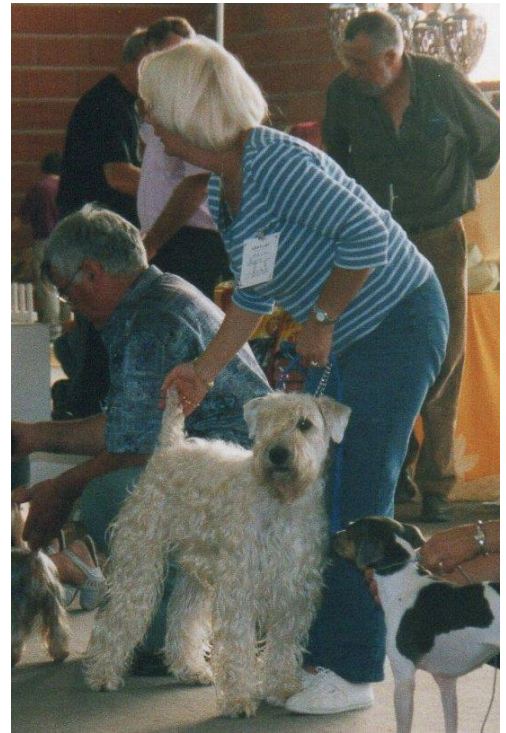




Actually as the standard of the breed was not change, we should not be talking about “old type” nor “working type” as we do... Today’s type should be the type of the old days as well as dogs able to work by conformation. Due to their working activity, working Wheatens have a selection partly based on hunting skills. Still the conformation has to be there or they could not hunt. I don’t think it is right to assume that a working line is less worthy. To be able to hunt a Wheaten needs to have the conformation it was made for which is described in the breed standard. Now for obvious reasons, a working dog will be more muscular than a couch potato one. Usually the coat is matted or shaved and there isn’t a nice trimming to soften the general appearance. This certainly does not make working Wheatens ready for the ring. But how would they look if pets or prepared for dog shows ? And how a show dog would look if kept into kennels as a hunting dog ?

I am very much looking for keeping my puppies and Wheatens in the original type, this is my goal and I am not looking for personal preferences to make any change.

I am glad my nowadays puppies are not looking different from Irwing, the foundation dog of my lines.



***Tinker The Soft Irish Gentlewheaten, winning her title at the breed championship***

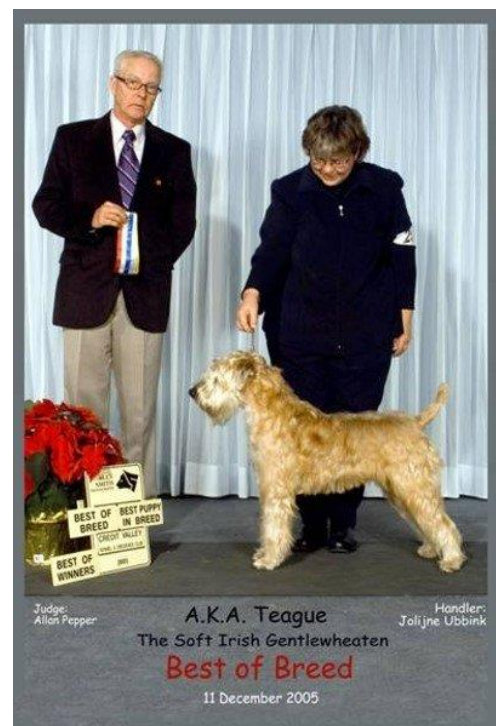


***Nowadays puppies, 4 weeks old on the left and 9 weeks old on the right***



***Shannon The Soft Irish Gentlewheaten taking CAC – CACIB – BOB Right, Teague with Jolijne Ubbink, taking BOB (9 months old)***

My own wheatens do both. They compete in the show ring and they work on boars. Every day they are off leash in the fields and they hunt by themselves. I am not a hunter myself,





I have never trained them but I participate to working trials (dogs work but we don't shoot animals). They naturally have the instinct, the brave temperament and the strength to do it. It is important to keep in mind Wheatens are first of all hunting terrier dogs when breeding. No matter if they win ribbons in the ring, they are before everything, terriers, which means hunting dogs. I am not against dog shows, we need them and I show my dogs but I am well aware and conscious that if they were to choose, they would go for the fields and not for the ring...

To hunt is a natural instinct for a dog, a terrier, a Wheaten. To play the "show off" in a ring is not. It is secondary and all Wheatens should have the conformation to be able to work.

- **If you could incorporate just one dog from the past into your breeding program who would it be and why ?**

Difficult to really judge dogs from the past as I didn't get a chance to see them so I will trust Maureen Holmes and choose Silver Leader. Her words : *"Silver Leader was an outstanding specimen and excelled in conformation. Had he been exhibited extensively, he could quite easily have made his title"*. A good example that excellent dogs are not always in the ring.

- **Who has been your greatest mentor in the breed ?**

When I started to get involved in the breed I was lucky to meet with most of the Irish breeders and some Wheatens owners. Meeting them at shows or visiting them at home which allowed me to ask them many questions, to see their dogs, to share their experience and to benefit from their knowledge and advices. I would take advantage of this interview to thank all of them starting with the late ones, Dympna O'Neill (Ardymon), Anthony Doyle (Killykeen), Water Ladd (Corrlough) and of course, Joe O'Brien (Briankeen). Also people that were involved in the breed at a time, Eamon Taafe (Enrale), Nick Hammond (Hamkel), Mary O'Caroll (Maroc), Bernie and Declan Kelly (Gildieven), Hannah and Dan Ryan (Newgrange). And the current breeders involved in the breed for many many years, Helen Hubbock (Newkdara), Anna, Chris and Elaine Butler (Ballysax), Susan Kealy (Kealdale). All these people I have known them for many years.

Here are a few photos of the old good days... visiting breeders and meeting them at shows.



**Visiting Dympna O'Neill (Ardymon)**



**Visiting Wally Ladd (Corrlough), with Tony Doyle (Killykeen)**





*Visiting Mary O'Carroll (Maroc)*



*Visiting the Kellys (Gildieven)*







But I had a very special relationship with Joe O'Brien. Joe was always extremely kind to me and I have great memories of my vacation time in Waterford with him and Catherine Keane. Joe and I were very close, calling each other every Sunday. He was in a way my "Irish" grand-father. He definitely was the person that encouraged me to breed and he got me started. When I met him, he was already an old man retired from the ring and about to retire from breeding. But he was very much concerned about the future of the breed and he was willing to pass on his passion to someone. He had nephews owning Wheatens bred by him but they were busy with family and they didn't have the time to dedicate to continue to show and to breed after him. I could never forget the day he called me and he said "I have a little girl for you. Her name is Pollyanna". I was speechless by surprise and taken by emotion. Since the first day Joe always took the time to answer my questions and he taught me a lot. No doubt he was my greatest mentor in the breed. I have fond memories of my time with him and Catherine and I miss them very much.



*Left, me with Joe O'Brien – Right, Catherine Keane - (Briankeen)*

- Since you began in Wheatens have you seen many changes within the breed ? If yes please explain. Do you believe the quality has improved or declined since you first became involved ?



Since I began in Wheatens, the number of Irish lines breeders has slightly increased. This has helped the quantity of true to type specimens. Now I would not say that among these lines the quality has improved. The quality was already there and most breeders have kept it. It is an erroneous belief to think there is always something to improve. This is how we end with exaggeration.

On the other hand, the number of mixed lines breeders has bloomed. Out of these combinations, there are Irish coated specimens but difficult to see it as an improvement for the breed.

What I can see is that there are more and more "Irish coated" dogs with a lack of bones, short backs, long neck, thin heads and high ear sets (not level with skull). More and more breeders are gluing the puppies' ears folding the ears higher than skull level, certainly not the best way to get a correct earset... It is obvious to me that some breeders are breeding for the "Kerry / Fox" look, probably more showy to their eyes ... Unless Ireland decides to change the breed standard for a blond kerry (I hope not), to my opinion, lines apart, the quality has not improved and the breed is going in the wrong direction.



***On the right an example of a correct earset***

- **What in your opinion is the greatest hurdle that is now facing the breed ?**

It may be that there is no plan to save the breed yet or at least not a finalized one. It has been decades that we have been discussing the problem and we are still running in a circle. To increase the number of memberships does not help if these people don't breed pure Irish. Like in everything, quality must be first to quantity.

We can repeat again and again the same things "judges should disqualify untypical specimens", "breeders should conform to the breed standard", "people must read the essence of the breed" etc... but sadly it has never led anywhere and this is not enough to protect the breed in the future.

**What needs to be done to protect the breed into the future ?**

Only official recognition of the kennels that breed pure Irish to the exclusion of others could help. Unfortunately, not all countries are open to have more than one breed club like it is the case in The Netherlands. But Ireland could possibly give recognition to breeders inside and outside Ireland by giving them for example a special "status". Those people could be "breeders accredited by the ISCW club of Ireland" according to their bloodlines.

Ireland could also have "authorized representatives" in foreign countries again selected on their breeding policy and their taking part on the preservation of the breed. The purpose would not be to give a life term position. These representatives would not be there to voice their own opinion and to take action of their own without the Club's permission but to represent the Club's guidelines, to officially display the right information in their country. It would not be automatically a life term position but subject to yearly renewal by the Club and breeders could be dismissed by the committee at any time if breaking the agreement between the two parties or for inappropriate behaviour.

I think this could be a start.



***Hanah and Sean Ryan (Newgrange) visiting me – with Sean's puppy dog "T'Celt The Soft Irish Gentlewheaten" (on the left) - T'Celt fully grown with Sean winning CAC – CACIB – BOB at 10 years of age under judge Ronal Menaker.***