

Views from breeders around the world: Louise Borst-Borreman (August 2015)

1. What first attracted you to ISCWT?, how many years have you been involved with the breed? Are Wheatens your original breed

When on holidays in Ireland as a child I would stay with my aunt and uncle, Barbara and Con Bradley, in Newbridge, County Kildare. They always had a Wheaten bred by Maureen Holmes (at the time I had no knowledge of that of course). From day one I fell in love with this dog. I loved the colour and the sheen of his coat and the specific touch (sensation) when going through the coat with my fingers. Moreover Finn was a very loveable animal.

So you could say I know the breed since a “yard made a coat for me” (10/12 years of age).

I just did not know they were called Wheatens!

As a child I drove my parents mad asking for a dog. Finally they agreed. I got a black and white pup that looked more or less like the Dutch Staby hound. I loved him dearly, his name was Kim.

In 1972 William and I got married. We both worked fulltime, so there was no opportunity to have a dog. When I started to work part-time in 1976 we got our first Wheaten, bred by Mrs. Beute-Faber who started the breed in Holland.

She started with imports from Ireland. Maureen Holmes was in close contact with her, and through my uncle, whom I asked for advice, she directed us to Mrs. Beute-Faber.

One of my uncles Wheatens was Holmenocks Hanover, which they called Finnegan.

My first Wheaten (Geimread Caoin Mo Lurgan) was called after him.



So I am really actively involved with the breed since 1976. Next year it will be 40 years!

As my first dog was a cross breed, Wheatens are my original breed.

I have a photograph of my Irish grandfather (who I never met as he died young) sitting with a group of men all holding a dog in front of them, another photo shows him with an Irish Terrier on the bench at a dog show in Drogheda Co. Louth. I suppose I have the love for dogs and horses from him.

2. In your opinion which is the best wheaten owned or bred by you?

I think Dutch, German Belgian and Int. Ch. Dunlath Brugh Na Boinne, daughter of Ch. Newkilber Camelot and Ch. Bairbre Banbha Brugh Na Boinne. She was the winner of the Wheaten top 10, best bitch and res. Club winner 1989.

She was of a good size, well built exc. bone, pigmentation, exc. mover and sported a silky wavy coat of an exc. colour. Moreover she had a good character with plenty of spirit.



Ch Fiona Finnin (winner top 10, 1992), her daughter Ch. Handsome Meabh and Ch. Fiona Finnin's brother Ch. Finnacan BNB (best male, Clubwinner 1992), also spring to mind.



More recent, a dog I imported and co-bred, in my opinion fits the Standard very well. Ch. Traboh's Phinneaus was bred in Canada out of a bitch I bred: Macalla 'O Meav BNB, (a daughter of Ch. Handsome Meabh BNB x Kormacc) and Briankeen The Chieftain.

Bernadette Hobart and I decided on which stud dog we would like to use, Jolijne Ubbink and Anne Holahan also played an important role in realizing all of this.

Phinneaus has an exc. size (he is sometimes dwarfed in the ring surrounded by other males who are way too big), exc. bone, strong head, (not appreciated often nowadays), exc. dentition, beautiful coat colour and texture and is an exc. mover.



Moreover he has a very sweet nature, but stands his ground! In type, I think, he is a real Briankeen.

Unfortunately he could not be shown in other countries due to the docking ban (of which I approve!)

Holland allowed imports from countries where docking still is

allowed to be shown.

In other European countries this was not the case. I am glad Holland allowed it, because I imagine breeders may be hesitant to place a good/promising dog with someone that is not allowed to show the dog. This might influence the availability of new blood lines, needed to widen the genepool. Exporting to a country that does not have the docking ban, gives the risk of the dog still being docked later! I would not like that to happen, as the risk of the dog having phantom pain for the rest of its life is very realistic.

3. Other than those you have been personally involved with, which two or three wheatenens would you describe as the best ones you have seen and why?

Very hard to just name three!! So I am going to be cheeky and name a few more.

From the beginning of my experience with Wheatens, Ch. Newkilber Camelot (Robin) and Ch. Newkilber The Quiet Man (Mario) imported into Germany. They both had enormous influence on the breed.

Ch. Briankeen JR promoted the breed in Ireland and did a lot of winning. He was a very charismatic dog with a lot of presence



Ch. Newkilber Killala and Ch. Wheaten Rebels Larissa for me were bitches that were the type and quality to strive for. Well built, lovely coats with lovely colour, very feminine, showy and excellent movers. Typical examples of the breed according to their IRISH Standard.



In males Ch. Geyes Kilmore still is a dog to look at when imagining the description of the breed in the Standard. He comes from the famous Geyes Kennel who celebrates its 50th years in Wheatens and Kerries this year. Mrs. Eva Corander founded the kennel and her granddaughters Aya and Mia now continue the kennel.

Ch. Holmenocks Hicklam, Ch. Ballysax Bertie and Ch. Ballysax Bounty also were dogs I would have gladly take home. I realize there are even more I could name.

In 2002 my World Winner Amsterdam Ch. Cosgrove Conan from Breenagh was an exc. specimen in all aspects, showing himself all the time.



Ch. Camacha Nevan, bred by Rob and Monique Hubner is another more recent example in The Netherlands. He is the sire of Ch. Fëanáro Niallan Naomhan ("little Nevan").

Niallan comes from the kennel of the late Marianne Baas Becking, who bred quite a few lovely, typical Wheatens. This dog went to Ireland and did a lot of winning. The only thing you could hold against him would be his size. But because of his many virtues you cannot but forgive him for that! I made him BOB at the Irish club show and his daughter Dalstar Giselle, still a very young bitch at the time, best bitch.



4. What kennel within or outside of the breed has impressed you and why?

In the past the Holmenocks kennel of course and later the Newkilber kennel. Both kennels were enormously influential worldwide. Other important kennels were the Briankeen kennel and Mulben kennel. Up till today the longstanding Ballysax kennel, where Christy and Anne Butler are still going strong and breeding some lovely dogs, while Elaine is continuing the kennel. Ballysax Wheatens can be found in pedigrees worldwide. The Wheatens from these kennels were (and are) well built with lovely dark pigmentation, substance and gorgeous coats, sadly lacking in quite a lot of the dogs of today.

Some more recent kennels also come to the fore and hopefully will make sure there is a continuation of well bred Irish Wheatens.

Wheaten Rebels Kennel who started the breed in Germany did a lot of good, promoting the breed as it should look like and breeding wonderful Wheatens. I personally am not so happy with the type of some of their recent dogs.

Geyes kennel from Finland, against all odds, kept on breeding correct Wheatens of exc. quality and is a great guardian of the breed.

5. If you could incorporate just one dog from the past, into your breeding programme, who would it be and why?

This is very hypothetical as unfortunately I had to stop breeding years ago due to health problems. I would imagine Ch. Geyes Kilmore because of all his qualities: build, size, colour, presence and pigmentation.

Kdara Fancy, a very typey Wheaten with all the correct breed essentials, who had a lovely size, exc. build, exc. character and above all correct parallel movement going away. I saw him long ago, when visiting Anne and Christy Butler. I did import a grandson (Ballysax Bounty x Karmel) called Ch. Fenian O'Connor who became the first undocked Dutch Champion, Clubwinner 1995 and Winner Wheaten top10 in 1996.



6. Who has been your greatest mentor in the breed?



Maureen Holmes no doubt.

On a regular base William and I would spend our holidays in Ireland combining sightseeing with visiting relatives. After we got our first Wheaten and getting more and more involved with the new club (William was the first chairman), we also wanted to see Wheatens in their country of origin. We contacted Mrs. Holmes asking her for some shows we could visit during our stay. She answered that there would not be many Wheatens at the shows and that she would

organize a “show” for us by inviting some of the leading breeders of the time to her home to show us some of their Wheatens and to introduce us to them

So in this way we met Maureen Prokosh and Jean Peterson (Newkilber), Joe O’Brien (Briankeen), Wally Ladd (Corlough), Anthony Killykeen Doyle (Killykeen), Anne and Christie Butler (Ballysax), Dan Ryan (Newgrange), Art O’Neil (Ardymon) , Barry Mc Donald (Rickard), Mr. & Mrs Brady (Macfinn), Pat and Mary O’Carrol (Maroc) and Martin Mullins (Mulben), of whom we got our foundation bitch Cunla of Mulben.



It was the start of a long acquaintance with Maureen Holmes. She coached me and was a very strict teacher, it was not always easy. She explained, showed, asked and introduced me to breeders abroad. One of her statements was "look outside your own breed", sit at the ringside and observe the way other breeds move, are presented, ect.

She also made it clear that in order to assess a dog you have to feel the dog. Only looking at it is not enough. Go over it and make your hands check if what you saw is what is there, or just clever trimming. Same goes for photographs, they may be edited (photo shopped in to-days terminology). Make sure you see as many dogs as possible in different countries. Form a picture in your mind of what the breed should look like.

When she was in Holland she mostly visited Mrs. Beute-Faber (together with her husband co-founders of the Dutch Wheaten club). In later years she regularly stayed with us. Together we would visit other breeders if possible go to a show and do some sightseeing as well.



In some cases she would be judging the progeny/young dog's day and would be very outspoken in her critiques in the sense that she wanted people to take good care of the dogs. One time I had to translate: "Keep them so they look like they **belong** to someone".

She had strong feelings about all the changes developed in other countries by people who had as she called it, *"only had a nodding acquaintance with the breed and turned the dogs in something hardly recognizable"*.



She also was very unhappy with what happened to her first book which was published in the US. The photographs she selected were, for the bigger part, replaced by photographs of untypical dogs she did not approve of. The photo's she sent were never returned. They were lost and irreplaceable.

Will and I suggested she would update the book and do it entirely the way she would want it. She agreed and the second book was made: The Softcoated Wheaten Terrier (still available). This book was presented to Mr. van de Weijer, who wrote the introduction, at the World Show in Dortmund where he judged the Wheatens.

In assisting her, by looking for photographs, playing the devil's advocate, finding a printer etc. I learned a lot.

Several times we sat at the ringside in Ireland and I got explained what to look for in the dogs that were presented. She told me to always look critical at the pups you bred, but to start to look at the overall picture and then look at points that could be improved on.

We also looked at litters of pups in Ireland, I can think of the time we sat in Tony's garden watching puppies. The 2 black and tan pups especially were discussed and whether they would clear or not. We were reminded of one of the first articles, by Dr. Pierse in which he mentions the incidence of black and tan pups in a litter of Wheatens.



She also was the one who finally got me to allow her to trim my first Wheaten. I only had one big pair of scissors (that I still have, amongst many, more sophisticated ones). She put Fin on a table and, while watching Lucille Ball and laughing at the jokes, she trimmed him. Of course it looked well as many a dog had been trimmed by her before! She was very happy to see the result!

So I learned a lot of different aspects of breeding, showing, assessing, and on top of that integrity.



Being an all-round judge she sometimes was asked to judge rare breeds, that are small in numbers, which she had never seen in reality. She refused to do so as she did not think it fair to the owners of such breeds who would enter their dog to get an opinion on type and quality of their entries.

She did not feel she would be able to do so as she was not familiar with the breed. She always prepared the day before judging by reading the Standards of the breeds she would be judging the next day

She was adamant every entered dog should get the same attention, as the exhibitors all paid the same amount of money to get the judge's opinion on their entry.



7. **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?**

Have you seen many changes within the breed?

Yes I saw many changes and not for the best! For me this started soon after I got my first Wheaten. Round 1980 some English dogs were brought in from England. They looked completely alien and looked more like an Old English Sheepdog, just smaller in size. Loads of hair of incorrect texture, overbuilt, short neck 'dead' ears hanging at the side of their head, other expression, grey shawls, in all, NO terrier type in any way, let alone Wheaten in type! (nowadays this type is no longer around)



Judges not familiar with the breed, put them up at shows and that is when the struggle to preserve correct type started in Holland. Later on, when the English dogs were nearly gone (the breeder stopped). American imports took their place. These dogs were showy and flashy, but unfortunately again not according to the Irish Standard, which asks for moderation (moderation is the keyword when assessing a Wheaten). They either had dense woolly coats, were too short in the back, over-angulated, and upward movement because of that, lacking substance or a combination of all.

These imports, combined with Irish Wheatens sometimes resulted in good specimen of the breed. Unfortunately there was loss of type when going on to the next generation when these dog were combined.

Some breeders preferred the flashy untypical imports and continued with them, thus breeding to personal taste, instead of selecting the correct ones from these mixed litters. They were encouraged by judges who preferred flashiness, instead of breed type, thus ignoring FCI rules.

Breeders who showed good quality Irish Wheatens, according to the Standard, often got (and get) a raw deal. I am happy to say there are also quite a few judges from Ireland and abroad that judge according to the Standard and have interest in the welfare of the breed. In that way helping to preserve the breed and supporting those dedicated breeders.

Up to this day there is an ongoing struggle to preserve correct type. In a lot of countries it is nearly lost, only a few dedicated breeders battling on. At the risk of treading on some toes.....the support from some Irish judges and the IKC leaves a lot to be desired.

Of course the dogs have to be of good quality, only lovely coat is not enough. Good confirmation and movement should be there, but woolly coated dogs should NEVER be highly qualified as this is an eliminating fault! So no good typical specimen and/or a flashy woolly dog? NO highest qualifications!!!

I see this as the only way to stimulate people to breed quality Wheatens of correct type, both in build, gait as in the rest that makes a dog a typical Wheaten

Do you believe the quality has improved or declined?

I believe there always have been good and mediocre specimen. Only a few are special.

Since line breeding is not recommended anymore, because of the realistic danger of less and less diversity in genes, there is less uniformity in the litters. On the positive side: a wider gene pool will help to keep the breed healthy in body and mind. A very important aspect, without any doubt!

Considering the amount of untypical dogs some wish to call Wheatens, one could say the quality because of that loss of type, has declined. If we only keep the Irish Softcoated Wheaten Terrier in mind one could say they have improved in overall confirmation, but because their moderation they will not often be upfront in a world of shows where exaggeration in a lot of cases is still the norm and is most looked for in order to be placed in the Group.

I think we should watch hind assembly (tail sets, angulation) and resulting movement
Another thing to watch is height to length proportions, there is a tendency to breed for shorter backs, which combined with too long hind legs with no width in the first thigh will cause untypical and uneconomical upward movement instead of forward drive, very wrong for a working TERRIER It literally leads to nothing.



Recently it was mentioned as a complaint that the imports to the United States from Europe had changed “the type” (for instance longer backs) one had worked so hard for to achieve.

Another topic is heads. They need to be strong.

In some countries stop has nearly disappeared and one strives for “brick” shaped heads that tend to get narrower starting to resemble a Fox Terrier head. Typical strong heads are being considered coarse.

So it is not only coat that makes the difference. It is an important factor, as incorrect coat is an eliminating fault. Unfortunately this point of the Standard in many cases is not enforced when judging takes place.

Dedicated breeders will breed typical specimen regardless of having less chance in the show ring. Although they may follow different paths (i.e. choice of breeding stock) to reach their goal, if the result is a typical Wheaten, in my opinion that is breeders freedom. Breeding is selecting! Breeding to PERSONAL TASTE is NOT the way to go! Just look at photographs in the social media to-day what people consider to be a Wheaten. Also look at the ringsides around the world to see **why** it is not the way.

8. What in your opinion is the greatest hurdle that is now facing the breed? What needs to be done to protect the breed into the future?

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

There are too many people that just want to breed pups, they do not really have a passion for the breed. They **do** like success in the show ring and as long as that can be achieved “anything goes”. Cute fluffy puppies are very attractive to some. That the owners cannot keep their heavy coats at adulthood is no problem..... Just send them to a professional trimmer for a pet owner’s cut..... These so called breeders don’t want to invest in getting knowledge about the breed, its character, history and purpose.

A breed is part of a countries heritage, be it cattle, horses or in this case dogs. The goal should be to breed as close to the Standard as possible and be happy and proud when this is achieved. Kennel clubs, breed clubs, breeders and judges should be aware of what this hobby should be about: preserving cultural heritage, in this case **Irish** cultural heritage. According to FCI rules the Standard of the country of origin must be followed! Unfortunately this is far too often ignored

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

There has been and still is, a lot of discussion on restricting exaggeration and emphasizing on going back to breeding healthy dogs of correct type.

The slogan “*fit for function*” is used regularly in meetings of kennel clubs. Rules and instructions have been made and published. It is time to put “*your money where your mouth is*” and put all those intentions to practice!! Kennel clubs, breed clubs, judges and breeders should take their responsibility, or be made to do so.

Judges in particular from Ireland, should take their Irish breeds serious and judge them according to their Standard. If they dislike that type, they should not accept a judging invitation for that breed. If they still go ahead and do judge them, they let down the people who are working hard to preserve that breed.

NOTE: It was brought to my attention, that in recent years, the IKC has been active by issuing the paper: *The essence of breed type. This is now, along with the Standard, meant to be sent to Irish judges going abroad or any non-FCI judges coming in, judging Irish breeds.*



Phinneaus at the beach in the sun set (photo Alice van Kempen : 2014)