

Miniature Bull Terrier Breed Type
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As promised here is my attempt to describe correct type in Miniature Bull Terriers. Even for me this is going to be a little long-winded so I intend to break it down in to a number of parts and I beg the tolerance of the readers if it seems to be straying off target. It will all tie together at the end (I promise).

Part 1

Type in any breed of dog is that combination of qualities which make it recognisable as the breed it is and prevent it being mistaken for any other. Type is the result of two different but related pressures on the evolution of the breed involved. These are function and fashion. To understand function it is essential to have an understanding of the breed's history and I will start with that.

The Bull & Terrier was deliberately created sometime at the end of the 18th century or beginning of the 19th century by crossing bull-baiting dogs with terriers. When bull-baiting was declared illegal in the 1820's, dog-fighting gained a huge impetus and crosses increased to a level that by the 1840's it was said the pure Bulldog was extinct. The reason was that the cross-bred dogs made for a more exciting sport. These Bull & Terriers had type but within that type there was wide variation. For fighting Bull & Terriers, function was all important. But fashion was coming into play. Certain colours were held to be superior or inferior (brindle & red were considered the best, white and black & tan, the worst) and breeders would plan matings accordingly. Size had a wide variation and the dog fighters aimed for dogs of around 30-45lbs. Their dogs were intended for the hardest of blood sports and developed accordingly. Heads were based on the Bulldogs, with punishing jaw power, and were large and heavy in comparison with the size of the dog. More agile than their Bulldog ancestors, they sacrificed some of the agility of the terrier with deep chests and much more muscle and substance. Yet many of the Bull & Terrier crosses lacked these attributes. Some as I have just described, were more Bulldog than terrier, equally others were more terrier than Bulldog. Of a size on a par with their terrier forefathers, they had no place in the fighting pit other than the occasional novelty match. But they weren't without value. At a time when rats were everywhere in the rapidly growing urban cities of Britain, people had suddenly developed the ultimate ratting dog. Though lacking the bite needed for the fighting dog they had more than sufficient power to crush a rat with one bite, and they retained a longer jaw. They were probably more agile than the terriers that preceded them as they gained extra muscle but sacrificed little mobility (as they lacked the huge chest of their bigger relatives). They also had the Bulldog's tolerance of pain. They were often used in organised rat killing contests, but were also employed to kill rats for their owners in everyday life. With these little Bull & Terriers, white was a popular colour.

By the mid 1800's dog fighting was on the decline and dog showing was becoming popular. It was at this period that James Hinks comes into our history. Now, my conclusions as to the part he played, is at variance to that usually reported, but I do have some evidence. What I believe James Hinks did, was breed Bull Terriers the size of the fighting dogs but with the conformation of their smaller relatives. For evidence, read 'London's Labour, London's Poor' written in the 1840's which describes the rat pit bull terriers and they are the Hinks showdogs of twenty years later. There is also a painting of a dog show around this period which illustrates the point. It was this that caused the fighters to doubt the fighting ability of his dogs and although doubt has recently been thrown on the truth of the fight between Hink's Puss and an old style Bull & Terrier, I personally believe that the fight took place (though I am convinced the 20lb weight variation is an exaggeration). Some believe the story that James Hinks did not intend to breed fighting dogs. I have read this more than once and although interesting, that is as

much for what it omits to tell us, as for what it does. James Hinks' son and grandson are both on record confirming that he fought his dogs. It is also on record that when James Hinks ceased breeding Bull Terriers, he sold his remaining stock to a gentleman who was later convicted of dog fighting. Additionally, very few, if any, Bull Terrier historians believe that James Hinks' struggle was to create a white dog - it was to produce a better looking dog. Having said all that, I stated earlier on that I believe that he wished to produce a dog the size of the fighters with the conformation of the rat pit Bull & Terriers and surmise that is why the fighting abilities of the Bull Terrier were quickly diluted.

Hink's Bull Terrier was much more terrier-like than its rivals on the show bench but they still competed for the next 20 years or so. But, under the auspices of The Bull Terrier Club, a Breed Standard was derived which ensured that they could never win and they disappeared from the show ring for the next 60 years. The first Bull Terrier champion was a small dog of 16lbs and for a period, the small dogs were very successful. The breed was divided into three varieties: light-weight; medium-weight; and heavy-weight. It was at this point the new style Bull Terrier began to change gradually. The larger dogs started to get heavier, reverting in part to the build of the dogs they had replaced. They did keep the cleaner heads and tidier conformation. The smaller dogs did not follow the same trend. The light-weights (or Toys) were in trouble. Always more difficult to breed to the Bull Terrier Breed Standard, their numbers were low and fell even further with the ban on ear-cropping in 1895 and never recovered. The advent of the First World War 19 years later was the final straw and they became extinct. The medium-weights (what became our Miniatures) also fell out of fashion and were never again to compete consistently with the larger dogs. They did have one saving grace over the Toys though; they were popular for field sports, both in their own right, and even more as an outcross to other working terriers. This was, however, somewhat of a double-edged sword for the variety. It ensured their survival but, as fashion dictated the Bull Terrier gain ever more power and substance, they were unable to follow suit. As they declined on the show bench, breeders started to fear for their survival and in 1938 The Miniature Bull Terrier Club was formed. The original membership comprised of breeders of very small almost Toy dogs, show Miniature Bull Terriers, working Miniature Bull Terriers, small working Staffordshire Bull Terriers and even cross-bred working dogs. Against this background, in the next part I will discuss the Breed Standard.

Part 2

As breeders, exhibitors and judges, we are used to having a Breed Standard, and we try to learn, understand, and then hopefully use that understanding to make decisions affecting all these areas of our hobby. The Standard is our blueprint. It tells us what our dogs should look like, what their character should be, etc. It tells judges how to decide which dogs are worthy of awards. In short, we could not manage without it. Yet how aware are we of where the Standard came from? Nowadays all breeds in the show ring have a Standard. In the early days of dog shows this was not the case. Breeders bred what they felt individually were correct and judges used the same criteria. To us this appears a recipe for anarchy, but for a period, it worked. One of the main reasons it worked was that breeds had a purpose and the breeders and judges were aware of that purpose and generally that was what was bred and judged for. As time passed, for more and more breeds, their primary purpose became the show bench and more breeders took up breeds because they liked their character and appearance rather than required them for the work they did. As I alluded to in Part 1, when function ceases to be the essential driving force behind a breed, fashion steps in. It is at this point a Breed Standard becomes essential and the individual breed clubs began to formulate their standards or descriptions of their breeds. Generally speaking, they were first formulated in one of two ways. Either a particular individual of the breed was chosen as the ideal and the Standard was a written description of that dog (this approach was used for the first Standard of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier) or the best features of a number of animals were selected i.e. this one has a better head so we use that, this one has the

better body so we use that, etc. (I don't know which system was used in the first Bull Terrier Standard but I suspect the second). At first glance there may not appear too much difference between the different approaches, but when you give it a bit more consideration, it becomes obvious that there are major differences. With the first approach, the dog you are describing exists, it has been bred. So, it can be bred again. This approach has the effect of preserving what is already there and increasing uniformity within that breed. The second approach describes something that does not exist. It is a fantasy which breeders have to try to create and as each breeder will have different views of how to achieve this ideal, there will be less uniformity as they strive to improve the breed.

Just to complicate matters, in the early days of Breed Standards there was not one Standard but each breed club drew up its own. In the early 20th century, The Bull Terrier Club, The British Bull Terrier Club, The Northern Bull Terrier Club and The Scottish Bull Terrier Club all had their own Standards which although similar did vary on certain points. As now, the club members voted as to any amendments to the Standard. Now in some breeds their current Standards are very similar to the originals whilst others have changed quite significantly. These changes are almost all the direct result of changing fashions within the breed and often reflect the influence of particular dogs and/or particular breeders and the Bull Terrier is one of those breeds which has changed quite drastically. To illustrate this point I'm going to compare and comment on particular sections of The Bull Terrier Club Standard in use in 1908 with the present one.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

(1908) *The general appearance of the Bull Terrier is that of a symmetrical animal, an embodiment of agility, grace, elegance, and determination.*

(2008) *Strongly built, muscular, well balanced and active with a keen determined and intelligent expression.*

Even with this opening to the Standard, it is obvious that power as taken precedence over grace and agility.

HEAD

(1908) *The head should be long flat and wide between the ears, tapering down to the nose, without cheek muscles. There should be a slight indentation down the face, without a "stop" between the eyes. The jaws should be long and very powerful ...*

(2008) *Head long, strong and deep, right to end of muzzle, but not coarse. Viewed from front egg-shaped and completely filled, its surface free from hollows or indentations. Top of skull almost flat from ear to ear. Profile curves gently downwards from top of skull to tip of nose which should be black and bent downward at tip...*

The differences here are striking. Other than "flat between ears" there is little else in common. The distinguishing down-face is notable in its absence. These sorts of differences occur throughout the Standards and though the 1908 Standard asks for muscular shoulders, back, legs etc., it makes no mention of substance in 1908. The Bull Terrier was first and foremost a terrier and that is what the Standard requires. The current Standard is for an animal much more evenly divided between Bulldog and terrier. Down-face came into the Standard in the Twenties. The demand for maximum substance was in the Sixties. The Standard changed to reflect the dogs being shown and reflected changes in fashion. The Bull Terrier had, to an extent, become a caricature of a fighting dog. Down-face was justified in that it theoretically offered a stronger bite. The increased substance justified in a similar manner. It didn't matter if it was true or not because its days of a working dog were long behind it. For the Miniature, things were different. They still were to a large extent, working dogs. This meant that major changes were much more circumspect, a theoretical advantage was meaningless, and even if

breeders had wished to bring the fashionable changes into their Minis, they couldn't. If crossing with the larger dogs increased size it meant that the offspring couldn't work so it wasn't often done. As a result, the Minis didn't inherit the genes for down-face. In the next part I'll get around to explaining why the history, both of breed and Standard, have resulted in type in Minis differing from Bull Terriers, even though the Standard is, other than in size, identical.

Part 3

If you have been following my writings, you will hopefully now be aware that the Miniature Bull Terrier, although coming from the same Bulldog/terrier crosses as the Staffords and Bull Terriers, is not descended from the same gladiatorial stock as these breeds. It was developed for a different purpose and always remained more of a terrier than did its close relatives. Since the 1880's, its popularity varied from uncommon to rare. As a variety of Bull Terrier it was kept under the Standard of its more popular relative even though that Standard reflected less and less the dogs in existence. With the formation of The Miniature Bull Terrier Club in 1938, that was about to change. Initially, change was slow but with increased publicity, a number of extremely competent Bull Terrier breeders began to take an interest in the Miniatures. These breeders approached the breed from a different angle than the existing breeders. They decided that what was needed was a miniature version of the current Bull Terrier. The fact that the existing Miniature was probably closer to the original Hink's dogs was irrelevant. They no longer looked like Bull Terriers and these breeders applied themselves to correcting this situation. Tom Horner gives a wonderful description of the Bull Terrier in his book, "*The Bull Terriers are the supreme athletes of the canine world. Stronger and more powerful than anything capable of comparable speed, and faster and more agile than any other of like size and strength.*" This description can be applied with some accuracy to any of the Bull Terrier family but there are provisos if, as has often happened with the Bull Terrier, substance becomes over-emphasized, then agility and speed suffer. It is all a matter of balance. In the early years of the MBTC, the more traditional breeders wished to maintain the working terrier aspects of their dogs while the Bull Terrier people wished to impose the show points of the Bull Terrier on the breed. A compromise between the two ideologies was reached. As well as a height restriction 14", the Miniature had also been restricted to a maximum weight of 18lbs. This weight limit was increased to 20lbs, not enough to match the proportions of the Bull Terrier, but still significant enough to give the dogs more substance. Breeders now strived to bring heads in line with their larger counterparts and in order to capture the genes for down-face, interbreeding between Bull Terriers of both sizes was introduced. At least one top Bull Terrier kennel crossed Bull Terriers with English Toy Terriers in order to produce Miniatures (this is possibly when PLL was introduced into the breed). Eventually the weight clause was dropped, not because it was felt incorrect, but due to fears that it may encourage breeders to under feed dogs. Over time, the Miniature came to be the smaller counterpoint of the Bull Terrier as its name implies.

Yet it's important to be aware that it is not identical. The Standard for the breeds is the same and perfect examples of each breed will be true to the Standard, so how are they different? Heads on a Miniature will not be as exaggerated as on the Bull Terrier. It is intended to kill rats, not battle another dog to death (though some with little encouragement would love to try). It will be more alert as it is a true terrier. It will be slightly lighter in build. It isn't intended to look super powerful, but to have power and agility in equal balance. The often quoted acceptable types in the Bull Terrier: the Bull (supremely powerful); the Terrier (neat, compact); the Dalmatian (upstanding, excellent conformation); and the Middle-of-the-Road (a combination of the other three); is in reality reduced to one - the Terrier, though I accept some will be verging on the Middle-of-the-Road type. Some will show more power than others but the true Bull is too exaggerated for a Mini. The same applies to the Dalmatian. Again, some Minis will show some of the virtues of this type (though in my experience, not many) but not enough to

warrant the name. I suspect this is down to size. The larger dogs can be very much a Bull type or a Dalmatian type and still look balanced, the Minis don't. Tails tend to be shorter and ears smaller, both of which are called for in both breeds, but it is a virtue which Minis have retained better than the Bull Terrier. The Standard calls for a dog with a keen, determined and intelligent expression. A good Mini genuinely is keen and determined (usually determined to get its own way). I have mixed views about intelligence in both sizes but they're definitely not stupid. Movement is more accurate in a good Mini as it lacks the exaggeration of its larger relative. It moves more as a terrier lacking much of the swagger (roll?) often associated with the Bull Terrier. I think the best way of summing up the differences is the good Bull Terrier pushes the Standard to its limits while the good Mini sits right in the middle.

Part 4

To understand type, it is not possible to 'leave history aside'. Type is not a fixed quantity, it varies over time due to conflicting demands. The main difference between Bull Terrier versus Mini type at present, is that the Mini is much more of a true terrier. That being more alert, active, agile, neater, lighter in build, more determined and more independent. It is important not to mistake breed type for breed perfection. It is perfectly possible for a poor show specimen to possess breed type (although a good specimen must have it). I am not implying that the Bull Terrier fits the Standard better than the Mini. The good Mini (and we do have some extremely good Minis) is more accurate to the Breed Standard than a good Bull Terrier. The show winning Bull Terrier is exaggerated in many features although the Standard does not call for exaggeration.

Referring to the present Breed Standard (2008):

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Standard calls for *Strongly built, muscular, well balanced and active*. Yet in most winning Bull Terriers, balance and activity are sacrificed for weight and power.

BEHAVIOUR AND TEMPERAMENT

The Bull Terrier is the gladiator of the canine race, full of fire and courageous. It has been argued in the UK for this clause to be removed but it hasn't (yet) and a Mini is much more likely to be full of fire than is the Bull Terrier.

HEAD

Profile curves gently downwards from top of skull to tip of nose. Not on many Bull Terriers it doesn't, profile swoops down would be more accurate. Yet Minis' heads regularly meet this request.

EARS

Small, thin and placed close together. Dog should be able to hold them stiffly erect, when they point straight upwards. Only Minis have ears which can be truly described as meeting the Standard. Bull Terriers' ears are usually larger in proportion, rarely placed close together, and equally rarely point straight upwards.

BODY

Well rounded with marked spring of rib and great depth from withers to brisket, so that latter nearer ground than belly.

BACK: *Short (compared with what?), strong, with back line behind withers level, arching or roaching slightly over loins*.

LOINS: *Broad (but compared with what?), well muscled*.

CHEST: *Broad* (again, but compared with what? Compared to say a Fox Terrier, the Mini has a broad chest. The Bull Terrier's chest is usually proportionally broader) *when viewed from front.*

UNDERLINE: *From brisket to belly forms a graceful upward curve.* Another feature more likely to be correct on the Miniature. On a significant number of Bull Terriers, curve is often downwards (though that is probably a conditioning issue rather than one of conformation).

Movement also is often better in Minis.

I contend that in comparison with a good Mini, a good Bull Terrier lacks agility and that is purely because with the Bull Terrier, power is deemed more important. Perhaps top-winning Bull Terriers' heads are becoming less exaggerated in profile in more recent times? If so, that is a good thing. I think it demonstrates my point that the less exaggerated head on the Mini is perfectly correct to the Breed Standard. The breadth of head called for, is summed up by the words egg-shaped, and a good Mini meets this requirement, even though it has less breadth in comparison to a good Bull Terrier.

These are probably the reasons why over the past few years Minis in the UK have done better at group level at general championship shows than have the Bull Terriers. As to this fact, statistically there is no argument. There are less than 10% Minis registered than Bull Terriers yet Bull Terriers have by no way achieved an advantage in group placings reflecting that numerical advantage. The statistical analysis is fair and it loses none of its validity due to the fact that 10% of Minis bred are shown compared to 2% of Bull Terriers.

CONCLUSION

I would like to say that I like Bull Terriers. If I didn't keep Miniatures, I'd have Bull Terriers. I like the power they show. What I hope to achieve through this article is to show why they aren't identical and also why both breeds can conform to the same Standard without either sacrificing its own breed type.

I am not saying that the Mini is closer to the Standard than the Bull Terrier. What I am saying is that both breeds have different type and both types are acceptable under the Standard. To repeat myself: *I think the best way of summing up the differences is the good Bull Terrier pushes the Standard to its limits, the good Mini sits right in the middle.*

I've no doubt that in the fullness of time, the Standard will be changed again to reflect the winning Bull Terriers. This is what has always happened in the past. As to whether or not this is a better approach than leaving the Standard alone and breeding dogs to match it, I'll leave you to decide.