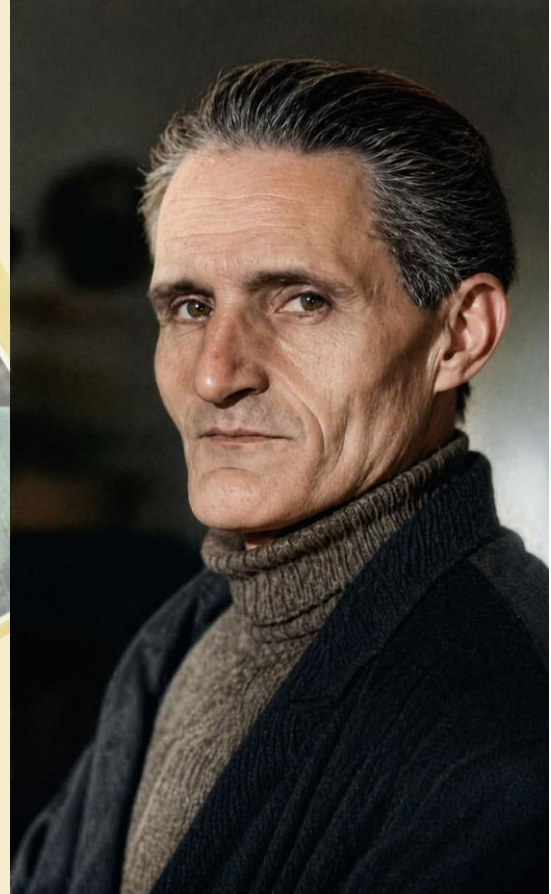


Topsy - the original model for the first breed standard.



The Rediscovery of the Västgötaspets



(Adapted from the Swedish book by Björn von Rosen)

During the height of the debate surrounding the Jämthund, one of the arguments raised was that if such a distinct local dog type truly existed, it surely would have been recognised and described much earlier. After all, the region had long attracted hunters and dog enthusiasts.

At first, I countered that the Jämthund had already been recognised as a distinct type. But over time, another thought began to take shape — a memory that had stayed with me for more than twenty years.

As a schoolboy in the 1920s, I often spent my summer holidays in Västergötland. Along the country roads between places like Tråvad, Kvänum, Jung and Edsvära, I would frequently see horse-drawn carts travelling between farms and markets. Running alongside them, every now and then, was a small dog unlike any I had seen elsewhere.

These dogs were low to the ground, prick-eared, and often short-tailed. They had a bright, intelligent expression and were clearly working farm dogs. They belonged to the spitz family, yet were remarkably consistent in type and quite different from most other dogs.

Years later, when I became familiar with the Pembroke Welsh Corgi, I noticed a striking similarity. Whether the two breeds share a common ancestry — possibly dating back many centuries — had been discussed elsewhere, though it is beyond the scope of this account.

When I later spoke with older people from the Västergötland region, it became clear that these small farm dogs had once been common, particularly in the late 1800s across the plains of Skaraborg County. At that time, there were no Welsh Corgis in Sweden.

When I described these dogs to the knowledgeable dog expert Carl Leuhusen, he immediately took an interest. He was able to add that similar

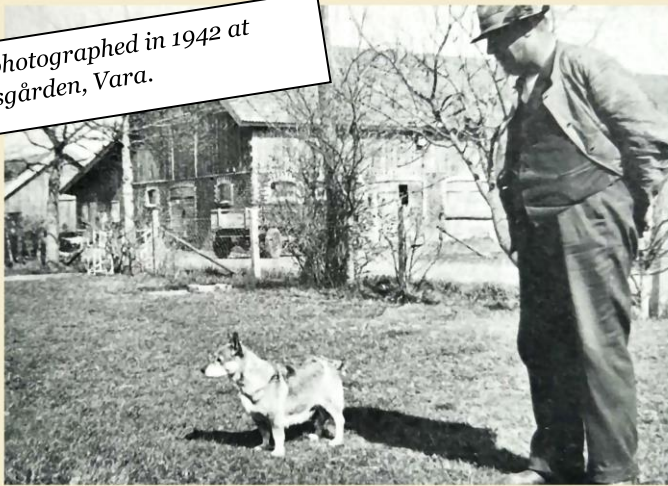
short-tailed dogs had existed until relatively recently at Bäckaskog in Skåne.

This suggested the type may once have been more widespread, although most reports pointed to the Vara district as it's stronghold.

I placed an advertisement in the local press describing the dog and asking for information. One of the most useful replies came from a teacher at the community high school in Vara — the very centre of the region where the dogs had once been most common. He had occasionally seen such dogs even in more recent years, often accompanying their owners to market. Through his connections across the district, he offered to assist in the search.

Together, in the summer of 1942, we set out on a series of bicycle journeys across the Vara plains, following up leads we had received. Many led nowhere. By this time, crossbreeding was common, particularly with Collies and Samoyeds. But eventually, one lead proved true.

Topsy, photographed in 1942 at Nils-Ersgården, Vara.



I still remember the moment clearly. We arrived at the farm of Andersson at Nils Ersgården and there, standing beside her owner, was a small dog who immediately struck me as exactly what I had been searching for. She was a twelve-year-old bitch named Topsy. Although she was too old to be used for breeding, she was of an outstanding example of the type. More importantly, she had already produced offspring in the area, and from her, valuable lines could be traced.

It was a great stroke of luck to have found such a clear and convincing model so early in the process. Topsy became the foundation for my proposed breed standard for the Västgötaspets, which I later submitted to the Swedish Kennel Club along with photographs taken during our travels.

At that stage, official interest was cautious. Owners of the best examples we had found were invited to present their dogs at a kennel club show in **Göteborg**. The group was small — just one male and four bitches that we considered truly representative of the type — but their quality made a strong impression. 1

They became the sensation of the show.



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“The breed has steadily consolidated around its inherent (latent) breed characteristics, including on the male side. Int. Ch. Garr 20259/58, owned by K. G. Zetterstén, is as complete a representative of his sex as the two model bitches were at the outset.”

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Soon after, the **Västgötaspets** was officially recognised as a breed. My colleague, the Vara schoolteacher K. G. Zetterstén — who later became headmaster — played a crucial role in establishing a stable foundation for the breed’s future, both as a breeder and as an advisor. Since then, the breed has grown steadily, though not as rapidly as some others. In return, it has perhaps become more consistent in type. It remains most strongly associated with western Sweden, particularly Västergötland.

From time to time, when I see a group of these small, cheerful dogs at a show, I am struck by how close they came to disappearing altogether. It is a curious twist of fate that the Swedish Vallhund might have been lost, had I not been reminded of it during an entirely different discussion.

~ Björn von Rosen ~



Above: Int.Ch. Garr

Left: Karl Zetterstén with Garr, left and Rasker on the right, (photo circa 1962)

Attribution,

This document presents a modern adaptation of Count Björn von Rosen’s account of the rediscovery of the Swedish Vallhund, originally published in *Mitt hundliv* (1982). This English version has been adapted for readability while preserving the meaning of the original text. All credit to the author and their efforts to save Västgötaspets from disappearing and for preserving early breed history. Some of the images collated and presented here have been digitally enhanced.