



INTELLIGENT AND LOYAL

JILLY COOPER

TRANSWORLD
BOOKS

About the Book

The mongrel occupies a special place in our hearts and homes. Jilly Cooper collected stories from hundreds of owners to write this engaging and affectionate tribute. She presents a delightful account of the lives and natures of a vast assortment of dogs of doubtful parentage: a fascinating, moving and entertaining chronicle of their exploits and accomplishments, their bravery, devotion and wisdom. Jilly's special method of classification enables you to tell instantly if your pet is a Woolly Whitejaw, a Borderline Collie, a Bertrand Russell or a Lancashire Hot Pet. At last, our mongrels have achieved the recognition they have so long deserved ...

Contents

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Dedication

List of Illustrations

Acknowledgements

Introduction

1. How to classify your mongrel
2. The rescued mongrel
3. Intelligence
4. Loyalty
5. The mongrel comforter
6. Dog Juans
7. Fight the good fight
8. The poor man's burglar alarm
9. The street dog
10. The sociable mongrel
11. Diet
12. Mongrel hang-ups
13. The mongrel and marriage
14. The mongrel and children
15. Non-pedigree chums
16. Mongrels and other animals
17. Working mongrels
18. Holidays
19. Of shows and snobbery
20. The mongrel athlete

21. The mongrel and the arts
22. The dogs of war
23. The leak of nations
24. Curvoyants
25. Heinz super dogs
26. Old age and death

Picture Section

About the Author

Also by Jilly Cooper

Copyright

Intelligent and Loyal

Jilly Cooper

a celebration of the mongrel
with photographs by Graham Wood
and others

To Maxine Green
with love

List of Illustrations

(GW) shown against the dog-names refers to photographs taken by Graham Wood. All other photographs are reproduced by courtesy of the dogs' owners.

- [1.](#) Sam Knight (GW)
- [2.](#) Bob Grey (GW)
- [3.](#) Mopsey Cooper (GW)
- [4.](#) Bobby Holt (GW)
- [5.](#) Leo Fennell (GW)
- [6.](#) Daisybell Young (GW)
- [7.](#) Trixie Sylvester (GW)
- [8.](#) Basil Harris (GW)
- [9.](#) Heidi Southworth (GW)
- [10.](#) Barbara Cooper (GW)
- [11.](#) Mabel Cooper (GW)
- [12.](#) Rusty (GW)
- [13.](#) Italian Street-dog (GW)
- [14.](#) Lulu Pilkington (GW)
- [15.](#) Toby Rainnie (GW)
- [16.](#) Patch Spence (GW)
- [17.](#) Chip Smith (GW)
- [18.](#) Tiny Heller (GW)
- [19.](#) Twiggy Kirby (GW)
- [20.](#) Hettie Gibson (GW)
- [21.](#) Barney Carritt (GW)
- [22.](#) Nipon Persson (GW)
- [23.](#) Sidney Farlow (GW)
- [24.](#) Otis Price (GW)
- [25.](#) Bobby Walker (GW)
- [26.](#) Pebbles Hudson (GW)

- [27.](#) Bonkers O'Shea (GW)
- [28.](#) Sam Williams
- [29.](#) Meg Tomlinson
- [30.](#) Bobby Walker (GW)
- [31.](#) Scamp Neighbour (GW)
- [32.](#) Flash Brooks
- [33.](#) Fella Mitchell
- [34.](#) Sam Phillips (GW)
- [35.](#) Cindy Slack
- [36.](#) Scamp Wholey
- [37.](#) Tina Todd
- [38.](#) Bobby Booth
- [39.](#) Fortnum Cooper
- [40.](#) George Wing
- [41.](#) Rusty Harris (GW)
- [42.](#) Jack
- [43.](#) Prince Hart
- [44.](#) Chip Smith (GW)
- [45.](#) Bobby Holt (GW)
- [46.](#) Sandy Williams
- [47.](#) Snarler Davoll
- [48.](#) Basil Harris (GW)
- [49.](#) Sara Frances
- [50.](#) Teddy Williams
- [51.](#) Sambo Braddell
- [52.](#) Sally Gates
- [53.](#) Tib Brown
- [54.](#) Tina Wood
- [55.](#) Trixie Thomson
- [56.](#) Tigger Taylor
- [57.](#) Rover Marshall
- [58.](#) Pippa Daniels (GW)
- [59.](#) Dusty Dye (GW)
- [60.](#) Luke Maples
- [61.](#) Shandy Bishop
- [62.](#) Oswald Saunders

- [63.](#) Nobby Kempster
- [64.](#) Leo Lewis-Bowen
- [65.](#) Rats
- [66.](#) Rats
- [67.](#) Sid Whitchurch
- [68.](#) Zam Williams
- [69.](#) Sandy
- [70.](#) Rikki Bruce-Lockhart (GW)
- [71.](#) Honey Powell
- [72.](#) Jumble Evans
- [73.](#) Timmy Perrin
- [74.](#) Digby Matthews
- [75.](#) Bessie Bemrose
- [76.](#) Maria Cohen
- [77.](#) Brackie Leet
- [78.](#) Frumpy Purkis
- [79.](#) Chum Sharpe
- [80.](#) Jason Parker (GW)
- [81.](#) Jack Pratt
- [82.](#) Major Olins
- [83.](#) Major Hugo
- [84.](#) Peter Ferris
- [85.](#) Tim Jowett
- [86.](#) Tiny Heller II

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to the people who have helped me with this book. They include Major Eric Stones and Jack Winterflood B.E.M. of Battersea Dogs' Home, Clarissa Watson of the National Canine Defence League, David Taylor F.R.V.C.S. and Dr Christopher Dowling and Miss Angela Godwin of the Imperial War Museum. I should like to thank Beryl Hill for typing the manuscript and Amelia Sallitt for helping me wade through the mass of correspondence when it first came in.

I am also deeply grateful to all the owners who wrote to me so entertainingly about their mongrels. One of the saddest aspects of writing this book is that many owners have since sent me letters telling me their dog had died. If any owners did not alert me of their dog's death before the book went to press and their dog appears as being alive, I hope they will forgive me and accept my deepest sympathy.

The lion's share of my gratitude, however, must go to the following mongrels who made up the *dramatis canes* of the book. Some of them are merely listed below. Others also appear in the narrative either in the text or in photographs. But it is hearing about the exploits of all these dogs that has enabled me to draw what I hope is a comprehensive portrait of the mongrel. They include:

22 Sallies, 15 Patches, 15 Sams, 14 Sandies, 12 Judies, 12 Peters, 12 Tobies, 11 Bobbies, 11 Princes, 10 Susies, 9 Bens, 9 Kims, 8 Freds, 8 Lassies, 7 Blackies, 7 Bobs, 7 Brandies, 7 Scamps, 6 Candies, 6 Chums, 6 Dusties, 6 Rexes, 6 Trixies, 6 Whiskeys, 5 Barneys, 5 Flashes, 5 Ladies, 5 Mandies, 5 Simons, 5 Tims, 5 Tinas, 5 Trudies, 4 Bellas, 4 Bruces, 4 Glens, 4 Jacks, 4 Jets, 4 Laddies, 4

Laddys, 4 Majors, 4 Megs, 4 Paddies, 4 Pennies, 4 Pips, 4 Rips, 4 Skips, 4 Snappies, 4 Spots, 4 Suzies, 4 Teddies, 4 Tinies, 4 Trudies, 3 Andies, 3 Basils, 3 Besses, 3 Biggles, 3 Boris, 3 Bouncers, 3 Bullies, 3 Charlies, 3 Cindies, 3 Dans, 3 Emmas, 3 Gypsies, 3 Heidis, 3 Honeys, 3 Jaspers, 3 Jumbles, 3 Luckies, 3 Lucies, 3 Lulus, 3 Maggies, 3 Monties, 3 Panchos, 3 Rickies, 3 Rories 3 Rusties, 3 Scatties, 3 Shandies, 3 Sherries, 3 Sidneys, 3 Simbas, 3 Stumpies, 3 Sues, 3 Tesses, 3 Tonies, 3 Tramps, 2 Benjies, 2 Bills, 2 Blues, 2 Bonkers, 2 Bosuns, 2 Boys, 2 Bretts, 2 Brunos, 2 Brutus, 2 Busters, 2 Buttons, 2 Chloes, 2 Chums, 2 Dingos, 2 Dougals, 2 Flosses, 2 Fredas, 2 Geordies, 2 Georges, 2 Jakes, 2 Janes, 2 Jens, 2 Jennies, 2 Jesters, 2 Joes, 2 Jumbles, 2 Katies, 2 Krugers, 2 Leos, 2 Maxes, 2 Midge, 2 Moxies, 2 Nickies, 2 Oonas, 2 Oswalds, 2 Pebbles, 2 Pippas, 2 Pixies, 2 Poppies, 2 Rags, 2 Rascals, 2 Rebels, 2 Rikkis, 2 Robbies, 2 Robertas, 2 Rosies, 2 Ruperts, 2 Samanthas, 2 Sapphos, 2 Shebas, 2 Smokies, 2 Sophies, 2 Spikes, 2 Tessies, 2 Topsies, 2 Toscas, 2 Twiggies; Ally, Araminta, Armstrong, Arthur, Atlas, Barbara, Barnaby, Basil Brush, Baxter, Be-Be, Beau, Bed and Breakfast, Benghazi Ben, Benny, Bernard, Bessie, Beth, Bilbo, Bimbo, Bitsey, Bonnie, Bonny, Boot, Bootsie, Boy Biddy, Bozo, Brackie, Brian, Brownie, Buddy, Butch Cassidy, Buzby, Caerphal, Caesar, Caezor, Camp, Capon, Cara, Cassie, Charlie-Girl, Charlotte, Chela, Chip, Chips, Chuffy, Chummy, Chummy Boy, Cindy Loo, Coffee, Coon, Craighsmuir, Cresswell, Crusoe, Cymri, Cyrano, Daisy, Daisy Bell, Dandy, Dansey, Del, Dick, Digby, Dilly, Dolores, Don, Don Juan, Doris, Drooby, Duffy, Dugie, Edwina, Effie, Errol, Erroll, Evans, Fan, Fancy, Fella, Fleck, Floppy, Flossie, Fly, Folly, Fortnum, Foxy, Friday, Frisky, Frumpy, Gamma, Gemma, Gretchen, Greyfriar's Bobby, Grundy, Gyp, Gype, Hamlet, Hanna, Hannah, Harriet, Hatter, Henry, Hetty, Honey Ball, Jack the Goat, Jacko, Jackie, Jan, Jass, Jason, Jayne, Jess, Jesse James, Jill, Jim, Jimmie, Jimmy,

Jock, Joker, Josephine, Josh, Josie, Joss, Jubilee Jimmy, Julie, Juno, Kerry, Kimmy, Lass, Littlewood, Luke, Mabel, Mac, Many, Maria, Marion, Matey, Maybe, Micky, Mike, Miky, Miquette, Missy, Misty, Mitch, Mitzi, Mollie, Mopsey, Mubbs, Mutt, Nellie, Nero, Nimbus, Nina, Nipper, Nobby, Nipon, Old Boy, Oophy, Ossie, Otis, Pal, Pandy, Pappy, Partly, Pat, Patrick, Peanuts, Pedro, Peggy, Penelope, Pettah, Pilgrim, Pinkie, Pongo, Poochy, Poodle, Potter, Price, Psyche, Python, Quarry, Queenie, Raffles, Raggy, Rajah, Rats, Rexie, Rickie, Rob, Rocky, Robyn, Roo, Roobarb, Rose, Rover, Ruffey, Rufus, Russ, Saba, Sacha, Sady, Samba, Sambo, Samdog, Sammy, Sara, Sarah, Scooby, Scruff, Scruffy, Seamus, Seeley, Shadow, Shamus, Shaun, Shelley, Sheila, Sian, Sid, Simon, Sinbad, Sintra, Skippy, Smokey, Smokeyjoe, Smudge, Snarler, Snoopy, Snowy, Soda, Sophy, Stacey, Stan, Suki, Sunny, Tahli, Tammy, Tanya, Tara, Teddy-girl, Tessa, Texas, The Major, The Motorway Dog, The Tyke, Tib, Tich, Tiffany, Tiger, Tigger, Timmie, Timmy, Tiny II, Titty, Toby, Toby-Jug, Tocra, Tojo, Topsy, Topsey, Topsey of Testwood, Toto, Towser, Trigger, Trinder, Trix, Trubble, Trudy, Trudi, Tub, Tuffy, Tulip, Tully, Timmie, Tuppence, Twiggy, Twizzle, Vicky, Waggles, Waif, Watney, Weena, Whistle, Whiskers, Whisky, Whiski, William, Willie, Willy, Willoughby, Wimbledon, Yillah, Zade, Zam, Zip, Zoie.

I have tried to make the above list complete: I must apologise for any errors or omissions it contains and hope it may be possible to correct them in any future edition.



Introduction

What is this life if full of curs, I have no time to stand and stare.

There were always dogs in our family. But the ones that stood out were two mongrels called Rags and Evans. Rags, a little russet-coloured rough-coated Terrier, belonged to my grandfather, who was a clergyman. As soon as the organ struck up the last hymn, Rags, who'd been waiting at the church door, would trot up the aisle to collect my grandfather and later stand proudly by his side as he talked to the departing congregation. Rags was, in fact, much better with the parishioners than my grandmother who preferred to read novels. On one occasion a local Lady Bountiful came to tea at the vicarage. Rags promptly made a bee-line for her, sitting at her feet, gazing beseechingly into her eyes, whimpering adoringly.

'I have a way with doggies,' she kept telling my grandmother smugly. 'They all dote on me.'

Alas, when she rose to leave it was discovered she had been sitting on a large bloody bone.

Another time my aunt surreptitiously added Rags's and the cat's names to the bottom of my grandmother's prayer list, so the entire Mother's Union was exhorted in a ringing voice to pray for Raggety Bones and Mewkins.

Evans, who belonged to my paternal grandfather, was extremely ugly. So ugly in fact that when, on the day he arrived, my grandmother proudly took him into the garden to be introduced to the gardener, the old man scratched his head and exclaimed, "Eavens, Mum,' Eavens! If that was my dog, Mum, I'd have named him after t' other place.'

Despite his hellish aspect, however, Evans had a lovely nature, and was so intelligent that he managed simultaneously to drink out of the lavatory and hold the door open with his tail so it wouldn't shut him in.

To my everlasting regret both Rags and Evans died before I was born, but such was the force of their personalities that I felt I knew them almost better than the succession of charming pedigree dogs who enhanced my childhood. When I married and we moved to Putney, and for the first time had a largish garden and lots of space, it seemed natural to get a dog. Just at that time, a reader of the *Sunday Times* wrote to me saying she bred English Setters, and asked if I would like a puppy. I accepted with alacrity, and so began one of the great doomed love affairs of the age. Maidstone, the Setter, and I adored one another almost to the disgraceful exclusion of everyone else in the world, but I couldn't control him and he created dangerous mayhem wherever he went. When he was six, we acquired a mongrel called Fortnum (of whom more later) misguidedly hoping that a companion might settle Maidstone down. In fact it pushed him completely over the top and he had to be destroyed a year later.

Perhaps subconsciously seeking to stop myself rushing out and buying another English Setter puppy, I acquired two more mongrels, Mabel and Barbara, in quick succession, and found myself the owner of a pack. Such was the power of their collective charms, that before I knew it I was a mongrel addict.

If you love something you want to learn more about it. When I had Maidstone, I bought countless books advising me (admittedly with little effect) how to rear, look after, train, breed and show an English Setter. Setters even had their own Year Book filled with self-congratulation and hilarious anecdotes.

I found, however, to my dismay when I went to the library, that hardly anything had been written about

mongrels except for the odd work of fiction. No book was devoted to them exclusively, which seemed extraordinary when there are more than 150 million mongrels in the world. Most dog-guidance books either ignored them completely, or described them pejoratively as being ugly and unpredictable.

The Kennel Club bans mongrels and they are excluded from all major dog shows. They are also appallingly served by many of their owners. During 1980 Battersea Dogs' Home took in some 14,000 mongrels, most of them too ill on arrival to be saved, because no one had bothered to fork out a fiver to have them inoculated. In contrast with this vast number of mongrels, only about 4,000 pedigree dogs were taken in - and this ratio is more or less the same in dogs' homes throughout the country.

Poor mongrel! We live in an age which champions the underdog. Over the last decade, we've had International Women's Year, the Year of the Child, the Year of the Disabled, Gay Lib, Black Power, Student Power and Flower Power - surely it's time for the Year of the Cur. Perhaps Nigel Dempster was striking a first blow in the campaign for Mongrels' Rights in a piece on 'In and Out' in the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine* in 1979, when he wrote that Battersea mongrels were 'In', and several very popular breeds of pedigree dogs were 'Out'. I decided to strike a second blow by writing this book in celebration of the mongrel, and calling it *Intelligent and Loyal*.

My main problem was how to research the subject when there was no available literature. I had talked my head off to most mongrel owners in Putney, but that wouldn't make a book. I needed world-wide information. My husband, not a great dog fan, heroically drafted this advertisement for *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*:

'Mongrels' Lib. Jilly Cooper is writing the definitive book on mongrels. If you have one or know of one, information and photographs will be welcome. It is

time mongrels got a fair deal.'

I had no great hopes of a response. My friend Tim Heald, while writing his excellent book *It's a Dog's Life*, had put a similar advertisement in the papers, asking for good dog stories. He only received fourteen replies. I am afraid none of the stories were terribly good and several of the letters asked for money. But it seems that the emotive word 'mongrel' made all the difference and incredibly, within a few days, I was absolutely snowed under with material from mongrel owners all over the world, none of them asking for money. In addition, to my eternal gratitude, the *Daily Mail* printed a similar message in letter form. The *Evening News* took up the story with a picture of my three dogs romping in the garden, and the letters started coming in by the sackful. They were funny, heartbreaking and touching at the same time. I have never enjoyed a correspondence more. There were letters from children telling me about their family pets: 'I'm writing to you about our mongrel Foxy who is an excellent guard dog, although fat because she's been spade.' There were letters written in spidery hand and covered in tear stains from old ladies writing about some little terrier mongrel who'd died before the war. The photographs they sent in were almost better than the letters. They showed faded sepia dogs lying in hammocks, or sitting at the wheels of ancient motor-cars, or wearing yachting caps, or just brandishing a wagging tail and behind as they disappeared out of the photograph.

Most owners seemed to resent bitterly the fact that other people, particularly the owners of pedigree dogs, looked down on their mongrels. They were convinced that mongrels were the best dogs, but repeatedly suppressed the depth of their affection and pride by making a joke of it.

'Missy is a small, mainly white, creature with black spots, and blodges of brown on her face,' wrote Richard Ingrams, the editor of *Private Eye*. 'She is fairly ugly, has

sharp teeth, beady little eyes and a tendency to yap at the smallest provocation. She was meant to have a rough coat like both her parents, but as things turned out she is smooth. Despite these failings, everyone including me seems to be devoted to her.'

Looking at Missy bristling out of her photograph one can see exactly why.

In similar vein was one of the first letters that came in written on blue card from a Mr and Mrs Roberts of Walthamstow describing their mongrel, Errol. Into the card they had slotted two photographs, 'One in colour, and one in black-and-white in order not to overglamorize Errol.' In fact, as we later found when we went to photograph Errol for the frontispiece, he was a dog whom it would have been difficult to overglamorize.

One of the joys of writing *Intelligent and Loyal* has been collaborating with Graham Wood, who took the photographs. We first met when he came to take my picture for the *Daily Mail*. We ended up next morning with frightful hangovers and a set of the best photographs of my mongrels that have ever been taken. It was only after we'd decided to do the book together that he let slip the information that he couldn't stand dogs, and was absolutely terrified of them. Like most great photographers, however, he was able to overcome his prejudice when necessary.

Throughout the book we have used his photographs extensively, but when I wanted to illustrate an anecdote about a dog that was dead or who lived abroad or too far away, or to include a mongrel snapshot that was so funny or splendid it could not be left out, we have used photographs sent in by the owners.

For me *Intelligent and Loyal* has been a labour not just of love but of adoration. I still like pedigree dogs, but, having discovered the charms of the mongrel late in life, I hope I will be forgiven for writing with all the obsessive fervour and bigotry of the newly converted. My only regret

is that there was not room to use all the marvellous material sent in. I hope that Graham's less rose-tinted approach will balance the book; that people will have as much fun reading it as we had putting it together; and that this book may help the mongrel to achieve some of the recognition for his special qualities that he deserves.

No one I know has summed up these qualities better than Hugh Walpole, whose mongrel Jacob was the model for Hamlet, in the *Jeremy and Hamlet* books.

'I have owned a great many dogs,' wrote Walpole, 'some of them very finely bred, very aristocratic, very intelligent, but none of them has ever approached Jacob for wisdom, conceit, self-reliance and true affection. He was a ghastly mongrel. I tremble to think of the many different breeds that have gone to his making, but he had Character, he had Heart, he had an unconquerable zest for life.'



Chapter 1

How to classify your mongrel

FROM EARLIEST TIMES the dog has been of service to man, guarding his cave, hunting with him for food, and giving him friendship. Gradually, to suit his own purpose, man started to breed specific types of dog to carry out particular tasks. He produced Mastiffs, for example, who were strong and brave enough to fight fiercely in battle. He bred a wolf-like sheepdog, the Alsatian, to frighten off any wolf that threatened the flock. As a double bluff, he even produced the Old English Sheepdog who looked like a sheep, so that when the wolf descended unsuspecting on the fold, he was routed by a great woolly monster. Man also needed fast dogs like the Greyhound and the Foxhound to hunt the rabbit and the fox, he needed Terriers to dig his prey out from their holes, and Spaniels to retrieve it from the undergrowth. As people had more leisure, Pokes, Pugs and other toy dogs were bred for decoration and companionship.

Because each of these breeds was needed for special duties, their value increased, and, as with all expensive things snobbery crept in. The breed dog became a status symbol, and greedy breeders with an eye to financial gain produced more and more breeds allegedly for different purposes. In fact they seem often to have been creating mere collectors' items. At the same time, a huge sub-culture of mongrels were still carrying on their doggy life unheeded, attaching themselves to various owners, or surviving by scavenging.

The word mongrel, which is pronounced with a flattened 'o' in the same way as *monkey* and *fishmonger*, comes from the Middle English word *Meng* (to mix), and from the Old English word *Gemong* (a mingling). A mongrel is a dog of mixed blood, whose parents were not of the same breed, or of any breed at all. A breed dog, say an Afghan Hound, has parents, grandparents, great grandparents and great-greats going back for at least ten generations, who are all Afghans. The mongrel, on the other hand, is usually the product of many generations of chance matings, and may have as many as sixty breeds in his make-up.

To complicate matters the term 'mongrel' not only applies to a dog whose parents are both mongrels, but also to a dog whose parents are both pure bred dogs, but of different breeds. Therefore if an Alsatian mates with an Afghan, the puppy can either be described as a 'crossbreed', or an 'Afghan/Alsatian cross', but is still a mongrel because it is not pure bred. Equally if a Greyhound mates with a mongrel bitch, its offspring can be described as 'Greyhound crosses', but are still mongrels.

Many people tend to label all mongrels euphemistically but inaccurately as 'crossbreeds'. 'Mutt', 'tyke', and 'cur' are other less flattering names, as is the French 'Bâtard'. Americans and English owners often refer to their dog as a 'Heinz', because of the original 57 varieties. The Australians with typical down-to-earth humour call them 'Bitsers', because they are usually made up of bits of this breed, and bits of that.

As a large part of this book consists of anecdotes about various mongrels of all shapes and sizes, I have tried in this chapter to categorize them into types to make them more readily identifiable, and to save laboriously describing each dog's appearance when I came to it. If I have identified anyone's mongrel wrongly, I apologize; it is often difficult to tell exactly what a dog looks like from a small photograph. If your mongrel doesn't fit into any of the categories, you

should be delighted: you are the privileged owner of a unique dog.



Chapter 2

The rescued mongrel

Oh rest ye, brother mongrels, we will not wander more.

'LUCY NICHOLAS JOINED our family in 1964,' wrote a friend when she learnt I was gathering material for a book on mongrels. 'My mother bought her out of sheer embarrassment when she came up for auction at a local Conservative party sale. As the auctioneer pointed her out as lot four, a piglet-like creature in an old cardboard box with a head too big for her body, the room fell silent. As the silence continued, my mother felt herself blushing at the humiliation the small creature must be feeling. When finally the auctioneer failed to raise a single bid, she gallantly offered £2 10s. and found herself the owner of the obvious runt of the litter.'

Lucy's new owner displayed that quixotic streak of compassion which I am proud to think of as peculiarly English. It is that same streak which sends thousands and thousands of people off to dogs' homes every year to rescue mongrels that are about to be put down. It is also that streak of compassion for the underdog among underdogs that often makes them, on reaching the dogs' home, choose the ugliest, most pathetic dog they can find.

Brutus Collis, a black-and-white Shagpile from Dorking was rescued from the local RSPCA home. According to his master, 'It was love at first sight. I saw Brutus trying not to look too eager to be picked out.'

'Simon's body was a bundle of bones and scabs,' wrote another owner. 'He gazed at us from a pile of straw, and

when we didn't take him, he slunk back into the corner dejectedly so we changed our minds.'

'The dogs were all barking and throwing themselves against the bars,' said Mrs Chatwin of Orpington, 'except one misshapen black and tan bitch who was just sitting staring into space with a hopeless, despondent look in her eyes. I knew instinctively this was the dog for us. She'd been thrown from a car and didn't trust anyone. However, she immediately jumped into our car as though she'd been in it all her life.'

Sometimes a prospective owner needs just a flicker of recognition to take on a particular dog. 'The local RSPCA shelter was full of beautiful breed dogs,' wrote Miss Woodrow of Gwent, 'but in one corner cowered a sandy mongrel bitch who'd obviously been ill treated. She gave my hand a lick and that was it - she cost us ten shillings.'

Mrs Lynne of Upminster, however, preferred the grand gesture. 'The dogs were penned in twos and threes when I arrived. They were being given their only meal of the day. Ricky left his food to come and talk to me, that was that. He has grown into the most beautiful dog, and is loving to the point of adoration.'

Shelley Barton, a handsome cross between a Boxer and a Great Dane, both highly sensitive breeds which need a huge amount of affection, was obviously miserably displaced in the dogs' home, and on seeing her future mistress for the first time hurled her not inconsiderable weight into her arms, as if to say, 'I belong to you, please take me away from this terrible place.'

Certainly visiting a dogs' home is a gruelling experience - all those desperate creatures clamouring for attention. For the tender-hearted it is hard not to come away with a whole pack. Charles Dickens, for example, was upset by a trip to Battersea in 1862:

As you come within sight of the cage, twenty or thirty dogs of every conceivable and inconceivable breed rush towards the bars, flattening their poor snouts against the wires, and ask in their own peculiar and most forcible language if you are their master or no.

A German, Dr Carl Schneider, visiting the home at the turn of the century, was even more upset, and was haunted for years by the vision of one particular stray:

He looked at me with human eyes, whimpering and whining and unfolding his trouble to me in exquisite dog language, moving his body and tail in every conceivable posture of entreaty and abject submission, and when I moved away he pressed his nose and paws against the railing and emitted a cry such as might burst from the shipwrecked on a barren island, who sees the sail, on which he built his hopes of deliverance, disappear on the horizon.

It is the same today. There are few more heartrending sights than a van full of terrified strays arriving at the dogs' home. Once they are unloaded, their collars - the last vestige of their individuality - are removed and replaced by a Battersea collar with a number: regulation prison uniform, for prisoners who have not committed any crime.

But all dogs who enter here need not abandon hope. Of the 14, 151 mongrels taken in by Battersea in 1980, 1,665 were reclaimed and a huge total of 6,451 dogs found homes. This admittedly means that around 6,000 mongrels were put down, but the majority of these were severely ill on arrival, either very badly injured in road accidents, or so diseased that they would have risked infecting the other dogs.

Battersea is only one of thousands of dogs' homes all over the country which are constantly placing dogs with new owners. The Canine Defence League, for example, takes in between 3,000 and 4,000 dogs a year and manages to rehouse 90 per cent of them. Another cheering aspect of dogs' homes is the dedication with which the kennel staff look after their charges, and the real satisfaction they find in returning a lost dog to its owner, or in placing a stray in

a new home. As a rule, after a mongrel has been a certain time at Battersea, and the kennels are becoming overcrowded, he has to be put down to make way for other dogs only just come in. Fortunately the kennel maids get very attached to some of the less outwardly attractive dogs and keep moving them to the back of the queue. A dog called Old Boy, for example, stayed at the home for eleven months. He was an old mongrel nobody wanted: good-tempered, healthy, loved by the staff, but one who didn't, because no visitor showed any interest in him, go out of his way to sell himself any more. Everyone seemed to want a young dog, or a dog with a sad, appealing face. Happily the press got to hear of Old Boy's plight and published his picture with a story in the paper. Battersea was inundated with requests to adopt him: the quixotic streak of the English was at work again and he found a marvellous home.

Other mongrels are not so lucky as Old Boy. Miss Tanya Leonard, who works in a dogs' home near Newport Pagnell, cannot help getting attached to the strays she looks after.

'There was a little black mongrel we called the Motorway Dog, because he was picked up on the M1, obviously dumped. He had bleeding feet, a burn on his nose, and scars and scabs all over him. Some of the scars indicated that he'd been thrashed with a thin stick. It was really satisfying seeing him gain confidence and fill out. Four weeks after he arrived another dog whom we called Basil, came into the kennels. We don't name all the dogs, only the ones for which we feel a special affection. Basil was terribly thin (I only once saw a dog so skinny, and that died) and surprisingly at first he refused food, but I took him out with me at lunchtime and gave him bits of my sandwiches. He enjoyed this extra attention, and gradually gained weight. He was such a happy dog, who wagged his tail for even the smallest thing.

‘Both the Motorway Dog and Basil are fine examples of dogs who, if given the chance, will do anything to please, and despite an unhappy cruel past develop a beautiful individual character. But thanks to selfish people who are unprepared to look beyond the outside skin of a dog, and not at its personality, these dogs were put down last week. Both were well on the way to recovery, and looked forward to leading healthy, happy lives. I have put a brave face on it at work, but no one can tell me mongrels are not as good as pedigree any day.’

It must be heartbreaking for the kennel staff to nurse a dog back to health, and then have to destroy him because he does not appeal to any prospective owner. Mrs Hart of Taunton, on the other hand, is just the sort of saviour the dogs’ homes are looking for. She went to Somerset RSPCA and specifically demanded a dog no one else wanted. She was immediately given Sally, a four-year-old Rough-and-Reddish, whom everyone had passed over, despite ‘eyes like clear brown trout pools’, because she looked so commonplace. She had already been chucked out of two families, the first because the wife couldn’t stand dog hairs, the second because she fought with the resident Cairn.

Not all strays come from dogs’ homes, of course. Lucky Draper, a red Tightskin was found in a field in Northamptonshire.

‘My grandfather,’ wrote Lucky’s mistress, Rebecca, ‘was feeding the cows when he saw a car stop, and a man throw some rubbish over the hedge, and then drive off. Feeling furious, my grandfather drove his tractor over to pick up the mess, and found a puppy, very small and weak, all tangled up in her collar and lead, and almost dead with cold because it was snowing. Pop took her home, gave her some warm milk, wrapped her in a blanket and sent for Dad and me. Mum didn’t have any say in the matter. She didn’t want another dog, but she loves Lucky now (sometimes).’

Another little mongrel, called Matey Webb, was also found in the snow, tied shivering to a gate by a bit of string. 'We knew he wanted to live with us, when he didn't wee in the car going home. We washed him in the sink with Fairy liquid and wrapped him in an old blanket.'

Sometimes a rescued dog can cause dissension in a family. Mr Baines wanted a Great Dane, his wife wanted a Dachshund. Instead she found Sam, a tan and white Prop Forward, careering, obviously lost, through Bromsgrove, and brought him home. Mr Baines was incensed when he saw Sam *in situ*, saying he hated cringing dogs, and Sam must go at once. For the next week, Sam was secreted in an old cowshed like some prisoner on the run, but fortunately won his spurs the following week, when some neighbouring cows strayed onto Mr Baines's land. Sam promptly rushed out, rounded them up and drove them back. He returned to the house in triumph with a beaming master at his side.

'This is a simply marvellous dog, not like that other one,' said Mr Baines. 'Where on earth did you find him?'

Success with one stray tends to make owners take on another. Mr Byatt already had a beautiful Satin Crammer, another Sam, whom he'd bought for £5. Shortly afterwards he discovered a brindle Twentieth-Century Fox Dog in his garden who was limping badly and eating chip paper, because she was so desperately hungry. It took an hour of coaxing and throwing titbits to get her to lick Mr Byatt's hand and snuggle up in his arms. When he finally got her into the house, she slept for forty-eight hours.

In a nation of supposed animal lovers, it is utterly horrific to find that people can be so desperately cruel to dogs, dumping them in icy fields, or chucking them out when they go on holiday. The ultimate in heartless brutality, however, must be buying a dog for a child as a Christmas present and, when the child gets bored with it, dumping it on the motorway. One can imagine the panic-stricken terror

of the wretched animal as it weaves desperately in and out of the oncoming traffic, seeing all it knows and loves fading as the number plate disappears out of sight. One's heart bleeds for Kim Crook III, a Jack Russell, who was discovered on the edge of a main road, creeping pathetically out of the verge to look hopefully at every passing car, then darting back again. Poppy Smerdon, a glorious Satin Crammer, was dumped by some gipsies on the A40 and taken to the nearest dogs' home.

'She clearly found us appealing when we saw her at the home,' writes her present master, 'and was determined we should be her new owners. My wife and I had been invited to a lunch party, and we took Poppy away but left her in the car. Obviously she felt left out, because she pushed down the window, and joined the pack of Labradors on the lawn. Since then we have not been parted from her. She is quite simply the best dog we have ever known. My wife and I and our two children, the cat and the tortoise are simply devoted to her.'

At other times the bond between mongrel and new owner is forged more slowly. Mrs Saunders of Liss, Hampshire, used to walk her Alsatian bitch in the woods every day, and was often trailed by a brindle Prop Forward, who was obviously a stray, whom she called Buster. Very nervous at first, he gradually over a year allowed her to talk to and then to stroke him. After that he followed her home, and for two days stayed in the garden.

'I fed Buster, but wouldn't let him in. He slept on the back doorstep, and cried to come in. Finally I weakened. No one seemed to have lost a dog, so he stayed. I think he'd been dumped by someone who had driven off. Whenever I started the car in the early days, he would rush and hide. He is rather noisy at times, but very loyal and affectionate.'

Some dogs - the quixotic streak at work yet again - are lucky enough to be rescued from cruel owners. Poor Patch

Mellor, a Standard Magpie, was tied to a tiny box in a field for more than two years. Mrs Mellor used to take her own dogs for walks past him, and throw him pellets of bread and meat which often, alas, landed too far away from him to reach.

‘He was a bag of bones, his white fur was yellow as though it had been singed (which the vet said was lack of nourishment). We finally approached the owner, who said in amazement, “Dost want him?” We took him straight away. He is about nine or ten now but plays like a puppy.’

Another philobrutist, Miss Jane Howell of Charlbury, was working in a café for pocket money when she discovered a little dog tied to a chair in the back room, who used to be pelted with bits of gristle and sausage meat at mealtimes.

‘He was called Whiskey. I loved him at once with an enormous sense of outrage. The owners wanted an Alsatian, so poor Whiskey was for the chop. I bought him from them on the never-never, paying with my wages each week, and took him home on a length of washing line. I stopped on the way to let him loose in a meadow full of wild flowers. He’d never seen grass or sky, never been off a chain since he’d left his mother, and he went berserk. His back legs were weak through insufficient food, his back dipped through months of cowering, but he just ran and ran, leaping back through the buttercups to check I was still there, then barking and chasing, rolling and snuffling. I re-named him Jesse James. He was an inspiration to everyone who met him.’

In the same way, little Twiggy Kirby, the original Edith Sitwell dog, belonged to an old lady who never took her out and made her sit behind a chair all day. When her new mistress took her to the vet when she was eight months old, he said her paws were like a new puppy’s and her hind quarters were quite bare where she’d sat on them all the time.

'I don't think she'd ever seen a bird before,' writes Miss Kirby. 'She is spellbound by them, and tries to climb trees to get a better view. We've now had Twiggy over a year, and we feel she is having her youth now.'

Almost worse than dumping a dog on the motorway is turfing out a bitch when she's heavily in pup. Cara Bagnall, an exquisite black and tan Spanish Policeman's Hat Ear Dog came from Harrow Rescue Centre. A week after she arrived at 5 a.m. on New Year's Eve she had twelve puppies. Ten lived, but as Mrs Bagnall had had only a week to build Cara up, she was like a skeleton.

For the next six weeks, the Bagnall family dropped everything, turning the study into a nursery, and taking it in turns to bottle-feed the puppies. As it took nearly two hours to feed them all, as soon as one person finished, someone else had to start. The Animal Rescue League helped Mrs Bagnall find homes for nine of the puppies, but she kept the tenth and called him Boy: 'Both dogs have completely settled in and we love them dearly.'

It is in fact this nursing back to health and confidence that forges the cast-iron link of devotion between the rescued dog and his owner. Bully Latchford came from Battersea in the 1920s and had a close-cropped white coat, black ears, baleful eyes, and a docked tail so his whole rear end wagged. 'He had been terribly maltreated,' writes Mr Latchford. 'Weals across his back, and a raw mark on his neck from a too-tight chain. Every bone in his body stuck out. My mother was the one who nursed him back to health, I've never seen an animal show so much gratitude or intelligence.'

Some dogs are so badly treated that even with kind owners they never fully recover their confidence. Judy Manser, a black and tan Terrier Cross from the RSPCA, was still a mass of sores when she came to her new home. As her previous owners used to stub their cigarettes out on her, she still jumps a yard if people approach her suddenly.