**FIONA MCMILLAN HISTORY for the Trailing of the Sheep 2024**

I was born and raised on a farm in South West Scotland in a small village called Moniaive, Dumfriesshire which is just over the English border. I lived there with my mum dad and two older sisters. I was the boy that my dad never had as he used t6o say only because I was the most interested in the farm work. I was the baby of the family,

The farm we lived on was Craigmuie which hosted grass parks and hill ground totalling 1000 acres and went up to 1400 feet. We ran 200 plus cross bred sheep and 800 blackface sheep. We had over 100 Pedigree Galloway Cattle which we showed and to this day my father Mr Gilbert (Bert) McMillan still holds the record for winning the Queens cup (this cup is for the best in show) with the Galloway breed at the Royal Highland Show some 40 years ago. This has never been won by the Galloway breed since then.

My dad was the farm manager at Craigmuie which was owned by the Gourlay farming company. From a small age I followed dad on the farm learning the many craft and skills on the farm. A special place in my heart was working with the border collie and is still my passion to this day.

I was shepherding and helping on the farm from the age of 7 or 8 until my father passed away in 1992 from a heart attack while running his dog at a charity trial locally. I lost my mentor and best friend that day. I then turned to office work holding various positions and I am currently working for Police Scotland and have been for over 24 years.

My proudest moment to date was when I won the Young Handlers Competition at the International in Woburn Abbey in 1986 with a young stand in dog that my father ran in the nurseries because my bitch got injured 2 weeks before. (Picture)

I also ran on the popular TV programme One Man and His Dog the year after. That was not as successful as I had difficulty in penning the sheep with my bitch Gael. But still an honour to take part in the TV programme. It was always an ambition of my Dad to be on that programme and I think he was a little annoyed I had beat him to the post!!! (picture)

When I became a little older I took on lambing the sheep at home assisting my dad. My other job on the farm was training all the young pups and dogs to bring them up to a certain standard for my dad then to step in and put the finishing touches to them. I loved working with the young dogs and there is no better satisfaction when a young dog is broken and you are able to do a job on the farm and you know you brought out the natural ability in that the dog a great feeling.

I took up trialling at the age of around 14 and ran at my first local trial in Moniaive. It went okay but it was nerve racking stepping out onto the big stage with everyone watching. I then got the bug and attended as many trials as I could with my dad but Scotland at that time (1990’s) had some great handlers so I was really up against it.

I left the trialling scene for a little while and followed my career but I still had a burning passion for trialling and was itching to get back to it. Without the farm environment it was difficult to keep the dogs to a standard as they were not out everyday doing the practical stuff that keeps them focused so I then took to organising trials starting off with my local nursery league the Dumfries and Kirkcudbright Nursery’s and have held that position of Secretary for over 25 years. I love to see young dogs progressing through the nurseries trials over the winter months.

Bit of background I have ran dogs since the age of 14 at various open trials in Scotland. My proudest moment to date was winning the young handlers at Woburn Abbey England International back in 1987 for Scotland with my dads young nursery dog Garry. Gael my own bitch got injured at a trial 2 weeks before we were due to go down to the International. It was all the more special as my dad was the Scottish Judge for the International that year. I have to add he did not judge the Young Handlers just in case you were thinking there was any favouritism. The year earlier I represented Scotland on One Man and His Dog in Wales, that didn’t go so well. We got a bad sheep that did not want to go into the pen. But that’s trialling as we all know it.

For well over 30 years I have been involved with the International Sheep Dog Society. I have been a Director for most of that time and been on Council which is a trustee of the Society on 3 separate occasions to the current date. I am currently Senior Scottish National Vice President and President elect. I will become the first lady President in the history of the International Sheep Dog Society in November 2024. I am very honoured to hold this position and hope to serve my country well.

I have been judging sheepdog trials for 30 years. I have judged nurseries, open trials, novice trials. I have judged in Scotland, England, Ireland, and quite a lot in Canada and USA. I started judging overseas back in 2010 in Seattle, Washington, Whitby Island then progressed to Cananda Kingston. I have judged in New York, Oregan, San Fransico, New Hampshire, Banff and now Idaho. It’s a pleasure and an honour to visit these wonderful places and doing the job I feel so passionate and love makes it all the more special. I have met a lot of lovely people and seen some really lovely dogs that I have wanted to bring back home.

I have organised a lot of trials in my lifetime and a lot of Scottish Nationals and Internationals when held in Scotland. I have been doing this job for over 30 years and was a great honour to be asked to be Chair for the Centenary International Sheep Dog Trials that was held in 2006 over in Kelso. My proud moment was when I managed to secure HRH Princess Royal as Patron of the Society after her visit to the International in Kelso. HRH Princess Royal remains our Patron to date.

I am delighted and honoured to be asked to judge the 2024 Canadian Championship See you all there!!! Good luck.