

# Dogs *not* in Canada

by Ria Hörter

THE CANADIAN KENNEL CLUB RECOGNIZES 164 BREEDS, BUT THERE ARE HUNDREDS MORE WORLD-WIDE, SOME OF THEM RARELY SEEN OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

## BROHOLMER

### DANMARKS HAVE

Fyn is a small Danish island situated between Jutland and Sjælland. The western coast is separated from the mainland by the Lille Bælt (Little Belt) and the eastern coast by the Store Bælt (Great Belt). The capital is Odense, hometown of Hans Christian Andersen. Fyn has a charming landscape, green fields and grasslands, farmhouses with thatched roofs, and wooded hills. In between are little villages, old towns on the seaside, country houses and castles – one of the reasons Fyn is called *Danmarks Have* (Garden of Denmark).

The small village of Gudme is situated between the city of Svendborg in the south and Nyborg in the east. There we can find a castle – maybe manor house is a better description – dating from the Renaissance and situated on the very small island of Broholm.

### DANISH AND NORWEGIAN VIKINGS

It's believed Danish and Norwegian Vikings who organized marauding expeditions to the British Isles from the 8th to the 11th century took Mastiff-like dogs home with them to Scandinavia, as stolen goods. A dog skeleton found by archaeologists in an old Viking village on the island of Fyn had the form and shape of the Broholmer dog of today. Because local dogs in that time were far smaller and of a Spitz type,



ILLUSTRATION: JOHN FRASER

**Origin:** 12th-century Denmark

**Original purpose:** Cattle dog, guard dog and pack hound

**Description:** A big, powerful dog of Mastiff type, the Broholmer is reposed, observant and friendly, absolutely not aggressive. The head is big and strong; the skull and nose ridge should be parallel when viewed in profile, with only a slight stop. The muzzle is not too long and should have pendulous lips. The medium-sized eyes are round and dark brown to dark amber. He has a lot of throat skin. The Broholmer's body should be rectangular, with a deep chest and straight back, and strong, muscular forequarters and hindquarters. The coat should be short with a coarse texture. Its colouring may vary from light yellow to brown-fawn, with a black mask. A black coat is also permitted. White markings on chest, feet and the end of the tail are accepted.

**Height/weight:** 70 to 75 centimetres (27-1/2 to 29-1/2 inches); 52 to 63 kilograms (115 to 140 pounds).

**Information:** [www.broholmeren.dk](http://www.broholmeren.dk)

the theory about the Viking dogs is considered correct. Additional proof is the so-called 'Dalbo dog,' also a Mastiff type. This type of dog lived in Sweden until the end of the 19th century – another reason the Broholmer is considered a distant descendant of the dogs the Vikings took home with them ages ago.

### BUTCHER'S DOG

The descendants of the Viking dogs were cross-bred with Great Danes and English Mastiffs, the latter presented to the Danish Court by King James I (1566-1625) of England.

In those times, the Danish Mastiff-like dogs were used for herding and guarding cattle – on farms and at the cattle markets in the cities – and protecting hearth and home. A Danish dog book, published around 1800, states that the Broholmer was a very ordinary breed, not rare at all, especially in Copenhagen. His nickname



PHOTO: RIA HÖRTER

*Broholmers in front of the manor house Lange-soe, on the island of Fyn.*



PHOTO: RIA HÖRTER



*Broholm Castle, Count Sehested's home on the island of Fyn, ca. 1930.*

PHOTO: COURTESY BROHOLMERSKAPET

was “butcher’s dog,” probably because one could see this type of dog lying on the doorsteps of butcher shops.

## COUNT SEHESTED AND KING FREDERIK VII

During the 17th century, this Danish mastiff-like dog was also a pack hound, especially used on royal hunting-grounds. After the ban on *parforce* hunting, their numbers dropped rapidly. Count Niels Frederik Bernhard Sehested (1813-1882), gamekeeper of the Danish King, archaeologist and living at Broholm Castle, started a breeding program to save the breed. During his travels throughout the country, he tried to find as many good examples of Broholmer dogs as possible, and gave a number of people a dog for free, providing they would breed a litter. The name of the breed, *Broholmeren* in Danish – a tribute to the man who saved this dog from extinction – dates from the end of the 19th century.

King Frederik VII (1848-1863) and his wife, Countess Danner, were great fanciers of the Broholmer. The royal couple owned these dogs for years. Those belonging to the king were always named ‘Tyrk’; Countess Danner’s were always ‘Holger,’ whether it was a dog or a bitch.

## BREEDING BROHOLMERS IN THE ZOO

The first dog show in Denmark was organized in 1886. Descendants of Count Sehested met there, to write a breed standard. Broholmers have been recorded in the Danish stud books since 1887; in 1982, the breed was officially recognized by the FCI, which used the description from 1886, the only difference being acceptance of the colour black.

Between 1859 and 1921, Broholmers could be seen in the Copenhagen Zoo as part of a breeding program; about 200 puppies were born there. During this period, black Broholmers were used as guard dogs in the Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen’s famous amusement park.

Still it was not possible to save the Broholmer. Its numbers dropped dramatically because of inbreeding, distemper and viral infections. There were some registrations in 1910, and Broholmers were entered at a dog show around 1939, but at the outbreak of World War II, the breed was finished.

## FOLLOWING THE TRACK OF THE BROHOLMER

In 1974, the Danish Kennel Club published ‘Following the track of the Broholmer’ in its paper. Somebody from Sjælland, who owned an 11-year-old male without a pedigree, responded. He was given permission to enter the dog at a show under the name *Gamle Bjørn Fra Helsingø* (Old Bjørn from Helsingø). The judges were in complete agreement: this dog was a real Broholmer! Thanks to a great deal of publicity, more representatives of the breed were traced, descendants of the dogs bred in the zoo some 50 years before.

The 25th anniversary of the *Broholmerselskapet* was celebrated in 1999 with a show at which more than 100 Broholmers were entered. Today there are 500 to 600 Broholmers, most of them living in Denmark. Breeding is done according to strict rules and only since January 1998 has the breed been exported, in very small numbers.

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