

Theophil Studer.

On the Dogs from the Crannoges of Ireland

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The author already had the opportunity to examine the remnants of dogs, some of which were found in prehistoric Irish lake dwellings, that are kept in the rich prehistoric collection of the Irish National Museum in Dublin. Since then, the director of these collections, Dr. Scharff, was so kind as to provide us with a number of excellent plaster casts of dog skulls from the collection, which allow us to minutely compare them to the prehistoric and recent skulls in our own collection.

At first, we have three casts made from dog skulls found in the Crannoge of Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath. Two large skulls belong, according to their labels, to the famed Irish Wolfhound breed. One has a basilar length of 210, the other of 217 millimetres. The skulls are generally rather narrow and the facial part not distinctly separated from the cranial part. The muzzle narrows towards the front, the saggital crests are very high in both, the occipital protuberance strongly elongated towards the back, the skull cap not very arched, resulting in a cranium that descends evenly, almost in the form of a roof, from the base of the saggital crest to the auricular region. The facial part is rather broad just in front of the zygomatic arch, but narrows considerably in front of the infraorbital foramina and continues to narrow up to the nasal end of the muzzle. When viewed from the side, the upper line of the muzzle shows no depression at its root; the skull descends gently and evenly from the forehead to the front end of the nasal bones. The larger skull additionally shows an indentation in the middle of the nasal bones. Its muzzle is also generally broader and less pointed in front, the whole skull somewhat less graceful than the smaller one. The forehead is broad, with a strong medial depression in the middle in the larger skull, which is less pronounced in the smaller specimen.

In general, and in one case up to minute details, the skulls correspond to the skull of an Irish Wolfhound in the British Museum in London, as well as to a Wolfhound skull in our museum's [Museum of Natural History in Bern, SU] collection, which comes from the kennel of Mr. Walker in St. Moritz. Judging by the latter specimen, we can say that the old breed is still well preserved in Walker's kennel.

The older writers that treat the subject of Irish Wolfhounds always describe them as being similar to a strong sighthound and mention their relationship to the Scottish Deerhound¹. Skulls of the latter, which were provided to me by Mr. Staub's kennel in Zurich, confirm this close relationship between the two forms, although the Scottish Deerhound is of a more gracile build. Its muzzle is longer and more narrow, the zygomatic arches are less pronounced, the saggital crest is lower and the parietal region more arched.

¹ S. Graham, *The Irish Wolfhound by Capt. Graham, Rednock, Durzley 1879 und Walker, Der irische Wolfhund. Schweiz. Hundestammbuch. Bd. VI, 1896, p. 64.*

The two forms are unified in *Canis Leineri* from the lake dwellings at Bodman on Lake Ueberlingen, which belong to the lake-dwelling cultures of the Neolithic². The muzzle and zygomatic arch of these skulls correspond entirely to those of the Wolfhound, while the cranium, with its less pronounced saggital crest and more pronounced arch, corresponds to the Deerhound type.

We can thus state with some confidence that these large breeds, which played an important role as strong hunting dogs during Antiquity and the Middle Ages, have a Central European origin. According to antique sources, and supported by archaeological discoveries of depictions and sculptures of these dogs in Gallo-Roman remains, they seem to have been particularly important to the Celtic peoples.

The third skull, having a basilar length of 167 mm, is of a very different type. It belonged to a medium-sized dog, about the size of a strong Spitz.

The muzzle is blunt and not very elongated and is separated by an important stop at its root from the well-arched cranium, on top of which sits a moderately developed saggital crest. The zygomatic arches are strong. The palate is broad, namely in the P4 region. In conclusion, the skull belongs to the type of the lake-dwelling Spitz, *Canis f. palustris*, and is identical to its larger, stronger forms that were bred during the Neolithic. We have similar skulls from the lake dwellings at Lattrigen on Lake Biel and from the Roman ruins in Baden in the Canton of Argovia.

A fourth skull of a medium-sized dog comes from Lough Gur in Limerick. This one shows the signs of an advanced age. Its colour is brown, as is the case in skulls that are retrieved from peat bogs. This skull's form and size mostly corresponds to *Canis f. intermedius Woldrich*³ from the Bronze Age, particularly concerning the relation between cranium and muzzle, although the cranium appears to be a bit broader and more arched, the saggital crest somewhat lower and the muzzle a bit more pointed. Otherwise, the skull is close to the hunting dog breeds, namely the running hounds ([Laufhunde]), and the Helvetic Hound in particular. I have already stated elsewhere⁴ that *C. intermedius* from the Bronze Ages shows the same skull characteristics as a hunting dog, and that the Helvetic Hound found at La Tène, as well as the modern Bernese Hound, are similar to this dog; however, it also shows some relations to the Bronze-Age herding dog, *Canis f. matris optimae Jetteles*.

The examination of canine bones from prehistoric Irish remains thus shows the same primeval breeds as in Central Europe. *Canis palustris*, *C. Leineri* and *C. intermedius* were the primal forms based on which more recent breeds evolved. As far as we now know the prehistoric dog breeds of Central and Northern Europe, from Ireland to Lake Ladoga, we encounter the same primeval forms that have already been discovered in the Stone- and Bronze-Age lake dwellings of Switzerland and southern Germany.

² S. Studer, *Zwei grosse Hunderassen aus der Steinzeit der Pfahlbauten. Schweiz. Hundestammbuch V, 1893, und Beiträge zur Geschichte unserer Hunderassen. Naturwissenschaftliche Wochenschrift XII, 1897, Nr. 28.*

³ Woldrich, *Ueber einen neuen Haushund der Bronzezeit. Mitteilungen der anthropol. Gesellsch. in Wien. VII. Bd., Mai 1877, S. 61.*

⁴ Studer, Th., *Hunde der gallischen Helvetier und Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Hunderassen.*