Obituary: Albion Urdank’s Maeve

Albion Urdank’s Maeve (ABC 116858) passed peacefully in her sleep the morning of August 6, 2012, three weeks shy of her sixteenth birthday.

A small, rough coated black-and-white bitch with strong eye and powerful presence, who caught the approving eye of Barbara Carpenter on a brief visit to Pastor’s Hill farm in 2003, she was probably the first US Border Collie to have visited the UK without having to endure six months of quarantine as required under the unreformed pet import protocol (Kim Gibson’s interview in the ISN, which appeared shortly afterwards, and which featured Maeve, was titled “History in the Making”).

In 2005 Maeve competed as a member of the American team to the first World Trial, and had performed at a high standard in US trials for much of her career, running in the top 20 final round of the US Nationals twice. She was admired especially for taking appropriate initiative, without prompting, when called for.

In the first gather of the double lift at one US finals, she stopped initially at the head of a lead ewe, as the ten sheep set for the first gather were scattered widely; she paused before lifting to look up the field, thought better of it and promptly cast to a better balance point at about 12:30 O’Clock, a display of independent initiative which drew a loud and deep “Ahhh” from the crowd.

Maeve never gripped except when challenged provocatively, as when in the semifinal round of that same US Finals, a ewe unaccountably turned to face her on the cross-drive (the pace was steady and balanced, and the ewe probably reacted to the strength of the eye driving the flock against pressure). It stamped its feet, lowered its head and charged, while Maeve lay down on her own, as if awaiting the blow with resignation. But suddenly she leaped in the air, without command, gripped the ewe on the nose and shook it, then quickly released. The dazed sheep thought better of another challenge and joined the others to complete the drive, much to the satisfaction of the crowd which showed its approval with a hearty round of applause.

Such was Maeve’s appeal that Eileen Stein, current President of the American Border Collie Association, was moved to call her “Queen Maeve”. And so she was.

Her breeding was outstanding, as was her work. She will be greatly missed.