

# ***England and Basenjis in the War Years***

*Veronica Tudor-Williams*  
*The Basenji*, July 1989, page 4

Photo Right: *Amatangazig of the Congo*

In February, 1939, we held the first meeting to form the Basenji Club of Great Britain, the first Basenji club in the world, and drew up the first Basenji standard. This standard is still the foundation of all modern stands and much of the original wording is still being left in.



A few months later, World War II started. Mrs. Burn had lost Bongo after Crufts from distemper, and she had the arthritic Bokoto put to sleep and went to drive an ambulance in France. Mr. K. B. Smith parted with his dogs and joined the R.A.F., Miss Spiller had her dogs put down as they had developed scrotal hernias and were unfit for breeding. Hernias were a constant worry in the early days but with care we bred the problem completely out. Lady Helen Nutting and Lady Kitty Ritson had never bred Basenjis in England though Lady Helen had a number of litters in the South Sudan. I volunteered as Wren, but was refused by all the services because of a badly fractured and partly paralysed left arm. It was a bitter disappointment, however one good thing came from it, when I was interviewed they asked me what I did. I told them I did mobile first aid as a V.A.D. and also helped the farmers on their farms. Now comes the vital point, I told them I had the only Basenjis in the western world and did not know how I was to get them through the war. They were incredibly interested and asked me a lot of questions. They then allocated me a small petrol allowance to go and get slaughtered meat from the Downs. We lived, at that time, in the invasion zone behind Portsmouth. They also gave me an allocation of bombed biscuit from which I had to pick pieces of glass carefully before feeding to the dogs. I had seven dogs at that time and when Arthur Byron heard I was to keep my dogs, he asked me if I would take Amatangazig,

whom he had brought home from the South Sudan about a year previously. He had intended to give her to friends in Ireland. So Zig was kept in England to give her valuable contribution of new blood as Arthur had joined up. But for me taking her, she would have disappeared into Eire. Taking her was inconvenient as my dogs did not like Zig, a stranger and a native at that, so they had to live in different parts of the house.

Our next committee meeting for the new club was not until 1942 and was held in London. The meeting was just to show the Club was still in existence and for me to report on the Basenjis I had and any litter I had decided must be bred. We had a heavy air-raid during the meeting and Lady Kitty and I got stuck in the lift (elevator). We sat on the floor until the raid was over and compared notes on the very similar things we hated, such as being sick and big moths. We got some laughs out of this.

If people think that looking after dogs during the war was pleasant and relaxing, they can think again. There was always the danger of bombs and fire-bombs. We were supposed to sleep with packed suitcases in case of invasion. I never did this. I was not going to leave my dogs and anyhow, I saw no point in leaving my home which was arranged for the dogs for some unknown place on our little island.

I used to pick over my neighbors' dust bins to find anything edible for the dogs until the pickings became just prune stones and cabbage stalks. The slaughtered meat was pretty grim, often from animals which had been buried for days in the rubble behind Portsmouth. The meat was green and stinking. I used to cut it up, others couldn't face it, but the dogs flourished on it. When I was busy with other tasks during the day, we used to walk the dogs at night whilst fire watching and otherwise they had a big fenced-in field to run in. We also kept goats to give the dogs and necessary puppies milk. My vet, a great friend, used to laugh as she said every time I called her in it was "a very special dog." I tried to bring two dogs of each strain through the war.

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But back to the war year, when it was very lonely work to keep the dogs with most of my friends away in the services, I would have much sooner been a Wren. If it had not been for my perseverance, Basenjis might have been lost to us for a long time, if not forever. The Bernese Mountain Dogs, which were first imported at the same time as Basenjis and which interested me very much, were lost to the dog world during the war and have only recently returned to the show scene.

I bred the occasional litter during the war just to carry on the strains. There was no sale for puppies so it was expensive and hard work.

After the war years, I was able to supply foundation stock to most of the kennels in the world.

An advertisement for the "Congo" Basenjis of Veronica Tudor-Williams appears below:

# The "CONGO" BASENJIS The Property of Miss V. TUDOR-WILLIAMS LITTLE ORCHARD, HILL-BROW, LISS, HANTS.

Telephone - - - - LISS 253

**T**HOUGH practically no showing has been done during the past two years, Miss Tudor-Williams considers the kennel has made the biggest strides since it was started in 1937. This has been achieved through the bitch, Amatangazig of the Congo, imported from the Sudan, and the only Zande Basenji to have been bred from in England. For years Miss Tudor-Williams has tried to import the small Basenjis of the Sudan, as she considers they possess such quality and such exceptionally charming natures, but misfortune befell all her efforts. Finally, she achieved her ambition, and became the owner of Amatangazig, born in the desert in the "country of the barkless dogs," and this is the name the natives gave her, though she is usually known as Zig. Besides bringing in invaluable new blood, the first since 1939, Zig excels in just the points required, small size, exceptionally short back, fine legs and feet, perfect front and hindquarters, and wonderful colour, whilst her movement is a joy. Her stock is in great demand in America, three of her last litter, including Zeppo of the Congo, having



Amateur Snap of AMATANGAZIG OF THE CONGO, aged 6 years, height 15 ins., weight 15 lbs.



Photo., O. Wilmot.  
Miss Tudor-Williams with some "CONGOS"

been exported. One of these, Zinnia of the Congo, went best of breed, and third in the Hound group, at her first show in the States, and her daughter, Mr. Phemister's Melenga, has since become the first Basenji Champion in America. Zephyr of the Congo has been retained as an outstanding show bitch, whilst Zeppo was only allowed to leave this country because his son, Zolo of the Congo, shows even more promise, and as Zolo carries Zig blood both sides of his pedigree, he is a wonderful out-cross for all the bitches in England, and will be placed

at stud in 1946. Zolo is very small, short-backed, a glorious red with plenty of white, the keenest expression, and cleanest cut head ever seen on a Basenji, absolutely sound, and a delightful disposition. In fact it is confidently expected he will be the greatest stud force yet known in the breed.

The other dogs in the kennel have been doing well, and young stock bred from them have been winning in varieties. Kinga of the Congo is as popular as ever as a sire, and it would be difficult to overestimate his influence upon type and temperament, practically all the war-time winners having been sired by him.

There will be a number of litters bred this Autumn, and some bitch puppies carrying Zig blood will be available. There is such a demand for Congo stock early application is advisable.

For many years Miss Tudor-Williams has been exporting Basenjis to Canada and America, and the breed over there is founded upon her stock. As recognition of the work she has done she has recently been made an honorary member of the Basenji Club of America.

LEO. C. WILSON, F.Z.S.



Photo., J. E. Wilday, Liphook.  
ZEPP0 and ZEPHYR OF THE CONGO  
(out of Amatangazig of the Congo)