

Sheep Dog Dog

As told to John Herbert Marr, 1991.

When Lee Dunscaith went for a country drive with his wife Terri and their pet dog, they did not think they would be running into any risks. “It was a lovely sunny day,” said 24 year old Terri, “and we just wanted a quiet afternoon in the country.”

They drove up from Teesside onto the open hills of Castleton Moor, and started walking with their dog Sally. “We didn’t put her on the lead,” Lee told our reporter, “because she’s a good dog, and never gave us any trouble before. Besides, the sheep looked a long way off.”

To Lee and Terri’s surprise, the sheep on the moor did not run away from them but began to walk up from all directions. Very soon they were completely surrounded by bleating sheep, and were frightened they would not be able to get back to their car again.

“It was very scary,” Terri said, “because they kept pushing us and making fierce noises. Then they started attacking our dog. Sally is a lovely Alsatian dog and as gentle as a kitten. We’ve had her for four years, and she’s never attacked anyone. Suddenly these sheep all started picking on her and trying to butt her with their heads. One of them went for our Sally’s throat and managed to cut her with its horns. It was awful.”

Lee told us that he had to shout at the sheep and throw stones at them to force them back, before he and his wife could reach the safety of their car. Even then the horror was not over, because some of the sheep walked out deliberately in front of the car, crowding up to them in the road and refusing to move.

Mr T. Bradey is a vet in the region, and he told us that he had heard of two or three cases where the sheep had done this before. “They don’t like dogs,” he explained, “especially those big Alsatians. When they’ve got the new lambs with them, sheep are very caring for each other, and have more sense than people give them credit for. Some of the local farmers are fed up with dogs attacking their sheep, so they’ve started breeding sheep which can protect themselves.”

However Tony Campbell, whose family has farmed sheep on the Moors above Castleton since the 1920’s, disagreed. He refused to comment on the alleged attacks by his sheep, but told us that visitors to the moors should respect the rights of the farmers and leave their sheep alone, then there would be no trouble.

Lee and Terri Dunscaith were not impressed. “It’s a poor country when you can’t take the dog for a walk in peace,” said Lee. “If it happens again, I reckon we ought to have a right to protect our dogs. Those sheep are a menace on the moors and they ought to be put down if they go on savaging dogs.”