Blean Imports 1937

Bakumba of Blean is later registered with the American Kennel Club as:

Phemister's Bois

and becomes a part of the foundation of Basenjis in America

Cutting from New York Sun with notation October 1937
From a letter
(seems to be by George Gilkey):
“As noted above Mrs. Byron Rogers can be credited with being the first to establish the breed in America. Besides Boise she brought in a bitch puppy born to Bongo x Bokoto while in quarantine. This bitch was bred to Bois and a litter resulted. Unfortunately the litter and the dam died. ... Later he was acquired by Alex Phemister but was not in condition for breeding until late in 1942.”

A Letter from
Mary McWain, Haku Kennels:
“The oldest Basenji registered is Phemister’s Bois, date of birth being given as 1936.” (Apparently there was no pedigree given in his registration.)
“Nairobi (Bois x Phemister’s Naida) whelped 12/13/1942 also bred by Phemister’s but not bearing their name. Owned by Mr. and Mrs. Alfred King. Also, Ruki, same litter owned by Eugene E. Scott.”

In Veronica Tudor-Williams’s first edition of
Basenjis, The Barkless Dog writes:
“When Mrs. Burn’s Basenjis made such a sensation debut at Crufts in 1937, Mr. and Mrs. Byron Rogers, of New York City, became interested in the breed, and took three dogs back to the states in the S.S. Berengaria, September 1937. They consisted of a bitch by Bongo ex Bokoto of Blean, another bitch by Bongo ex Bereke of Blean, and a native-bred dog which had not completed his quarantine in England. He was Bakuma of Blean, by Noko ex Coqui, bred by the Chief of the Donkesse, born July 1936. Unfortunately, both the bitches died about a year after their arrival in the States, and the dog was lost sight of after going to a pet home.”

“Mr. Phemister then acquired another native dog, said to have been owned at one time by the Byron Rogers. This dog appears to have been lost, but it is almost certain he was Bakuma of Blean, photographs of Bakuma and Bois being identical. He was re-registered with the American Kennel Club as Phemister’s Bois.”

Advertisement in the Westminster catalog in 1938
In October 1979, Veronica Tudor-Williams writes in *The Basenji*:

“The first old cutting (see page 1) is out of the ‘New York Sun,’ with a written-in date of October 1937. It shows Mr. Byron Rogers with Basashi of Blean (bitch) and the native import, Bakuma of Blean (dog), who is without doubt the dog later known as Phemister’s Bois. The markings are identical, and in one newspaper cutting “Bois” is written in above the dog.”
Here is an article by the person who introduced the Basenji breed to the US, Alice Lang Rogers (who always styled herself as "Mrs Byron Rogers" as was convention at the time), whose Misty Isles kennel was well known in Poodles. The piece was printed in "Kennel Review" in March 1938 and reports that the first Basenjis arrived in the US five months prior. As is well documented, Mrs Rogers' venture was short-lived. Of her three UK Blean imports, the two bitches, Basashi and Rougie, died without issue within a year, but thankfully the African-bred male Bakuma, although re-homed, resurfaced a number of years later as Phemister's Bois and went on to become a very important sire in the establishment of the breed in the US. He sired the first American champion. With thanks to Bo Bengtson for sending me this wonderful piece of breed history.
Litter Planned

Glen Dymock posted this advertisement to Facebook in December 2020

An advertisement from the March 1938 issue of “Kennel Review”, featuring the first two Basenjis to arrive in the US, Bakuma of Blean (who was in fact bred in the Belgian Congo) and Basashi of Blean, both exported from the UK by Olivia Burn. I don’t think the advertised litter materialised as poor Basashi died in whelp. It is well documented that Bakuma later ended up in the ownership of Mr and Mrs Alexander Phemister from where, under the new name of Phemister’s Bois, he went on to play a very important role in establishing the breed in North America. Mrs Byron Rogers was a big name in poodles but I think she may have fallen on hard times shortly after this advert was placed, which might explain why she gave up on the idea of breeding Basenjis. With thanks to Bo Bengtson for unearthing this fascinating clipping.