

## Rescued by Rover: Terriers, Tenacity, and Thomas Anstey Guthrie

Facing page 410 of *A Long Retrospect*, the 1936 autobiography of F. Anstey (Thomas Anstey Guthrie) is a poignant “Last Photograph” which shows the author clasping his cherished Cairn with one arm. Held in his other hand, and pointed towards the dog, is a book looking very like *Humour and Fantasy*, the 1931 omnibus volume in which six of Anstey’s early works were, he said, improbably “resuscitated.”

My paper details the six dogs—including Mac the Cairn—that between them kept Anstey company for forty-five years. He rescued some of them (one from a dogs’ home, another from a dog-snatcher) and they repaid him by rescuing his career. They sat on his desk as he wrote and left the print of their paws on many a page. Without dogs to write about, Anstey would have operated within a narrower emotional range. Most of the deaths in his work are canine deaths, displacing the human deaths about which he struggled to write. Anstey’s autobiography is completely silent about the death of his brother, struck by a London tube train, but concludes with a long cavalcade of the deaths of Mac’s predecessors.

One of these dogs’ fictional counterparts itself experienced an improbable resuscitation. Anstey had it shot and buried in “The Black Poodle” of 1882, but it was to resurface in a film scenario which he prepared in 1920, and planned to send to Cecil Hepworth, the director of *Rescued by Rover*. By now, it was animal/human interactions that afforded Anstey most scope for the comedy of category confusion which he had pioneered, also in 1882, with *Vice Versâ*.