

The Retrieving Instinct by The Earl of Malmesbury

.... "My great great grandfather needed a good retrieving water dog, and a companion in the home. He found both qualities in the Little Newfoundler (later to be re-named the Labrador, which was a less cumbersome name).

How did these dogs develop their retrieving instinct? It was customary for the fishing boats in Newfoundland to carry dogs. These dogs developed their retrieving instinct by retrieving fish in two distinct ways.

Fish hooks were not as well made as they are today. A large fish, when brought to the surface, might free itself from the hook. A dog with a special harness would be lowered from the deck- grab the fish - and be hauled back on board with, hopefully, the fish still in its mouth.

Alternatively, fishing from the shore with nets, men rowed the nets in a half moon from the shore, frequently landing the other end of the nets on an unfriendly and rocky shore. It was usual for a dog to jump from the boat, swim ashore with a light line in its mouth - to be greeted by a fisherman who would pull the light line in; this line was attached to a heavier line, and so to the net. The dog's job was completed - and the fisherman, having pulled the net in, would take the fish out of the net. The dogs, now bored, would watch the removal of the fish from the net, and watching their master would imitate the retrieving of fish from the net. "

Aus: The Labrador Retriever Club 1916-1991, A
Celebration of 75 Years, S. 6f.