

Back on TV... a man, a dog and stroppy sheep

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

MORE than a decade after the BBC ended *One Man and His Dog*, Channel 4 is to bring the rural pursuit of sheep dog trials back to national television.

It has bought the rights to screen the World Sheep Dog Trials for the first time when they take place in Cumbria next month.

But in a leap from the BBC's presentation, which relied on the Black Country tones of Phil Drabble to tell viewers what was going on, it will be given a new look. The contest will be shown in high definition, with cameras on fences and pens as well as electronic measurements of the animals' movements.

Barry Davies, the former *Match of the Day* commentator, has been enlisted for the presenting team, alongside Ellie Harrison, a presenter on BBC's *Countryfile*, and Guy Martin, who made his name as a motorcycle racer.

The world finals, which begin on Sept 15, will feature 240 dogs from 23 nations and will be staged at the Lowther Estate near Penrith.

Tim Longton, the president of the International Sheep Dog Society which runs the contest, said the exposure was a "major coup". "It will provide a massive boost to the event, the region and the world of sheep dog trialling in general," he said.

The BBC pulled the plug on *One Man and His Dog* as a regular series in 1999 after 23 years on air, causing a stir with viewers.

At its peak in the early 1980s the show had drawn up to eight million viewers but towards its end it could round up only about 1.6 million fans on BBC Two.

The Queen was said to have been among the viewers. Mr Drabble, who died in 2007 aged 93, was made an OBE. When he left the programme in 1993, he said it had become "a bit boring watching dogs chase stroppy sheep round a field".

