

Some anecdotes from Alicia Pennington's 'Royal Toy Spaniels'

In 1613 Captain Saris is reported to have returned from Japan with small spaniels in an exchange of gifts and letters from the Emperor. The writer remarks on a similarity in size, shape and colour between the toy spaniels of the Eastern and Western Courts. Henrietta Maria, the sister of Charles II, also brought over her toy spaniels from the French courts, among them the little black and tan Pyrame, a small spaniel with fused feet, a legacy still inherited in our present day King Charles.

With their handsome appearance and lovable disposition, this imperious little breed has charmed its way through history. The noble Knight Fitz-Ralph, in the thirteenth century, returned from the Crusades to his home in Pebmarsh Essex, bringing with him from a fishing village in Italy a strain of small, intelligent and beautiful spaniels. One can be seen at his feet in his effigy in the Parish Church.

Dr Caius, physician to Queen Elizabeth I, described the spaniels as: *'little, pretty and fine, and sought for to satisfy the delicatenesse of dainte dames and wanton womens wills, instruments of folly for the to play and dally withal, to tryfle away the treasure of time, to withdraw their mindes from their commendable exercises. These puppies the small they be, the more pleasure they prevoke are more meete play fellows for mising mistresses to beare in their bosoms, to keepe company withal in their chambers, to succour with sleepe in bed, and nourishe with meate at board, to lie in their lappes.'*

Dr Caius, true to the superstitions of the day, recommended that the Spaniell Gentle was able to soothe the sickness of the stomach. They should be worn as "plasters" by sick and weakly people and with the warmth of the body the sickness transferred to the little dog and the patient became well and the little dog often died! A recommended cure for gout was a Spaniels puppy, two days old, boiled up with nettles, *'terpentyn, paramecete, oyle of balm'* and various secret drugs *'to anoint you where your grefe was'*.

The Reverend Idstone was a writer of the mid-Victorian period, and although he wrote a considerable treatise on the dogs of Great Britain, where he numbered the various breeds at forty, it is clear his heart lay with the King Charles Spaniel *'I have seen extraordinary instincts developed in these Spaniels. One, a dog in my possession in 1838, and until his death, was, from constant association with me and my friends, almost human; and as he held his head on one side, apparently endeavouring to fathom the meaning of conversation, it seemed as though he were almost prepared to join in it.'*

'On one occasion he was sleeping in the room where a lady to whom he was much attached was moaning with pain, and waking up, he seemed at a glance to understand the emergency, and after a moment's consideration, endeavoured to pull the bell, though he had never before been taught to do so. Through impatient of strangers, he would at once permit the approaches of my friends at first sight, and more singular still, he understood and appreciated a dislike I did not venture to express, and would always dive at the legs of a couple of New College chaplains towards whom I had no cordiality. How did he know this, I wonder; or how divine that I had a sincere respect for Dr Pusey, to whom I never spoke in my life? – but such was the case, I am sure, by his manner and gestures, which, however, the sage never noticed or acknowledged.'

By the nineteenth century the breed had evolved over the years to the present day King Charles as we know it. By natural selection the face was shortened over a period of time. I do not believe any distinct cross was used have been necessary.



Lady Wentworth and her King Charles Spaniels and a painting by her husband Neville Lytton of four types of Charlies from her book *"Toy Dogs and their Ancestors"* 1911, now out of print

*King Charles Spaniels Show
report by Lady Wentworth
UK Kennel Gazette March 1937*

King Charles Spaniels

An entry of 99 (believed to be a record) is a compliment which I appreciate, and I have been asked to make a few general comments before giving the awards. Personally I cannot reconcile the term "King Charles" as applied to all colours for though it has been argued that all colours may come in the litter I wish to emphasize that this only happens where they have been crossed and is purely the result of crossing, and only persists where crossing is repeated and continued. The Tri colours were a new colour produced in the second generation by crossing Red and White with Black and Tan as I pointed out in my book, *Toy Dogs and their Ancestors*. There is a distinct and marked difference in the type of Blenheims and Black and Tans and is against the interest of the preservations of these distinct types that the colours should compete together.

It is moreover impossible for any judge to be consistent in making awards as it is like judging a variety class.

The quality of the Blenheims and Tricolours shown under me was remarkably high, though some good ones had to be penalized on account of having no tails. Some had none at all and others had only a knob. This formation often accompanies a "noseless" head, but though a "screw tail" is allowable, entire absence of tail is emphatically undesirable.

Rubies have long been on the decline and have lost type of recent years. Black and Tans tend to the top heavy overweighted skull and weak hind legs.

Aston-More Nebo is a brilliant exception and may be taken as an example for breeders just as Ch Asthon-More Wildflower should stand for all time as the model of a perfect Blenheim head. Daintiness and Lovedream are also ideal type. There was no getting away from the quality of the leading winners from the which almost all came from the Ashton-More kennel, long famous for its high standard, but some of the others were well worth challenge certificates had they not been unlucky enough to meet such hot company, in which second place was often equal to a challenge certificate in ordinary competition.

The Royal Courts and Ducal houses all had their own strains of toy spaniels. In fact, one Duke of Norfolk used to feed his surplus King Charles pups to his pet eagles!

There have always been short-muzzled, round-headed little spaniels. Evolution and selective breeding over the centuries, culminating in the more intensive breeding of the nineteenth century, have set the standard we know today. Looking at the prints, woodcuts and photographs over the past hundred years, there have been very little changes in the breed. Particularly if you compare these with the newly imported Pekingese of 1860 and the Pugs of that time: they would have been considered very long muzzled by today's standards but the King Charles remains the same. Just over a century ago, the first miniature dog shows began to be held between the working men in the East End taverns of London. Competition was keen and it was not unknown for these small spaniels to change hands from anywhere between 5 and 250 pounds. Mrs Jenkins, a well known breeder at the turn of the century, with the Clevedon prefix, writes of visiting a Mr J Garwood off Grays Inn Road in the 1860s. The old man lived quite alone except for the companionship of some twenty King Charles *"who shared equally with him, and who, at his bidding, came out of mysterious corners and hiding."* Mrs Jenkins gives Mr Garwood the credit of being the source of the foundation stock of many of the best breeders at the turn of the century.

One of the most delightful stories I discovered in my research concerns one of the earliest champions, a Blenheim of some renowned who fathered quite a dynasty. From his picture, Bowsie looks a very attractive little dog. The story, which is told by his owner, illustrates the intelligence of the breed. *"My favourite would never make friends with any strangers, unless he considered them drawing-room guests; then he would don his most gracious airs, poise his head on one side, and put out his paw to be shaken, at the same time waving his flag in token of welcome. But woe unto a backdoor intruder if Bowsie were near, no Bulldog or Mastiff could appear more formidable, and many a time some unfortunate tradesman or tramp has rushed away, leaving a pattern of his most important garment in Mr Bowsie's teeth."*

Bowsie was a most sagacious dog. How dearly he loved a carriage drive, a railway journey, or a show! When the show hampers were brought out he would frisk and bark with delight, and would quickly open the lid with his tiny nose and paw, and dive in, defying anyone but his mistress to remove him, and only then when assurance was given him that he would start for the show next day, could he be persuaded to come out and eat. On one occasion, when we were living in the country, Bowsie narrowly escaped being taken by express train to London. I had gone to town, and Bowsie, thinking that it was to a show, escaped from home by jumping from the window of an upper room, where he had been locked in for safety. He ran to the railway station, a distance of half a mile, and dashed into a first-class compartment of a train in waiting, where he complacently seated himself between two lady passengers. Fortunately, the station-master, seeing, and recognising my lord, sent him home safely, through crestfallen and disappointed.

"In the matter of food Bowsie was an epicure, and if one of his favourite dishes was on the table, and likely to be removed without his being served, he would sit with his back firmly planted against the door, defying the maid to pass with the dish, and tear her apron to ribbons should she dare the attempt. This little dog always went to bed with one of the children, and passed away at the age of fifteen, when he was sleeping in the arms of my youngest son. Never has there been a truer, more faithful friend than this animal, and though many years have passed since his death, I can scarcely keep the tears back as I write of him."



ORANGE FRILLS

MODERN VARIANT OF CURLY KING CHARLES

BUNTHORNE

MODERN EXAMPLE OF CURLY KING CHARLES

OLD TYPE OF TRICOLOUR

BEST MODERN TYPE OF MARLBOROUGH

FROM A DRAWING BY NEVILLE LYTTON

At one time the light was very bad, and I had difficulty in seeing the dogs against what light there was, and so missed one very fine tricolour which was shown with its back to the light, and I only saw it properly after the class was over, too late to alter the awards.

Cavaliers

This revival of an old breed interested me, for my father kept the old type with which I am quite familiar, and I spent some years trying to preserve it from extinction. Almost all these dogs are far too big and heavy boned. I know it is difficult to bred them right, the old material having almost died out. They now have much too long noses, with square ends. The old type had a moderate and pointed nose (about the same proportion as a Pom) with good stop, high-set ears, placed well forward – was short in back cobby and smart, and the extreme size about 16lbs or less (some only weighed 7 or 8 lbs). They had masses of coat, very often tightly curly. The best were all curly and Black and white waistcoat or red and white, or red with white facings. Tricolour hardly ever seen and never of such good type. With such a variety of types shown today I did my best to sort them out reasonably.