

History of The Breed - The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. *With acknowledgements to The Parent Cavalier Club, UK*

The breed today is the direct descendant of the small Toy Spaniels seen in so many of the pictures of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Toy Spaniels were quite common as pets of the Court ladies in Tudor times but in this country it was under the Stuarts that they were given the Royal title of King Charles Spaniels. History tells us that King Charles II was seldom seen without two or three or more at his heels.

As time went by, and with the coming of the Dutch Court of William III, Toy Spaniels went out of fashion, being replaced in popularity by the Pug dog with the little black page in attendance. We do not hear much about Toy Spaniels again until the 18th and 19th centuries.

At that time the special strain of red and white Toy Spaniels bred at Blenheim Palace by the Dukes of Marlborough were well known for their sporting qualities, as well as for their claims as ladies' companions.

In the early days there were no dog shows, and no recognised standard of points, so type and size were very varied. With little transport available, breeding was carried out in a haphazard fashion. In Queen Victoria's reign breeders started to hold shows and enthusiasts began to breed dogs seriously, and to a desired type.

This brought a new fashion; dogs with a shorter face gradually evolving the flat face of the modern King Charles Spaniels. There were a lot of very able breeders at that stage, and they were successful in breeding dogs of the highest quality, with flat faces, high dome, and with very long ears set low. This type is still popular and a very lovely breed.

Then Mr Roswell Eldridge, an American and a great lover of Toy Spaniels, came over to England and was unpleasantly surprised to find that there were none of the little nosy spaniels left. He immediately set about trying to right this by offering prizes at Crufts for three years (it was later extended to five years) - £25 for the best dog and best bitch, for dogs of the variety seen in King Charles II's time.

The following is a quotation taken from Cruft's catalogue: *"As shown in the pictures of King Charles II's time, long face, no*

stop; flat skull, not inclined to be domed and with the spot in the centre of the skull."

The King Charles breeders did not take these classes very seriously. They had worked hard for years to do away with the long nose, so it was hardly a popular move. Gradually, as the big prizes came to an end, only a few enthusiasts were left to carry on the breeding experiment. Foremost amongst them was Mrs Hewitt Pitt. At the end of five years little had been achieved, as the Kennel Club considered that the dogs were not sufficiently numerous or standardised to merit a separate breed registration.

In 1928 a club was founded, and the title "Cavalier King Charles Spaniel" was chosen. At the first meeting, held the second day of Cruft's Dog Show, 1928, the standard of the breed was drawn up, and it was practically the same as it is today. The live pattern on the table was Ann's Son, the property of Miss Mostyn Walker. Members brought all the reproductions of pictures of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries that they could muster. It was agreed that as far as possible the dog should be guarded from fashion and there was to be no trimming.

For the next few years progress was slow as Kennel Club recognition was still withheld, and with no Challenge Certificates few people were sufficiently interested to try to raise a breed with no sales value. The little band of pioneers entered their dogs in Open classes at shows, and guaranteed classes for their dogs at a few shows where the Show Secretaries were co-operative. As a rule there was no financial reward, but the dogs were presented to the public and gained in popularity. Gradually people became aware that the movement had come to stay.

In 1945 the Kennel Club granted separate registration, and the first set of Challenge Certificates followed a year later. The first Cavalier Champion was appropriately owned by Mrs Pitt's daughter Jane (now Mrs Bowdler). He was Ch. Daywell Roger and had been bred by Lt. Col. and Mrs Brierly. Very widely used at stud, Daywell Roger was a major contribution to the development of the breed in the middle of the Century.

By 1960 annual Cavalier registration at the Kennel Club had reached four figures and no less than sixty Champions had been crowned.

The breed was on its way and this was emphasised in 1963 when Mrs Cryer's Blenheim Ch. Amelia of Laguna won the Toy

Group at Crufts. The first Club year book, covering the activities of 1964 was published in 1965. It was a slim red volume needing only a single page to list the prefixes and affixes of all Club members.

As registrations increased so did the number of Challenge Certificates offered at Championship shows and so did the size of classes. Exactly ten years after Amelia's triumph another Blenheim went one better and became Supreme Best in Show at Crufts. When he won this accolade Messrs. Hall & Evans' Alansmere Aquarius was quite a young dog, not yet the Champion he quickly became. His success focussed public attention still further on the breed both in Britain and overseas. Cavalier Clubs were already well established in U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand, and had recently been set up in Finland and Sweden.

By the end of the Seventies interest in shows had swollen to such an extent that Cavaliers always headed the Toy Group entries at our Championship events. The Club celebrated its Golden jubilee in 1978 with a social function at Royal Leamington Spa and a Championship show which drew a huge entry at nearby Stoneleigh.

Amice Pitt graced the occasion as President and it was the last time many members were to see her because this formidable and well-loved lady was not in good health and eventually died in December 1978. The Amice Pitt Rally held in turn each year by the various Cavalier Clubs is designed to keep fresh her memory and to acknowledge the debt which we all owe her.

Early in the eighties registrations reached 10,000, and there emerged the need to have a separate judge for each sex at most of the Championship shows. This was not a welcome development, but it is generally recognised as inevitable in view of the large entries. That a Cavalier can win at top level was no longer in question, as was re-emphasised at Crufts in 1981 when Mr & Mrs Newton's Ch. Jia Laertes of Tonnew came into the big ring on the final day having won the Toy Group. Meanwhile regional clubs proliferated along with rescue organisations, to help individual Cavaliers which have fallen on bad times. In 1988, when the Club marked its Diamond Jubilee, the Championship show entry was 777 exhibits, and a total of 363 Champions had been crowned.

The Tricolour is fairly certain to have appeared with 'the crossing of the three colours, that is - the Red and White (Italian Spaniel), Black & White (Holland Spaniel), and the Black.

The year 1828 brings the first mention of a Ruby, through a Van Dyck painting of Phillippe le Roy, two hundred years earlier, shows a red spaniel, with white on head and toes. The Tricolour (Prince Charles) we know today was a result of crossing Black and Tan with Blenheims, and again breeding the mis-marked Black & Tan result back to a Blenheim. The Ruby must also have appeared in this way, first as a mis-marked Ruby, and then bred back to a Black and Tan, and so eventually breeding true, as did the Tricolour.

Mention of the short-nosed type is first made in 1845, and in 1859 The Field reports - The King Charles and Blenheim Spaniels as bred by the fancy, are snub-nosed, round-headed animals like Pugs, with silky ears and coats, but they are truly graceful animals'. It is considered generally that a bulldog cross gave the flat face; some, however, content this was due to the Pug or Japanese crossing.

The King Charles Spaniel enjoyed immense popularity during Edwardian reign but this gradually declined up to the Second World War, when many spaniels were put down for fear of raids as well as feeding problems. One or two breeders kept going on a smaller scale, and it is from these lines that today's dogs have descended.

The King Charles Spaniel is the companion par excellence; once owned, few other dogs satisfy. They are seen at their best running freely in the garden and home, where their quick elegant movements show to advantage. Gaiety, sweetness of temper

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BREED - King Charles Spaniels

What a galaxy of splendours the very name inspires. These little dogs - so human - are the true aristocrats of the dog world.

The true origin of the King Charles is lost in obscurity. Lady Wentworth, the late President of the King Charles Spaniel Club (England), spent many years in research on the subject, but even so was unable to come to any concrete conclusions.

The first written reference to the breed in England seems to have been made about 1570. Dr. Caius, Physician to Queen Elizabeth, makes mention of these little dogs as 'the Comforters or Gentle Spaniel', kept by the Court ladies, as being very useful foot warmers sitting beneath the voluminous skirts of the period on the owner's feet, or lying against the body - a most useful form of collecting insects in less hygienic periods than our own.

The main colours at this time were the Red and White Spaniel (believed to have come from Italy) the Black and White Holland Spaniel, and an all black. The appearance of the spaniel was very different from the modern dog, and paintings show that he resembled more closely the tiny drop-eared Papillon rarely seen nowadays; the muzzle being pointed, the ears and legs well feathered, and the tail long and carried very gaily. The painting of Louis XIV and Family (Wallace Collection) shows a very good example of the type.

The Maltese, Pug, and Pomeranian, although not as we know them today, were also known at this time, and it is understandable that old references to the Court pets could show some confusion.

It should also be appreciated that there must have been some unauthorized interbreeding between these varieties, which would change and add to each breed.

The next reference to what was possibly a King Charles Spaniel was made about 1587. After the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, at Fotheringay Castle, a tiny spaniel was found hidden in her clothing and soaked with blood. Nothing further is recorded than that it was taken away and washed.

It was during the reign of the two Charles', from 1625 to 1685, that the spaniel really came into prominence. Charles I, one of England's greatest beneficiaries to the world of art, appreciated the qualities of these exquisite little dogs, and had some at his Court. His son, Charles II, gave his name to the breed.

Mr Pepys [a courtier] in his diary tells us the palace was full of them, and the King could be seen walking in St. James's Park, followed by his red and white, black and white, and black curly-coated little spaniels (the tan being introduced at a later date by crossing with the Pyrame, a small black and tan webbed-toed water-spaniel with a straight coat).

Henrietta, Charles II's sister married to Monsieur, the French King's brother, was a great admirer of these little dogs, and possibly brought some over with her from France when visiting her brother.

In 1685, Charles II's brother, James II, was also an admirer of the breed and kept some at Court. William III it is thought might have brought over the Black and White Holland Spaniel in 1688. These appear to have been introduced previously by Anne of Cleves. The Duke of Marlborough may also have brought some, eventually crossing them with the Springer (at that time a small dog) and so producing the Marlborough Spaniel.

The next dog show was again organised by Mr Brailsford at Birmingham in November 1859 and again was for sporting dogs only.

The first show at which toy spaniels were exhibited was at Birmingham in 1860. There were altogether 267 entries of which the toy breeds shown were pugs, Italian greyhounds, toy terriers, King Charles spaniels and Blenheim spaniels. Mr J Stretch won a first prize with his King Charles spaniels and no prize was awarded for a Blenheim. The judge was a Mr J J Walsh, better known to the canine world under his pseudonym "Stonehenge".

*By Mrs C R Fieldhouse Sept 1995
The King Charles Spaniel
Introduction
The First Dog Shows*

The official first English dog show was held on June 28 and 29, 1859. It was organised in the Town Hall at Newcastle, by Messrs Shortbase and Pape at the suggestion of Mr R. Brailsford. The only breeds exhibited were Pointers and Setters.