

Show dogs and their cousins

Conformation exhibition

Conformation exhibition as we know it is a relatively modern phenomenon--is only about 125 years old. For a critical analysis (from the perspective of social history) of the early development of dog shows and of breed standards which are the essential prerequisite to judging individuals according to breed type, please see: Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures of the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 82-115 (part Chapter 2: "Prize Pets").



The first recorded dog show (that we know of) was in 1603 when the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II, organized a field trial in which 480 dogs competed. Another show, for Schipperkes only, was held in Brussels in 1690; this event "appears to have been one of a regular series organized by Brussels shoemakers to show off their dogs in their ornate, intricately worked metal collars," states Frank Jackson, editor, *Faithful Friends: Dogs in Life and Literature* (London: Robinson, 1997), p. 359. Jackson continues, in his prefatory essay to Chapter 12, "In Competition": "In 1791 Ignaz Cernov and Father Martin Pelcl visited a dog show which took place in Prague....It lasted three days. There were 128 dogs on exhibition...[including] 10 Poodles..." A show for sporting breeds took place in June, 1859 "as part of a well-established poultry show held at the Corn Market, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The event has since erroneously come to be regarded as the first dog show, but its significance is as the first dog show to attract a high proportion of its entries from far away, something which had become possible with the advent of the railway." (Ibid, p. 361.)

Soundness

Assessment of dogs' conformation according to principles of soundness is an ancient skill which has become rare only since automobiles replaced horses as a main means of transportation. Most of us no longer possess once-upon-a-time-ordinary abilities to judge locomotion on four legs: we pay attention to four wheels, both riding on them and avoiding them. However, through concentrated attention we can regain this skill, and the best of the modern study-tools is cineradiography ("moving X-rays") pioneered by Rachel Page Elliott and described in her book, *The New Dogsteps*, 2nd edition (New York: Howell Book House, 1983) and the corresponding video: "*Dogsteps*": a study of canine structure and movement. After careful study of her book and video, there's no better way to develop skills than to sit all day at ringside at a big modern dog show.

Breed Type

Here's a short definition of breed type: "that collection of specific characteristics which, when taken together, separate one breed from another" (Patrick Ormos, "The Importance of Breed Type", *American Kennel Club Gazette*, December 1991, p. 72). For example: Breed type enables us to tell the difference between the Poodle, the Barbet, the Portugese Water Dog and the Puli.

Closely allied with breed type is the concept of style. Here's a short definition of breed style: "the

specific way in which the defining characteristics of breed type are expressed" (ibid). Ormos advises: "Breed type should be a priority for every breeder. Consistent style should be our goal."

Ideally, excellent conformation provides a platform for excellent performance, and the sum total is soundness. When type and breed-appropriate temperament are also present, an ideal is fulfilled: for example, "Am., Bda., Can., Dom., Mex. and F.C.I. Int. Ch. Stormy Lane to Sir with Love, Am., Bda., and Can. UD, Mex. PC, Best in Show and High Score in Trial winner both on the same day," (*Poodles in America*, vol. V, Poodle Club of America, 1980, p. 472).

Unfortunately, type and (especially) style are vulnerable to fashion. Newcomers and old-timers alike may differ from a judge who typically chooses "typey" dogs according to current fashion; thus, an incorrect concept of type dominates and becomes, in effect, "correct"--even though it is explicitly precluded by the breed standard. Example: these days, many Poodles which are successful in the breed ring do not adhere to the breed standard in a matter essential to soundness: they are "too straight in front"; judges' eyes have become so acclimatized to this great fault that it has become part of the style they're looking for.

Another conundrum: the breed ring puts a very fine point on type. However, this is actually a mysterious and generalized concept. For example, we have no difficulty identifying a Border Collie, even though there's a broad variation between individuals. How do we know that a field-bred Labrador, slender and agile as a Whippet, is as much a pure descendant of the St. John's Newfoundland as a dog bred to the conformation standard and with appropriate working temperament? In both instances we "know" partly by demeanour, by the way of going, as well as by certain physical characteristics held in common. That we "know" indicates that type can vary more broadly than is generally accepted, and yet hold together as an integrated concept.

This broad interpretation of type explains how we recognize long-ago Poodles--proto-Poodles--in tapestries, woodcuts, wood engravings, paintings, in verbal descriptions, and so on (see ["...Visuals"](#) and [...Lit 101](#)). It is probable that (but we have not yet found the documentation; we're commencing to delve) Poodles--proto-Poodles--used in falconry/hawking--always male--were exchanged along with the birds of prey at the annual late-fall auction held at Valkenswaard ("falcons' place") in Holland during the Middle Ages and continued to be exchanged there even after Poodles commenced their careers as gun-dogs ca 1600. This would explain the pan-European universality of type which we "click into" despite having eyes trained by the modern conformation ring.

For a coherent (very rare: many otherwise lucid people are rendered incoherent by the subject!) criticism of breeding dogs "for" conformation exhibition, see: Konrad Lorenz, *Man Meets Dog* (NY: Kodansha, 1994; first published in German in 1953, first American edition 1955), ch. 9, pp. 92-98, "An Appeal to Dog Breeders" which develops the thesis that it "is a sad but undeniable fact that breeding to a strict standard of physical points is incompatible with breeding for mental qualities..." After dryly observing that he doesn't know a single intellectual man who looks like Adonis, the author states that it is possible for breeders to compromise in choice of physical and mental properties, but conformation competition inevitably involves the danger of exaggeration "of all those points which characterize a breed...." a statement with which Poodle-fanciers must fervently agree. While you have this wonderful book in your hands, see pp. 141-3 for references to the Poodle, "rightly famed for his sagacity" and "extraordinary 'humanness.'"

Poodle Breed Standards

To examine Poodle breed standards from 1886 to the present day, go to [Breed standards](#).

"The Breed Standard is the Blueprint, the Breeder is the Builder, and the Judge is the Building Inspector" --Percy Roberts, breeder/handler/judge

Since building inspectors judge buildings in relation to building codes designed to ensure function--soundness--not aesthetics (don't we wish!), this analogy is accurate in relation to dog judging insofar as the judge selects soundness in accord with the breed standard, in preference to the preferred type of the day. In the instance of a judge who selects type in preference to soundness, Mr. Robert's statement is more accurate in the following revision: "The Breed Standard is the Blueprint, the Breeder is the Builder, and the Judge is the aesthetic-architecture-contest judge."

See: "The Judge is the Building Inspector", by Richard G. Beauchamp (editor/publisher of *Kennel Review*, 1964-1993; breeder under Beau Monde prefix; judge), *Dogs in Canada*, March 1999, pp. 27-9. Final article in series of six. **"Soundness versus Type"**-- This leads us to an area of judging that has been debated through the ages [sic--since ca 1880]. When evaluating merit, some judges begin by selecting the soundest in the class and then selecting from them the individuals with the greatest type. Others make their first cut based on type and then evaluate these on the basis of soundness. I am a staunch proponent of the latter.... The judge thus paints a visual picture of his ideal..." p. 29.

Poodle Clubs

During the period of formation of the various kennel clubs in the late 19th century, breed clubs were also formed. History of one of the oldest is contained in: *Der Deutsche Pudel-Klub E.V. (DPK) und seine Geschichte* (Hamburg: 1996), 671 pp. Founded in 1893, the purpose of this club--very roughly translated--is to promote the spread of the Poodle, his pure breeding and appropriate care, into always wider circles.

Hair-do's (clips)

Poodles are among the most difficult dogs to present in today's conformation ring, because of contemporary "show coat" requirements. This "big hair" is a disfunctional exaggeration of a traditional warm-weather working clip, a fashion at least 2,000 years old, intended to ease water-work, and reminiscent of (if not in imitation of) a lion. See Maxwell Riddle, *Dogs in History* (Fairfax, VA: Denlinger, 1987), pp. 75 and 113. Incidentally, that which we now identify as "sporting clip" is also historically inauthentic. See [Hair-do's through the ages](#).

The historically authentic summer working clip may be seen in the head-pieces for [...Menu](#), ["...Visuals"](#), [Circus...](#), and in *Poodles in America*, vol. V, pp. 111 and 113 (1884-1928 AKC Champions Chloe, Emperor, Dinah, Negresse, Milo, and Milo Fils). The historically authentic cool-weather working clip may be seen in the headpiece for [...guns](#), and also in the headpiece for [...traps](#).



Today, the Poodle is one of our premier performance breeds; historically, the Poodle is *the* world's premier performance breed. It is an entire contradiction to exhibit in a traditional working clip which is so exaggerated that it precludes that performance which was the driving force for the development of the breed. Every now and then a campaign is mounted to allow "sporting clip" in

the conformation ring; this is strenuously resisted by those who prefer "show coat". It would be better simply to require historical accuracy in every way. In this postcard of "German Poodle Champion 'Rupert' from an exhibition in Madison Square Garden" Rupert is wearing an historically-correct Continental clip. This historically-correct clip is in fact allowed in the CKC and AKC show rings, and in the instance of the Poodle Club of America's and Poodle Club of Canada's unofficial field-titled classes, strongly supported and encouraged.

Notes on the "New" Standard Poodle

- Poodles were well-enough known in 19th century North America (for example, see [Poodle Lit. 101](#), Alcott and MacNab). A pair of essays, "The Poodle in America Before 1929," by Flora M. Bonney, and "The Great Revival," (*Poodles in America*, vol. I, Poodle Club of America, 1960, pp. 9-12; 23-32), support the opening statement of the second: "In 1929 the stage was set for the renaissance of interest in the Poodle. There had been a handful of loyal supporters of the breed who were showing and breeding, but there was no popular acceptance of the dogs at this time....Registrations were small; there were 23 Poodles and 16 Toys registered in the year....it was an event when they appeared in print." Certainly, the registration of 23 Poodles in 1929 is in startling contrast to the registration of 58,661 Poodles in 1959 (PIA, vol. I, p. 32)! Certainly, North American Poodles prior to 1929 do not--in general--lie behind today's dogs. However, it would be a great mistake, despite that AKC-registered Poodles were rare in 1929, to think that a broad variety of North Americans were in entire ignorance of them: (a) The widespread registration of even pure-bred dogs and their widespread ownership is a post-World War II phenomenon (in 1944, 465 Poodles of all varieties were AKC-registered); (b) Poodles were, in North America as elsewhere, a preferred circus dog, and many people enjoyed travelling circuses (see [Circus dogs](#)); (c) Poodles were a popular subject on Edwardian-era postcards, in North America as elsewhere (see [Old-timey \(and not so old-timey\) photos](#)); (d) In the 1920's Poodles appeared as symbols of elegance in North America, as earlier, and as later, for example, "Short An Sweet" by Billy Tracy, Sam Ehrlich, Dan Dougherty, 1926 Broadway Music, with cover art by Perret of an elegantly dressed lady with a Poodle on a leash, and vintage car; (e) finally, *Little Women* is one of the most continuously and widely-read children's books in the world, and it is incredible that American children were delighted by Aunt March's odious Poodle in the latter part of the 19th century and completely mystified in the early part of the 20th.
- During the 1930s, a revival was mounted in North America which was largely focussed on conformation exhibition (see particularly: Mackey J. Irick, *The New Poodle*, NY: Howell, 1986, 6th ed.; also [Rare...](#)). In the 1960s, North American Standard Poodles were exported world-wide. To consider effects, see: [Diversity in Standards](#).

Long-time cousins

Excepting Hellenic cousins, the following short list of "original" cousins was compiled using *The Encyclopedia of the Dog*, by Bruce M. Fogle DVM (London: Dorling Kindersley, Ltd., 1995; Willowdale, ON: Firefly Books, 1995). In relation to drawing up a family tree (Who is Poodle Adam? Who is Poodle Eve?) Fogle lays his money on the Puli, "probably brought into Europe by the Magyars" (p. 188). The Magyars were a Finno-Ugrian-speaking people who swept over Europe in the 9th century, settling in Hungary; their dogs were descended from an ancient Asian corded herding breed, whose existence would explain "Poodles" glimpsed in antiquity, for example, the "Standard Poodle" in moderate working "lion clip" on a Roman stele (gravestone), and the "corded" dog on a Greek pottery vessel (see ["...Visuals"](#)).

For a far more extensive discussion of Poodle origins, see Rosa Engler, *Pudel* (Cham, Switzerland: Muller, 1995), literally at your fingertips here in an English-language crib: [Origins of the Poodle](#).

For more information about ancient dogs, see: J.M.C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1973), and a source recommended there: Aymard, *Essai sur les chasses romaines*, chapter XII (1951). Toynbee indicates that dogs were a frequent subject on Roman grave stones, ashes containers and so on; unfortunately a photographic survey is yet to be published. For a quick yet sound survey, see Riddle (cited above).

American Water Spaniel

The AWS qualifies as a long-ago cousin (although developed to the present form by Dr. F.J. Pfeifer of Wisconsin in the 1920s) because lookalikes are present in pre-Civil War photos, and behind the AWS we find Irish Water Spaniels of an earlier type than the IWS we know today. The Boykin Spaniel (South Carolina) is a close relative of the AWS. These are duck-hunters' dogs; in physical type very similar to the Poodle/proto-Poodle dashing along with the van in *The Triumph of Maximilian I* (see head-piece for "[...Visuals](#)"). Fogle, p. 119.

Barbet

Very similar (in looks) to the PWD, the Barbet is the spaniel-sized historic "French Poodle". The similar-sized Caniche (the modern Poodle in France) and the Barbet were one and the same until the fourth quarter of the 19th century (beginning of the "dog show" era; see footnote, [Duck dogs -- guns](#)). Voltaire believed the Barbet was man's best friend (letter to Schomberg 31 8.17 69); this breed has contributed to the French language *être crotté comme un barbet*--to be very, very muddy. Interestingly, Fogle cites a second name for the Barbet: *Griffon d'Arrêt à Poil Laineux* (woolly-haired pointer). See: *Larousse Universel* dictionary in two volumes, 1922 edition, Littré's dictionary (1878 edition), Fogle, p. 190, and *La Sauvagine*, February 1995 (cover article).

Bichon Frisé

"The Bichon is a breed of ancient Mediterranean origin. Its early name, Barbichon, comes from its oldest ancestor, the Barbet (i.e. Water Spaniel)." (Sharon Pflaumer, "Light 'n Lively", *Dog World*, March, 1997, p. 16.) The Bichon Tenerife (a variety, among which are also counted the Bichon Maltais, the Bichon Bolognais, and the Bichon Havanais) was the preferred curly-coat at the court of Francis I (1515-47); of Henry III (1574-89) (Henry carried his Bichon in a basket hanging from his neck); and of Napoleon III (1808-37). See also "Here Comes the Havanese," by Sharon Frampton and Leslie Rugg (*AKC Gazette*, January 1999, pp. 44-8. We've included references to the Havanese in "[Gordon's Poodle Visuals](#)" and [Companions to genius \(and etc.\)](#)).

Caniche

Caniche is the French name for the modern FCI-recognized Poodle, supposed to have drifted away from the Barbet in the fourth quarter of the 19th century. (This theory does not take into account the small Caniche was developed at least 500 years ago...) Yet as late as 1922, *Larousse Universel* stated that the Caniche was a variety of Barbet and "La fidélité du caniche le fait choisir de préférence pour guider les aveugles..." (loyalty makes this the breed of choice for guide-dog work; see [Guide...](#)).

Curly-Coated Retriever/English Water Dog/Water Spaniel

The English varieties of the water dog are extinct as separate breeds, but doubtless live on in our dogs' gene pools. Numerous visual records have survived. (See particularly Gainsborough and Stubbs, "[...Visuals](#)".) The Curly-Coated Retriever, which "evidence suggests that it existed as early as 1803" is probably "descended from the extinct English Water Spaniel and the Lesser Newfoundland [St. John's Dog/Labrador]." Fogel, p. 192.

Epagneul Pont-Audemer

This medium-sized dog is "related to old French spaniels, the Barbet, and...the Irish Water Spaniel....Date of origin: 1600s." Fogle, p. 191.

Havanese

See Bichon, above.

[Hellenic Caniche-Griffons and their variations](#)

Hungarian Puli

Supposed by Fogle (p. 188) to be the Poodle's progenitor, although (p. 190) the Barbet is "possibly the forerunner of the poodle", the Puli is a herding dog whose other name is Hungarian Water Dog. Probably brought into Europe by the Magyars (9th century), Fogle gives the date of origin as "Middle Ages".

Irish Water Spaniel

"This breed, the most distinctive of all spaniels, is the survivor of the three varieties of water spaniel that once inhabited Ireland." Fogle, p. 189, identifies this as a 19th century breed, doubtless because developed by Justin McCarthy in the mid-19th century from the South Country Water Spaniel (or Shannon, or Rat Tail Spaniel) probably crossed with the Barbet, or "French Poodle"; perhaps with the PWD (Jeff Griffin, *Hunting Dogs of America*(NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. 144-5). We've slotted this breed with "the cousins" because of its purely water spaniel origins.

Komondor

Origin in antiquity; job is to guard livestock; first mentioned by name in 1544; largest of the Hungarian herdsman's dogs; supposed to have come into Europe with the Magyars (9th century). Fogle, p. 232.

Löwchen

In existence at least from the 15th century in Germany and the Low Countries, as art history gives evidence. We've indiscriminately included images of these "little lions" in "[Gordon's Poodle Visuals](#)" on the theory that they may be--in fact almost certainly are--Löwchen, and if so, someone may someday enjoy claiming these references, but if we don't include 'em the opportunity will be lost! See "The Lionhearted Löwchen," by Kim Campbell Thornton, *AKC Gazette*, January 1999, pp. 50-4.

Pastore Bergamasco

The "Silver Pastori, shepherd of the Alps", herder, companion, protector, a "unique and ancient sheepdog", looks very like a blond Puli; how this breed varies from the Komondor and the Perro de Aguas, which also look a bit like blond Pulik is unknown to the editor of the Poodle History Project. Not in Fogle. However, in *Canadian Rarities*, vol. 1, issue 1, March 1997, p. 23, there's a photo! *Canadian Rarities* is the newsletter of the [Canadian Rare Breed Association](#)

Portugese Water Dog (Cão de Agua)

Fishermen's dog, dating from the Middle Ages (see [Ship's dogs...](#)). Fogle states that the breed's ancestors arrived in Portugal either in the 400s with the Visigoths from central Europe, or in the 700s with the Moors from North Africa, p. 188. See also: Carla Molinari, *The Portugese Water Dog* (Lisbon: 1993), ISBN 972-9181-22-5 (in the English language); "when I travelled to Portugal some years ago, I had a nice conversation with Mrs. ... Molinari, president of the Portugese KC (and Treasurer of FCI), in her office in Lisbon. She had written a book on the Cão de Agua....[in which] she gives some interesting information on origins of the Portugese Water Dog (Persian Gulf) and a chronological history of the Iberian Peninsula in comparison to canine history. The bibliography quotes some earlier Portugese sources...." (WW, 24 Jan. 2000).

Pudel

We're including this section on the Pudel (German word for Poodle) simply to express the difficulty of identifying the national origin of the breed. There is no doubt that today's Standard Poodles are largely of German origin, type modified according to an English standard (if that seems odd, it is!). However, their concept is medieval and pan-European. Fogle, pp. 190 and 282. Pudel is an archaic German word for "splash" etc., now (we understand) limited to a technical process in steel-making.

Spanish Water Dog (Perro de Aguas)

Related to the Portugese Water Dog "and perhaps to the Poodle", a multi-purpose medium-sized breed, "assisting in herding, hunting, and fishing," and originating in the Middle Ages. Corded coat; various colours. Fogle, p. 189.

Romagna Water Dog aka Lagotto Romagnolo, Truffle Hound

This is the Italian Water Dog, recently accepted by FCI as a separate breed. Small/medium-sized Poodle-cousin, which is to say, strongly reminiscent of many images pre-dating 1900 in "[Gordon's Poodle Visuals](#)", a relatively light dog (traditionally, suitable for falconry). Tail uncropped. Coat is dense and curly, of woolly texture. Colour: dingy white or solid white; white with liver or orange markings, liver-brown roan, liver-brown solid, and orange solid-colour. Occasionally seen with a brown mask. Original purpose was the traditional function of the water dog, waterfowling in marshes, today (post-drainage, alas!) mostly used as a truffle-hunter. Here's an eye-witness account, from Australia: "...appeared at my sister's house one night with this bedraggled animal and a picture taken from a dog magazine. She had collected the dog from his other home where he runs over the paddocks and in the bush; [asked]...can you make him look like ... [the picture] as I have to take him to the Breeds Committee of the ANKC tomorrow so they can decide to admit them or not. We bathed him, got out the burrs and dried him and then ... set to work. I held the photograph while ... [my

sister] scissored. After many hours we had a dog which in no way resembled the dog which had arrived at the door.... He went to the Breeds Committee and the breed was accepted [in Australia] as of July last year....in the Non-Sporting Group with the Poodles here. This is a mistake--UK accepted them and placed them in the NS Group and when the parent club in Italy heard they ... demanded that they be moved to the Gun Dog Group. The UK did so, but Australia which sticks to the UK groups accepted them before the change took place and so they are stuck in the NS Group for the time being. In their native state they are clipped twice a year and allowed to grow back; however, [judging from the books lent us, all in Italian] ...the show ones....are scissored into a very pleasing shape and they have beards. Their coat is funny. It was much easier to get the mats out than Poodle hair; it seems to be semi-waterproof like a true Poodle coat.... I saw some in Scandanavia in 1999 and they looked like the ones in the books. They have a really nice nature like a gundog, they are rather sweet. Not as big as a Standard, but heavier, rather the size of a tall Labrador." (RT, 20 Jan. '01)

Wetterhoun

Water dog developed in Holland in the 1600s; useful keeping dikes free of burrowing animals. Fogle, p. 191.

NB: Also noted: the Bolognese.

Come-lately cousins

Cockerpoo

Cross between American Cocker Spaniel and Miniature Poodle, "not given to the hyperactive excesses of many American Cocker Spaniels"; lower incidence of skin problems than the American Cocker. Fogle, p. 285.

Labradoodle

In 1989, Wally Conron of Kew, Australia began crossing Labs and Standard Poodles, aiming to create a non-allergenic guide dog. Non-shedding characteristic is not yet established, but temperament is very successful. Fogle, p. 284.

Peke-a-Poo

"In North America, small poodles are frequently crossed with other breeds, producing companion dogs known as the Cockerpoo and Pekepoo. These have become so popular that it is possible that they will eventually be recognized as new breeds." Fogle, p. 269.

Pudelpointer

"From a pool of seven poodles and just under 100 various pointers," Baron von Zedlitz, a 19th century German dog breeder, attempted to produce the ideal versatile hunting dog. Fogle, p. 218.

Hungarian Pumi

Cross between Puli and German spitzen, first mentioned by name in 1815; small (and vocal) drover.

Fogle, p. 232.

The head-piece for this section is taken from *Der Deutsche Pudel* (Munich: Der Deutschen Pudelklubs, 1907), p. 50, fig. (b) "Idealisierte Zeichnung". This is an idealized drawing of a Poodle prepared for conformation exhibition in a greatly exaggerated corded coat, a tour de force popular in those early days of dog shows. Corded coats are still accepted in the conformation ring; the "corded Poodle" is not a separate variety.

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