

History of the Bulldog

Although the breed has undergone dramatic changes over its history, the Bulldog remains a favored pet dog.

By Michael Dickerson

From Fighting Dog to Show Dog and Family Companion

It wasn't until the official Bulldog Club was formed in England that these poor physical qualities began to be worked out by concerned breeders and fanciers. Long before the English Kennel Club was founded, the Bulldog Club was the first group to attempt to standardize the breed, and the first to hold a conformation show for them in 1859. Jacob Lamphier is credited with drawing up the first "official" standard of Bulldogs in 1864, but it wasn't until 1879 that it made it to print. The first real standard was the Philo Kuon, which was adopted in 1865 in London. Many of the first dogs that appeared in the show ring had splayed feet and bowed legs. To make matters worse, show judging was equally poor and did not in any way help with the breed's physical development. Even today, the Bulldog is considered a very difficult dog to judge correctly in the show ring, and years of dedicated experience are required to do it properly. It is nearly impossible to mention the long list of influential breeders and dogs from England and America that are responsible for the Bulldog's development in the last 200 years. There are several hundreds. Some of the famous dogs during the late 1800s and early 1900s still have a stronghold on today's offspring, and many of the present top sires and pedigrees can still be traced to them.

Some of these influential dogs include: Monarch, Donald, King Dick, Old King Cole, Crib, Rosa, Thunder, Sir Anthony, Brutus and Sancho Panza. In the 1800s, "Crib" and "Rosa" were two dogs that were considered the foundation for the Bulldog standard. Both dogs had deep chests, incredible muscle tone, roach backs and low tail sets. Crib was a brindle-and-white dog that was considered to be "the best ever" for his day. He was a multi-purpose dog that was used as both a guard dog and as a family companion. Prominent breeders of this time frame were Mr. S. E. Shirley, Mr. G. Roper, Mr. R. J. Lloyd Price, Jesse Oswell, Mr. Clement and Mr. Henshaw. By the late 1800s, Robert Hartley, Charles Hopton, Walter Jeffries and Sam Woodiwiss had become widely recognized and respected breeders in America and England.

BULL -RUNNING

It wasn't long before bull-running became almost as popular as bullbaiting. The scenario included a bull being set loose, and a pack of ravaging Bulldogs that would follow and chase. The sport developed in the town of Stamford, and it attracted large enthusiastic crowds that gathered to watch and wager on the event. Its popularity increased throughout England and spread to several other towns including Tutbury and Tetbury. James Hinks is credited with being one of the first Bulldog exhibitors. Hinks actively showed Bulldogs for four years from 1860 to 1864. One of the first shows that Hinks participated in was held at the Birmingham Agricultural Hall. The show attracted an entry of 40 Bulldogs including the famous red dog "King Dick" who was owned by Jacob Lamphier. King Dick had a very successful show career. He would become the first show champion and the first Bulldog to be registered in the English Kennel Club stud book. The first British Bulldog club was organized in 1864 by Mr. R. S. Rockstro.

Most of the Bulldog stock was exported to America, and the UK had the most influence on the breed's development in the States. The first dog to be exhibited in America was "Donald," who was shown in New York in 1880. He was a brindle and white dog owned by Sir William Verner.

Like several other breeds, the ill effects of World War I and World War II took their toll on the Bulldog. At the outbreak of World War I, there were approximately 12,000 Bulldogs in the United Kingdom. By World War II, dog shows had been completely ceased and the Bulldog population decreased to 8,000. Some influential kennels of this time included Merstham, Pearson and Cloverleys. Mrs. Pearson of Pearson Westall's kennel became the first lady president of the English Bulldog Club in 1936.

After World War II many new important faces emerged that would have a great influence on the breed. Jack and Kathleen Cook were credited with breeding the most United Kingdom Bulldog champions. Les and Ellen Cotton of the Aldridge Kennels were responsible for breeding Eng. Ch. Aldridge Advent Gold. This dog went on to sire nine UK champions. Other influential dogs that made their presence known were Eng. Ch. Maelor Solorium, Eng. Ch. Prince of Woodgate and Eng. Ch. Noways Chuckley. "Chuckles" was the first Bulldog to go on to win Supreme Champion at Crufts in 1952. Arthur Westlake, Dora and George Wakefield and Harold and Audie Hayball produced many fine dogs that will forever hold a place in the history of the breed.

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The Bulldog In the US

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