

HISTORICALLY THE COLOR WAS ALWAYS THERE IN THE LAND SPANIELS OF THE REGION OF BRITTANY, THE COLOR PATTERNS FOR BLACK AND LIVER HAS ALWAYS BEEN HOMOZYGOUS IN EXPRESSION.

The true first standard of the breed was written and compiled in 1907, and it did include the Black and white coloration as an acceptable color pattern. Unfortunately this standard was not accepted by the Society Central Canine (SCC) in 1908. The most probable reason for this was the fact that all the "epagneuls" were combined under one main club called the "CLUB FRANÇAIS DE L'EPAGNEUL", with no real foundation specific for the new "Epagneul Breton Breed".

THIS CLUB INCLUDED EPAGNEUL BREEDS SUCH AS THE:

- Picardy
- Picardy blue
- Pont-Audemer (looks a bit like an Irish water spaniel or a poodle)
- Français
- Breton

In 1907 the very first standard elaborated under Arthur Enaud, did include black. But when the time came to have this standard agreed to by the kennel club (SCC), in 1908, under the influence of M. Jean Huguet, an "Epagneul Français"-breeder, this color was rejected. The "Epagneul Français"-men always (and to this day) considered that black was not a "french" color! At that time, it seems the Epagneul Français was more influential "clubwise" than those of our "Breton" (the breed club for Épagneul Français' first standard had been established in 1886 by James de Coninck) , and the Club de l'Épagneul Breton, in 1908, included only a few people just numbering 10!

This individual made argument that the color black did not exist in the Epagneul Français breed, and this is indeed a true fact. The Epagneul Français is Homozygous for the Liver coloration, but then the Epagneul Breton is NOT an Epagneul Français !!!

So with this Breton breed struggling for recognition and a standard they were forced to endure the grave error of this one individual from 1908 to 1956.

In the following years after 1908 the Breton breed grew in popularity and is now the most popular of the Epagneul breeds. With this popularity came the separation of the breeds into their own governing clubs. This is when the election of Gaston Pouchain in 1956 found a leader who would set out to correct the errors of the past with regards to the standard and recognition of the color Black.

1907 - The original standard that included the color Black & Required a naturally short tail

1908 - The standard as was approved by the SCC not including black

1933 - The standard still without black but now accepted dogs that had docked tails

1956 - A strong club that managed to correct the standard to include the color black under M. Pouchain

The history of the Breton breed is one of obscurity with regards to the initial crosses that evolved it into a breed. This lack of factual records has led to many not knowing the true origins of the breed and so in France , Italy and all over the world one is left to reading the many "old" history books. Since this history is based on such old books, information is then copied and republished or translated into other languages, and if there were some mis-stated facts they too were often passed on again and again until another historian rewrites the pages for another generation. When confronted on the facts in error the defense is that it was written in a book !

In most all historical writings it has been determined that there has been no "out crossing" since before 1908, and with many breeds such as French Epagneuls, English and Irish Setters, and Springer types too ! So the legend of breeding with just Pointers and Setters is not true...After the official foundation of the breed, out crossing may have been accidental and not intentional since one would not want to breed to a medium or long bodied breed when a standard called for a really short compact look, body, and head type.

SOME FACTS (thanks to the research done at the SCC in 2002 by P. Willems) :

- 1)** EB N 1 - Boy, LOF11609 owned by Dr. Gastel is in fact an Orange and White male not a Tricolor as erroneously written in Pouchains book. Also noted is that BOY was the FIRST of his coloration as prior to this the predominant colors were Liver and White, Black & White and Tricolor. The tri-colored dogs were equally numerous before this. Pincon-Royal, the first dog entered in 1896 was tri-colored.
- 2)** EB N 2 - Marpha I, LOF 11610 owned by Dr. Gastel, bred by M. du Pontavice is in fact Liver & White
- 3)** EB LOF13092 born in 1908 was the FIRST Black & White Breton registered "Nell" belonging to M. Gastel . Nell was also the 344th Breton recorded. In the book The Brittany in America by Fred White, he mentions NELL as the daughter of Boy & Marpha one being Orange and the other Liver. So this means that Boy who was Orange & white also had to have had the Black gene in order for his breeding to Marpha would be able to produce a Black and White dog.
- 4)** The second Black and white Breton registered is Phan du Boulouard LOF#21058 born in 1915 obviously registered even after the color black was denied from the standard. Phan belonged to M. de Bernardieres (this was also listed in the recent book by H. Bourdon, third generation holder of the Affix Cornouaille where the majority of lines imported to the USA came from, on pg. 22)
- 5)** The third Black & White registered was Fane du Své LOF#21814 born 1920, belonging to M. Robbé. He was out of Jubee D'Armorique by Hanap D'Armorique, so both parents were from the famous kennel of M. Treuttel. So this kennel who bred Myrrha, the 3rd Epagneul Breton ever registered (a LW), did already have the Black gene in its lines since the very first days of the breed.

When the Proponents against the color black in the USA claim that Black never existed in the breed, they were wrong. Since we are forced to follow the history books as they are written we find that in White's book it is also mentioned that several breedings on occasion did produce black coloration and for that reason some lines were culled in the USA. Many Liver dogs were culled for being too dark and thought to be Black, and he mentions that certain Orange dogs were actually the carrier of the Black gene evidenced in the nose color.

Original Brittany standards in the USA included the many shades of pigment such as Tobacco, Deep Brown, and Tan. As the standards evolved over the years the deep shades were changed to reflect the preference away from dogs that may have carried the black gene.

Many early imports into the USA were registered only with the Field Dog Stud Book, it is there that we continue to find registration data reflecting the existence of the Color Black already in the American Brittany population. Listed in 1945 we find in the FDSB the registration of a bitch named Bess of Mimosa (388918) Frank Jordan, Concord, NC Br, C. V. Davis, Morganton, NC. 9/7/45 , w b & tk. By Riverside Bob (375472) ex Fulgora of Richmond (341413)

The Richmond kennel name belonged to Dr. Busteed who had involved his Brittany breeding program into a thesis paper and he wrote color & genetics articles that has been published in White's book, in the the American Brittany Book (blue) by Nicky Bissell, and the AKC Gazette. The lines behind Bess includes line breeding on Fanche & Fenntus du Cosquerou, and included the imported Fr. Ch. Gwenneec de L'Argoat.

In mentioning the American Brittany Book by Bissell we find commentary on some of the imports to the USA. Gobik de Cornouaille was written up as having a Black nose, Fenntus du Cosquerou was described as having a nose color dark enough that some would call it Black.

While some would like to say that imports started coming again into the USA beginning in the 1970's there has been a steady flow of dogs registered but not necessarily with the AKC that were imported from abroad. Most of these dogs were registered with the Field Dog Stud Book and many came into the province of Quebec and into the areas surrounding Michigan and upstate New York, and New Hampshire. The open exchange of registering between the Field Dog Stud Book and the AKC shows that imports were arriving as late as middle 1960's and of many color registrations that may have included the Black gene. They can be found in pedigrees that contained Torbec lines, Kaymore lines, and the Ponkapong lines.

THE FIRST BLACK CHAMPION IN FRANCE AFTER THE CORRECTION TO THE STANDARD WAS:

- Ch. CS - Gitane des Bords de L'Isle
- Breeder/Owner/ Handler- Henri Bousquet
- (Emir des Bords de L'Isle x Dolly de Basse Bretagne)
- Photo Courtesy Club de L'Épagneul Breton - France issue 85

THERE WERE ALSO MANY IMPORTED INTO THE THE USA PRIOR TO, DURING, AND AFTER THE CORRECTION TO THE STANDARD TO ALLOW BLACK, THEY WERE:

1948 - Wanda & Urs de Basse Bretagne were in '8/48- Wanda; Urs, 9/48).

1951 - saw import Fr. Ch. Unan I de Cornouaille acquire his AKC Show Championship

1962 - Atan de Cornouaille (Varh De Cornouaille x Tostik De Cornouaille); o/w: Harmon.

1962 - Janard De Keranlouan (Istor De Keranlouan x Itron de Keranouan), o/w: Dr. Paul Parashak

1963 - Joa De Cruckin (Ettu De L'Argoat x Demone De Cruckin) o/w: G and M Rocherolle, breeder- Henri Nicolas.

1965 - Javotte De Keranlouan (Iowan De Keranlouan x Isis De Keranlouan o/w: L. E. Swanter, Breeder Guy Morin.

NOW AN INTERESTING ONE:

March 1966 - Nanga Du Pont Ar Rod (Fram De St. Tugen x Janie Du Pont Ar Rod)
O/W: Mrs. James B. Bell, Jr. (Belloaks Kennel fame) Breeder- D.N Aubry

Most involved in the Epagneul Breton recognize some of the kennel affixes in the above names, some are older and some that are well known for the development of a top quality Black Tricolor dog. And one can see the parallel in the affixes between the first recorded Black & White champion in France to dogs that were imported in 1948. So when some say Black was never introduced to the USA they could very definitely be in error. Why do these names not appear in mainstream USA American Brittany pedigrees? Is it because they may have carried the color of Black?

We do know that in 1949 that there was a Special Specialty show held where a French judge- M. Maurice Allaire officiated. There were 58 dogs entered and 5 presented for exhibit of which 4 were imported. M. Allaire commenting on only 3 dogs there; Ch. Patrice de Sharvogue -"A splendid dog, but too old for competition", Urs de Basse Bretagne (listed as imported in 1948) "A very nice type bitch, but a trifle light boned", and Thias du Roc'Hellou (imp.)"An excellent Brittany and typey in all her elements". (Excerpted from The Brittany in American by Fred Z. White, M.D.) History has not listed any other French judgments made in the USA since 1949 is there any wonder there has been some genetic drift from desired type?

When you find information such as this and then read material published by those in the USA and Canada implying that the current dogs in France are the product of crossbreeding after World War II it is an erroneous campaign to discredit the outstanding qualities still maintained in the breed in France over the years. Even Fred White's book details that during the war years the French were even more stringent in their selection process since they could only keep the absolute very best specimens at that time, so would it not be considered that the dog in France today is from the very best foundations after the War?
