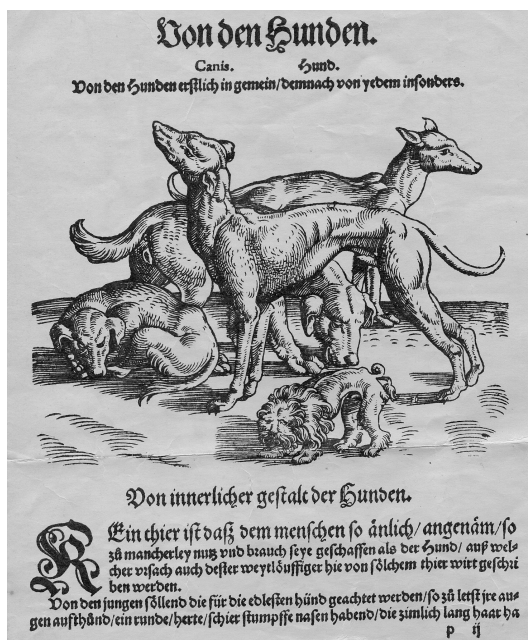


Chapter 1

Emerging From The Mist's Of Time The Lowchen Beginnings



Frontispiece of *Von Den Hunden*, written by Conrad Gessner in 1755.
Print. Ashford Collection.

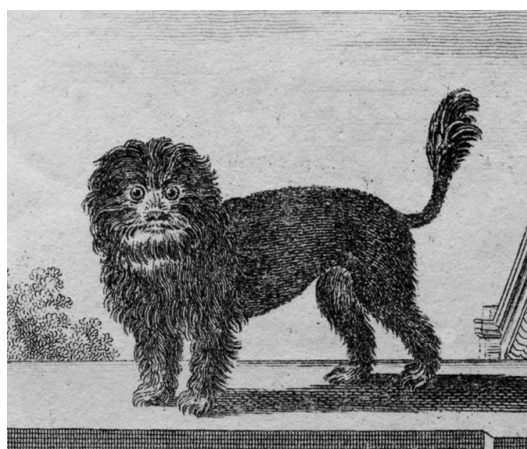
Uncovering the Löwchen history required basic research to determine both the origin and purpose of the breed. Its history was difficult to uncover. Finding mention of the breed required many hours spent searching through old dog books, manuscripts and art books in multiple languages. What follows in this chapter was found as a result of this extensive investigation. We must keep in mind that researching histories of any breed is risky at best. Unless the history is detailed from its very beginning, all theories are mostly conjecture.

Some basic concepts need to be established in order to have a clear understanding of this breed's and any other breed's development. The terms 'Purebred' and 'Breed', by today's standards and definition were practically nonexistent prior to the nineteenth century. Before then

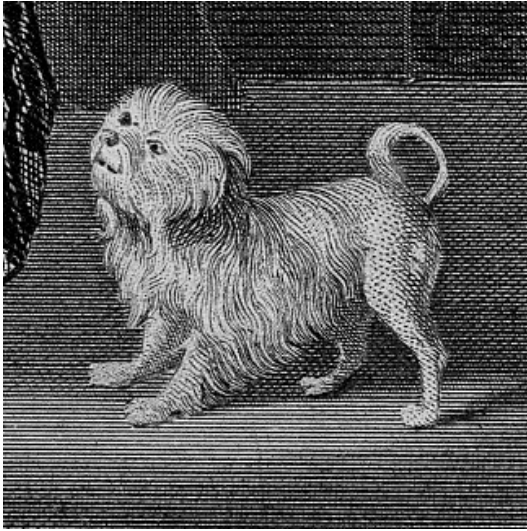
we could consider 'breed' a loose term. The difference between the uses of 'breed' then and now, is that breeds were not the pure strains we know today. A 'type' of dog possessing common traits could be labeled a member of a 'breed', if those traits came through in successive generations. That a dog was considered a member of a breed does not mean it was 'purebred.'

Until the later part of the nineteenth century, farmers or connoisseurs of the hunt usually bred dogs for utilitarian purposes. They were hoping to improve the working performance of dogs bred by them. To do this they bred dogs not for their appearance, but based on their performance at the tasks required of them. Breedings were made to meld together the capabilities of two individuals in their offspring. In one way, breeding was not so different then from today, the largest difference being that today, breeders stay within the confines of their established and registered breed.

In the early days, if a type of dog evolved and its get produced the same characteristics for generations after, it 'became a breed.'" A good example would be the Gordon Setter. Developed by the Earl



Lowchen Barrs Buffon 1779
Print. Ashford Collection



The Lacemaker c. 1860
Print Ashford Collection

of Gordon and his hunt master, Gordon Setters were acclaimed to be superb hunting dogs. During the breed's development, they came in a wider variety of colors than just the black and tan we know today. These colors were the result of different types of dogs bred into the bloodlines to enhance certain traits. As the Earl's bloodlines developed, the dogs became known as Gordon Setters in honor of him.

Some breeds evolved because they were geographically isolated from outside influences. Prime examples are the Finnish Spitz and Ibizan Hound. They developed their unique traits due to generations of closed breeding. Because of their isolation during the years of formation, no outside influences manifested themselves on the breed in development. Occasionally outsiders discovered such breeds and would then herald the world, telling about their extraordinary find. Their act of extolling the breed's virtues often created interest in it, which sometimes led to tampering and the eventual destruction of the breed as it was in its original state.

The concept of 'purebred' as we define it today: "Having many generations of ancestors of the same breed or kind" was practically unheard of prior to the late 1800s. Bloodlines of various breeds commonly coursed through a dog's veins, bred in for the qualities and improvements they offered.

Using bloodlines from more than one breed was commonly accepted as a way of further refining or developing a breed toward its use. This method resulted in creating most of the breeds that we know today.

It was not until the establishment of studbooks that the concept of 'purebred' took hold. Yet in the early days of studbooks, dogs of various breeds could be entered in a studbook if a breeder saw fit to include the get from a crossbreeding. Perusal of early studbooks yields examples of that. As years passed and large central organizations such as the American Kennel Club or Great Britain's Kennel Club, took responsibility for maintaining studbooks, the mixing in of other breeds gradually tapered off. Eventually, crossbreeding was not allowed as common practice by large, central registries.

The purpose of this brief introduction into the theories of 'purebred' and 'breed' is to open your mind to the idea that no breed, until the early twentieth century, was truly purebred as we understand that term today. When anyone regales you with the story of his ancient breed's purebred lineage, you will now recognize that the breed as such was not purebred as we define and understand purebred today.

Because of the affinity between man and dog, much has been studied and written about them. Evidence of the relationship extends prior to ancient Egyptian times; as far back as to the time when men lived in caves. The period we are mainly interested in, when researching the Löwchen, is from the fifteenth century to now. Many who wrote about dogs during the medieval period through eighteenth century, were the scientists of their day. They were concerned with documenting the species sharing the earth with the human animal. Extensive volumes listing creatures and their variations within species were written. They covered such diverse subjects as sea creatures, satyrs, unicorns, elephants, and birds as well as commonplace animals and insects.

Early writings about dogs were not always accurate. Early research was not based on solid genetic information, if any. Much of what we know about genetics today is relatively new since common knowledge of extensive genetic knowledge does not go



1496 Flagellation of Christ. Albrecht Dürer
Print Ashford Collection

back much earlier than the nineteenth century. Early written breed histories were sometimes based on what the writer surmised from his own beliefs, observations and conclusions or long held myths. Often origins of breeds were credited to magical means. For example, the ancient Chinese attributed the Pekingese's origin to a breeding between a monkey and a lion. Today we know that scenario is not genetically possible but it is an example of the frame of reference many of the earliest writers worked within. Even though there was a lack of scientific knowledge as we recognize it today, this does not mean that breeding of dogs was left to chance. Serious breeders existed in the medieval period. Their breedings were based on how dogs performed their jobs, whether hunting, herding or guarding. Appearance would not be of great importance to dog fanciers until the late nineteenth century. One exception to the rule would be companion dogs kept and bred by or for ladies. Required was that small dogs be charming, small, pretty and amusing.

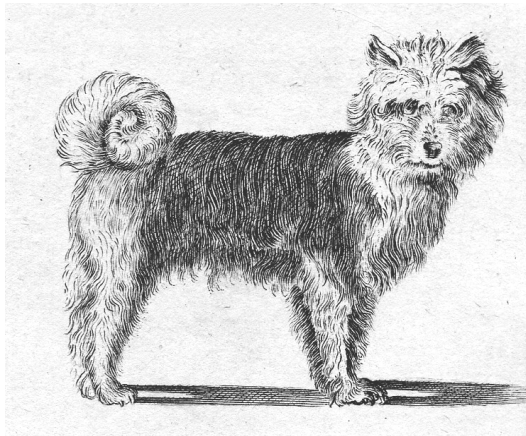
A problem encountered when researching the early years of a breed is that often breeders did not keep a written record

or their records were destroyed through the years hence by those not recognizing their value. Another problem encountered when researching the very old breeds was the exact meaning of the language used in old documents and books. Through the years, words and their usage changed, sometimes causing later readers and writers to misconstrue what was originally meant. Writers, when referring to their reference materials wrote their own interpretations of what they found based on their understanding of words that may actually have changed in meaning. This sometimes caused an eventual change in the meaning of the information from what the original writers intended. An example would be the term 'Canis Melitius,' which as long been understood by Maltese fanciers as meaning Maltese Dog. To writers of old, it also meant toy or small dog. Which definition for the term came first or is correct is unclear. One must not, because of the murky definition, assume Maltese is meant when Canis Melitius is used in old writings, since this term has been used interchangeably for hundreds of years. Due to uncleanness of word usage, inaccuracies exist in many breed histories. Words and phrases were used interchangeably. Waterdog and Water Spaniel both describe the same dog in the 1500s. The opposite, a single breed name is shared among several breeds. For example Bichon, Poodles and Canis Melitius were all known as 'Bouffe dogs' at varying times in their histories. Bouffe meant full coated, as these breeds were. A researcher who is not aware of this could draw an inaccurate conclusion on what is meant by a writer using terms with variable meanings, depending on the period of time applied. A firm knowledge of numerous breed histories is important when researching individual breed histories.

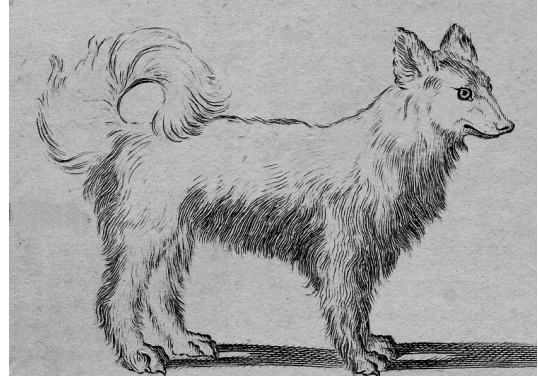
Löwchen Historically

All breed histories are conjecture unless there is clear and irrefutable documentation from their beginnings. Such would be the case of recently developed breeds as the Argentine Dogo or Cesky Terrier, both of which were developed last century with much documentation. We will never know for sure the complete truth and history of our beloved Löwchen since there will always be new facts and ideas uncovered as the years roll by, some may eventually lay to rest the theory laid out in this book. Some day in the distant future, genetic research may be conducted to try to trace dog breeds and their paths of development. Many breeds sharing common roots and histories are lumped together in early scientific classifications. The Löwchen history was pieced together by studying various breeds' progressions through time, and how they related to the Löwchen story. An attempt at a hypothesis of the Löwchens' development is now presented, along with theories of several other breeds' beginnings and roots. The reason of their inclusion is that they were commonly believed to have contributed to the Löwchen origins.

It is assumed by many that the following breeds, some now extinct, shared a common ancestry: the Maltese, the Comforter these breeds are related, but not all are intertwined with the others. During the (possibly the Bichon Frise), the Spaniel Gentle, Shock Dog,



Siberian Dog. This dog pictured in an encyclopedia dated 1776, is equivalent in size to the Pomeranian dog. Print Ashford Collection.

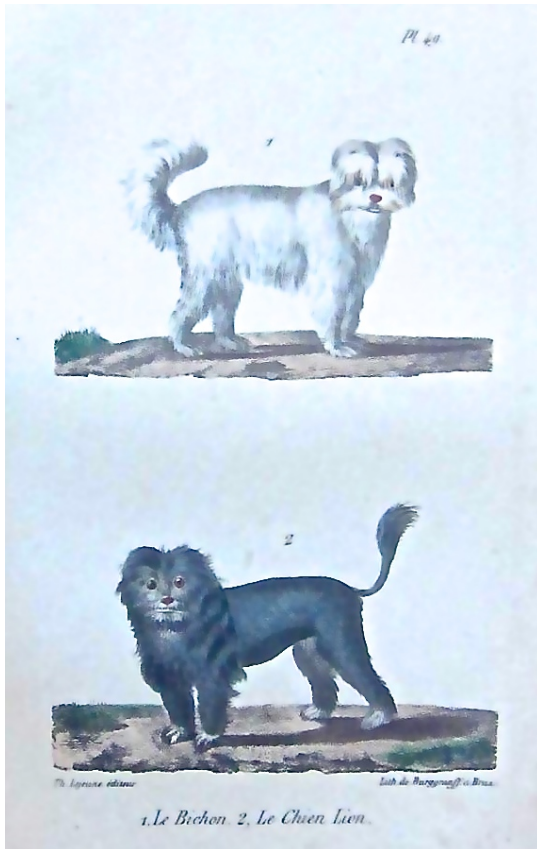


Pomeranian Dog d. 1776
Print Ashford Collection

Bichon Frise, Poodle, Havanese, Bolognese and Löwchen. Some of nineteenth century the Löwchen was classified as a member of the Bichon family, which additionally consists of: Bichon Frise, Bichon Maltese, Bichon Havanese, and Bichon Bolognese. Bichon is translated from French as "Lap dog with long silky hair," a classification all these breeds fall under in most ways. One assumes that these dogs are all related, when that is not the case. The first classification of the Bichon breeds was made around 1817 by Dr. Walthier, a fancier of small dogs, and was based on appearance more than any other aspect. Those making the early classifications were using what information they had at hand. From then on, the Löwchen was always classified as a Bichon breed. This is inaccurate and reflects the gaps in information that led to this conclusion. The Löwchen should not be included in this group since its development is alien to the other members of the Bichon family.

To research the Löwchens' beginnings, a plan was devised. It would not do to solely search early research materials for the Löwchen.

Ignoring other breeds that might or might not be related could cause one to miss important clues to the Löwchens' development. Several breeds were examined. These were the Poodle and the members of the Bichon group, since assumptions exist that the Löwchen descend from these breeds. This research proved this is unlikely. The Poodle stems out of the Canis



1828 A German version of Barrs Buffon. This is one of the first printed illustrations of a Bichon.

Aquatic family, prior to the fifteenth century they probably shared some common ancestral roots with Löwchen through stemming from the Generosi classification of dogs.

After the early sixteenth century, the predecessors of the poodle began emerging as distinct entities. These entities were separate from the Löwchen, and their developments were not generally linked to the other in their course of development. It's surprising to read current breed histories and find the authors are repeating a breed history with little actual research done on their part to substantiate the stories told. One must always immerse deeply into the facts to find the truth. Setting out to determine the Löwchens' history proved to be ever more fascinating as additional material came to light. There are several stories explaining the

Löwchens' origins. Among them, according to *The Hutchinson's Dog Encyclopedia*, the Leoninus was considered to be simply a poorly colored Maltese with a wavy instead of straight coat, cut in a lion-like pattern. An early 19th century book, Cassell's *New Book of the Dog*, claimed that Russia was the original home of the Löwchen.

In a German book published in 1884, *Das Edlen Hundes*, the Löwchen is described as being a result of a poodlepinscher cross. An earlier explanation of the breed's origins comes from an encyclopedia published in 1779: "From the Spaniel and little Danish dog has proceeded the liondog, which is now very rare." A very interesting story of a small breed believed to originate in France, resembling the Löwchen, can be found in an old German book "*Des Edlen Hundes Hufsucht, Pflege, Dressur*" by Otto Friedlich which is found in the AKC Library. The book explains that the breeds' small size is due to their being buried up to their necks while still puppies. The belief was that there would be no room to allow the body to grow larger than the vessel containing it. As you can see there are many ideas as to where the Löwchen comes from, and it is up to us to sort out the story.

The original intent of this research was to give a firm foundation to what has been modernly credited to be the Löwchen history. This history was much repeated and written about, but little research was conducted to validate the information being passed on to each new Löwchen fancier. The original explanation, written about and told by Madame Bennert, was that the Löwchen developed along the Mediterranean (possibly on the Island of Malta) or in Italy.

Based on this idea, one can see why credence can be given to the Löwchen tracing its origins to the Maltese dog, since the Maltese stems from the Mediterranean regions. Interestingly, this supposition is not supported by regional examples of Löwchen in art. There is little evidence of Löwchen living in the Mediterranean regions much earlier than the 1800's. In the art of the regions, many other small dogs are found, including Spaniel, Whippet or Italian Greyhound type dogs.



De slagtershond, wachthond



Het Bologneesch hondje. De spanjelet

Het Leeuwtye

Dutch Print 1845.

It is possible that the idea of the Löwchen developing along the Mediterranean came about due to the existence of paintings that were created prior to the 1800s featuring early Bichon type dogs with a lion cut. These dogs had the type of coat found on today's Bichon Frise. This and other characteristics indicate that the Löwchen was not illustrated here. Additionally, historians or writers of these regions did not mention the Löwchen as native dogs. The assumption of the Löwchen development in these regions and the breed's

similarities to dogs in the Bichon group may help explain their inclusion in the Bichon Family classification, since most of the Bichon group descend from this region.

When Madame Bennert wrote of the Löwchens' origins she was drawing on resources that were limited. Her conclusion of similarities between the Löwchen and Bichon types was correct, based on the information at hand. Later research has proven otherwise, that the breed is unlikely descended from the same regions and that it is an unlikely relative. This book's research material drew from sources all over the world, thanks to computers, present day libraries and modern office equipment making it all possible. These resources were not available in Madame Bennert's day, making accurate research on her part more difficult. Despite this, Juha Kares of the Chic Choix Löwchen from Finland, strongly supports Madame Bennert's history. He maintains that there are dogs living today on islands scattered about the Mediterranean merely near Greece, which strongly resemble the Löwchen. These dogs may be proof of the development of the Löwchen in the



Shock Dog. Barr's Buffon.c. 1779. The same dog has been identified as a Bichon in other copies of this print instead of "Shock Dog"
Print Ashford Collection



Havanese painted by Jean-Jacques Bachelier d. 1768. Note the coat texture, it is similar to the Bichon coat. Perhaps this is in actuality a Bichon-type dog clipped in the lion clip and not actually a Havanese. This could be an illustration of the mislabeling of dog pictures, common even in the present time. Print Ashford Collection.

Mediterranean, but there are questions as to the origins of these dogs. There is no way to dispel the possibility that the dogs were brought to the islands through the years by travelers. It is possible that they exist on these islands as a separate type of dog from the Löwchen in entirety, and resemble them. Further analysis of the situation is warranted, and should take place before the bloodlines on these islands are diluted by dogs brought ashore by today's traveler.

Another theory, recently developed, takes another viewpoint. Based on physical evidence such as bone structure, size, color and shape of eye; coat colors and texture; intelligence and attitude, a conclusion indicates a predecessor of the Löwchen may stem from an eastern dog from the Tibetan region. There may have been a type of dog much like the Tibetan Terrier and KyiApso that traveled through Russia into Europe



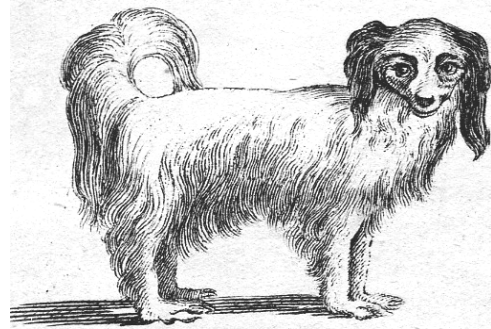
White Poodle in a Boat. Painting by George Stubbs. 1780. Paul Mellon Collection.

over a thousand years ago. It may have been this dog that became the foundation of type that metamorphosed into the Löwchen of today. This dog could have been any size, large, medium or small. Most likely, it was a medium dog capable of running along with the horses of the eastern-based invaders as they ravaged Western Europe. It is likely that the dogs remained in Northern Europe blending with native dogs of spitz and terrier or pincher type, creating the forbearer of the breed we know today as the Löwchen. Much evidence exists pointing to a Germanic (Teutonic), Dutch or East Russian origin for the Löwchen. Cassell's *New Book of the Dog*, written at the turn of the century proposed Russia as the original home of the Lion Dog. Cassell stated that they eventually spread to Holland and Germany. This proposal is bolstered by description of the Russian Poodle. In *The Book of the Poodle*, Anna Katherine Nicholas described them as being very leggy dogs with long wedge shaped heads and very little stop. Some had yellowish eyes. The usual coat color was black, but there were also white, and black-and-white particolored dogs. The coat did not curl or cord. The Russian Poodles' coat was long, coarse and almost wiry with a totally different texture from the French and German Poodles. During the time of the Russian Poodles' existence the rest of the continental Poodle breeds carried corded

coats. It's important to note here that the term "Poodle" written at that time as Pudel, was used interchangeably for several types of large hairy hunting dogs until the breed became more defined in the late 19th century. Except for size and head, the Russian Poodles' description is closer to the Löwchens' appearance than to that of the German Poodle. Could the Russian Poodle possibly be the Grande Chien de Lion rumored to exist? Jane Cook owns a nineteenth century French print featuring this dog. In any case, that there was a large dog resembling today's Löwchen lays out the possibility that a smaller dog with similar features also existed in Russia. Alternatively, this large dog could, through a period of time have been reduced in size by blending with smaller native dogs.

Breeds as Classified

Throughout written history, people strove to make sense of the world around them. In doing so they would seek to place species into classifications. In 1570, Dr. Caius categorized dogs according to type. He classified small breeds as follows: *Delicati*, which spawned *Meliteus, sue Fotor*, which in turn spawned the *Spaniel Gentle* or *Comfortor*. The *Delicati* was derived from the *Generosi* category, along with the *Aucupatorii*, which produced the *Aquaticus, sue Inquisitor* and the *Hispaniolus index* that in turn became the Spaniel, Setter, Waterspaniel.

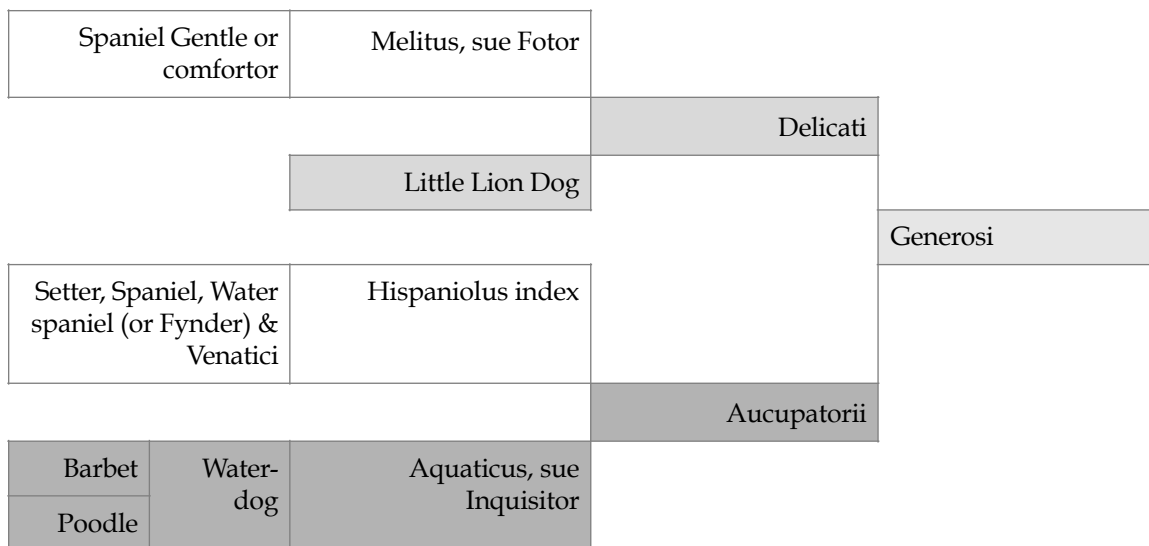


Spaniel 1776 Encyclopedia Print. Ashford Collection

The Löwchen was always a small companion dog. It does not appear to

descend out of the Aquaticus, sue Inquisitor classification, as does the Poodle. The earliest common classification that the Löwchen and Poodles have in common is the Generosi category. It becomes obvious that the Löwchen is not closely related to the Poodle family and does not descend out of the breed. The Löwchen does not have some of the

unique physical characteristics of the breeds descending out of the *Aquaticus* classification. They do not have webbed feet or profuse and tight curly coats which shed water easily. Nor do the dogs in the *Aquaticus* category possess tightly curled tails or upright ears.



Map defining the development of the breeds as defined by Dr. Caius.

By 1756, Carl Linnaeus classified dogs into nine categories, one of which was the *Canis Melitaeus* or pet dog. In 1792, Professor Gmelin, in *The Animal Kingdom*, expanded this classification to thirty-four breeds. Breed descriptions of interest to us are as follows:

Greater Waterdog; *Canis Aquaticus Major*: The hair is long and curled like a sheep.

Lesser WaterDog; *Canis Aquaticus Minor*: Is of a small size, with long curly hair, which about the ears is longer and hangs downwards.

Barbet; *Canis Aquatilis*: The tail is truncated, or seems cut off in the middle, with long coarse hair. ("This seems the same with the *Canis Aquaticus Major*" - the author of *Dogs, Their History and Development*.)

LionDog; *Canis Leonis*: Is exceedingly small, with long hair, like the foregoing on the fore part of the body; that on the hind parts being shorter and smooth."

The Dog, printed in 1781, listed thirty established breeds. Included are the Shock Dog or Lap Dog, the Lion Dog and the Petite

Water Dog. According to this book, the Petite Waterdog came from the crossing of the Waterdog and Spaniel. It's important to realize that the Waterdog being discussed is not the Portuguese or Irish Waterdog, but likely the predecessor of either, if not both. This breed was the foundation of many breeds, but is now extinct. The Petite Waterdog was a member of the *Canis Familiaris Aquaticus*, which is divided into two categories, the *Aquaticus Major* and the *Aquaticus Minor*. These eventually developed into the Petite Barbet, which eventually morphed into Miniature Poodle and the Grande Barbet, which was the predecessor of the Standard Poodle.

In 1781, the Poodle as we know it today did not yet exist, but its ancestor the Barbet had emerged. Since the Löwchen predated the Barbet according to written references, it must be stated that any assumption that the Löwchen evolved out of the Barbet or Poodle should be ended. To further lay this idea to rest, let's compare the

Barbet and Löwchens' outward appearance since they are so very different from each other. The 1798 edition of *Barrs Buffon* has an illustration of le Petit Barbet, which sports a curly coat and docked tail. It also appears to have almond eyes and a short muzzle. The Petite is a smaller version of the Grande Barbet. As early as the 1400s, illustrations of Löwchen can be found in which they sport long tails carried over the back and round eyes. Coat was another distinct difference. Löwchen were always described as possessing a wavy and silky coat differing from the Barbet's description of long, thick and tightly curled coat that was sometimes likened to a sheep's wool. According to *Buffons 1807*: "The dog with long fine curled hair, which are called the Bouffe dogs and which are bigger than the Water Dog, are from the Water Dog and the large Spaniel." It seems that the Bouffe Dogs he writes here about are the Barbet. *The Naturalists Library* by Lt. Col. Charles Hamilton Smith, and edited by Sir William Jardine, published in 1843, names the Waterdog as the "Barbet of the Continent," making a connection between the Waterdog and the Poodle of the Germans. Further description of the Petite

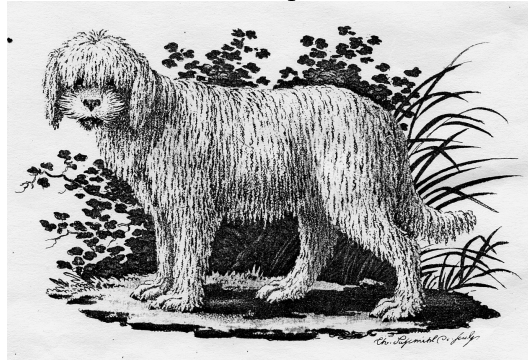


Many American dog fanciers today think the Barbet is extinct but it still exists. Its appearance and purpose is much as it was when it was written about in the 17th and 18th centuries.

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At this point, it should be obvious that the Löwchen are not descended out of the Poodle since the early Löwchen was well documented, prior to the Poodle's development from the Barbet. The Barbet and the Poodle are worlds apart from the Löwchen in physical attributes. Furthermore there is the possibility that the Toy Poodle may stem from the Löwchen!

By the early 1900s the Poodle had developed into the dog we recognize today. The English drew up a breed standard in 1886. Drury wrote, in 1903, in *British Dogs*, that the Poodle was divided into three categories; the first two determined by coat; the corded and noncorded, the third Toys. To date the Standard and Miniature were not yet divided by size.



The Barbet. *Traite des Chiens de Chasse*. Le Marquise de Lauriston. Print Ashford Collection

Barbet follows: "The Little Barbet is a diminutive breed, with smooth and long silky hair on the head, ears and tail while the rest is more curly. The head, legs and body were covered in tight curls. The Italians called the Little Poodle or Kleine Pudel; Barbino, the French; Petit Barbet and the English; Little Barbet."

Le Petit Barbet" Print 1755 Ashford Collection

There were three variations of coat; corded, curly and fluffy. The larger Poodle's (Standard and Miniatures) description made it clear that its coat should not be silky. Fluffy meant that the coat was merely brushed out and not in cords or ringlets (curly). It is interesting to note early Poodle exhibitors used to wet the ringlets prior to a show to tighten the rings.



Print 182. Ashford Collection

According to Drury, Toys “have come into vogue more of late.” In 1905 Toy Poodles were added to the American breed standard: “The Toy Poodle should resemble the Poodle in every respect except coat, often softer and silkier. Height; under 12 inches. Weight; under 10 pounds.” When Toy Poodles were considered a breed at the end of the 1800s, they were thought to be mongreltype dogs. As stated in *The Dogs of the British Islands*: “In this mongrel race, the peculiarities of their ancestors are so pronounced that they are called half bastards of pure crossing. They look like the medium sized Poodles, but are only half their size, and they are much lighter. Their heads are not so high, the muzzle is longer, the body slenderer and the legs are comparatively



“Toy French Poodle” Postcard mailed in Trenton NJ. on October 19th, 1908. Note the wavy coat. Postcard Ashford Collection.

thinner. The hair covering the head is long, fine and soft; on body and legs more curled and more wooly; on the head, ears and tail it is decidedly longer and more knotty, but silky. The tail is carried straight, and it's tip turns slightly upward. On the face the hair is long, especially about the mouth.



Der Zwergpudel (Toy Poodle) d.1902
Print. Ashford Collection

By the time Toy Poodles were included as a variety by the AKC in 1943, the breed was recognizable as the Toy Poodle we know today. Where did the Toy Poodle come from? In the second edition of *Stonehenge*, he writes "That probably many of the Poodles of forty and fifty years before had been Maltese." Surely, because of size, the Poodle he was talking about was the Toy Poodle. Was the Maltese dog crossed with Löwchen producing the early Toy Poodle? This possibly introduced colors the Maltese lacked. The straight tail and curly, woolly and knotty coat came when this crossing was interbred with the Miniature Poodle. Or was the term "Maltese" being used generically as was commonly done at the time and not actually referring to the Maltese we know today, but to the Löwchen? This is possible since during those days the Löwchen was also known as the Maltese Lion Dog.

Reference to the Löwchen lessened during the period of development of the Toy Poodle. During this time period, the number of Löwchen and breeders became drastically reduced. Could the Löwchen have been absorbed into and used as foundation blood for the Toy Poodle? One must consider this



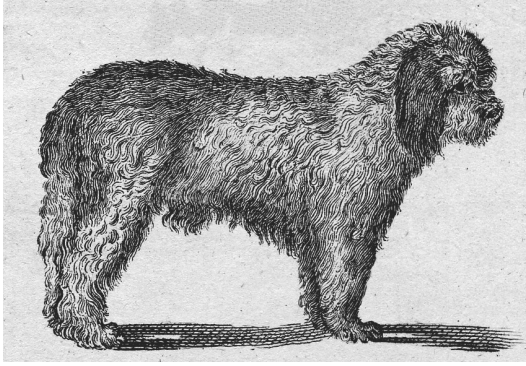
23. Löwchenhündchen.
Löwchenhündchen. Des Elden Hundes Hufsucht, Pflege, Dressur. Otto Friedlich
Print. Ashford Collection

possibility since the early breed description of the Toy Poodle resembles the Löwchen breed standard. Also consider the apparent disappearance of Löwchen at the same time the Toy Poodle began to emerge.

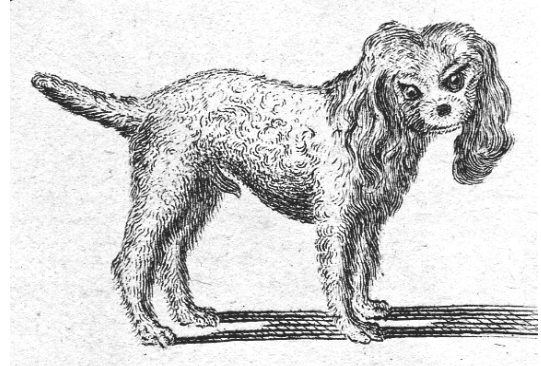
The purpose of explaining the Poodle history is to show that the Löwchen and Poodle developed as breeds at different times. The Löwchen, while little known in recent dog history, is the older breed of the two. Reference by modern day writers to the Poodle in the fifteenth century is incorrect as you can see. The Poodles' predecessor, the Waterdog, was just becoming established during that time period. The Löwchen already appears as a distinct breed according to writers and artists of the time.

Löwchen Origins

There are varied theories of the Löwchen's origins. One, most unlikely, found in Buffon's *Natural History* (1807), stated, "from the Spaniel and small Dane has come the LionDog, which is now very scarce." Vero Shaw claimed that they came from the Island of Malta, where they existed as a degenerated and shy strain of breed. The dog he described does not resemble the Löwchen temperament at all and was most likely not the breed we know today. Examples of Löwchen in art have been traced as far back as a woodcut executed in 1422.



Great Water Dog Print d. 1776
Ashford Collection



Small Water Dog Print d. 1776
Ashford Collection

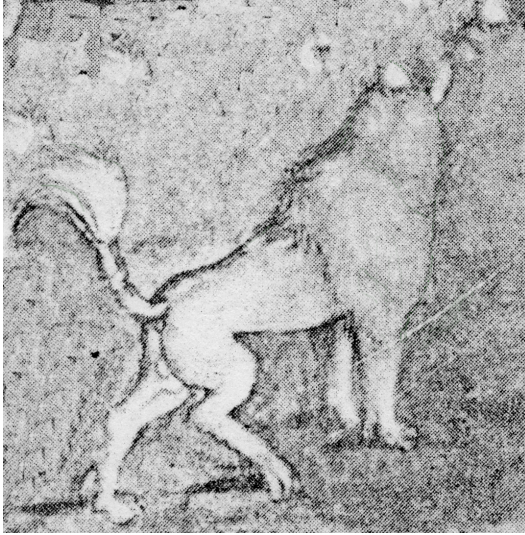
Poodle, Bichon Frise and Maltese fanciers variously lay claim to early examples of art, which they feel depict their breeds. Löwchen fanciers also claim some of but these same works of art. Albrecht Durer's works are pointed to as examples of the early Poodle in many Poodle books. This is incorrect, since during Durer's life the Poodle had not yet evolved, the Lion Dog (Löwchen) was already being mentioned in literature. The Poodles precursor, the Waterdog, was established as a breed when Durer worked as an artist, but its written and illustrated description does not fit the little dog Durer drew. Durer's dogs are clearly Löwchen. The little dogs depicted in his woodcuts were small, approximately 11 inches tall. Their coats wavy, with some texture, do not appear exceptionally dense.

Their round eyes peer through a fringe of bangs on a hairy face and their long tails curl up over their backs. In comparison, the Waterdogs had very thick, curly and dense coats. The tail was long, heavily fringed and straight. It was a large breed suited for hunting, not at all like the dogs of Durer, which were obviously small companion dogs.

A German contemporary of Durer, Conrad Gessner, wrote extensively about species including insects, mammals, fish and birds. He described a dog which might be the Löwchen in his book *Historie Animalium* in 1555: "These are called in Germany Bracken Schoshundle and Gutschenhundle; the Italians Bottolo, and other nations have no common name for this kind that I know.

Martial made this distinction of a little French dog; for about Lions in France there are store of this kinde, and are sold very dear; sometimes for ten crowns, and sometimes for more. They are not above a foot, or half a foot long and always the lesser the more delicate and precious. Their head like the head of a mouse but greater, their snout sharp, their ears like the ears of a cony, short legs, little feet, long tail, white colour and the hairs about the shoulders longer than ordinary is most commended. They are of pleasant disposition, and will leap and bite without pinching and bark prettily, and some are taught to stand erect holding their forelegs like hands; others to fetch and carry in their mouths which is cast unto them." The dog described may be a Löwchen because of the coat pattern and description of the head. Löwchen have a distinctly shaped head with a sharp boned jaw line. Though this description continues on to name France as the country of origin for the breed, evidence points to the development of the breed being in Germany or Holland, where they appear frequently in written words and art.

Another reason to believe Löwchen originated in Germanic regions would be their similarity to other breeds known to have evolved in the same regions such as the Schnauzer and Spitz type dogs. Some of the similarities the Löwchen and Schnauzer dogs are more evident in the Löwchen known as smooth coats. The type of smooth coat being referred to here is the coat that is hard and breaks off easily, giving the impression of an open coat. This coat is similar to the original



Master Behem Codex Painting
d. 1505 Jagellonian Library.

Schnauzer coat most commonly found in Germany Another similar feature between the Schnauzer and Löwchen is the silver and light silver color pattern, as well as the tendency to fade. The Löwchen also share with the Schnauzer or today a density of bone and muscle. Both look lighter than they actually are when picked up. The Spitz is not so obvious in the Löwchen, but is revealed by the occasional throwback that sometimes is born. Some of these throwbacks look like Spitz mixes, with the upright ears and a coat that patterns like a Spitz.



Pure-bred Löwchen from Germany's Burgwald Kennel. This is an obvious throwback to the spitz-type ancestors! Photo taken 1992 By Gini Denninger.



Stating that the Löwchen shares commonalities with Schnauzer and Spitz type dogs does not mean that the Löwchen evolved from these breeds but that they in all probability, share common ancestors many hundreds of years ago. These similarities lend credence to the idea that the breed developed in Germanic regions. There is much mention of Germany or Holland as being the birthplace of the Löwchen by esteemed writers.

As in all things cultivated by man, there were periods of drastic change. One of those times of change for the Löwchen was from 1480-1523. It is clearly illustrated during those years, in various art works, that some Löwchen had upright ears. Even some of Durer's Löwchen show signs of this trait. Of interest are: The flagellation of Christ and Christ before Caiaphas, both of which have Löwchen with ears and ear hairs standing up, away from the head. Several other excellent examples of this can be found in a miniature painted by the Master Behem Codex (Krakow, year 1505); a woodcut by Hans Holbein executed in 1523 and the brilliant jewel colored painting of Katerina von Mecklenburg by Lucas Cranach der Elder.



Katernina Von Mecklenburgs's
Löwchen. Painting yr. 1500.

There are many other examples of this peculiar trait. Erect ears could indicate that terrier or spitz blood was introduced into the Löwchen. Today's occasional high set ear can be credited to this early infusion. Other characteristics that might be considered remnants from this infusion are the occasional hard coats and feisty yet friendly personalities. Some Löwchen like to hunt rats and small varmints and several have actually practiced at gogotground events at terrier trials with some degree of success.

Throughout the Middle Ages, these dogs romped in all types of households ranging from castle keep to farmyard. People love to claim Löwchen were royally favored. One charming story told is that should a royal knight die in battle he was laid to rest with a lion carved at the foot of his tomb. If he died of peaceful causes, a Löwchen was carved on his tomb instead. Another folklore was that ladies of the court would take the shaven Löwchen into their beds to serve as hot water bottles. During this period, dogs of all sizes were thought to serve medicinal purposes. The belief was that illness resulted from bad spirits making their home in a person. By pressing a dog or part of a dead one, to the area that was in pain, these evil spirits would be drawn out of the human into the dog's

body. Other purposes small dogs in particular served were to draw parasites such as fleas and mites away from unwashed human bodies. It was a rare occasion that persons from the Middle Ages bathed. The parasites preferred the warmer body of the dog making them effective parasite magnets.

As well as serving as companion dogs to the ladies, Löwchen were, no doubt, charged with varmint hunting. Many a home or drafty castle was chased clean of mice by these little dogs. Since most Löwchen are living vacuum cleaners, it can be assumed that they probably cleaned the floors of all edible debris after meals in the Middle Ages. It is important to note that Löwchen were popular in other than royal households. They were portrayed in art works as being fed, played with and carried by everyday people in both wealthy and poor circumstances. Eventually, as the political climate changed in Europe, the breed began to fade from visibility. Reference to the breed became infrequent in old manuscripts describing dogs.

The earliest mention of a breeder and fancier is of Dr. Walthier who lived in the early 1800s. He used the Latin name of Leoninus for the breed when referring to them. He explained that the breed was likened to lions merely because of their trim and not by possessing a ferocious personality. Charles HamiltonSmith described the breed as being "extremely rare" in 1843 in *The Naturalists Library*, which was edited by Sir William Jardine. Additionally he states "The Lion Dog is a small variety, with the head, ears and shoulders covered by long, curly and soft hair and a floccose tail; the rest of the body like the lion, being proportionally clad in smooth fur." H.D.Richardson said of the breed: "A vary rare variety and useless" when discoursing on them in *"Dogs, their Origins and Varieties"*, which was published in 1851. Yet, contrary to the rest of popular writers, John Meyrick said of the breed in *House Dogs and Sporting Dogs* (1861), "It is a common pet on the Continent, where he is often crossed with the Barbet." Could this mentioned crossing be additional evidence of the possibility of the Löwchen being foundation blood for the Toy Poodle? How common the Löwchen was during the later

1800s is unknown, but evidence does point to its decline during the same time the Toy Poodle began to emerge.

A little known possibility is that the Löwchen lived in the United States prior to the Civil War. A book entitled *Gone are the Days* includes a lithograph of a black woman shopping in the French Quarter in New Orleans. A Löwchen accompanies her. Could this be her French or Cajun employer's family dog getting his daily exercise by going with her? If there were other Löwchen in the southern part of the United States, it is likely they were brought in with European immigrants. How many Löwchen lived in the United States is unknown. Sadly, the breed was not fated to become established in those early southern days.



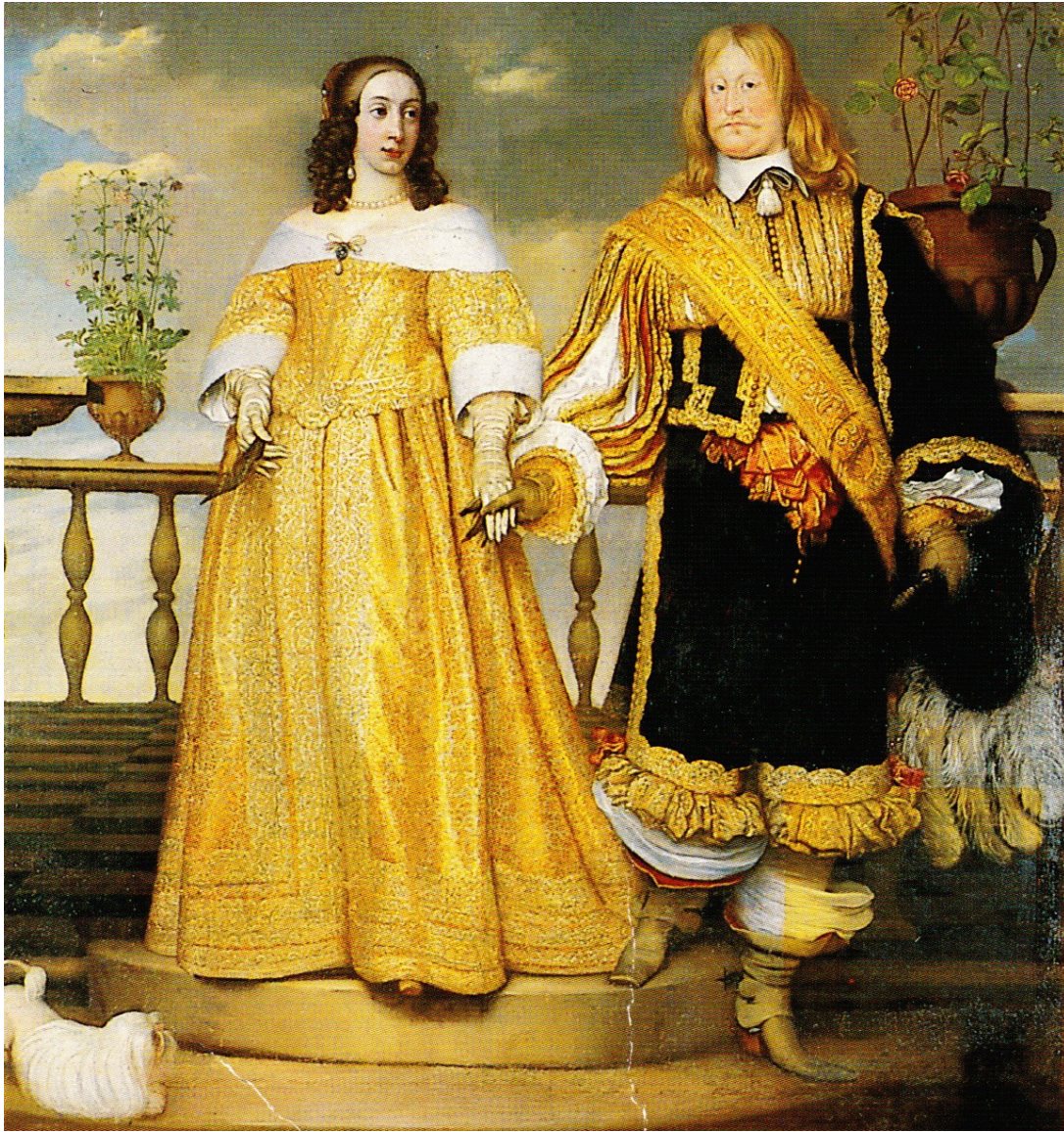
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Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, studbooks were becoming established and gaining importance, especially in Great Britain. The establishment of studbooks brought order and prestige to purebreds. Unfortunately, by the time studbooks originated, there were hardly any Löwchen breeders.

Along with studbooks came the common usage of breed standards, as we know them today. Before written standards



existed, a brief description of the type of dog or breed in question was all that a breeder had to go on. A breeder, if skilled, observed desirable traits and tried to reproduce them, despite not fully understanding the genetics of the event as we do today. While there is no evidence of any early Löwchen clubs promoting the breed, there was interest in and understanding of the breed. This was reflected by a breed standard that was included in *Hunderassen*, which was also published as *Dogs of All Nations*. This standard is the earliest known, existing, written breed standard. It was published in 1905. With the advent of dog breed standards came clearly defined breeds, including the Löwchen. With this advent, the Löwchen began to emerge from the mists of history.



The marriage of Magnus Gabrielle. Oil Painting. Hendrich Munnichhoven 1653.



Madame Bennert in Paris with (left to right) Ch. Berta, Ch. Eisemée and World Champion Blaguer
Photo Ashford Collection