

Early Theories About History of the Epagneul Breton Breed

The following historical excerpt is a reprint from a publication of the original American Brittany Club magazine known as "Brittany Field and Bench" edited at the time of publication by Jack Whitworth. The information below is quoted from a letter to Alan Stuyvesant an early Brittany fancier from the United States who resided in New Jersey, and was written from M. de Kermadec, one of the early leading French historians of the breed. The original letter was dated in 1946, and reads in pertinent part as follows:

"The English Springer Spaniel is without a doubt derived from the French Spaniel which he closely resembles except as to height, being shorter. The French Spaniel averages about 24 inches tall. Now the liver and white Brittany is definitely said to be akin to the French Spaniel. In many cases, I am persuaded that is true. The dimensions of the ear in particular, as well as their temperament seems to indicate it.

As for the Welsh Springer, his being kin to the Brittany Spaniel is a certainty. Here I will have to give you a short history lesson. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the peninsular of Brittany was completely depopulated by the barbarians and later re-peopled by Celtic elements who came notably from Wales, when the Saxons invaded Great Britain. The Celts brought with the some domestic animals, in particular, a pony, a red hound (coursing dog) and a spaniel dog which are still found in Brittany hardly modified today. While the pony, which we call 'bidet' has become rare and the coursing dog has disappeared since the turn of the century, certainly the Spaniel has survived.

A little over 40 years ago the Brittany Spaniel, used mostly for woodcock hunting, behaved almost like a Springer. I have an old friend, a native of Wales, who has often told me that the Spaniels native to that country are identically the same dog as our old orange and white Brittany Spaniels [in France]. They are two varieties of the same breed, one of which [the Brittany variety] has been slightly modified by a cross with English Setters (or to be exact, with one female Setter) to give it staunchness on point and little more height."