The Dog in Medieval and Renaissance Europe

Body types, uses and accoutrements

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Presented at Royal University of Meridies
July 19, 2014

studioloperyn.wordpress.com
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Please cite the author as “Anne Nicholls, known in the SCA as Peryn Rose Whytehorse”.
A brief discussion of dog evolution and genetics

- 20,000 to 100,000 years ago some wolves developed a relationship with humans...

- These canids proved to be amazingly genetically malleable.

- Focused breeding can bring about change in just a few generations.

- A modern spaniel is not necessarily the spaniel type that Shakespeare knew
A brief discussion of dog evolution and genetics

Rethinking “breeds” in period research

- The modern concept of “breed” has it’s roots in Victorian (1800s) dog breed clubs with detailed breed standards

- DNA research of modern dog breeds indicates that breeds once thought to descend from pre-1600 “breed” types are more modern creations

- Period sources describe greyhounds, spaniels, harriers, etc., and many look similar to today’s breeds with those names. But there was no centralized standard that breeders followed. In period the name “greyhound” or “spaniel” referred to a range of dog phenotypes
We can easily document dog type differentiation back to the Greeks and Romans (and earlier)

Roman tombstones for dogs
“My eyes were wet with tears, our little dog, when I bore thee (to the grave)... So, Patricus, never again shall thou give me a thousand kisses. Never canst thou be contentedly in my lap...” tombstone of Patricus, Italy

“Here the stone says it holds the white dog from Melita, the most faithful guardian of Eumelus; Bull they called him while he was yet alive...”

Cynegeticon. Augustan poet Grattius c63 BCE – 14 CE

“Great glory exalts the far-distant Celtic dogs....Swifter than thought or a winged bird it runs, pressing hard on the beasts it has found”

"If you are not bent on looks and deceptive graces...when bravery must be shown, and the impetuous War-god call in the utmost hazard ...then you could not admire the renowned Molossians so much"
We can easily document dog type differentiation back to the Greeks and Romans (and earlier)

Mastiff-like
Molossian Hound
Roman marble copy
c 200AD of a Greek bronze
(cast approx 400 years earlier)

British Museum, London

Texts describe
• Sheep dogs (big and white)
• Guard dogs (big and black)
• Hunting dogs
  • Fast running (for hare)
  • Dogs that “can break the neck of a bull”
• War dogs (Pliny recommends wolf hybrids)
We can easily document dog type differentiation back to the Greeks and Romans (and earlier)

**Cynegeticicon. Xenophon. 5th century BCE**
- Laconian hounds: large body, with a small head, straight nose, upright ears, a long and supple neck, tan with white markings on the face, chest, legs, and rear; or black with tan markings
- Tracked by scent and "give chase vigorously without relaxing, with much clamor and baying…after the hare…. Let them pursue fast and brilliantly, borne along after her in a pack, giving tongue properly again and again"

**Cynegeticus. Arrian. 150 CE**
- The Vetragus can catch hares easily (notes that Xenophon did not know of a dog that could)
- They should be long from head to tail, with a sturdy build, a pointed muzzle, and large soft ears

**De Re Rustica. Varro. 37 BCE**
- Describes hunting dogs, which chase the beasts of the forest, and watch dogs used by shepards
- Sheepdogs: large, deep bark, drooping ears, thick shoulders and neck, wide paws, thick tail, white to be easily recognized in the dark. Should wear a nail-studded leather collar (melium) to protect it from the bite of wolves. Described for where they came from – Laconian, Epirote, Sallentine, Spartan.
Body types found in period and their common uses

Aberdeen Bestiary
13th century England

“There are many kinds of dogs:

• some track down the wild beasts of the forests to catch them;
• others by their vigilance guard flocks of sheep from the attacks of wolves;
• others as watch-dogs in the home guard the property of their masters lest it be stolen by thieves at night and sacrifice their lives for their master;
• they willingly go after game with their master;”
Body types found in period and their common uses

Sighthounds
- Large, hunting (hare, deer)
- Small, companion

Scent hounds (Lymers)

Running hounds (including Harriers, Raches)

Spaniels
- Large, hunting (birds)
- Small, companion

Mastiff (curs)

Alaunt

Ground dogs and terrier types

Herding/guarding

Companion dogs

...and as men call greyhounds of Scotland and of Britain, 2 so the alauntes and the hounds for the hawk come out of Spain.

-Gaston Phoebus
Gaston Phoebus chapters & illustration titles

- How the Hart should be moved with the Lymer
- How an Hunter should Seek and Find the Hare with Running Hounds
- Hunting for the Hart with Greyhounds
- Buck-hunting with Running Hounds
- Roebuck-hunting with Greyhounds and Running Hounds
- Raches or Running Hounds in the Fifteenth Century
- The Smooth and the Rough-coated Greyhounds
- The Master Teaching his Huntsman how to Quest for the Hart with the Limer or Trackhound
- Hare-hunting with Greyhounds and Running Hounds
- Hart-hunting with Greyhounds and Raches
Body types found in period - Sighthounds

Includes

- long, short and wavy coats
- small, medium and large builds

Hunted hare, deer (several types)

c1500 Italy, Pesaro

A good greyhound should go so fast that if he be well slipped he should overtake any beast.

- Gaston Phoebus

Hunt of the unicorn.
1495-1505 Cloisters, NY
Body types found in period - Sighthounds

A greyhound should have a long head, the ears small and high, in the manner of a serpent, the neck great and long bowed like a swan’s neck, his chest great and open…His shoulders as a roebuck, the forelegs straight and great enough and not too high in the legs, the feet straight and round as a cat, great claws…the thighs great and straight as a hare.

-Gaston Phoebus

Livre de Chase
Gaston Phoebus
1404-1410 France
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
The good greyhound should be of middle size, neither too big nor too little, and then he is good for all beasts.

If he were too big he is nought for small beasts, and if he were too little he were nought for the great beasts.

Nevertheless whoso can maintain both, it is good that he have both of the great and of the small, and of the middle size.

-Gaston Phoebus
Body types found in period - Sighthounds

16th century
Palazzo Vecchio
Florence
Body types found in period – Small Sighthounds

15th c French

15th c Flemish

15th c French
Body types found in period – Small Sighthounds

*The Adoration of the Magi*
Heironymus Bosch
C1470-5
Netherlandish
MET, NY

Froissart
15th c French

*Triptych of Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation*
1485 Flemish, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg
Body types found in period - Scenthounds

Hunt of Maximillian
1531-33
Bernaert van Orley

De Natura Animalium, Cambrai c1270
Douai, Bibliotheque municipale

Livre de Chase
Gaston Phoebus
1404-1410 France
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
Body types found in period - Scenthounds

Livre de Chase
Gaston Phoebus
1485 France
Bibliothèque de Genève
Body types found in period – Running hounds

The best hue of running hounds and most common for to be good, is called brown tan.

They should have great nostrils and a long snout, but not small, and great lips and well hanging down…a great forehead and great head, and large ears, well long and well hanging down, broad and near the head, a great neck, and a great breast and great shoulders, and great legs and strong, and not too long, and great feet…and the foot a little low, small flanks and long sides…great back, good thighs, and great hind legs…the tail great and high.

-Gaston Phoebus

Hunt of the unicorn.
1495-1505 Cloisters, NY

The Taymouth Hours
England, Q2, 14th C.
British Library
Body types found in period – Running hounds
Also known as “Chien Courant”

Three types of running hounds:

1) Running hounds hunt in divers manners, for some followeth the hart fast at the first, for they go lightly and fast.

2) This kind of running hounds men should find usually in the land of Basco and Spain. They are right good for the wild boar, but are not good for the hart, for they be not good to enchase at a long flight.

3) They hunt a good deal more slowly and heavily, but as they begin, so they hold on all the day. These hounds force not so soon a hart as the other, but they bring him best by mastery and strength to his end, for they retrieve and scent the line better and farther, because they are somewhat slow. They hunt all the day questeying and making great melody.

-Gaston Phoebus
Body types found in period – Running hounds

Livre de chasse
15th c - French
Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine

Lymer names:
Loyer, Beaumont, Latimer or Bemond

Lymers are coupled [tie together] when scenting and flushing deer from thick woods.
Body types found in period – Spaniels

Spaniels (hounds for the hawk)
Their kind cometh from Spain, notwithstanding that there are many in other countries...[they] should have a great head, a great body and be of fair hue, white or tawny, for they be the fairest, and of such hue they be commonly best. A good spaniel should not be too rough, but his tail should be rough.

Their right craft is of the partridge and of the quail, they can be taught to swim.

-Gaston Phoebus, 15th c French
Body types found in period - Spaniels

Libro d'Ore Gualenghi-d'Este.
Taddeo Crivelli
C1469, Ferrara

Crist bearing the Cross and the Crucifixion;
The Resurrection and the Pilgrims at Emmaus.
c1505
Gerard David, Netherlands
Body types found in period – Mastiffs

His office is to keep his master's beasts and his master's house. And it is a good kind of hound, for they keep and defend with all their power all their master's goods. Also of mastiffs and alaunts there be (bred) many good for the wild boar.

-Gaston Phoebius
Body types found in period – Alaunts

The good alauntes be those which men call alauntes gentle. Others there be that men call alauntes veutretes, others be alauntes of the butcheries.

They that be gentle should be made and shaped as a greyhound, even of all things save of the head, the which should be great and short. And though there be alauntes of all hues, the true hue of a good alaunte, and that which is most common should be white with black spots about the ears, small eyes and white standing ears and sharp above.

Men should teach alauntes better, and to be of better custom than any other beasts, for he is better shaped and stronger for to do harm than any other beast.

And also commonly alauntes are stordy * (giddy) of their own nature and have not such good sense as many other hounds have, for if a man prick a horse the alauntes will run gladly and bite the horse. Also they run at oxen and sheep, and swine, and at all other beasts, or at men or at other hounds. For men have seen alauntes slay their masters. In all manner of ways alauntes are treacherous and evil understanding, and more foolish and more harebrained than any other kind of hound.
They have a great head, great lips and great ears, and with such men help themselves at the baiting of the bull and at hunting of a wild boar, for it is their nature to hold fast, but they be (heavy) and foul.... but by themselves they could never take a beast unless greyhounds were with them to make the beast tarry.

Alauntes of the butcheries are kept to help them to bring their beasts. They be good for bull baiting and for hunting wild boar.
Body types found in period – Ground dogs & Terriers

La Venerie
Du Fouilloux
1561

The Taymouth Hours
England, Q2, 14th C. British Library
Body types found in period – Ground dogs & Terriers

Hunt of Maximillian
1531-33 Bernaert van Orley

15th C French

15th c French
Body types found in period – Herding/guarding

Grimani Breviary
The Month of November
1490-1510, Flemish

Way of Salvation
Andrea da Firenze
1365-68, Cappella Spagnuolo, Santa Maria Novella, Florence

Chapel of the Annunciation.
Andrea Orcagna
C1340-47
Santa Maria Novella, Florence
Body types found in period – Herding/guarding

Early 15th c Italian
Body types found in period – Companion dogs

Scenes from the Life of St. Augustine
Master of St. Augustine
South Lowlands, Flanders, Bruges
c1490

Portrait of a Lady with a Lap-dog
Attributed to Jörg Breu the Younger
German
1530-1547

St. Peter and Simon Magus.
Benozzo Gozzoli
15th C Florence

St. Peter and Simon Magus.
Body types found in period – Companion dogs

Vision of St Augustin
Carpaccio
1502, Venice

Triumph of Death 1336-41
Buffalmacco
Pisa

Grimani Breviary
The Month of April
1490-1510, Flemish

Bible historiée toute figurée
Jezus i jego pies podczas wesela w Kanie.
Naples c1350
Paris, BnF
Accoutrements

Collars and leads/leashes
- Pin close
- Buckle
- Martingale
- Rope
- Spikes/protection
- Rumbler bell

Armour
- Metal (war)
- Padded fabric jackets

The coat/barding debate
- Popular in the SCA, looks like modern dog racing coats or small versions of period horse barding
- Lacking body of period examples. We have a plethora of images and descriptions of dogs in period and rare examples of dogs wearing anything other than collars
Collar types – Pin close

Hunt of the unicorn 1495-1505
Cloisters, NY
Collar types – Pin close

Velvet covered leather collar with copper-gilt engraving mid 18th C
Leeds Dog Collar museum, England
Extant collars of this type are difficult to find, out of period examples help to understand construction details

Brass collar, pierced work, with ring for lead. 1630-50 Leeds Dog Collar museum, Leeds, England
Collar types - Buckle

Red velvet collar with gilt wire decoration and doeskin backing.
Arms of Bartolomeo Visconti & Philomena Nicoli c1488

The Hunt of the Frail Stag
Southern Netherlands
1500-1525
Collar types - Martingale

Martingale collars are easily identifiable by the closing mechanism attached to the leash. Well suited for dogs whose necks are wider than the base of their head (sighthounds).

Martingale collar on a small greyhound. St. Michael’s Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury, England c1439
Collar types - Martingale

ROBERT LORD HUNGERFORD
He died in 1459. His effigy and remains were first in the Hungerford Chantry (on the north side of the Trinity Chapel) which was demolished in 1789, and this tomb was rebuilt here from its fragments.

Salisbury Cathedral, England c1459
This one has a buckle at both ends
Collar types - Martingale

Playing Cards
Ink, tempera, and metal foil on pasteboard
South Lowlands, probably the county of Flanders, 1470–85
Collar types - Rope

“Spin horse hair to make couples for the hounds, which should be made of a horse tail or a mare's tail, for they are best and last longer than if they were of hemp or of wool. And the length of the hounds' couples between the hounds should be a foot, and the rope of a limer three fathoms and a half, be he ever so wise a limer it sufficeth. The which rope should be made of leather of a horse skin well tawed.

-Gaston Phoebus, 15th c French

Hunt of the unicorn 1495-1505
Cloisters, NY
Collar types – Spikes/protection

5. **German iron collar**, of stirrup shaped and spiked links with its original leather lining. 15th/16th century

2. **German iron spiked hunting collar**, 16th century

3. **German iron hunting collar** of four large plates linked by spiked rings, 16th century

4. **German medieval iron spiked collar**, made of eight linked and spiked ‘W’s. 15th/16th century
Collar types – Rumbler Bell

Only seen on pets/companions, including small dogs, ferrets, pigs, etc.

Sepulchral Monument of Ermengol X, Count of Urgell

Limestone and traces of polychromy
Spain, Catalunya (Cataluña), Lleida (Lérida), ca. 1300-1350
From the monastery chapel of Santa Maria de Bellpuig de les Avellanes, near Lleida
Collar types – Rumbler Bell

Two venetian ladies
1510 Venice

King Charles VI in conversation with his secretary Pierre Salmon.
Traictés de Pierre Salemon a Charles VI roy de France.
c. 1412 – 1415, Bibliothèque de Genève
Armor - Metal

Spanish
16th or 17th C
Armor – Padded fabric jackets

Devonshire tapestry
The Boar and Bear Hunt
15th C
V&A

Hunt of Maximillian 1531-33
Bernaert van Orley