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PEKINGESE FANCIERS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE GATHERED TO CELEBRATE 150 YEARS OF “BUTTERFLY LIONS” IN THE WESTERN WORLD. BY DAVID ALLAN FELLER

LEGACY



For every owner, a dog is a totem: an object of spiritual importance, emblematic of goals, values, even memories. Sometimes the memories are modest and personal: childhood playmates fondly recalled, a loyal dog who dried tears in a time of sorrow.

In purebreds, the iconic character of each breed often conjures up more romantic fantasies: Scottish Deerhound owners enjoy the vision of the dignified athlete curled in their living room and recall their royal roots, the lethal bursts of power that allow them to run down game in a moor; Newfoundlands inspire proud thoughts of powerful dogs saving drowning children; Miniature Bull Terriers are revered for their heritage as vermin hunters, even though hardly any see life on a farm.

Dogs make you feel in some way that you *are* where they *have been*.

No breed serves up more such memories than the Pekingese. They came directly from the Summer Palace in Beijing in the mid-19th century and were brought to Britain as an exotic trophy and spoil of colonial advancement. To this day, Pekingese evoke images of dynastic China and the richly decorated parlors of British aristocracy.



The Goodwood Estate welcomed two Pekingese from China 150 years ago. Below right: In February, it was the site for a lavish celebration of these exotic dogs.

For one weekend last February, 140 Pekingese fanciers from around the world lived out their Cinderella dreams. On that weekend, their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Richmond played host to the Pekingese Club (U.K.) at the opulent Goodwood Estate in Sussex County to celebrate the breed's introduction to the West.

The guests toured the duke's palatial home (while sipping champagne and nibbling on canapés!), and attended a gala dinner and a specialty conformation show judged by prominent Pekingese breeder and judge Ann Offiler. The lavish proceedings provided a grand backdrop for the dogs, and a wonderful insight into the cultural significance that attracts so many to the breed.

FAB FIVE

Unlike other breeds with geographic names, Pekingese uniquely lay claim to two distinct points of origin: the Summer Palace of the Chinese emperor in the East and the Goodwood Estate, Great Britain, in the West. Recent archival work conducted for the club has revealed new insights regarding when the first dogs were received in England from China.

It has long been held that the "Goodwood Pair," a dog and bitch named Guh and Meh, arrived in 1861 as a gift to the 6th Duke of Richmond from his cousin, Admiral George Fitzroy.

The pair was part of the original "famous five" dogs who came to Britain during that period, the other three being gifts to Queen Victoria and the Duke of Wellington, respectively, later in the 1860s.

While those dogs appear to have lived out their lives as pets, it has often been claimed that they became the foundation of the Goodwood Kennel line and the ostensible ances-



tors of the first champion Pekingese, English Ch. Goodwood Lo (1903). If Goodwood Lo was a direct descendent of Guh and Meh, then the champion's ribbons could be said to reach all the way back to the 'emperor's robes' in the ances-

tral Summer Palace.

QUESTION OF TIMING

It is probably worth noting that this version of Pekingese history has been, for a number of reasons, contested to some degree over the years. Queen Victoria's dog, Lottie, who came from the original five imports, was often given superiority in the historical narrative, for obvious reasons. Then, too, the difference between these early Pekingese and other Asian breeds, such as Pugs and spaniels, was not all that clear; in 1891, prominent breeder Mrs. Loftus Allen advertised her stud dog as a 'rough-coated Pekingese pug,' and early Chinese scrolls depicted dogs of a more spaniel-like character.

OPPOSITE, TOP, AND RIGHT: STEVE JEFFORD (CANINE PHOTOGRAPHY); BOTTOM: COURTESY, JAPANESE AND CHINESE DOGS