

Extract from:
The Police Dog: History, Breeds and Service
James R. Engel December, 2018

Chapter 7

The Belgian Heritage



Although the modern Belgian state came into existence only recently, in 1830, generations of students were introduced to the ancient indigenous people, the Belgae, in the *Commentaries* of Julius Caesar:

"All Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another, those who in their own language are called Celts, in ours Gauls, the third."

Caesar goes on to note that these Belgae were the bravest because "merchants least frequently resort to them, and import those things which

tend to effeminate the mind," certainly politically incorrect by the standards of today, where effeminization of the mind underlies many agendas, particularly in Europe.

The central thread in the history of these peoples has been the conflicting Latin and Germanic cultures, often descending into warfare involving powerful neighboring adversaries, from the campaigns of Caesar to twentieth century atrocities. Even today this cultural conflict severs Belgium in two, with the Flemish, whose Germanic roots go back to the ancient Belgae to the north and west and the culturally and ethnically Latin Walloons to the south and east, spiritual descendants of Caesar himself. Twice in the twentieth century Belgium was at the epicenter of a new kind of war, driven by the technology of the Industrial Revolution, unprecedented in terms of overt military violence, collateral civilian damage and long term rending of the social fabric. The evocative poetry of the era cast the soldier's graves on Flandres fields into the common memory of mankind, foreshadowing the horrors to commence in 1939. The emergence of the Belgian police dog heritage took place under the oppression of these conflagrations, subverting worldwide Belgian influence for two generations.

Belgium is central to police dog evolution and history in that modern police service evolved in the Flemish homeland, important breeds and varieties of police dog are Flemish in origin and because even today Belgium is a vital and important center of service orientated sport and police dog breeding and training.

*In Flanders fields the poppies grow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

John McCrae

The Belgian Enigma

In discussing things Belgian eventually one must confront the underlying enigma: there is not now, never has been and never will in any fundamental and realistic sense be a nation of Belgium or a person who is a Belgian. Rather there are two separate regions and peoples locked in an unholy union differing in ethnic background, culture, language and world view with deep historical animosities. This absurd construct, this bad marriage, was conjured up in 1830 by Machiavellian politicians for the perverse agendas of the major powers and consummated at the end of a shotgun for their own ends, with little concern for the wishes or welfare of the people involved. The only unifying factor and justification was that the regions making up Belgium were at the creation predominantly Roman Catholic in an era when common religious affinity meant much more to the social fabric than it does in the more secular Europe of today.

To the casual tourist these differences are not overt; communication for one fluent in neither national language is by its nature labored and subtleties are obscure. Outward appearances are normal: everybody drives on the right in an assortment of foreign made vehicles, there are no burned out cars on the streets or routine photos and reports of violence in the press, as has been so prevalent in Northern Ireland. It would seem that the lack of overt religious strife has rendered the conflicts nonviolent. But these are profound differences and conflicts nevertheless, even if just below the surface.

It is perhaps something of an inconvenience to impose this little historical detour in a book about police dogs, but there is simply no alternative; until one grasps these historical circumstances the Belgian canine world makes little sense. But it is well worth the trouble, for Belgium is the homeland of some of the best working lines, breeding and training in the world. No French or Dutch breed is of comparable stature to the Belgian Malinois, which is the foundation of today's KNPV lines in the Netherlands and the French Ring Sport in addition to Belgian national venues.

The people of Flanders, the more northern and western portion of the nation, are the Flemings, of Teutonic or German cultural origin and speaking Flemish, which is today virtually the same as Dutch. Wallonia in the more southern and eastern region, home of the Walloons, is French in language, culture and ethnic makeup. In addition, there is a small German speaking community in the east, in the vicinity of the city of Liege, annexed after WWI.

Individual persons living in the country known to the outside world as Belgium are thus either a Fleming or a Walloon, and there is no more anything in between than there are creatures part dog and part cat. There are no national political parties, no national newspapers, no real national culture – everything in Belgium centers in the one sphere or the other.

Subsequent to the 1830 creation of Belgium the official language for government and commerce – even in the Flemish region – was French, which was to a certain extent adopted by the Flemish higher classes and the upwardly mobile mercantile class, especially in the region of Brussels. In that era French was the language of diplomacy, commerce and culture worldwide; French use was ubiquitous as the hallmark of sophistication and culture. Belgian periodicals and magazines, such as canine journals, were in French, which was by default the language of science, culture and higher education. Today the vicinity of Brussels is the only region with a national character, has emerged as cosmopolitan and multilingual; the remainder of the people tend to think of themselves as essentially Flemish or French in terms of culture and personal identity.

The fact that the French language was imposed by outside political and military authority as the language of state, commerce and government from the beginning created an undercurrent of Flemish resentment, just as the Irish have residual



Note Mechelen, Terveren, Groenendaal and Laken in the vicinity of Brussels, which were the regions associated with the currently recognized varieties are associated.

The cities of Roulers and Courtrai further to the west are associated with the evolution of the Bouvier de Roulers, later the Bouvier des Flandres.

animosity for the British even to this day. As Flandres became more modern, prosperous and democratic the imposition of a foreign language became increasingly onerous, and Dutch was gradually adapted as a second official language, a slow process in that there was no official Dutch version of the national constitution until 1967. Flemish resentment has been a driving force in the ongoing desire for separation, which is intense for a minority but seems unlikely to come to fruition; the Belgians are perhaps just too prosperous and comfortable for real revolution.

Relationships between the Flemings and the Walloons have always been tense, as in any troubled marriage, and in recent years the regions have become increasingly separate in term of government. In 1993 Belgium became a federal state with three regions – Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels – virtually independent in everything other than military and foreign affairs. As mentioned above, there is a fringe element favoring outright separation, with the Walloon region perhaps becoming part of France; some say that this would be the case today if the problem of where Brussels



Sketch of early Belgian Shepherds in conjunction with initial standard.

Artist: Alexandre Clarys (Belgian, 1857-1920)

Duc, with long, dark gray brindle hair, Born about 1890 Owner: Arthur Meule, of Saint-Gilles-Bruxelles.

Charlot, with short smooth hair, fawn coloured, charcoaled on the back and the head, white breast. Born about 1890 Owner: Jean Verbruggen, of Cureghem.

Dick, with gray wire hair. Owner Aug. Dagnelie, of Brussels.

itself would fit in could be resolved. On the day by day basis the Belgian population is on the whole pragmatic, peaceful and prosperous, with the physical separation of Flemings and Walloons, and increasing separation of governmental functions along regional, ethnic and cultural lines, facilitating peaceful coexistence; separate but equal does in these circumstances seem to be a viable, pragmatic social structure. If Belgium is a bad marriage, it seems to be one where separate bedrooms provide the basis for ongoing stability if not contentment.

The current Belgian population is a little over ten million people, approximately sixty percent of whom are Flemish. Belgium was at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution and today 97 percent of the people are urban. This does much to explain why there are virtually no actual herding dogs serving in Belgium; and why the Belgian Ring Sport has no large area tracking tests. I know of a Belgian Ring club in Antwerp entirely contained on a small city lot, including a clubhouse.

In everyday life the Flemish and Walloons have always lived in their own lands, conversing in their own language, reading their own newspapers. In a general way the Flemish have much more intercourse with their Dutch neighbors to the north, the primary difference being that the Flemish remain predominantly Catholic and the Dutch much more Protestant, and the Walloons in a similar way relate to their French neighbors to the south. Indeed, the internal divide between Wallonia and Flanders marks more real cultural difference – and even animosity – than the national borders with France or the Netherlands. In the national government the Belgians must come together, make laws and conduct business, but even here they are segregated, there have never been national political parties in parliament, but only expedient alliances to form fragile coalition governments. In recent times, there have been long periods – years – where it was impossible to form a government in parliament.

The problem with all of this is that internationally the Belgians somehow have to send one Olympic team, one United Nations delegation and one unified team to international events such as the FCI IPO championships, since the rest of the world insists on dealing with them as one nation. This makes national level canine organizations complex and unwieldy. Since there can only be one FCI member, *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert* in this instance, all of the St. Hubert national breed clubs encompass both regions. Apparently the Belgians have as much difficulty designating an IPO team for the FCI or WUSV international IPO championships as do the conflicting American organizations.

These ongoing conflicts of culture and language played a ubiquitous role in the evolution of Belgian breeds, service and influence. In earlier years most written material –books, magazines and pamphlets – was in French, but the incipient working breeds or varieties – most especially the Malinois – emerged primarily in the Flemish regions of Flanders and Brabant. It must be remembered that the four Belgian Shepherd varieties recognized today, after a century of strife and infighting, physically differ in coat color and texture but also in character and history. The long coated Groenendael, so prominent in working trials in the early years, emerged largely in the Walloon region south of Brussels while the short coated Malinois emerged in regions north of Brussels, deep in the Flemish provinces of Brabant and Antwerp. The demise of the Groenendael and the emergence of the Malinois in working and sport prominence correspond in time as well as place with the increasing prosperity and self-determination of the Flemish people.

Concerning an illustrated brochure about the Belgian Shepherd Dog published by the *Club of Malines* in 1898 Louis Huyghebaert, godfather of the Malinois, wrote "It was also the first time that something official was written about this Flemish breed in the Flemish language." These founders of the Malinois, the working dog of the Belgian Shepherd varieties, in the city of Malines, deep in the Flemish countryside

and closer in spirit and geography to the Netherlands than Wallonia, nurtured an underlying resentment of French domination destined to fester, under the surface if not overtly.

From an American perspective, the Belgian police breeds were in the German shadow through most of the twentieth century. While the Malinois became the predominant police dog in the Netherlands and Belgium, in America it was exotic and not widely recognized, with most of us thinking of the Malinois as funny looking German Shepherds, if we were aware of them at all. As Malinois began to become more common in police service television and radio announcers tended to have a difficult time pronouncing the name. In the twenty-first century, and especially since the taking out of Bin Laden, this aura of strangeness has to some extent abated. Even in Belgium, the Netherlands and France the German Shepherd is today numerically much more popular with the general public than any of the other police style breeds.

National Canine Organizations

In a nation with such deep ethnic, lingual and cultural divisions it cannot come as a surprise that Belgian canine organizations have a history of strife, competition and shifting allegiance. There have historically been three major national clubs with separate studbooks and conducting Ring trials, two of which are ongoing and one of which, *Kennel Club Belge*, is today for practical purposes irrelevant but historically significant. These are:

Societe Royale Saint-Hubert (SRSH)	1882
Kennel Club Belge (KCB)	1908
Nationaal Verbond der Belgische Kynologen (NVBK)	1963

Among other things these divisions make the work of the canine student and historian, and those looking for information for breeding or selection purposes, much more difficult as many dogs have been registered with multiple organizations, sometimes with differing names.¹ Another complication is that much the literature is written as if the FCI affiliated *Societe Royale Saint-Hubertus* is the only worthy organization, being perceived as "official." This is particularly important in a police dog book, where historically many dogs come from outside of establishment lines and where formal registration is increasingly irrelevant. Thus much of what has been written has been according to personal ideas of what is important, valid and legitimate, often downplaying or ignoring crucial elements of this history.

But for working oriented breeders and trainers especially this focus on establishment FCI affiliated organizations is increasingly irrelevant, for the FCI historically and increasingly denigrates working character and promotes show line interests and advantage. Several decades ago the Schutzhund title was often taken at face value, indicative of police service readiness, and this was broadly valid if common sense and appropriate testing was factored into the selection process. But in recent years, IPO, Schutzhund rebranded, is increasingly out of the mainstream of police dog acquisition, which has gone hand in with increasing Malinois predominance over the German Shepherd.

Today most of the best of Malinois breeding in Belgium is under the auspices of the working oriented alternative organization, NVBK, which makes exporting to other nations for breeding and sport purposes problematic and creates the temptation to falsify documents and other maneuvers to work around the system. But in exporting dogs for police service or breeding for direct police sale in America this is less and

¹ Tjop, a famous stud dog, had four registrations: LOSH 6132, LOF 10538, NHSB 2740 and FCSB 116. FCSB was a short lived registry discussed in the history sections.

less a factor as registration becomes less and less important. A consequence of these complexities is that many more Dutch Malinois out of KNPV lines are exported than come from Belgium.

Historically this ongoing internal strife was a major factor in the slow emergence of the Malinois as an important international working dog beyond the Low Countries and France, holding these dogs, among the finest in the world, in relative obscurity for most of the twentieth century. This also contributes to the fact that most prominent and influential Malinois lines, from the perspective of the world at large, particularly America, are those of France, the Netherlands or even Germany rather than the Flemish homeland.

Societe Royale Saint-Hubert

The Belgian national all breed canine organization, *Societe Saint-Hubert* was founded on Feb. 18, 1882. King Leopold II gave his blessing in 1886 making it officially the *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert (SRSH)*.² In practice the organization is often colloquially referred to as *St. Hubert*, and often with the abbreviation SRSH. SRSH in that era, as with most national formal organizations such as the Kennel Club in Britain, after which it was modeled, was principally concerned with the dogs of the upper middle and elite classes and emerging conformation hobbyists, an organization by and for hunters and their hunting dogs, especially their hounds. The working and farming class Flemish people with their herding and guardian dogs, later to evolve into the Malinois and the Laeken, and a generation after that the Bouvier, would have tended to regard SRSH as haughty, upper class and entirely too French.

The weekly magazine *Chasse et Pêche (Hunting and Fishing)*, founded in Brussels November 5, 1882, persisting until 1970, was the official publication of *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert*. Louis Vander Snickt was the long time editor and in this role, and as a judge and general commentator, wielded significant influence over canine affairs, playing a role in the evolution of the Belgian Shepherds and Schipperkes.

Interestingly enough, St. Hubert is the patron saint of the hunter rather than the herdsman or dog owner. Perhaps more appropriate for the herding dogs would have been the patron of the shepherds: Saint Druon, often shown with a staff, his sheep and his dog. But of course common working dogs and men counted for little in the upscale, show dog oriented canine establishments of the era.

With the establishment of the *International Cynological Federation (FCI)* in 1911 the member national organizations gained enormous prestige and power, since only their registration papers, judges and breed standards were recognized by other nations. SRSH was a charter member of FCI, thus gaining an enormous upper hand in canine power politics.

² In Flemish or Dutch this becomes Koninklijke Maatschappij Sint-Hubertus.



My old friend Jean Du Mont with Flack de l'Assa
1958. Photo C.Greving

Kennel Club Belge

In general a predominant national canine authority or kennel club emerges in each nation, as in the American AKC, the British Kennel Club and the national FCI affiliated club in most of continental Europe and much of the rest of the world. Thus although there are often alternate or dissenting entities, often with specific interests, in most nations a single national kennel club, usually the first one established, becomes predominant. In America there is in addition to the AKC a large and prospering United Kennel Club (UKC) mostly focusing on registration of functioning hunting dogs, as opposed to the ornamental and companion versions in the AKC ring. Another example is the KNPV in Holland, with focus strictly on police trials

and training. In such situations, with is relatively little overlap in interest and breeding lines, there is relatively little conflict.

Belgium is an exception to this. The separate cultures and languages, Flemish resentment of French domination in government, the press and civic intuitions and the fact that Belgium was created relatively recently with little realistic expectation of national spirit or cohesion has meant that truly national institutions of any sort have been difficult or impossible to establish and maintain. Because of this history, it is quite natural that *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert* would be elite and French dominated, in this instance initially primarily run by and for hunting dog enthusiasts. Gaining acceptance and recognition, and especially formal registration privileges, for the herding and working dogs of the farmers, herdsman and tradesmen, was a long and arduous process involving much conflict.

As will be outlined in detail in the historical sections, *Kennel Club Belge* (KCB) emerged from these conflicts in 1908, overtly as a consequence of ongoing strife over the coat color and texture in the varieties of the Belgian shepherd, but more fundamentally in response to the broader issues of who should control Belgian canine affairs, and involving issues such as whether the emerging breeds, especially the Belgian Shepherds, should be functional as serious police level working dogs or ornamental as in the English Kennel Club style.

Although *Kennel Club Belge* was to be a major factor in the Belgian canine world for many decades, and from the working dog advocate's perspective one of the more supportive, the creation of the FCI in 1911 with *St. Hubert* as a charter member, lending the aura of international respectability and presence, made prospects for long term viability problematic. Reviewing early pedigrees, many of the most significant Belgian Shepherds of the era were dual registered, often with Dutch or French registration in addition. In a time of trouble, the man in the street was hedging his bets.

In the early years KCB was supportive of working dog training and competition, holding their first Belgian national Ring Sport championship in 1913, thirteen years prior to SRSH. It seems likely that *St. Hubert* insiders, in common with the British

Kennel Club which they admired and emulated, regarded working trials, especially those involving dogs biting men, and performance oriented breeding as obsolete in the new era, expecting it to naturally fade away as it did in England. But when it became evident that the interest was deep seated and persistent, and when *Kennel Club Belge* emerged as serious competition, they belatedly created their own working programs in order to regain control.

Through 1932 there had been no publication of the *Kennel Club Belge* breeding records, that is, the *Livre des Origines Belges* (LOB). The preface to the records for that year provides insight into the spirit and purpose of the organization:

"This is the list of registrations made during 1933 in the L.O.B. being the Studbook (*Livre d'Origines*) of the *Belgian Kennel Club*.

"One might ask why this studbook was not published in previous years and why, after twenty-six years of activity, our highest registration number is only 18,785.

"The late M.G. Oortmeyer, our dear chairman and founder of the *Belgian Kennel Club*, was not an enthusiast about the publishing of our studbook. He kept his L.O.B. carefully and held it at the disposal of serious fanciers, but at that moment there were so many false pedigree makers, that M. Oortmeyer wished to avoid putting in their hands a booklet which would give them the material for their falsifications. Besides, we never cared much for having a high number of registrations. During twenty years there did not exist any registration fee at the *Belgian Kennel Club* and we asked our friends only to apply for the registration of mature and worthy dogs. Up to June 1933 we did not even register litters. We thought it superfluous to register thousands of puppies from which a third never became mature dogs, and from which another third is lost for dogdom, as they come in hands of people who are not interested in pedigree dogs.

"But years elapsed and minds changed. There are still false pedigree makers but they know their business and need no studbook to have the necessary material. The Registration of litters has its good and bad side and, furthermore, we were compelled to give satisfaction to our members asking for a publication of our studbook. In June 1933 we started registering litters."

Publication of breeding records was to be short lived, persisting only from 1933 through 1937. Thus KCB was in fundamental ways different from registries as we think of them today; rather than an effort to record every pup and every litter, they regarded such things as secondary and in general only encouraged registration of dogs actually involved in breeding or working trials.

Kennel Club Belge was perhaps in a sense more comparable to the KNPV or NVBK, organizations with emphasis on maintaining and enhancing police and military functional potential, through demanding performance tests for breeding qualification, rather than conformation competition based on artificial style and fashion, creating breeding lines popular with diverse companion homes but of increasingly diminished service utility. This performance orientation is clearly evidenced by leadership roles of men such as Joseph Couplet, famous as trainers and advocates of police canine service.

KCB has been in decline for many years, and today is on the brink of irrelevance. There are a number of reasons for this, the primary one being the inability to compete and maintain relevance sans FCI affiliation. They are not recognized internationally, by FCI nations or nations with an FCI understanding, such as the United States, and thus no one affiliated can easily sell pups or compete in national or international working trials. Also, KCB was primarily in the French or Walloon

region, which has had difficult times economically, especially in comparison to the Flemish region, in recent decades. The web site in 2007 showed about 23 clubs, almost all in the southern or French speaking region, and a schedule of about 25 total ring trials. There were at this time seven *Kennel Club Belge* Ring judges. But more recent internet inquiries fail to bring up more than a front page of a site, with empty Flemish and French versions, shown last updated 2003. Like a derelict ship at sea, drifting off into nothingness.

Although now in decline, *Kennel Club Belge* played an important role in keeping the working dog flame alive in the hard years after WWI, certainly a noble service. Perhaps there is reincarnation for canine organizations pure in spirit, perhaps the NVBK, introduced directly below, is the spiritual heir of *Kennel Club Belge* and men such as Couplet who began this struggle so many decades before. In a certain place in my heart I would like to believe.

Breaking Out, the NVBK

The founding of the *Nationaal Verbond der Belgische Kynologen* was an act of revolution and a declaration of independence on the part of the Belgian Ring Sport community and the advocates of the Malinois. This new organization arose because serious trainers and Malinois breeders chafed under the restrictions, control and manipulation of the conformation orientated, FCI affiliated SRSB organization. Not only did NVBK take control of their Ring trials, they began their own registration book, making independence complete.

NVBK was founded in the province of Antwerp 1963 and began competition in 1964. It is today the most important and significant of Belgian Ring national organizations, both in terms of numbers and support, but most importantly it is a working dog entity conducted by working dog people for working dog people. Approximately 100 dogs receive level III certification each year, compared, for instance, to 800 to 1000 yearly KNPV titles. While numerically relatively small this is enough for a viable, ongoing breeding and training community. There are approximately 50 NVBK ring judges, in contrast to the half dozen, mostly older, listed for Societe Royale Saint-Hubert. St. Hubert continues to conduct annual Category I Ring championships with an entry of twelve or fifteen, but aggregate activity and participation is small compared to the NVBK.

Today, all dogs participating in NVBK ring trials are Malinois. Other breeds are theoretically permitted but do not participate. Malinois from other registries must obtain NVBK papers in order to enter an NVBK trial, which is relatively easy to do. NVBK puppy registrations were 359 in 2006, 430 in 2007 and 454 in 2008.

Historically NVBK is primarily a Flemish organization, which in Belgium, deeply divided between the Flemish and culturally French regions, is a deeply significant fact. Currently the administrative districts are: Antwerp, Brabant, Limburg, East-Flanders and West-Flanders, all in the Flemish region to the north and west. As of 2007 there were more than 100 NVBK clubs in Belgium and more than 1600 members. By 2013 membership had risen to 2600 Belgian members. Current reality is that the practical demise of St. Hubert and Club Belge Ring Sport activity and credibility has compelled serious Ring enthusiasts to gravitate to the NVBK.

More recently the NVBK seems to have become interested in building bridges to the French speaking Belgians, is gradually including use of the French language version of the name: *Fédération Nationale des Cynophiles Belges* (FNCB)



Foto) Oefeningen met politiehonden (Schouten op het terrein Zorgvliet. — Onze foto brengt in beeld den hoogsten sprong (3 M. 10 c.M.), door den Belgischen politiehond Bobby Dog.

The father of Belgian Ring Sport Edmond Moucheron, who also bred Groenendaels under the kennel name "Chenil Dax" after his most famous dog

Work and Sport

The emergence of the Belgian Shepherd as a formal breed created an ongoing need of an outlet for the energy and working drive of these newly urbanized herding dogs, just as there was a need of a social and sport outlet for the people in the more prosperous and leisure oriented world created by the Industrial Revolution. In America these needs were often met by after work softball, bowling and similar social activities. In Belgium and other northern European countries a burgeoning interest in amateur dog training and trial competition emerged. Eventually this would lead to the Belgian Ring Sport as we know it today, but in these early days as clubs and breeds were evolving there was significant opposition to the emphasis on overt aggression, especially amateur participation in programs involving dogs biting people. This concern is thus not specifically American or recent, but rather has been present from the beginning.

In the 1880's men such as Edmond Moucheron began giving police dog demonstrations in France, Belgium and Holland. These would

normally take place in a fenced off area, that is a ring of sorts, and included obedience, agility as in dogs jumping over bicycles and dramatic protection scenarios. This was very much entertainment in popular venues for the common man, comparable to our American county or state fairs, and intended to excite and entertain. The scaling wall, at ten feet or more, was a highlight of these dramatic performances and the subject of numerous photos of the era. These police style demonstrations caught the imagination of much of the public, became the forerunner to the Ring Sport. Moucheron is regarded by many as the father of Ring Sport, and if not the father he was certainly the precursor, in the mold of John the Baptist.

Those involved in formalizing the breed, Dr. Reul and his associates, were thinking in a different direction; were emulating the evolution of the English Collie through conformation shows and sheep dog trials. Thus the motivation was emerging from the top down, that is, was promoted by club founders who were not especially hands on dog men interested in a sport for themselves, but rather motivated by promotional and social agendas. Emulation of the Brits turned out to be a shaky foundation on which to build sport herding, for continental circumstances varied in fundamental ways. Scotland and England were different because of climate, terrain and commercial context; in large regions there was still viable ongoing sheep raising, and thus herdsman interested in competing with their dogs. Such things did not prevail in the Low Countries, although in the more eastern areas of Germany a viable herding community, and sheepdog trials, would exist well into the twentieth century.

The first sheep herding trial for the Belgian dogs took place on the 1st and 2nd of May 1892 in Brussels, sponsored by the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* (to be discussed later) in conjunction with the Belgian Collie club, in emulation of similar British trials for their Collie dogs. Although Reul and others were supportive, apparently preferring this to the enthusiasm for the emerging police applications as more acceptable to the better social classes, the trials turned out to be expensive and unpopular and thus fell out of favor.

The failure of herding trials to thrive is not in retrospect the least bit surprising, as the plain fact is that sheep were disappearing from Belgium. The survey in 1836 counted 969,000 which by 1880 had fallen to 365,000 and continued to drop in a precipitous way. Rapidly expanding sheep production in Argentina, Australia and other places was gutting the Belgian market. The advent of the steam powered ocean going vessel played an important role in this, bringing forth the age of international trade in bulk commodities in addition to high value luxury goods such as tea and spices.

In 1897 Louis Huyghebaert, living in Mechelen (Malines) north of Brussels, deep in Flemish country, took notice of the fact that sheep and shepherd's work was disappearing and advocated that different sorts of trials be created to "bring forward the three fundamental characteristics that a shepherd dog should possess: intelligence, obedience and loyalty." Huyghebaert would evolve as a very important man on the Belgian canine scene, active as a breeder, writer and in canine politics, in the better sense, for another half century.

But for the moment what is telling is what he did not mention, promote or approve of in the place of herding, that is, protection or police training and amateur competition involving biting dogs. In reality this was seriously out of step with the times, as a worldwide police dog movement was about to emerge in the city of Ghent further west in Belgian Flandres; and civilians across north central Europe – the Low Countries, Germany and much of France – were evolving enormous interest in hands on participation in police canine affairs. Nevertheless, Huyghebaert at this time believed that amateur protection training was the wrong trend to encourage, and was an advocate of tracking, writing a book on the subject and encouraging sport activity. He was also an advocate of dressage (obedience) trials, with individual exercises testing a dog's ability to leap over high and long obstacles and swimming exercises.

It is said that to praise or blame a man it is necessary to walk a mile in his shoes, and this reluctance to encourage civilian protection sport played out well over a century ago in a social context remote from today's world. It is entirely possible, even likely, that civilians, perhaps enthusiastic young men in back yards, were emulating the stunts of Moucheron and creating dangerous dogs that posed an ongoing threat to the credibility of the breed. God knows that sort of thing goes on even today. Ernest van Wesemael, founder of Belgian police service (to be discussed in the Police Dog chapter), also expressed opposition to civilian involvement in such training.

Thus a common thread among those seeking to promote the breed as a fashionable dog for the better classes was discomfort with the protection work, perceiving it as appealing to the wrong sort of people rather than the upward social mobility they saw as desirable for an incipient breed. Those opposed to such training thus expressed plausible concerns; and there was without doubt the need to evolve safe as well as effective training methods and trial procedures that demanded the demonstration of control and responsibility rather than raw aggression. Both Huyghebaert and van Wesemael seem to have believed that the demonstrations of Moucheron, with their emphasis on dramatic attack scenarios, like a carnival side shows, which to an extent they were, projected a low class image unlikely to appeal

to the more upwardly mobile and urban enthusiasts they envisioned as the future fanciers, with visions of gentile dog show popularity. It is not clear if the opposition was to any sort of amateur training involving biting dogs or simply a reaction to the overly dramatic aspects of the demonstrations.

Perhaps van Wesemael felt that the dogs were by nature aggressive enough, and long-term acquisition was simply a matter of selection and training for manageable dogs, in which case he was mistaken. This was perhaps possible, as he does not seem to have been an especially astute, hands on dog man.

In time Huyghebaert relented, reluctantly or not, as he played an active role for another half century while the Belgian Ring flourished. Real history is never simple and neat; men respond to complex emotions and motivations which evolve over time. But neither of these men is plausible as "Father to the Belgian Ring," for they were akin to reluctant, upwardly mobile, protective fathers of delicate daughters, aspiring to gentile class status, fending off aggressive young men of questionable repute, with the well-known propensities of all young men.

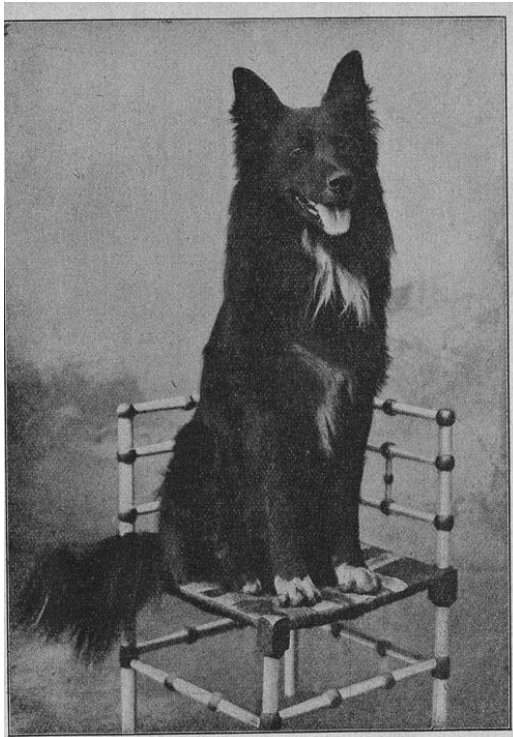
But at the end of the day the era of police dog and amateur police style training was imminent, and it was not a matter of allowing it or not allowing it but one of developing programs that demanded reliability and control. In this era the common man, the men working in the fields and emerging industry, increasingly had a mind of their own, and their collective mind was increasingly focusing on police style training as an amateur activity, which would expand enormously with the turn of the twentieth century, in Belgium, in Germany and then in much of the rest of the world.

Belgian Ring Sport

Although somewhat informal in the beginning, Ring style demonstrations were being held as early as 1903 in Malines (Dutch: Mechelen). By 1908 more formal trials with better established rules were underway. These early trials included water exercises similar to the KNPV water exercises of today. The prototype trial took place in June of 1903, won by a bitch called Cora, who would play a prominent role in early breeding lines, indeed would become a foundation of the breed. This trial is best thought of as a demonstration, an experiment, in that there was a minimum of formality and rules, the dogs more or less doing what they had been trained for rather than a pre-determined program.

Until well into the 1960s, when Belgians and Dutchmen began to become involved in the German style of sleeve oriented sport, the suit sports, Ring in Belgium and France, KNPV in the Netherlands, drove the evolution of the Belgian working breeds, in particular the Malinois and somewhat later the Bouviers. Protection work featured a decoy or helper in the protective body suit, in principle allowing the dog great latitude in where and how to bite, favored as more natural and realistic than the separate bite sleeve then emerging in Germany. While French Ring has been widely publicized in America for several decades, the Belgian variety has had much less notice here

Although French and Belgian Ring are superficially similar and share common roots, in that the decoy wears the full body bite suit rather than the padded arm of Schutzhund, today the differences in philosophy, practice, and even breeding selection are significant if sometimes subtle. Although the French Ring varies the order of some of the exercises, the Belgian Ring judge has a great deal more latitude to alter the exercises, so that the handler is never certain what he and his dog will face on a particular day. At one trial near Liege, in the middle 1980s, the object presented for the retrieve was a large sponge in a bucket of water. The handler was required to take it out, toss it without wringing it out, and send this dog to bring it back. In the protection exercise that day, the decoy had a rope attached to the lower of two stacked plastic barrels. As the dog came in to engage the decoy he tugged on the line so that the dog was distracted by the two barrels bouncing behind him.



Chien de berger belge à poil long noir, dit de Groenendael, ayant obtenu : le premier prix aux concours internationaux de dressage pour chiens dits de défense et de police, à Saint-Troude, Boussu, Binche, Frameries, Valenciennes, Tourcoing, Monscron et Paris en 1908, de même qu'à Bruxelles, trois fois, Monaco, Tabize, Roubaix, Lille (championnat international), Monscron et Paris en 1909, 1910, 1911 et 1912. Proclamé quatre fois champion du monde du dressage, à Paris en 1908, 1909, 1910 et 1912 et trois fois vainqueur de la coupe internationale « Marquet » en 1910, 1911 et 1912.

Jules du Moulin (Couplet, 1931)

Although Belgian Ring is a lesser-known European sport, it is, from the more sophisticated spectator's point of view, one of the more interesting. The trial fields tend to be small and intimate, and the judge's discretion in arranging the details of the exercises adds to the general interest.

The Groenendael Jules du Moulin (LOB 2884), owned and trained by Charles Tedesco, proprietor at the kennel du Moulin at the village of Auderghem, just south east of Brussels, became a very prominent working dog. In 1908 Jules and Tedesco won the first World Champion title at the defense dog Championships in Paris. The detailed nature of this Paris competition is not clear; perhaps it was of French origin and a precursor for the French Ring sport, or perhaps Paris was just so strong as the center of the French speaking world that it seemed natural for the culturally French Belgians to go there for major events. Jules went on to win many other championship competitions through 1914. An interesting sidelight is that Jules was out of a female of undocumented origins, not the least bit unusual in that era.³ As noted above, championships prior to 1913 were in Paris under the auspices of *Club National des Chiens de Defense et de Police*.

The inaugural *Kennel Club Belge* Ring Championship was in Brussels on June 21 & 22 1913. Jules du Moulin and Charles Tedesco were in first place, followed by Top de la Joliette, Groenendael; Karl de la Mare, Tervueren; and Tom des Crosnes, Malinois. Jules was also the winner in 1914, on the eve of the deluge.

It is characteristic of the era that Groenendael activity centered on *Kennel Club Belge* and in the predominantly French regions. There was an early surge of working Groenendael enthusiasm, but as activity resumed following the war the Malinois was in the spotlight, the Groenendael to fade into oblivion as a serious working dog. Following WWI forward the winners were Malinois with exceptions in 1927 Torry de l'Ombrelle LOB 11172 - rough-haired and 1960/1961 John (LOB 76361) - rough-haired. The best result for another breed was the second place of the Bouvier Sicky der Begijntjes (LOB 56425) in 1950.

Although *Kennel Club Belge* provided the primary arena in the early years of Ring competition, in accordance with the usual Belgian way there have always been multiple, conflicting organizations. The primary organizations with Ring programs, with year of first championship:

Kennel Club Belge (KCB)	1913
Societe Royale Saint-Hubert (SRSH)	1926

³ I am coming to prefer the term undocumented over the customary unknown, because in many if not most instances the people involved knew the background, often for several generations, perfectly well. Not being written down does not mean that knowledge does not exist, dogs were bred on oral tradition and community knowledge for centuries before formal registries came into existence.

This is slightly misleading in that although there were very successful *Club Belge* championships in 1913 and 1914, with 21 and 22 participants respectively, the late summer and fall of 1914 brought Belgium under the heel of the German Army. Although there are references to an event in 1916, likely very small scale in the time of war, it would be ten years before recovery was sufficient to make a full scale championship possible.

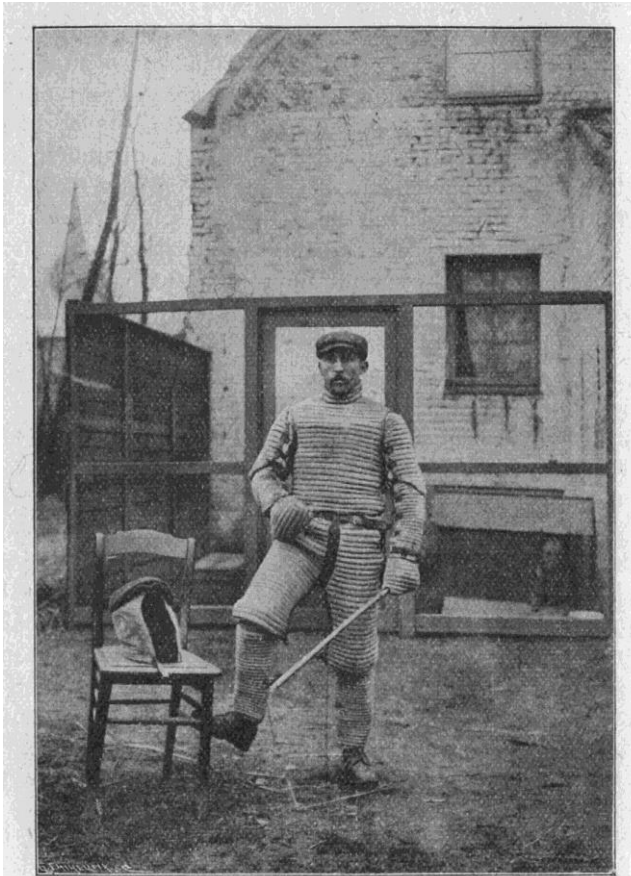
The first post war *Club Belge* Ring Championship was in Brussels in September of 1924. There were 33 participants, mostly male Malinois, but with four Bouviers des Flandres and six females. Interestingly enough, the first three places went to a bitch, with first place going to Ledy du Plateau with S. Van de Bossche of Brussels. There were seven Groenendaels, with the female Diane du Fonds des Eaux with V. Menier in third place.

The inaugural *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert* Ring Sport National Championship took place on October 3, 1926. The entry was relatively small: there were nine competitors: 5 Mechelaar, 2 Groenendael and 2 Bouviers de Flandres.

The lack of Belgian national unity and strife among trial sanctioning entities have been factors limiting Belgian Ring sport visibility in the world at large. Perhaps this is not all bad, as there is something to be said for having a dog sport somewhere in the world that really is about local men training their own dogs, devoid of overweening commercialism. If you visit Europe, it is well worth the trouble to seek out a local trial and spend the afternoon drinking beer and leaning on the fence that usually surrounds the field. It will be like stepping backwards in time to an older, slower paced, simpler world.

My initial experience with the Belgian way of work was at a club near the ancient city of Liege in far eastern Belgium, in the middle 1980s. Like it was yesterday I can recall standing by the ring watching a marvelous Malinois perform in perhaps the most fascinating ritual of the working dog world, the Belgian Ring trial. Schutzhund is precise, demanding and dramatic. KNPV is practical, down to earth and powerful. French Ring is spectacular, athletic and impressive. But Belgian Ring is akin to a chess game between the handler and the dog on one side and the judge and decoy on the other. The rules and traditions are subtle and elusive, and perhaps to the novice it would seem that not all that much is going on. But for those with even a little bit of insight it is an intricate drama, almost a trial field morality play.

The dog on the field, called Clip, with his handler Alfons Bastiaens of Westerlo, was the reigning *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert* champion, and five times winner between 1981 and 1986, so we had the privilege of observing the sport at the very highest level. Later I was to learn from Malinois friends that this Clip is quite famous, having been St. Hubert Belgian champion several years. Perhaps there was a tiny edge of envy in their voice, but for me he was an excellent dog enjoying his work on a warm, sunny afternoon on the tiny Belgian trial field. (If only we could go back after all of these years and live again such memories with the hard earned knowledge of experience and research, and with a modern camera!)



Apache revêtu d'un costume dit d'attaque pour chiens de défense et de police, le mettant à l'abri des morsures.

Decoy equipment of the early era. (Couplet, 1931)

But what I carried forward from that day was a few words exchanged with a little old man standing with us by the ring. I do not remember all of the details, I suppose one of my friends, perhaps Alfons Verheyen, translated a few words, but what he said was that he remembered when there were Bouviers in Belgium, remembered Edmund Moreaux and Francoeur de Liege. This would have been half a century in the past, but it seemed like we were talking about the previous week. And of course, in this context, for this man, if a dog was not in the ring, did not work, it did not exist. I am sure that old man, if he is somehow still alive after all of these years, has no recollection of a strange American, but for me it is one of those moments locked in time, like the days when Kennedy or King were assassinated. The Bouvier des Flandres of this culture is, sadly, almost gone but the Belgian Ring carries on.

On reflection after all of these years one of the attractions of the Belgian Ring is that it is – or seems to be for an American who wants to believe – a truly amateur world

where the advancement of the breed, sportsmanship and camaraderie are still fundamental. Schutzhund and KNPV today are today largely driven by money and greed, to the detriment of sportsmanship, the breeds and too often the welfare of individual dogs. Schutzhund has become almost wholly commercial, and the burgeoning export market has wrought change on KNPV fields, brought forth commercialism and greed.

Although generalizations can be treacherous, my perception is that Belgian Ring dogs tend to be larger and more robust while French Ring dogs tend to be quicker and more agile. The Belgians emphasize the full grip in the bite while the French emphasis is on precision in the face of a quicker and more agile adversary. The Belgian Ring trial area is in general much smaller than that used in the French Ring. (I have visited a Belgian Ring training club on a small city lot in Antwerp, perhaps 35 or 40 meters by 90 meters.)

The Belgians believe that their emphasis on the full bite is a fundamental verification of the dog, while the French would contend that the dog's effort to overcome the evasive efforts of the decoy are more important, and that a less full grip is of secondary importance. The Belgian Ring helpers can be less mobile than the French, and use bulkier equipment. The French Ring helper evades the dog while the Belgian Ring helper utilizes variations in the trial procedures and unexpected obstacles and distractions to test the dog. This is not to judge one or the other superior, but merely to point out differences produced by rules and tradition.

Belgian Ring dogs compete at three levels or categories: ⁴

Category III: Young dogs competing for the first year.

Category II: Dogs who had in their first competition year sufficient points to advance to this class. (5 times 300 points)

Category I: Elite dogs which have sufficient Cat II success to advance (3 times 340 points)

During week end competitions from March through August trials are held where dogs seek to qualify for the championships in September. What this means is that each weekend there are trials for the three categories in different cities. Sometimes there are only one or two trials, but over the season there are about 20 trials for each category. On three subsequent September Sundays, beginning with the Category III dogs, the 20 dogs with the best qualifying scores compete to become champion.

Historically the Belgian trainers in general have been the least commercial, the least interested in Americans as customers or promoting their national breeds as working dogs or their own trial systems. On my first visit to a Belgian Ring trial in the mid-eighties, Americans present and speaking English attracted no particular attention, at a time when a few words of English at a KNPV trial would draw people out of the woodwork looking for the opportunity to sell dogs.

In addition to the Ring, there has been a great deal of high level IPO activity in Belgium, perhaps those Belgians with international interests and commercial ambitions have tended to go in this direction. Many Belgian IPO trainers have become world class competitors, and Belgian training has been innovative and influential far beyond national borders.

⁴ Note that this is the opposite of Schutzhund or IPO, where the IPO III is the most advanced title.

The Belgian Shepherd



Belgian Shepherd, Malinois variety

The Belgian Shepherd is a canine breed derived from the indigenous sheep herding dogs of Belgium, built for quickness, agility and endurance rather than the fleetness of the sight hounds or the mass and power of the Mastiff style guardians. In the Belgian homeland, and all FCI countries, the Belgian Shepherd, or Berger Belge, is a single breed with four varieties according to coat texture and color.⁵ Non-FCI nations, such as Britain and the United States, have their own arrangements, recognizing some varieties as separate breeds and not recognizing others at all. In appearance these dogs have erect ears and full tails, are somewhat similar to the German Shepherd, generally being a bit lighter, a bit quicker and in the Malinois and Laeken perhaps a bit sharper.

In Belgium the Shepherd varieties today are as follows:

Dutch	French	Coat	Color
Mechelaar	Malinois	Short	red-brown with dark mask
Groenendael	Groenendael	Long	black
Tervuurse	Tervueren	Long	mahogany with dark mask & overlay
Lackense	Laeken	Rough	mahogany or fawn in varying shades

Mahogany is more or less interchangeable with red-brown as a color description. Fawn as used in describing coat color denotes a light yellowish brown, with a slight reddish tint, sometimes likened to the color of a young lion. The modern Belgian standard also provides for Other Colored long coated dogs, which includes the sables (sand colored), beiges and grays. These are classified with the Tervuerens.

There is some variation in the terminology, for instance with the Malinois we have:

Belgian studbook:	Belgische Herdershonden (Mechelse)
Dutch studbook:	Belgische Mechelse Herder
Dutch informal:	Mechelaar

With the exception of the Laeken each of the varieties is associated with a Flemish town clustered in the vicinity of Brussels. The Laeken name is derived from a prominent royal park now within the city limits of Brussels, where the founding family of this variety were shepherds.

The emergence of the Belgian Shepherds is a complex and convoluted history, and an organized presentation is difficult. Since men such as Reul and the Huyghebaert brothers played such important roles, and are referred to constantly, it

⁵ The word berger is simply the French for shepherd, just as bouvier translates as cowherd or cattleman, which is one who takes care of the cattle. There are Flemish equivalents, for instance Vlaamse Koehond is the Flemish or Dutch for the Bouvier des Flandres and Belgische Herdershonden would be the Dutch for the Belgian Herding Dog. The word chien is French for dog, and the American spelling for Tervueren is Tervuren.

seemed best to begin with a brief biography, the reader being encouraged to go back for a deeper understanding as he proceeds through subsequent material.

Adolphe Reul

The most prominent figure in the formalization of the Berger Belge was Professor Adolphe Reul (1849–1907) of the Cureghem Veterinary Medical School in Brussels. Dr. Reul was a prolific and influential author (on draught dogs and horses as well as the Belgian Shepherd), prominent conformation judge and tireless promoter and founder of Belgian canine and equine breeds. Reul was born at Braives in Wallonian Belgium June 7, 1849 and deceased in Brussels on January 10, 1907 at only 57 years, after an extended period of illness.

In addition to innumerable articles in professional journals and the general canine magazines, he produced these books:

Les Races de Chiens (The Breeds of Dog) 1893

Le Chien de trait Belge (The Belgian Draught Dog) 1899

Precis du Cours d'Exterieur du Cheval (on the Brabantine horse) 1902.

Les Races de Chiens, at over 400 pages, was comprehensive and influential in the establishment of the Belgian Shepherd. Although Dr. Reul is rightly regarded as a founder of the breed he was not at all hands on, not a breeder and likely never actually owned such a dog.⁶ As can be seen from his books, he was a very busy man, also involved in Belgian Mastiff affairs and the preservation of the Belgian draft horse, being instrumental in the creation of the national stud book for this equine breed.



Dr. Adolphe Reul

In stark contrast to von Stephanitz, who ten years later was to be the driving force behind the German Shepherd dog, and was profoundly concerned with practical working application of his incipient breed, Reul and his associates were primarily focused on the appearance, especially coat texture and color, that is the conformation. In this they were emulating the emerging British show dog fancy, especially the English Collie, and the rapidly rising popularity of conformation exhibition in middle and upper class Europe.

Reul was a man of his times, and must be understood in this context; more rigid class structures prevailed, and it was quite normal that such men took little note of the aspirations of the Flemish speaking farmers, herdsman and working class, among which these incipient Belgian Shepherd's dogs had been nurtured in the pastures and fields for a millennium.

⁶There was a minor breeder by the name of Auguste Reul active shortly after the passing of Dr. Reul, which can cause confusion.



Louis Vander Snickt circa 1906

Louis Vander Snickt

Louis Vander Snickt, born in Geraardsbergen on February 24, 1837 and passing in 1911, was a prominent man on the Belgian canine scene: he wrote extensively on diverse agricultural subjects as well as canine affairs, was long time chief editor of *Chasse et Pêche*, an influential conformation judge and prominent in Schipperke affairs. In addition to his magazine work, he produced the book *L' Aquiculture and Belgique* in 1894. Vander Snickt was an accomplished illustrator, providing many exceptional drawings and sketches in *Chasse et Pêche*. Earlier he had served as the manager of the zoological gardens of Ghent and Dusseldorf. His written commentary and personal involvement contributed to the emergence and evolution of our Belgian Shepherds and other Belgian breeds.

As editor of *Chasse et Pêche*, the official organ of *St. Hubert*, Vander Snickt was certainly privy to internal information, but being Flemish it is unclear how much of an actual insider he was in terms of influence and power.

The Huyghebaert Brothers

Louis Huyghebaert (1868 – 1952) was prominent among the founders of the Malinois, a well-known canine authority and for many years a prolific contributor to the canine publications *Chasse et Pêche*, *L'Aboi* and others. Located in the city Mechelen (Malines) in the province of Antwerp, he was proprietor of the kennel *Ter Heide*, founded in 1894 and eventually sold in 1911.

Frans Huyghebaert, brother of Louis, was also prominent among Malinois founders in the 1890's and later, even more active as a breeder and trial competitor. He also was a



Louis Huyghebaert

judge.

Although Louis Huyghebaert was a very prominent and influential conformation judge and a promoter of dressage (obedience) and tracking, he was, at least in the early years, markedly unenthusiastic about amateur protection training and thus not a promoter of Ring sport, putting him out of step with the rising tide of Ring training. In addition to his contributions to the various magazines, he also produced a well-known book promoting tracking.

Huyghebaert had diverse canine interests; much of what we know of the history of the Bouvier des Flandres and earlier related contending bouvier varieties comes from his work, most especially a long article making up the entire content of the magazine *L'Aboi* in March of 1948. Although Huyghebaert never uses the term Laeken in his famous Bouvier article, he does comment that the Bouvier des

Ardennes, also with naturally upright ears and long tails, was not sufficiently distinct from the rough coated shepherd's dogs to form the basis of a separate breed.



Joseph Couplet

Joseph Couplet was a very important man in the early Belgian police or ring dog movement, perhaps best known today for his book *Chien de Garde, de Défense et de Police*, with many editions beginning in July of 1908. Well known as a trainer and breeder of the Groenendael, such as Sultan de la Loggia, he was also a prominent judge.

In addition to his better known police dog book, Couplet also wrote *Le Chien Ambulancier ou Sanitaire, Son utilite et son dressage* (Dog of Ambulance or Health, His usage and training) Brussels, 1911.

Couplet was the chairman of the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* from 1911 and chairman of the *Kennel Club Belge* from January 1929 to his death in 1937.

Unfortunately, the small photo of Couplet shown here is the only one I have been able to find; he was a much bigger man deserving of a more prominent photo.



Justin Chastel, prominent Belgian Bouvier Breeder, on the left and Felix Verbanck on the right. Photo 1967.

Felix Verbanck

Felix Verbanck (1885 – 1973) was an enormously influential figure on the Belgian canine scene after the First World War through the 1960s. His *de l'Ecaillon* Malinois line placed him among the elite breeders of the pre WWII era. From 1909 through 1934 he resided in northern France for professional or business reasons, in the village of Thiant, near the larger city of Valenciennes. Although for many years he was justly famous as a Malinois breeder, in a certain way perhaps carrying on the work of Dr. Reul, he also served as secretary of the parent club and served as a senior figure and a mentor to many breeders of Groenendaels and the Bouvier des Flandres as well as the Malinois.

Verbanck was also a key figure in the history of the Bouvier des

Flandres, serving as the president of the Belgian club for many years and serving as an advisor and mentor. Although never a Bouvier breeder, his brother and nephew bred important Bouviers under his influence. I have in my possession letters in his own hand, or from his typewriter, from the archives of Edmee Bowles, founding Bouvier breeder in the United States. Mr. Verbanck was truly a remarkable and well-loved man.

Throughout this era the Belgian Shepherd and Bouvier des Flandres were strongly intertwined communities, with men such as Felix Verbanck and Louis Huyghebaert playing major roles in both breeds. In research for my Bouvier book yielded stories of deprivation during the two wars, a prized dog traded for a sack of wheat so that the family could eat. A Dutchman of my acquaintance mentioned that sometimes a family pet became a meal in WWII Holland.

Foundations

From antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the modern era in the region that is now Belgium wolves and other predators posed a serious threat to the sheep, to the extent that guarding was the essential function of the Shepherd's dog. Thus in this era the dogs were usually larger and more aggressive, often equipped with collars studded with metal spikes, in order to repel the wolves and other predators. These dogs tended to be more the heavier mastiff type, the style or type which persists even today as the guardian dogs, often white in color, in the Pyrenees, Italy, Turkey and even on to the Himalayas. To some extent the threat from the wolf and other predators carried over into relatively recent times; the last wolf known in Belgium was killed in the Ardennes in 1847. Even after this era stray or feral dogs continued to be a potential threat. Many of these livestock guarding dogs were cropped and docked because the shepherds noticed that the wolves could otherwise get hold of tails or ears and thus gain an advantage.

Beginning with the French Revolution, about 1792, larger estates were gradually dispersed and crop cultivation increased, that is, more and more land came into the possession of the common man. The concurrent demise of the wolf and the need to keep the sheep out of neighboring fields, and convey them along roads, seeking greener pastures, necessitated the evolution of the tending style shepherd dog of more recent history. Barbed wire did not yet exist, and it was the shepherd's dogs which allowed him to control and move his flocks in the ongoing quest for suitable forage. Ear cropping and tail docking gradually went out of practice, although these customs persist for the cattleman's dog, that is, the Bouviers.

So many years later it is difficult to see through the eyes of the founders, men such as Reul and Huyghebaert, but it would seem evident that the primary motivation in breed creation was national and cultural pride; in their view the British had the winning game, were making great strides in creating and promoting their breeds, their Collies, pointers, hounds and retrievers. It would be almost another decade before the Germans would bring forth their Dobermans, Rottweilers and above all the ubiquitous German Shepherd, and, in the aftermath of the oncoming war, in the 1920s, sweep the attention of the world. These Belgian founders felt compelled to preserve and protect their native dogs, enshrine them in books of origins, form them into world recognized national breeds; and English style conformation competition seemed to be the way of the future.

In a certain way some of these men never quite seemed to engage with the actual flesh and blood dogs, which served as props or pawns on the chessboard of elite posturing, created and propagated in the cause of national, cultural and class pride and personal importance. If so then the show breeder of today is their natural heir, the ultimate recipient of their patrimony. The problem with this is of course that it was and is the world of ornamental dogs, with ever changing, ever more grotesque style and structure, driven by never satisfied fashion rather than functional utility, of real value to mankind.

The first international open dog show in Belgium took place in Brussels in July of 1880. The sheep and cattle herding dogs were not formed into breeds at that time, and only seven such dogs were entered in a general continental class, including dogs from places outside of Belgium, including Germany and France. For perspective one

must remember that dog shows were by and for the upper classes, primarily with their hunting dogs; the Industrial Revolution was just beginning to break down these historical societal barriers. Of the 965 entries most were hounds, with 10 British shepherd dogs, Collies and Bobtails, in addition to the seven continental shepherds mentioned above. Thus the herding dogs as we know them today were an obscure sideshow on the edge of this glittering canine world, not yet formed into formal breeds with names and numbers inscribed in a book of records.

The formal advent of the Belgian Shepherd breed commenced with the foundation of the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* on September 29, 1891, in Brussels. Two weeks later, on November 15, 1891 in Cureghem, on the outskirts of Brussels, Professor Reul organized a gathering of 117 dogs, which allowed a panel of judges, including Reul and Vander Snickt, to carry out a survey or evaluation and select the most typical specimens as the ideal for this incipient breed. In organizing this pivotal event Reul had sent circulars to the veterinary community seeking cooperation, information and publicity in gathering together the 117 above mentioned candidates. The veterinarians, which would have been the among the more sophisticated, literate and influential elements of the rural communities, played a major role in breed creation; recall that von Stephanitz in Germany had been primarily educated in the veterinary and biological sciences, quite the normal situation in a military culture with large cavalry elements and relying on the horse as a primary mode of transportation.

Some four months later, on April 2, 1892, again under the direction of Professor Reul, and modeled after England's Collie standard, the first Belgian Shepherd standard, in the French language, was issued by the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge*. The standard first appeared in Flemish six years later, in 1898. In this era, if you did not speak French you were not important among the people that mattered. This breed standard recognized three varieties: the long coated, the short coated and the rough coated, without regard to color, exactly as the English Collies were classified. These divisions were to persist until March of 1898.

Going forward they proceeded according to selection for uniform structure and coat texture through inbreeding on a few carefully selected dogs, the traditional process of breed creation. Working character did not seem to be an important part of the process, as effective working trials were a number of years in the future. Attempts to secure *St. Huber* registration for individual dogs had been brushed aside; apparently these Belgian shepherd's dogs, emanating from among farmers and herdsman, were not nearly uniform enough in appearance or noble enough in form and bearing to merit recognition and registration. There was validity in these objections, and throughout the 1890's primary focus was on establishing the uniformity of appearance, structure and type so as to secure a place in the book of records.

But there was a terrible price paid for this policy, particularly among the Groenendael. The breeding records of the era demonstrate the exclusion from fashionable show breeding in the performance spot light because of perceived physical faults and also because of disdain for working dogs and the working class men who were their primary advocates. A prime example was Jules du Moulin, whose white chest patch was considered a fault, apparently overriding his working success, and the dogs of men such as Edmond Moucheron. As we see in the history of the German Shepherd, the split between working and show lines came very early in the breed creation process. The Malinois working oriented breeders were able to prevail over this tendency and establish the variety as a worldwide standard for police level breeding.

Belgian Shepherd Time Line

1880, July	First Belgian international conformation show in Brussels
1882, Feb 18	<i>Societe Royale Saint-Hubert</i> founded.
1882, Nov 5	<i>Chasse et Pêche</i> magazine founded.
1888, Mar 10	Belgian Schipperke Club founded.
1891, Sep 29	<i>Club du Chien de Berger Belge</i> founded in Brussels
1891, Nov 15	Dr. Reul and associates evaluate 117 dogs in Cureghem
1892, April 2	Initial standard issued, in French.
1898	Standard translated to Flemish
1898	Dr. Reul is exclusive Belgian conformation judge for a term of 2 years. (Later extended through 1900)
1898	<i>Section of Malines</i> founded by Dr. G. Geudens and Louis Huyghebaert
1898, July 18	<i>Berger Belge Club</i> foundation in Laeken
1898, Aug 14	Letter published from V. Du Pre, general secretary of <i>St. Hubert</i> , "suggesting" a standard with specific, mandatory colors for each variety.
1901	First Belgian Shepherd, Vos, number 5847, registered with <i>St. Hubert</i> .
1903	Louis Huyghebaert resigns from <i>Club du Chien de Berger Belge</i>
1905, June 18	<i>Federation des Societes Canines de Belgique</i> founded, with <i>Club du Chien de Berger Belge</i> among founding members.
1905, Nov 11	<i>Section of Malines</i> resigns from <i>Club du Chien de Berger Belge</i> in order to maintain affiliation with <i>Societe Royale Saint-Hubert</i> . Dr. Reul, resigning from <i>Club du Chien de Berger</i> becomes Chairman of Honor of <i>Section of Malines</i> , renamed as <i>Societe du Chien de Berger Belge</i> .
1906	<i>Berger Belge Club</i> affiliates with <i>Societe Royale Saint-Hubert</i>
1907, Jan	Death of Dr. Reul
1908, Jan 8	<i>Federation des Societes Canines de Belgique</i> agrees to integrate back into <i>Societe Royale Saint-Hubert</i>
1908, May 27	<i>Federation des Societes Canines de Belgique</i> dissolved
1908, June 14	<i>Kennel Club Belge</i> created by factions unwilling to reunite with <i>St. Hubert</i> . <i>Club du Chien de Berger Belge</i> remains aloof as a standalone entity.
1910, Mar 11	<i>Groenendael Club</i> founded, affiliated with <i>St. Hubert</i> .
1913	Inaugural <i>Kennel Club Belge</i> Ring Championship
1914 – 1919	War.
1926	Inaugural <i>Societe Royale Saint-Hubert</i> Ring Championship

Much more detail and explanation can be found in the Vanbutsele book, which all serious students of the breed should be familiar with. (Vanbutsele, 1988)

But the split in the Belgian Shepherd world was more complex than work and show. There was a profound difference in the world view prevailing in Germany with the creation of the German Shepherd dog, with primary emphasis on establishing modern working roles as the basis and reason for the breed, and the English Kennel Club model of the ornamental dog, where artificial, uniform style was to be the predominant measure of quality. While Reul and his associates were emulating the British fashion of creating ornamental breeds and preoccupied with the ongoing strife over coat color and texture, those who saw the future in terms of new work rather than retirement to ornamental status also had differences among themselves, with initial top down encouragement of herding and obedience trials in an era when the man in the street was increasingly inspired by the exciting ring demonstrations of men such as Edmond Moucheron. Pretense of the preservation of herding functionality quickly withered under the reality that there was essentially nothing to herd, and obedience without a protection aspect proved uninteresting to the people at large.

The journals of the era, such as *Chasse et Pêche*, were in French and thus largely unavailable to the Malinois community, primarily Flemish speaking, in particular and working oriented people in general. Thus what has come down to us, the stuff of history, is focused on these dog show results rather than the activities of the working trainers, much less formal in this era. Since there was no registration process in place before 1901, and little pressure to register working dogs thereafter, those focused on the work of their dogs had little motivation to be involved with these formalities, and thus leave little in the journals of the era. But they were there, were the real foundation of the breed.

In the mid-1890s ongoing confusion and strife evolved among conformation participants because judges were selecting different, contradictory types. A perceived need evolved, or was encouraged from on high, to establish a consistent, clearly defined structure and appearance in the core breeding stock.

As a consequence, Dr. Reul was designated as the exclusive judge of the Berger Belge, serving in this role from 1898 through 1900. This focus of authority was similar to that of the German Shepherd evolution, where von Stephanitz played a corresponding role; a dominant personality seems to be quite common, perhaps in a way even necessary, in the foundation of a breed. But the differences are as compelling as the similarities; Reul was much more the one dimensional figure, focused on style and appearance, and his influence was less long lasting; he apparently was of diminishing influence, ongoing for several years, likely exacerbated by illness, by the time of his death, in 1907 at only 57 years.

In 1898 Dr. G. Geudens and Louis Huyghebaert founded a competing club in Malines, with a focus on the working character of the breed and Flemish interests. Although founded, at least in part, in response to dissatisfaction with the original club, this new club, *Section of Malines*, was technically a branch of the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* in Brussels. As mentioned below, another dissident club, focused on the Laeken but destined for much wider influence, was also created in 1898.

In these tumultuous years the overriding reality was to be ongoing strife concerning coat color, texture and length, with coat colors in each variety acceptable in the show ring changing at a bewildering rate; and the losers becoming resentful and sometimes going off to create their own clubs.

Early in 1898 a voice was heard from on high when a letter from V. Du Pre, general secretary of *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert*, was read in a meeting of the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* advocating specific colors for each of the three varieties. (Vanbutsele, 1988) In the words of Verbanck:

There was a selection based primarily on color, recommended by L. Vander Snick⁷ and inflicted upon the breeders by Dr. Veterinary van Hertsen, the then president of the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge*, under the slogan, "Each variety has only one coat of only one color." (Verbanck, 1972)

Since the beginning of Reul's term as exclusive judge and this pronouncement concerning coat color came at virtually the same time, early 1898, there is the obvious question: What was the role of Dr. Reul in all of this? Was he the convinced advocate of rigid single color varieties, encouraging *St. Hubert* behind the scenes to provide the muscle to push the new standard through and enforce it in the show ring? Was he in his heart favorable to a more inclusive policy, one which would accommodate the reddish brown rough coats of Jan-Baptist Jansen, the reddish brown long coats to be known as the Tervueren and other variations, yielding to *St. Hubert* pressure as the price of a place in the sacred book? Or was he simply without the power at this point in time to directly control events? It is very difficult to know, and like all men his motivations and actions, private and public, were no doubt complex and evolving over time under pressure to bring his personal Belgian Shepherd saga to fruition. At any rate, in retrospect 1898 would prove to be the pivotal year in the evolution of the Belgian Shepherd.

Although the dogs had been shown according to coat texture – the long, the short and the rough – from 1892 without regard to color, these dictates from *St. Hubert* could hardly be ignored, for the simple reason that since the founding the Belgian Shepherds had been denied entry into the registration book on the grounds of lack of uniformity. Thus beginning in March of 1898 the long coated variety was shown with one class for the blacks, referred to as Groenendaels, and a class for the other colors.⁸ Shortly thereafter it was decided by *Club du Chien de Berger Belge*, under *St. Hubert* pressure, that each coat type was to be of a single color. The revised standard dictated:

Black for the smooth long coated.

Reddish brown with overlay and mask of black for the short coated.

Gray for the rough coated.

This created immediate strife and controversy. Excluded by *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* were the reddish brown long coated (later to be called Tervueren), the short coated blacks and especially the reddish brown rough coated dogs, to become the Laekens, which had been very prominent. The breeders of the now to be excluded colors, who had been written off with a flick of the pen, the dogs which they had struggled to breed and consolidate as to type and character casually discarded by the French speaking elite in their committee meetings, had great resentment.

Particularly egregious was the rejection of the reddish brown, rough coated lines of the Flemish shepherd Jan-Baptist Jansen, who spoke no French and thus was at a disadvantage in the world of canine political manipulation. Instead the rough coated dogs were henceforth to be grey only, an arbitrary decision in favor of the well-connected insider Ad Claessens, proprietor of the Brussels cafe *Le messenger de Louvain*. His dogs Bassoef and Mira were in reality the only greys prominent at the time, disparaged as weak in character. The prominent son of this pair, Boer-Sus, whelped in 1901, sired a few notable grey rough coats, but these lines quickly expired.

⁷ Whether Vander Snick acted from personal conviction or in deference to *St. Hubert* is an interesting but difficult to answer question.

⁸ It was about a decade later, in 1909, that the terms Laeken and Malinois came into general use.

Regardless of motivation, the *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* leadership and *St. Hubert* bureaucrats were apparently convinced that the power to set the standard and determine the direction of the breed was in their grasp, that the wishes of the people in the fields and villages, actually breeding, training and promoting the dogs, did not matter. In retrospect, this was to be a turning point, for they had overplayed their hand, creating significant backlash, particularly within the Flemish community.

In response to these onerous color restrictions, a new, competing Belgian Shepherd club was founded on July 18, 1898 in Laeken. *Berger Belge Club*, as it came to be called, would in the long term predominate, and later became affiliated with *St. Hubert*, in the place of the original club, CCBB, which in time faded into obscurity. The rough-haired reddish brown Belgian Shepherds, for which the club had been formed to support, would become known as the Laeken. Joseph Demulder was founding president and would serve until 1931.

These festering dissatisfactions came to a head in 1905 when *Club du Chien de Berger Belge*, *Club du Chien Pratique* (for training working dogs) and others joined together in Brussels on June 18, 1905 to found *Federation des Societes Canines de Belgique*, directly in competition with *St. Hubert*. Even today, a few dogs in the published data base records show FSCB registration numbers from the brief tenure of this organization. An important consequence of this split was that *Chasse et Pêche* would no longer serve as the official organ of the separated clubs.

In 1906 *Berger Belge Club* became affiliated with *St. Hubert* in place of *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* but under the condition that the rough and long reddish brown coats be included, thus abating the onerous color restrictions that had been the cause of so much of this conflict.

This new national organization was fragile and short lived. In 1907 there were discussions between the two organizations, resulting in an agreement formalized on January 8, 1908 to fold *Federation des Societes Canines de Belgique* back into *St. Hubert*. There was a meeting on May 27, 1908 for the dissolution of *Federation des Societes canines de Belgique*, but important elements of the dissident organization remained unwilling to be affiliated with *St. Hubert*.

These elements held a dog show in Brussels June 13 through 15 of 1908, with 377 dogs participating. This became the occasion for the creation of *Kennel Club Belge*, on the part of those unwilling to rejoin *St. Hubert*.

Club du Chien de Berger Belge was thus left in limbo, separated from *St. Hubert*, which had a new affiliate club in *Berger Belge Club*, yet not choosing to affiliate with *Kennel Club Belge*, a decision formalized on December 27, 1909. *Club du Chien de Berger Belge*, the original founding club, was thus isolated. It became increasingly irrelevant but persisted beyond WWII before finally fading away.

A separate, standalone *Groenendael Club*, affiliated with *St. Hubert*, came into existence on March 11, 1910 under the leadership of Vital Tenret, declared "Royal" in 1935, thus becoming the *Royal Groenendael Club*.⁹ The primary reason for this was to enforce breeding the black longhairs as an entirely separate gene pool, without crossbreeding, to solidify purity of type and color. This club created a tightly controlled stud book of their own to insure genetic purity, and especially the pure black coat. A consequence of this was the exclusion from breeding of working dogs such as Jules du Moulin, at this moment winning fame in Paris working trials, with white patches on his chest and light forepaws, for the sake of the Holy Grail, the pure black coat. This marked the beginning of the end of the Groenendael as a serious working dog.

⁹ The *Berger Belge Club* became "Royal" 25 years after it was founded.

Thus from this time forward there were two *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert* clubs for the Belgian Shepherd, the *Royal Berger Belge Club* and the *Royal Groenendael Club*. These two clubs eventually merged in the 1990s. Thus on the eve of the war, advocates of the Belgian Shepherd were estranged, standing in four groups:

Groenendael Club, affiliated with St. Hubert
Berger Belge Club, affiliated with St. Hubert
Kennel Club Belge
Club du Chien de Berger Belge

In order to understand how fragile this incipient breed was, consider that the total LOSH registrations from 1901 through 1914 were only 306. Of these, 117 were short hair fawn, 31 rough coated and 127 long coated of various colors. This is not quite as sparse as it might seem at a glance, as registration was not mandatory in this era, and total populations were likely somewhat larger. Although many dogs were dual registered with *Kennel Club Belge* an unknown number were likely only registered with this organization. Regardless of the details, in the big picture these numbers are a drop in the bucket compared to the 100,000 German Shepherds registered in Germany in this same time period.

In order to understand the emergence of these Belgian Shepherds and Bouviers, it is essential to perceive that there were two ongoing, interrelated revolutions, the Industrial Revolution moving much of the population to the cities for commerce and industry and a social revolution bringing real political power to these resultant emerging middle and working class people. Just as the AKC was a last bastion of elite white, Anglo Saxon, protestant power in America, the advantaged Belgian classes resisted, and canine affairs was an arena where they retained substantial control. For these reasons, as we have seen, although the process began in the 1880s, it was a relatively long time, not until 1901, before the first Belgian Shepherds were registered with the *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert* Studbook (LOSH).

It is important to notice that when the Germans, led by von Stephanitz, established their shepherd breed and club they founded their own stud book without seeking the acceptance or permission of another organization with differing values, thus avoiding a decade of bureaucratic bickering and staking out their own turf on the canine playing field. Perhaps well connected military men, from prominent families, were simply better equipped for breed founding in that era.

This long delay before registration seems to have been deeply resented by many of the Belgians struggling to establish this incipient breed. There was a long standing attitude among the elite that mere working dogs were not nearly noble enough to be taken notice of by a royal society, that familiarity would breed contempt. The concern was that registration of working dogs would lead to an association with working class men, something that the elite was not especially ready to accept. This ongoing strife, on the surface concerning coat texture and color but also reflecting underlying social stress – the estrangement between the Flemish and Wallonians – has greatly limited the national and international acceptance and popularity of these dogs of the Belgian shepherds and cattlemen. Popularity and prominence has primarily come through enlistment in police and military programs and on the sport fields of the Low Countries, especially Holland, expanding into France in the 1950s and 60s and America and Germany tentatively commencing in the 1980s.

Americans in general are unaware of how all pervasive the European class structure was, with enormous social privilege for the upper classes, and what a struggle it was for the working, mercantile and entrepreneurial classes to gain social and political leverage along with expanding financial prosperity. The American Revolution eliminated inherited titles of nobility, and served as a precursor for the French revolution. The French became a bit more stringent; it quickly evolved into a

matter of guillotining sufficient numbers of the nobility, including the king and queen, for the attitude of the remainder to become sufficiently egalitarian.

On the eve of the First World War the organizational structure, the estranged clubs and breed standards that would persist for most of the century, were more or less in place. Even coat color requirements were stabilizing. At this moment the Groenendael was at his zenith as a police or working dog, with the dogs of Edmond Moucheron often in the spotlight and Jules du Moulin becoming champion year after year in major venues such as Paris and Brussels. But the end was near, for although a few Groenendaels placed in Ring championships immediately after the war, under the selection policies of the new *Groenendael Club* the lights flickered out, the Groenendael disappeared from trial fields and police service across Europe and around the world. The Malinois was waiting in the wings, to emerge as the only variety with serious working service and credentials as the twentieth century unfolded after the war.

The War Years

Although the allies would prevail over Germany, the German homeland was not occupied and in the aftermath, in the 1920s, the German working breeds, the Dobermans and especially the German Shepherds, would prosper worldwide, leaving these noble Belgian dogs in obscurity. The First World War was a time of enormous deprivation and struggle, for Belgium was at the epicenter of this tragedy and suffered in every aspect of life. Formal canine activity, such as registration, went into abeyance and the keeping and feeding the dogs became the primary struggle for many. The FCI essentially went out of existence, to be reconstructed in the 1920s.

By November of 1914 the German Army had in a few late summer and autumn weeks overrun most of Belgium, establishing a line across the southern portion of the country which for the duration would be the scene of trench warfare the like of which would be cruel and brutal beyond precedent and comprehension. Historically, great wars had been settled by great battles, often bloody, cruel and brutal, but decided within a few hours, days or months. This war to end all wars, like the American Civil War, would because of modern technology such as repeating rifles, machine guns, effective artillery and aerial reconnaissance go on for four long years. Unfortunately, the epicenter was the cradle of these incipient Flemish breeds, these Malinois, Bouviers and Laekens, striking a blow which would take the rest of the century to recover from. That this is not an exaggeration we know from the words of von Stephanitz himself, a German Calvary officer as well as founder of the German Shepherd:

"In 1915 I saw no dogs in Belgium with the stock, for which the War was probably responsible." Later on the same page: "This experience I had nearly every day in West Flandres with the service dog of my regiment who accompanied me all over my area. Among the Walloons, South of the Mass, where the terrible closing stages of the War led me, the dogs had already been appropriated throughout the district for training in the Intelligence Service." (von Stephanitz, 1925)p186.

The Germans were well prepared to employ war dogs, sending some 6000 immediately into service. This was the fruition of a strong, formal ongoing working arrangement for war preparation between military authorities and the SV, the national German Shepherd club. Von Stephanitz, SV leader, was a retired German Calvary officer who would quite naturally have retained his military associations and viewed preparation for war and promotion of the German Shepherd as entirely compatible, desirable and natural ends, serving the expansionist German national cause. (Richardson, *British War Dogs, Their Training and Psychology*, 1920)p151

The Germans routinely sought out and confiscated all suitable dogs as they rolled over the Belgian countryside. In particular, the famous police training facility in Ghent, to be discussed in detail in the police dog chapter, was taken by the Germans

for their own benefit, including existing dogs. Ghent would not resume police canine patrols until 1979, and went through a period of using German Shepherds and then dogs from animal shelters before the reappearance of Belgian Shepherds. It is not without irony that the typical Belgian Police dog through at least the 1980s was a German Shepherd, just as in the rest of the world. (I have a photo of an in uniform Ghent police dog handler in 1985 with his German Shepherd, and this was apparently quite normal for the times.)

In contrast to these strong links with police and military authorities in the Netherlands and Germany, what emerges is the general perception that the Belgian Shepherd working community was from the beginning an isolated world onto itself, with little contact with police or military agencies or the public at large. Generalities, extending isolated instances to general conclusion, are of course treacherous, but the contrast of Belgian isolation with the close police involvement through the KNPV in Holland and ongoing cooperation with the military in Germany is compelling. Much of this may have to do with the fact that the civil administration was conducted primarily in the French language while most of the trainers and breeders were Flemish, it can be little wonder that they did not communicate well since they literally in many circumstances did not speak the same language.

WWII was a second German atrocity in a generation, and another severe struggle for survival for the Belgian canine community. In the spring of 1941 the Nazi blitzkrieg smashed through the Ardennes and swept through the Netherlands and France as well as Belgium, bringing terrorism and oppression on an unprecedented scale in the name of Arian supremacy. Whereas WWI had in some sense been a "normal" European conflict with a newly united German nation seeking territory they perceived as a rightful share of European colonial expansion, and with some Belgians and dogs able to seek shelter in neutral Holland or French regions behind the lines, Hitler at his peak held most of Europe in his grasp, with the exception of the Iberian peninsula.

Much of the of the actual fighting had again taken place in Belgium, first with the invasion of 1940 and then especially in the fall and winter of 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge and other action as Hitler made a final, desperate attempt to avoid occupation of the homeland. Widespread allied air strikes had been concentrated here, focusing on German held military infrastructure such as air fields. But even advancing allied armies did not end the destruction, for Belgium was targeted for massive German V1 and V2 rocket attacks, beginning in October of 1944 after the Normandy Invasion.

Post War Years

The post WWII years were difficult throughout most of Europe, but especially in Belgium. Through much of the 1950s, when the rest of Europe was recovering, Belgium was still experiencing very difficult economic times. Canine registrations were in many instances much lower in the 1950s than during the late 1940s. (A table of annual Bouvier des Flandres registrations for Belgium and the Netherlands in the appendices graphically illustrates these general trends.)

Belgian St. Hubert yearly registrations				
	1939	1949	1959	1965
	2009			
Malinois	460	800	420	415 977
Groenendael	175	374	138	238 112
Tervuern	30	84	2079	243

Note that Kennel Club Belge and NHSB numbers, often substantial, are not included.

Although a certain amount of care is necessary in interpretation, the table quantifies twentieth century registration trends. In 1959, for instance, there were also 6 short coated non Malinois (3 blacks and 3 blacks with red-brown) and 9 Laeken registrations. Three of the Tervueren were long

coats born in Malinois litters. (More complete statistics are included in the appendices.)

The 2009 Malinois numbers need to be understood in the context of the times, that is, the emergence of the Malinois as a major factor in national and international Schutzhund and later IPO competition. In order to participate, registration with an FCI national organization is necessary, which for the first time made registration an issue for many elements of the working community. Over this time period there was extensive registration of working line Malinois, in the Netherlands as well as Belgium,

2010 Belgian (SRSH) Registrations	
German Shepherd	1608
Berger Belge Malinois	1108
Border Collie	943
Golden Retriever	854
Berner Sennenhund	708
Labrador Retriever	656
Bulldog	487
French Bulldog	486
Rottweiler	455
Great Dane	415
American Staf Terrier	332
Bouvier des Flandres	296
Chihuahua largo	292
Berger Belge Tervueren	291
Chihuahua corto	264
Whippet	261
NS Duck Tolling Ret	249
Cav King Char Spaniel	249
Australian She Dog	243
Boxer	237
Dachshund	230
Beauceron	223
Newfoundland	210
Leonberger	202
Shar Pei	201
Berger Blanc Suisse	195
Dobermann	186
Berger de Brie	179

in order to be able to compete and to sell dogs for export, with "creative" methods of producing the proper documentation, typically using registered dogs already in the records in the place of the actual parents of desirable working litters.

Although the Malinois predominates in working circles, for the Belgians at large, that is the companion owning population, the popularity of the various breeds is similar to the rest of the world, that is, volatile, driven by fashion and often preferring the exotic foreign breed. This can be seen in the table to the left, where ten of the eleven most popular breeds are foreign. These are of course the numbers that the world sees, but there are many working line Malinois registered in the independent ring organizations NVBK and perhaps *Kennel Club Belge* and some perhaps not registered at all. Although NVBK annual registrations are not currently published, in 2008 there were 454, which would mean that there are similar numbers of German and Belgian Shepherds.

Through the 1960s sport competition in Belgium, and the Netherlands and France as well, was Ring Sport or KNPV. As Schutzhund/IPO training emerged and became more international in character, many Belgian participants gravitated to the German Shepherd, primarily to become involved in international canine affairs. Over the past thirty years or slightly longer, there has been an active community of Belgian GSD trainers and breeders,

often quite successful in international competition.

Looking back over the post WWI twentieth century there was an enormous wave of German police style dogs and influence across the world. Actually, there were three waves, the German Shepherds in the 1920s, the Doberman a few years later and then the Rottweiler in the 1980s. Throughout this era, enormous sums of money were paid by enthusiastic if slightly gullible Americans, a pattern broken by WWII but continued after this war until today, when hundreds of thousands of dollars are routinely paid for major German show winners. The Belgian Shepherds, who had a spark of international notoriety after the emergence of the Flemish police dogs in Ghent in 1899 through the beginning of WWI, faded back into obscurity.

To lend a bit of perspective to the Belgian numbers, in Germany there were 40,000 German Shepherd registrations in 1948 including East Germany, probably including a buildup of unregistered dogs during the war. This became 17,000 puppy registrations in 1961 and then 23,000 in 1965. These numbers have been fairly typical over the entire twentieth century, with fluctuations due to war, difficult economic times and political circumstance.

Much of the success of the German Shepherd is due to the size, prosperity and aggressiveness of the German nation in that era. In addition, there was from the beginning one club, one standard and for almost 40 years one predominant leader, who was as relentless in publicity and promotion as in defining the type and character of his breed. In contrast, the Belgian shepherd people were a small, divided, incessantly quarrelling community much more focused on canine politics and differences in coat color structure and appropriate working venues.

Historically the Belgian Shepherd varieties could be interbred, but in a broad general view the Malinois and Laekens had common roots, but the Groenendael was largely separate from the beginning, and held rigidly separate after the formation of the Groenendael club in 1910. Early Tervuren lines died out; modern breeding being reestablished after each of the two wars. Formal restrictions imposed by the breed clubs and *St. Hubert* were gradually tightened. Today breeding the different varieties of the Belgian Shepherd together is unusual and only possible with permission from breed club authorities. Inter variety breeding today is extensive between the long hairs in France and Italy, permissible in Australia and Canada.

For our purposes, the fundamental fact is that the Malinois and Laeken are Flemish or Dutch in origin rather than French, which is also true of the Bouvier des Flandres. (There were several French Bouvier varieties in the 1920s, but in Belgium they were never numerous in the studbooks and died out, with a few stragglers being incorporated into the Flemish lines.) Although the village of Groenendael lies in Flemish Brabant, the variety became more predominant in the French regions south of Brussels. The Tervueren of today is a post WWI recreation, with no direct lines to purported foundation stock. Cross breeding among the Belgian Shepherd varieties was allowed until 1973 and even afterwards in exceptional circumstances with the permission of the breed council in Belgium.

So the crux of this is that these Belgian herders emerged in a very small region, about six million in today's population, less at the time, which suffered grievous deprivations under two German atrocities during the crucial forming years. German working dog prominence was promoted, aided and abetted by the Wehrmacht, occupying and devastating the homelands of the potential competition, often confiscating or killing the dogs.

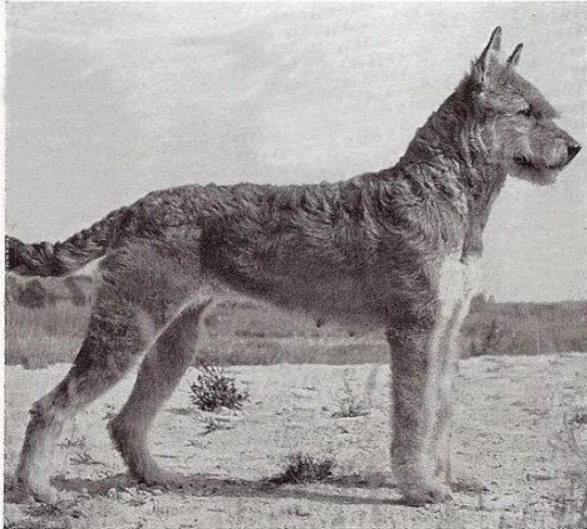
Personally I tend more and more to the opinion that it would have been much better to have created two entirely separate breeds, the Laekens and Malinois on the one hand and the long coats on the other, perhaps emerging as the Flemish Shepherd and the Wallonian Shepherd. Enormous amounts of strife and distraction could have been avoided, enabling much more effective promotion, especially

internationally. Life as the distressed child of a bad marriage, with parents alternatively negligent or seeking to mold the offspring according to separate cultures, has been difficult.

The Malinois is the premier working dog in the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Yet a relatively small number, a few hundred in the Netherlands and Belgium per year, are actually registered. There are also a number of secondary registries, the best known historically being *Kennel Club Belge*, which has a history going back to 1908 but has for all practical purposes died out today. NVBK, however, is a viable, flourishing alternative registry for the Belgian Ring Malinois. In addition there are large numbers of Dutch dogs without papers, whose working trial oriented owners are unconcerned in that they know enough about the background to satisfy themselves, their peers and potential customers for their puppies. (This is very similar to the attitude of the Border Collie people, if it works, and especially if it produces good working pups, then it is a Border Collie regardless of the Kennel Club paper empire.)

The Laeken

Historically there is a great deal of commonality in the cultural and genetic roots of the Laeken, the rough-coated variety of the Belgian Shepherd, and the short coated Malinois in that both emerged from indigenous herding stock in the vicinity of Antwerp and Boom on the broad Flemish plain north of Brussels. The Laeken, virtually unknown in America and uncommon in most of Europe, is similar in appearance to the other varieties, the distinguishing feature being the rough or wiry coat.



*Afb. M. Ruwharige Belgische herder (Laekense) Delta v. h. Hoogedijkje.
Eig. dhr. R. C. Ph. Hablé.*

Because of this coat texture and color there is a superficial resemblance to the Bouvier des Flandres, although the ears are naturally upright rather than being cropped, and the overall body type is much more that of the sheepdog rather than the bouvier. If you go back far enough there are no doubt common ancestors, for all of these lines and breeds were drawn from the indigenous working dogs of the farms and fields of the broad Flemish plain. The Laeken and Malinois origins centered in the area north of Brussels toward Antwerp, while the Bouvier des Flandres origins had focus further to the west, on the flat plain of the Rivers Lys and Schelde in the region of the cities Ghent, Roulers and Courtrai.

The name most associated with the foundation of the Laeken is that of the shepherd Jan-Baptist Jansen, whose sheep grazed in the royal park of Laeken, site of the royal palace, residence of the king and queen, from which the name of the variety is derived. Jansen was born February 26, 1859 in Moll (Mol in Flemish) and deceased in Brussels January 16, 1927. His father Adrian Jansen, also a shepherd, participated in these origins, and is mentioned as participating in the herding trial of 1892 in Cureghem with Vos. In general Jansen's best dogs were rough-haired fawns, and these became the basis of the Laeken variety as well as providing a Malinois foundation.



Jan-Baptist Jansen

In about 1888 Jansen purchased a dog from a cattle dealer out of a line of shepherd dogs used to guard the Belgian flax fields in the vicinity of the village of Boom, well north of Brussels in Flemish Brabant. This dog was Vos (fox in Dutch), rough-haired fawn or yellow in color, born in 1885, destined to become prominent in the foundations of both the Malinois and the Laeken. Vos is also referred to as Vos I to distinguish him from a later, significant ancestral dog of the same name. This dog Vos placed in the first (1892) herding trial, held in Cureghem, Belgium.

Also in the possession of Jansen was the shorthaired brown/grey/brindle female, of

undocumented origins, Lise de Laeken, sometimes known as Lieske. Bred to Vos Lieske produced Diane, the dam of Tomy, another very important founding resource and other dogs prominent in the originating lines. (The sire of Tomy was Samlo, also a dog of unknown origins.) Vos and Lieske also produced Tom de Vilvorde, one of the most famous rough-haired grey dogs. (Pedigrees in the next section.) As can be seen in the listing of the progeny, Vos produced diverse coat texture and colors, which would be characteristic of the breed and the source of never ending conflict throughout the years.

Progeny of Vos I:
 Dam: Lieske (Lise de Laeken)
 Spits (Jansen) F rough hair
 Diane (E Joubert) F short hair
 Tom (de Vilvorde) M grey rough
 Mouche (Duchenoy) F short hair

Dam: Moor (Jan Baptist Jansen)
 Dick(Dagnelie) M
 Poets(Pouts) F

Dam: Spits (Jan Baptist Jansen)
 Moor (Jansen) F

The Laeken was from the beginning the most problematic of the varieties, and has flirted with extinction, for there have been time periods when no Laekens were registered with SRSB. Today the Laeken is making slow but steady progress with Belgian breeders. A few more kennels have started up, and although there are still less than a dozen, that's more than at any time in their history in Belgium. The Laeken was for many years the most popular variety in the Netherlands and this has always been the stronghold. There is the speculation – or accusation, depending on where you stand – that in the Netherlands

some early Bouvier lines were blended in.

Since there were to be almost thirty more years before the formal establishment of the Bouvier des Flandres, which for practical purposes took place in the 1920s, I am not aware of documented common ancestry. In the early years, there were many diverse styles and types promoted as bouviers in this generic sense, just as there was diversity in physical type among the sheep herders prior to breed establishment and selection for uniform type and coat.

There is a great deal of similarity and overlap in history among the rough coated dogs, in the Netherlands as well as Belgium. In the early years the term "bouvier" simply meant cattle dog and there was enormous diversity. It could be very difficult to tell from an unidentified photo, or even standing in the presence of the dog if we could go back in time, if a particular dog should be identified as a Laeken, a rough coated Dutch shepherd or one of the various bouvier styles, such as the Bouvier des

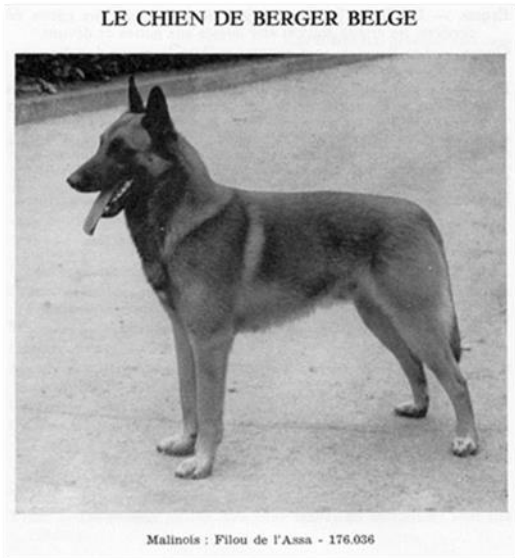
Roulers, the Bouvier des Flandres or the Bouvier des Ardennes. Or even perhaps a Picardie Shepherd. (In a similar way, groupings of early Dutch and German shepherds and Malinois would be difficult to sort out.)

Controversy and strife over coat color, perhaps really between Flemish advocates, supporters of Jansen with his reddish brown rough coats, against the French oriented establishment favoring greys for political reasons, would greatly diminish the prospects for this variety, and the Laeken has had a very minor role in Belgian Shepherd history even on to this day. In general, the Laeken tends to be a very sharp dog, not always easily adapted to casual homes.



Laken (Photo Jean-Michel Vedrenne)

The Malinois



The Malinois, the short coated variety of the Belgian Shepherd, is similar in appearance to a less angulated, lighter boned and more square German Shepherd. Photos from the early years show much more similarity among these German, Dutch and Belgian Shepherds, particularly the Malinois variety, than exists today. This is the natural order of things, for specialist varieties of dogs did not evolve according to lines on a map but rather by the nature of their work, their weather and climate and the people and agricultural traditions among which they arose. The age old shepherds of this region of Europe tended their flocks and spoke dialects which would evolve into modern German or Dutch in an era long before the states of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany came into existence.

This Malinois is a Flemish dog, for the primitive foundation stock was found generally in the modern Flemish province of Antwerp and extending north into the Dutch province of Noord-Brabant. Mechelen (Malines in French), the city from which the variety derives its name, lies twenty kilometers north of Brussels in the direction of Antwerp. In this region national boundaries are an artificial construct; for even today in driving the rural roads it is difficult to know which side of the twisting border you are on. Indeed, the ancient region of Brabant spans the border. So if the Malinois is an international dog, he is a Belgian-Dutch dog, not a Belgian-French dog. In the words of Louis Huyghebaert:

"Since the bicycle has made traveling easier, I have amused myself by researching the most beautiful types of shepherd dogs in the areas around Malines and the north of the province of Antwerp. During the operations of the new cadastral¹⁰ revisions, I had to visit every farm of many parishes in the province, and each time I came to the same conclusion. Everywhere, I have found the type of shepherd dog described by Reul in the following way:

"It is in the Antwerp Campine, towards the Dutch border and beyond it, in Noord-Brabant (Netherlands), that the short-haired type has maintained its uniformity. Big was our astonishment to meet last year (7th of September 1892), while visiting an agricultural exhibition in Oosterhout, not far from the Antwerp border, a dozen of well-built shepherd dogs of the Belgian type with short hair, owned by the local farmers. These dogs have the size of a fox or a wolf, they have short hair, with a red-brown brindle coat; their ears are remarkably fine and well-pricked, open at the front.

"Other characteristics: triangular and long muzzle, pitch-black nose; the tail in the shape of a spike, well-carried and slightly bent backwards at the end. The first prize was awarded to a dog with rare intelligence and such a good nose to discover underneath a basket the handkerchief that its master had given it to smell and that it did not see hidden." (Vanbutsele, 1988)

¹⁰ A public record, survey, or map of the value, extent, and ownership of land as a basis of taxation.



Although use of the term Malinois would not come into widespread usage for another two decades, the formalization of the variety began in the region of the Flemish city of Malines, south of Antwerp, about 1890. Here a group of dedicated breeders, trainers and enthusiasts – centering on the Huyghebaert brothers – began to gather the primitive breeding stock and promote the Malinois.

In 1898 this more or less informal movement led to the founding of a formal club in Malines, with a focus on working character and Flemish interests, under the leadership of Dr. G.

Geudens and Louis Huyghebaert. Although it would in many ways act independently in the years to come, this new club, known as the *Section of Malines*, was technically a branch of *Club du Chien de Berger Belge* in Brussels. They became active in producing literature and holding informal working gatherings in promotion of the variety.

In these years, prior to 1901, none of the Belgian Shepherds were eligible for enrolment in the records of *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert*, which makes historical

research more reliant on the various written commentaries and publications which have come down to us.



„Tjop”.
owned by Mr. F. HUYGHEBAERT, Malines. (Reproduced from *Chasse et Pêche*.)

The first Belgian Shepherd inscribed in the records was the male Vos des Polders, a short hair of unknown origin, born in 1897 and given the number LOSH 5847.¹¹ The records indicate that this dog was bred and owned by J van Haesendonck and was also registered with *Kennel Club Belge*. (Not to be confused with the famous Vos I or Vos de Laeken.) Vos des Polders, bred to a daughter of Vos de Laeken, produced Dewet, who is regarded a cornerstone of the Malinois,

and about ten others prominent in the breeding records:

Vos des Polders LOSH.5847, 1897 (van Haesendonck)

¹¹ These registration numbers were assigned in the all-breed order of entry rather than sequentially according to breed.

Dewet (Duchenoy, 1901)
 Vos I (Jansen, 1885)
Mouche (Duchenoy)
 Lise de Laeken (Lieske)

Both Dewet and Tjop, shown below, were relentlessly inbred to establish type and thus emerged as a large part of the genetic foundation of both the Malinois and the Laeken. Notice that both dogs feature Jansen's Vos prominently in their background.¹²

 Samlo (Beernaert, 1892)

 Tomy (Joubert, 1895)
 Vos I (Jansen, 1885)
 Diane (Joubert)
 Lise de Laeken (Lieske)

Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899)

 Cora (Opdebeeck, 1897)

Salmo, in the above pedigree, was a shorthaired, brown/brindle Belgian Shepherd, born in 1892 of undocumented parents, among the most prominent of the early Malinois. He was particularly well known for his outstanding color and build. He was described as an excellent worker as well as a winner at the dog shows, and was the first shorthaired shepherd with a charcoal fawn coat and a black mask, which would become characteristic of the modern lines.

Louis Opdebeeck bred his bitch Cora¹³ (LOSH 6134), a shorthaired brindle with a mask, of undocumented origins, to Tomy to produce Tjop, a shorthaired fawn without a mask. (LOSH 6132, born November 1, 1899) Opdebeeck was a very good dog trainer, and Cora later became the winner of the first informal Ring Sport trial held in 1903.

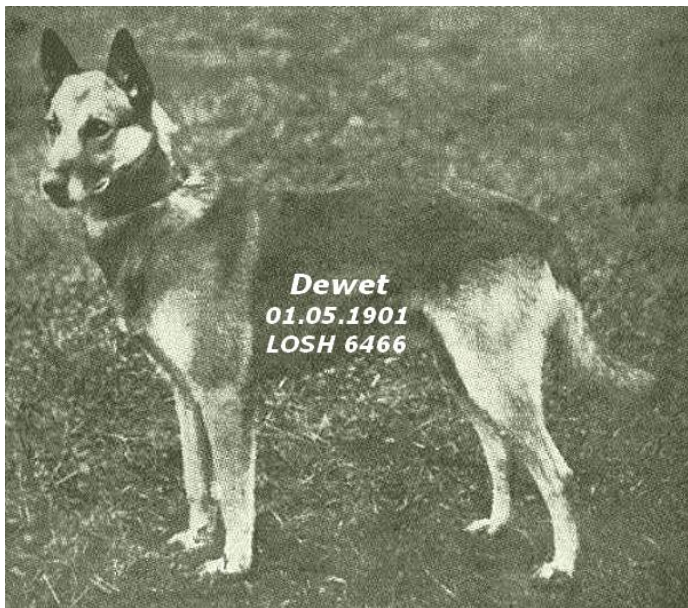
The first owner of Tjop was Frantz Huyghebaert, brother of Louis and an active breeder, a circumstance that would encourage wide use as a stud dog. Tjop would emerge as the first Belgian Malinois Champion and the most influential Malinois sire in the early twentieth century, truly a pillar of the breed.

¹² In these pedigrees, dogs with no ancestors shown are of undocumented origin, that is Samlo, Vos I, Lieske, Cora and Vos des Polders. The name in parenthesis is generally the name of the breeder or owner, and the number is the year of birth.

¹³ Sometimes known as Cora van Optwel

Notice the intense inbreeding (in red) on Tjop and Dewet :

Unknown
Samlo (Beernaert, 1892)
Unknown
Tomy (Joubert, 1895) LOB.138
Vos (Jansen, 1885)
Diane (Joubert)
Lise de Laeken (Lieske)
Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899)
Unknown
Cora (Opdebeeck) '97
Unknown
Sips Ter Heide 1906
Samlo (Beernaert, 1892)
Tomy (Joubert, 1895) LOB.138
Diane (Joubert)
Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899)
Unknown
Cora (Opdebeeck) '97
Unknown
Zet 1903 LOSH.8210
Tomy (Joubert, 1895) LOB.138
Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899) NHSB.2740
Cora (Opdebeeck) '97
Pretty 1901 LOSH.6474
Max (Huske) '94
Lady '99 LOSH.6135
Lise (Buelens)
Margot de Jolimont 1917
Unknown
Vos des Polders LOSH.5847
Unknown
Dewet (Duchenoy, 1901) LOSH.6466
Vos (Jansen, 1885)
Mouche (Duchenoy)
Lise de Laeken (Lieske)
Ducassor (Hanappe)
Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899)
Wip du Trianon '04 LOB.117
Mirza
Tititte (Dupuis)
Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899)
Beth (Dupuis) '04
Tjip '02
Margot I de Jolimont
Vos des Polders
Dewet (Duchenoy, 1901)
Mouche (Duchenoy)
Titi des Templiers 1907
Dewet (Duchenoy, 1901)
Martha des Templiers '06
Diana des Templiers '05
Dhora du Trianon LOB.1145
Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899)
Wip du Trianon '04 LOB.117
Mirza
Mouche du Trianon LOB.118
Tjop (Opdebeeck, 1899)
Beth (Dupuis) '04
Tjip '02



Tjop and Dewet, although very different in type, thus became Malinois pillars. Dewet, a powerful and coarse dog, had light fawn coloring with an overlay of black patches.

From the beginnings in the nineteenth century the Malinois was especially prominent as a working dog. With the precipitous decline of the Groenendael in work and sport competition in the years after WWI, the Malinois became the only true working variety, the others, sadly, descending into ornamental and show dog status.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, there was an ongoing, worldwide surge in Malinois

prominence and success in police service, military service and working sport competition at the highest levels.

The Malinois predominates numerically and competitively in the Dutch Police Trials and the Belgian Ring. In the French Ring the Malinois has predominated since the 1980s, typically representing as much as ninety percent or even more of the entries, with the German Shepherds a distant second in prominence.

In Schutzhund and IPO international competition, especially in Europe, the Malinois has become more and more dominant. Even when Germany wins the FCI team completion, she is represented primarily by the Malinois rather than the German Shepherd. The Malinois is increasingly prominent in military service; today the breeding program of the American military at Lackland Air Force base is exclusively Malinois.

The Groenendael

The Groenendael¹⁴ variety, the long haired blacks, trace back to two long-haired blacks, Picard D'Uccle and Petite, owned by Nicholas Rose, proprietor of the restaurant Chateau Groenendael about 5 km south east of Brussels.



Amitie vom Ludwigsbrunnen 1973

In contrast to the other varieties, the Groenendael has significant roots in the Walloon (French) sections of Belgium. Picard d'Uccle was born outside Nivelles and Petite came from the Forêt Soignes south of the Chateau Groenendael. Picard was given to Rose by a man named Prosper Beernaert from Uccle. Many of the Groenendael kennels through the 1950s were located in the Walloon region.

Picard and Petite were exhibited several times and at the first show for Belgian Shepherd Dogs, Petite won first prize in the longhair class. The first known litter of Picard and Petite, whelped May 1, 1893 and this litter produced, among others, Duc de Groenendael. Duc was bred to the longhaired Fawn Miss in 1896 and sired Milsart, the first Tervueren Champion of the breed. The Groenendael appeared on the sport field and in police service in the early years, but sadly today has been relegated to the show ring.



Duc de Groenendael

Nicholas Rose was actually only one of a number of founding breeders involved in the creation of the long haired black variety, whether the attachment of the name of his restaurant to the variety was due to the unique quality of his particular stock or his skill and luck at promotion is hard to know today so many years later.

In the early years, the Groenendael was very prominent as a working dog; Jules du Moulin and his trainer, Charles Tedesco, demonstrated this versatility by earning his World Championship at the defense trials at Paris in 1908, repeating this victory in 1909, 1910, and 1912. In 1913 and 1914 they won the inaugural

Belgian Ring championships under the auspices of *Kennel Club Belge*. A Groenendael club was formed in 1910 which existed until about 1990, at which time it merged with the existing Belgian Shepherd club under Societe Royale Saint-Hubert. Vital Tenret was founding president.

¹⁴ Groenendael is green valley in Dutch.

The Tervuren

Unlike other genetically determined attributes, such as size or other structural features, and particularly working character, which are complex and difficult or impossible to predict consequences of many genetic factors, coat color, texture and length are the consequence of a small number of genes with the probable distribution of results predictable by Mendelian principles. As an example, the black coat is dominant over other colors, which means that when a homozygotic black, that is one in which both copies of the specific gene are for black, is bred to a homozygotic reddish dog, all of the progeny will be black. Statistically, some of these first generation black dogs will carry the recessive gene for the other color, and such breedings will produce 25 percent reddish brown dogs. The problem is that it is impossible to know if a black dog has the potential to produce the other color without actually doing the breedings.

For these reasons, the Groenendael, among which there are some with a recessive potential to produce a reddish pup, has played an important role in the creation of the original Tervuerens and in reestablishing the variety after the two world wars. For similar genetic reasons, the short coated Malinois have a part of the population with a long coat recessive, and thus on occasion a breeding will produce a long coat with the Malinois color patterns. (There is a similar long coat recessive in German Shepherd lines.)

There is a lot more detail and subtlety to coat genetics, and there are people continually writing articles and exploring details, devoting a big part of their lives to it. But this is a book about police dogs, and in this realm a dog is what he does on the field or street, and if he is excellent in his work there is no such thing as incorrect coat length, color or texture.

The original long coated reddish browns, to become known as Tervuerens, emerged in the village of that name, an outlying eastern suburb of Brussels, where M.F. Corbeel, owner of the Corbeel Brewery, was an early enthusiast and breeder. Corbeel bred the fawn colored Tom and Poes, regarded as the foundation couple, to produce Miss, also a fawn. Tom was owned by the brother of Corbeel, but was not bred by him. Miss, who may have been bred by Corbeel, was bred in turn to Duc de Groenendael, a black, to produce the famous fawn Milsart in 1897, which ten years later, in 1907, after the variety was finally recognized, became the first Tervuren Belgian champion.

The Tervueren virtually disappeared during both world wars and each time was reconstructed by breeding and selecting from the other varieties. For these reasons the Tervueren of today can be traced back in the records to Malinois and Groenendaels such as Vos, Liske or Picard d'Uccle but not the dogs Tom, Poes and Milsart mentioned above. In the reconstructions, the few which did survive were bred with reddish colored long hairs, the result of recessive genes for the long coat or reddish color in these lines, born in Malinois and Groenendael litters to reconstitute this variety.

On occasion a successful Tervueren appears on the sport field, a reddish long coat born in a Malinois litter. Although such dogs are Tervueren according to their coat, their working excellence derives from the long term breeding of the Malinois for working character. Tervueren show people sometimes like to take credit for such dogs, pretend that it demonstrates inherent Tervueren working character, but this is just shallow propaganda, only influencing the thinking of the most gullible.



Ivan Balabanov with Ebor of Vitosha. The most influential Malinois breeder, trainer and teacher in America.

America

There were a few Malinois, or unregistered dogs with a distinct Malinois appearance, imported from Flandres by American Police agencies in the first decade of the twentieth century in conjunction with the tentative beginnings of American police dog service. A hand full of American pioneers had gone to see the inaugural Ghent police program, and returned with dogs.¹⁵ But these tentative beginnings evaporated with the WWI invasion of the German Army, resulting in the collapse of the Belgian social structure and the subsequent post war worldwide wave of German Shepherd popularity.

When the *Belgian Sheepdog Club of America*, BSCA, was incorporated in 1949 all or most of the dogs in this country were Groenendaels. In the 1950s a few Tervuren and Malinois imports made an appearance and the desire for AKC recognition emerged. Since there were very few Malinois at the time, a group of Tervuren enthusiasts successfully petitioned the AKC for recognition, promising a

functional club and conformation participation in order to be recognized as the breed Belgian Tervuren.

With the creation of the AKC Tervuren club in 1958, and an AKC Malinois club in 1992, instead of one breed with four varieties, as in Belgium and other FCI nations, we have a Belgian Sheepdog club for black long hair dogs, known as Groenendaels in Europe, and separate Tervuren and Malinois clubs for these newly coined "breeds." There is no recognition of the Laeken in the AKC scheme of things.

As a fine point of the nomenclature, the word Sheepdog appears only in the name of the American club for the variety that the rest of the world knows as the Groenendael. Elsewhere, as in the name of the breed in Belgium, it is Belgian Shepherd rather than Belgian Sheepdog.¹⁶ Although at the turn of the twenty-first century the Malinois emerged as a significant factor in sport and police service, none of the varieties have been especially popular in the civilian population. In 1995 for instance there were 631 Malinois registrations, 617 for the Groenendael and 527 for the Tervueren. 2006 numbers are Malinois 716, Tervuren 434 Belgian Sheepdogs 266. As a comparison, 1996 AKC registrations for German Shepherds were 79,076 and for Rottweilers 89,867.

A little caution in interpreting these numbers is in order, since worldwide registrations are trending severely down and it is not clear to what extent this represents actual decline or whether alternatively people are simply breeding and selling dogs without the expense of registration. Malinois imported for police service

¹⁵ Details in the police dog chapter.

¹⁶ As a note on nomenclature, the American spelling for Tervueren is Tervuren.

are often not registered, and sometimes not registrable because of the lack of European papers.

From 1959 until about 1980 the Tervuren, because of the small numbers, was exempt from the requirement that imported dogs must show a three generation pedigree of the same variety in order to be AKC registered. At that time it was decided there were sufficient Tervuren registered that the dispensation from the rule was no longer appropriate, and the exemption was thus rescinded. This was a significant limitation, for a long coated, reddish dog which occurs in European Malinois or Groenendael litters can be registered as a Tervueren.

Lee Jiles (Personal communication) comments:

"It has historically not been so much inter-variety breeding, but rather the use of Tervuren, that is pups with a long and reddish coat, that appear in Groenendael and Malinois litters that has had a major impact. Today in Europe with a few minor exceptions very little inter variety breeding is done."

In Europe elbow dysplasia and shrinking size in Laekens led to a more permissive policy for breeding with the Malinois, but there were only a handful of such combinations. The FCI policy of registering the Belgian Shepherds by the variety they are, not the variety of their parents (as has been the AKC policy since 1959) has made the difference in Europe and proved beneficial to the breed.

On June 13 of 1995 the AKC rescinded the three generation same variety rule. Now any Belgian import (or any other breed) need only have a legitimate three-generation pedigree from any AKC recognized foreign kennel club, which includes all FCI nations, in order to be registered.¹⁷

From a police dog perspective, this American history is more or less irrelevant, as with minuscule exceptions only the Malinois serve, and these are almost entirely imports or pups out of recently imported breeding stock, often sans registration.

¹⁷ Much of the information in this section is from Lee Jiles, whose generosity is greatly appreciated.

The Bouvier des Flandres



Centauri's Gambit

The Bouvier des Flandres was a relatively massive, athletic, short coupled, rough coated dog consolidated into a formal breed for police, guard and military service in the Flemish region of Belgium in the early years of the twentieth century. The name derives from the age old agrarian foundations, for bouvier is simply French for things having to do with the cattle or the cowherd, and the founding stock was indeed the gruff canine guardians of these Flemish meadows of the coastal region adjacent to the North Sea. The essential function was that of the drover and guardian, sharing a heritage with dogs such as the Rottweiler in the various regions of Germany and other droving and cattle guarding stock which had served in obscurity for a thousand years in the pastoral regions of Europe, all dominant, short coupled dogs with a unique blending of power and agility, in contrast to the fleetness and endurance of the herding dogs of the shepherd.

The creation of the Bouvier as a breed must be understood in the context of these Flemish people from which he emerged, following some twenty to thirty years in the footsteps of another famous Flemish working dog, the Malinois variety of the Belgian Shepherd. The formal emergence of the Malinois as the prototype police dog from very roughly 1885 through 1905 was the foundation for a century of increasingly sophisticated and refined police dog service, and set the stage for the emergence of the Bouvier des Flandres.

Thus this rustic Bouvier served in obscurity for almost another generation in the remote northwestern regions of Flanders, adjacent to the sea, as the shepherd breeds commenced, prospered and gained worldwide prominence. Although growing interest and a hand full of registrations occurred before WWI this great conflict, fought with such devastation in this entire region, delayed the real emergence until the early 1920s.

Many of the key personalities behind these two Flemish breeds were the same men, and the social and historical forces driving the process were similar. Felix Verbanck, for many years president of the Belgian Bouvier des Flandres club, mentor to many, including Edmee Bowles in America, was not a Bouvier breeder at all but a famous breeder of a principal Malinois foundation line. Men such as Louis Huyghebaert, who was the author of the principle existent history of the Bouvier des Flandres, will be famous as the father of the Malinois as long as men value such dogs. Both of these breeds emerged from among the agrarian dogs of the Flemish people, were ushered into the twentieth century driven by the same societal, agricultural and economic changes and created for the same purpose as guard and police breeds, leaving an obsolete but honored herding heritage in the past.

Beginning in the middle 1800s the sheep in the Low Countries, Belgium and Holland, were disappearing from the fields as wool and mutton was coming for very low prices from places such as Argentina and Australia, where they were evolving their own herding dogs for their own conditions. The sheep dog was on the brink of obsolescence in Belgium, and the cattle dog was not far behind.

Beginning about 1890 in Germany and Belgium men were gathering these native shepherd's dogs, often literally from the fields, with the purpose of preserving this patrimony as the herding style of agriculture was driven from these regions of Europe by the Industrial Revolution the general movement of the people to the cities. By 1905 there were well-established national Belgian Shepherd breed clubs and police style training was ongoing in local clubs in several nations. The Germans were preparing for war on a scale which would define the history of the twentieth century, and as a footnote also the fortunes of these emerging working breeds.

The first modern, formal police dog program had been established in Ghent, Belgium in 1900, and men from Britain, Germany, France and even the United States were coming to learn and seek out these famous Belgian police dogs. This was in the very heart of Bouvier country, and indeed many of the photos of these Ghent police dogs are obviously of the primitive Bouvier type in spite of the fact that another twenty years, and a devastating war, would pass before Bouvier registration began in earnest.

The Germans, led by Most, were right behind, and German Shepherds and a few Airedales, Rottweilers and Dobermans were being established in police units across Germany and then into neighboring nations such as Austria. The police dog had arrived, and was enormously popular both in service and as a civilian companion dog.

In the 1890's an attempt to establish Belgian sheep herding trials in imitation of the British had been promoted, but quickly faded because of a lack of interest in an obsolete function; these men were looking to the future rather than grasping at the past.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw the establishment of national police dog working trial systems across continental Europe, including the Ring program in Belgium, the Dutch Police (KNPV) trials and the Schutzhund or protection dog program in Germany. These became immensely popular and influential, and each has prospered until this day.

As the Belgian Shepherd, especially the Malinois, was evolving into a breed in the modern sense from the herding and farming dogs in the Flemish region north of Brussels, further to the East, in the region of Ghent and Roulers, another agrarian dog was serving in obscurity. In the lush meadows from the rivers Lys and Schelde to the coast of the North Sea there was a larger, more rugged, more rough coated native working dog adapted to the cattle predominating in the region. This rustic Bouvier also had his advocates, men unwilling to let him fade into history with a passing way of life, men who would preserve these dogs for a few brief years, extend the twilight before another generation would dissipate this heritage in the false glory of the show ring and allow it finally to pass, to their everlasting shame.

Although there were in Belgium several competing registries and several styles of bouvier were being promoted, amid a great deal of impassioned rhetoric in the various popular magazines, the Bouvier as the breed which came down to modern times was first registered in Belgium with *Societe Royale Saint-Hubert* as the Bouviers des Roulers, after one of the principle cities of the region. To give a sense of the area involved, other cities in the midst of this Bouvier emergence include Courtrai and Ypres. Later the breed was registered by SRSB as Bouvier Belge des Flandres, and then about 1930 as simply the Bouvier des Flandres. The other varieties, a small number of which were registered in both Belgium and France,

faded away, a few individuals being incorporated into the Belgian Bouvier des Flandres breeding records.

Although there was written mention of primitive bouviers in the various books and magazines commencing about 1890, it was the twentieth century before Bouviers were exhibited in dog shows in meaningful numbers, in the Netherlands as well as Belgium, and 1914 before a written standard and registry was established in Belgium. A few dogs, less than twenty, were registered before the war, and then nothing until the Germans had been driven back. In 1922 the Belgian national club was established and very soon thereafter the Dutch club came into existence. Although the Dutch began with Belgian breeding stock and had contact with the Belgians through the 1920s, thereafter the center of Bouvier activity moved from the Flemish speaking land of creation in Flandres to the French speaking areas of Belgium, resulting in a gradual loss of contact between Belgian and Dutch enthusiasts which continued during the second world war and through the 1950s.

To comprehend the Bouvier soul, we must look into the minds and hearts of these men who, in the time period roughly from 1910 through 1915, the eve of the war, were gathering together to preserve their native cattle dogs. Just as in the creation of every breed, a concept of type, physical form, and character emerged and foundation stock was sought out according to these principles and ideals.

How were these foundation dogs to be selected? For their new breed to prosper, it needed to attract advocates, and the police dog was the dog in demand for service and which roused the passion of the common man, the dog which had captured imaginations across continental Europe. The prototype was to be the larger, more aggressive, more gruff dogs guarding the fields, and this is from whence the founding lines emerged.

The draft dog function was ubiquitous in this era, and the fate of these dogs was the subject of the book and subsequent movie *A Dog of Flandres* which had to do with the Flemish or Belgian mastiff or draft dogs, entirely different dogs from the Bouvier in spite of what is portrayed in the movies. Any available dog was under duress no doubt pressed into service to turn a churn or pull a cart, but the preference was quite naturally the native draft dogs, destined to fade into oblivion. These larger mastiff and draft dog types are mentioned in the foundation selections but were incorporated primarily to produce a larger and more muscular breed rather than one with an ongoing draft or carting functionality.

Farms worldwide have their yard dogs, thirty or forty pounds, of no particular breed similar to the old fashioned farm collie dog in Britain. Some would claim that these yard dogs are progenitors of the Bouvier too, but this is absurd, makes no sense at all. These men creating the Bouvier were looking for the foundations of a police dog breed, and would have paid no notice to these nondescript yard dogs, but passed them by without a glance on the way to the fields and pastures in search of the guardian prototypes.

The creation of the Bouvier as a police and guard dog is without doubt; it is what was novel and popular, it is what was in demand for service, it is what they said they were about, it is indeed what they declared in their standard for the world to see. Modern dilettantes seeking to portray herding, draft work or other functions as the purpose of the breed, or as sufficient basis for breeding selection, are profoundly ignorant or purposefully disingenuous; there is no other way to say it. This Bouvier des Flandres was not a random gathering of the local farm dogs, but a rigorous selection from among the elite canine guardians of the region, as bred and passed down from generation to generation.

The emerging new world was that of the police dog, the training and trialing organizations were in place and prospering mightily; and these Bouvier advocates knew they were late to the party and needed to catch up, to put dogs on the police

and ring trial fields. And by the middle 1920s men such as Edmond Moreaux were winning trial field fame with dogs such as the immortal Francoeur de Liege. In this era, the Bouvier soon had presence in the Belgian Ring championships and on the KNPV trial fields, was earning his place in this new canine police dog world.

Bouvier popularity grew steadily in Belgium, approaching a thousand in yearly registrations in the 1930s with many active and vigorous breeding programs. (A mere drop in the bucket of German Shepherd registrations.) Bouviers appear regularly in the records of the Belgian Ring working championships in this era. Although the numbers were somewhat less in the Netherlands, growth was steady there also.

France is often mentioned as a nation of Bouvier origins. But it is well documented fact that the vast majority of dogs known as Bouviers today spring from the breeding of the Dutch speaking herdsmen of Flandres, which spread first to French speaking Belgium and the Netherlands. French records are very sparse, but where they can be traced back French roots of the Bouviers of today invariably go back to these founding Flemish dogs, first registered as the Bouviers des Roulers. The old, informal French "bouvier" lines – with the small "b" – simply died out, vanished into the morass of time.

The Second World War devastated the Bouvier, not so much by the direct loss of dogs – which was of course tragic – as by the damage done to the basic social fabric of Belgium by the second German atrocity in a generation. For five long years in the early 1950s fewer than 100 Bouviers were registered in Belgium with similar dismal numbers in the Netherlands and France. The breed did indeed come very near to flickering out. Justin Chastel and Felix Verbanck were the pillars in this era, and without their iron willed perseverance the Bouvier indeed might well not exist today.

Although a few odd dogs came to the Americas in the twenties and thirties, the arrival of Edmee Bowles from Belgium early in the war, fleeing the advancing German greed and plundering, began her American saga and the growth of the breed in this country. Beginning in the middle fifties and extending into the early eighties her du Clos des Cerberes line was not only the American fountainhead, it was recognized as among the best in the world by men such as Justin Chastel, modern founder of the breed in Belgium.

The work of the Bouvier des Flandres, the reason for which he was created, is police style search and protection work. In his creation, the founders melded the native cattle dogs with the larger native regional guard dogs, a natural response to the population shift to cities and industrial work that the agricultural revolution of the last century was causing all over Europe, and in which Belgium was among the earliest and most strongly affected. The words of the founders and guardians testify to this fact. As Felix Verbanck, primary leader of the Belgian club through the early 1960s, said:

"The breeders do not forget that the Bouvier is first of all a working dog, and although they try to standardize its type, they do not want it to lose the early qualities which first called attention to its desirability. For that reason, in Belgium a Bouvier cannot win the title of Champion unless he has also won a prize in a working competition as a police dog, as a defense dog or as an army dog."

Herding is not mentioned for the simple reason that there was no longer any herding to do in Belgium, that along with draft work, it was rapidly becoming obsolete when the Bouvier was being established in the formal sense.

When our first book was being written in the middle 1980s the Bouvier des Flandres, as it existed in America, was relatively close to the old style European roots and on the whole still a credible working breed. My perception is no doubt colored by our own dogs, primarily coming from the du Clos des Cerberes line of Edmee Bowles

and a little later from Dutch working lines – in retrospect sound choices. But in the intervening years the vast majority of Bouviers being produced in America have become diluted show dogs with little remaining of the original working character, or robust physique for that matter. This has been discussed extensively elsewhere; for the purposes of this commentary I refer to Bouviers des Flandres still according to the original working character, a very small and rapidly diminishing population. Those with so-called Bouviers out of contemporary popular lines will likely need to think in terms of a new dog, very difficult to find, if thoughts of serious competition are aroused.

As late as the 1980s there were significant numbers of Bouviers on Dutch KNPV fields and serving as police dogs, but today only one or two earn a KNPV certificate yearly, and they have virtually disappeared from police service. As recently as 1978 10 out of 30 police dogs in the central district of Brussels, Belgium were Bouviers, but today they are but a sad memory.

On the whole the Bouvier tends to be slow maturing, strong willed sometimes to the point of stubbornness and tends to defensiveness in the protection work. We have experienced very little handler aggression in our own Bouviers, and this seems to be a general tendency. (We of course have always been close to our dogs, many born on our kitchen floor or in our whelping room.) As with most of these breeds, the potential for dog aggression, especially among the males, is an ever-present concern, good management and training are necessary to keep this in check.

There has been a certain amount of variation in sociability among my better dogs, and this tends to correlate to some extent with early socialization. One dog which for various reasons had little interaction with strangers before eighteen months old was decidedly unfriendly when approached closely. In preparation for the introduction to the judge part of the trial extensive acclimation was required, much of it involving walking up to a stranger, shaking hands and then having the stranger throw a Kong. My other dogs with extensive early public exposure have tended from slight enthusiasm to disinterested neutrality to the passive stranger, entirely satisfactory for me. In general the stronger working line Bouviers should be extensively socialized as young pups and then brought into regular contact with strangers in varying situations. The concept of limiting socialization for fear of the dog becoming too friendly and thus not sufficiently aggressive is in my experience and opinion not supported by actual experience. All Bouviers should be socialized as pups and young dogs and be exposed to strangers and groups of strangers as they mature; lack of sufficient aggression will generally be the result of insufficient innate potential, possible in all breeds and all lines, the luck of the draw in puppy acquisition.

It is well known that individual Bouviers in European working lines have been very sharp and sometimes less than social; how much of this relates to the preference of the handler is a valid question. In that environment the control for a good score in the trial was sufficient; some of these dogs were primarily kennel dogs with outside contact limited to training and trial days. Those with such dogs take on a great deal of responsibility, but on the other hand every serious working breed needs a reservoir of hard, sharp and aggressive dogs as a breeding resource.

There are aspects of the Bouvier character that can render dealing with him difficult. He can be quite stubborn; there is simply no other way to say it. The correct way to manage this is not to attempt to break him of the characteristic but to use it to your own ends. Once you start something and fail, the Bouvier has the upper hand; the next time around the situation is likely to be more difficult. You must proceed with deliberate caution, one step at a time. Never give a command unless you are prepared to do whatever is necessary to insure compliance if you are sure he understands what is required.

Our earlier dogs had very little interest in thrown objects such as balls or Kongs; when I threw a Frisbee for our first Bouvier, a good dog who went on to Schutzhund III, he brought it back a couple of times without enthusiasm, and eventually just carried it out into the bushes and buried it. In the early 1990s we purchased Iron Xandra van Caya's Home in the Netherlands specifically because he was a very strong dog with extraordinary drive to retrieve the Frisbee or Kong, and this carried down well into his progeny. This can greatly enhance trial preparation, be an aid in creating the animated obedience; but the question remains whether this really relates to the ultimate potential in actual police style service or is a driving factor in the ongoing separation between sport field success and suitability to real world police service.

There is a strong emotional tendency to believe that one's dog is a one-man dog loving you above all others, a belief that your absence would be a great blow, but this often has more to do with the emotional needs of the man than the dog. The reality is that most good dogs can adapt to a new handler or home if sufficient time and patience are provided, and if the new trainer is supportive. While generalities are always treacherous, my observation is that the Bouviers need of a real bond with the handler, tend to strong ties and that while transition is always possible it tends to take a little longer and require a little more effort from the new handler. Thus as a generalization these dogs take significantly longer than some other breeds to acclimate to a new owner or a new training situation; the training process tends to be longer and to require a patient yet resolute and evenhanded partner.

These are not only my opinions, for in the 1980s we were told by administrators of Dutch Police programs and Dutch KNPV club instructors that roughly about twice the training time goes into a Bouvier as a Malinois, an especially quick dog to train. When asked why, if this is the case, they included a good number of Bouviers in their program, his reply translated as roughly "we have a need for some especially serious dogs in our work, and like the Bouvier for these applications." In general, the Dutch police Bouviers have had over the years the reputation of being especially strong and aggressive, and apparently there is even to this day a need and desire for such dogs. Unfortunately, over the quarter century since these words were written, such dogs have diminished to a few remnants, a tragedy for all of us for whom the Bouvier of old has a special place in our hearts.

The origins of the Bouvier des Flandres as a cattle guardian and herder, as opposed to the Belgian and German shepherd's dogs for instance, have played a role in the creation of the modern breed. The shepherd's dogs were continually in motion, putting great emphasis on fleetness, endurance and efficiency but not generally in direct physical jeopardy, not likely to have a life or working career ended by a kick from a truculent sheep. While the demands for speed and fleetness were perhaps not as extreme for the Bouvier he did need to be quick, cautious and agile in order to avoid injury from a kick. For these reasons, relative to the shepherd's dog, the Bouvier is slightly shorter in back, more square and less angulated. He is thus agile and capable of great acceleration as compared with the German Shepherd grace and efficiency. The rough all weather coat was a requirement of day and night service in the damp cool or cold conditions in the lands of origin, directly adjacent to the North Sea.

There are also consequences of the cattle-herding heritage for the sport dog. The Bouvier learned, no doubt by harsh lesson, to be wary, to respond to a threat with a quick jab of the foot or blow by the shoulder and then duck quickly out of range and decide on a next move. The bite might tend to be inhibited, reserved for serious provocation. This is well and good but a factor to deal with in training for the Schutzhund trial where the correct response to a threat is to take the offered sleeve and then hang on. Thus one must sometimes to some extent overcome by training the natural reactions in order to succeed in the sport.

Unfortunately, the Bouvier des Flandres is rapidly disappearing as a serious working dog in the homelands and the rest of the world. From personal experience I know that the three primary Bouvier des Flandres clubs in Europe – the Belgian, Dutch and French – were under the control of conformation breeders and were never really serious about the working heritage. The Dutch club is in a way the most honest and straightforward; although they pay a little bit of lip service, the typical breeder is oblivious to character or work, and would rather sweep it all under the carpet as an impediment to pet puppy sales. In the middle 1980s and a little later the Bouvier was the fashionable dog in the Netherlands, for several years registering 10,000 pups, often more than 15 percent of the total for all breeds. But this was entirely a show dog and pet bubble, although there was a moderate amount of KNPV activity at the beginning of this wave of show dog popularity, and some growing IPO or Schutzhund activity, by the turn of the twenty-first century this had fallen off to a very low level, a trend which continues unabated today. The Belgians and the French would spout noble words, but it was nothing more than lip service.

End Game

Over the past several decades breeds other than the German Shepherd and the Malinois have been diminishing in terms of service, sport participation and the overall vigor of working lines and culture, to the point of irrelevance in the real world. To be viable, a working breed must have critical mass; that is ongoing lines or breeding programs consistently placing young dogs in service and achieving working titles rather than sporadic instances of marginal dogs. Just as nature will inexorably tend to one species in a specific ecological niche, others gradually diminishing in competition for sustenance and space, modern police patrol dogs gravitate to successful lines and breeds. (Advocates of the German Shepherd would do well to take note of this while time remains.)

Today the US military accepts only German Shepherds, Malinois and a few Dutch Shepherds; typical of the policy of other modern nations worldwide as well. American police dogs are primarily imports, predominantly Malinois, or first or second generation pups out of imports. Over the years isolated individuals of other breeds have been in police service, but this is in decline and most of these are in programs out of the mainstream; all sorts of dogs become "police dogs" in obscure situations. Individual departments are free to patronize local breeders or accept donations, but there is no ongoing continuity, nothing beyond isolated instances. Sometimes dogs are highlighted for promotional purpose with little more than a photo of the dog with a man in uniform, the dog not purchased or supported with police funds or routinely engaging in patrol.

The decline of second tier breeds, such as the Bouviers and Dobermans, was the consequence of diverse social and historical factors. The popularity of the German and Belgian Shepherds was self-reinforcing, driven by the natural tendency to gravitate to the successful breeds. The enforcement of European bans on ear cropping and tail docking put nails in the coffin, but the coffin had been under construction for decades; the decline had been well under way when these bans took full effect in the middle 1990s.

Reliance on character tests for show dogs, designed and implemented by conformation breeders, incessantly watered down to accommodate the declining character of the breeding stock of the 'elite' breeders, played a substantial role in the decline of the Bouvier des Flandres in the latter years of the twentieth century. In France and Belgium, where after the Second World War seriously working titled breeding stock became ever diminishing exceptions, the credentials of the Bouvier as a working dog deteriorated to the point where the breed could no longer be taken seriously. The French and Belgian temperament tests – generally conducted by show breeders with no real working commitment – exacerbated the situation. Ultimately

the shame must primarily descend on the show breeders and national club office holders, but there is more than enough to go around.

In the second half of the twentieth century the only significant reservoir of serious working Bouviers were the KNPV lines in the Netherlands; increasingly isolated in terms of appearance, character and blood lines, on the verge of being a separate breed. It is true that a few Belgians and Frenchmen, such as Edmond Moreaux and Gerard Gelineau, with lines from Moreaux, swam against the tide and maintained working stock in their own kennels. Gelineau took his Bouviers to the French Ring Cup Final several times in the early 1970s. For the true Bouvier advocates these men will forever be heroes, for their struggle was against the sloth and greed of the mainstream Bouvier community as well as for excellence in their dogs. These men were exceptions; largely estranged from the overall breeding communities, to the everlasting shame of the pretenders in Belgium and France.

Without exception police style working dog lines are maintained only where a significant portion of the breeding stock obtains a working title as a breeding prerequisite. It might have been possible as late as the early 1980s to recover and preserve working Bouvier lines, but the people to do the job were just not there. But it would have meant earning recognized titles in established systems rather than the invention of special tests pretending to "take account of the special Bouvier character," which always turn out to be a thinly disguised farce, diluted to accommodate the weaknesses of the stock on hand. In particular, credibility would preclude the appointment of special judges specific to the testing programs, usually show breeders essentially ignorant of and uninterested in actual working character.

There is a tendency to focus on the degeneration of the Bouvier in terms of the lack of drive, aggression and confidence. These are of course fundamental components of a useful police style working dog, but only part of the picture. The dog who is strong, brave and confident, but has not demonstrated the willingness to be a cooperative, obedient partner is just as much a detriment to the heritage, and the gene pool, as the dog that is willing but not sufficient to perform under the stress of a serious confrontation. The real problem with the Dutch show lines in particular is the tendency for stubbornness, insolence and a lack of trainability as much as the lack of true fighting spirit.

Much more can be said, and has been in our previous book, to which you are referred. (Engel, 1991)

Retrospect and Prognosis

The Ghent police program commencing in 1899 provided a brief spark of prominence worldwide. Pre WWI American police imports were primarily Belgian, but we are talking about a mere hand full of dogs in programs that were marginal and – with the exception of the city of New York – short lived. WWI cast the Belgian canine world, especially their shepherds and bouviers, into a backwater that would persist for most of the twentieth century. In the post WWI era international prominence and profit were in the show and companion market, which the Germans predominated, even in Belgium itself, and because the German Shepherd especially was under strong, unified leadership with a commitment to international promotion and dominance. For most of a century the Germans were able to play both sides of the game, predominance in police and military service as well as enormous civilian popularity.

But over the past three decades the Malinois has been the dog on the move. In the 1980s most Americans, and Europeans outside of France and the Low Countries, were largely unaware of the existence of such dogs. A few of the long coats, the Groenendaels and Tervuren, had achieved minor presence internationally as

companion and show dogs, but the Malinois, unspectacular in appearance in a world of larger, more muscular, more heavily coated German Shepherds, was almost unknown to the public at large. This was about to change, for the Malinois was on the verge of coming into widespread American police and military service. Dog brokers and police departments were becoming aware that it was possible to purchase a KNPV titled dog, virtually street ready, for very reasonable prices. The police Malinois beginning to come from the Netherlands and the emerging enthusiasm for the French Ring Sport, predominantly Malinois, provided a two pronged popularity boost in the 1980s. In this era a few Germans, such as Peter Engel (no relation) through his von Lowenfels kennel, began to produce dogs competitive in Schutzhund and IPO, both in Europe and in America. The raw numbers are not impressive anywhere, one primary reason being that there has never been any real popularity among pet and companion owners, which are by far the largest market segment for breeds such as the German Shepherd or Doberman. But on the trial fields in every protection sport venue worldwide the Malinois is a dog to be reckoned with when the podium places are at stake.

Compared to the German Shepherd the Malinois tends to be smaller, more agile, more intense, volatile, very quick and often quite sharp. The better specimens in the hands of an experienced Malinois handler are second to none in any sport or service venue. But there is another edge to this sword, the over matched handler or the dog further down the quality scale can become a liability in terms of handler aggression and control, with the potential for inappropriate damage to civilians in police engagements. Potential for good is potential for evil, and an over the edge dog or inadequate trainer or handler can create serious problems of performance and especially liability. There can be little doubt that a few dogs which would have been disposed of in Europe wound up being sold to American police departments, at one time we really were gullible enough to buy almost anything. The consequence can be serious money for lawyers and legal judgments – capable of generating newspaper stories striking fear in the hearts of police administrators and politicians who eventually have to deal with the public reaction.

Earlier there were sporadic reports, often from wishful thinking German Shepherd enthusiasts but also from more neutral sources, of police departments shying away from the Malinois for these reasons; and there was no doubt some backlash. More recently these have faded as selection, of dogs and perhaps also handlers, has improved and training has adapted to the new reality. The real value added by the police dog today is in the olfactory capability, the man search and substance detection functions, and legal consequences and public relations considerations exert strong pressure for reliable control. The reality is that the breed coming up short in terms of control has a limited future no matter how remarkable other performance aspects may be, and Malinois breeders, importers and police trainers and handlers have generally adapted.

My expectation is that the Malinois is going to be a strong and increasing factor in police and especially military service worldwide, and that the German Shepherd community is going to have to become much more work oriented and competitive in order to remain a factor. In the end this is a good thing for both breeds, a monopoly tends to result in stagnation and a lack of improvement in every walk of life.

Although the Eastern European and other non-German Shepherd lines have produced an ever increasing portion of the better working Shepherds over the last thirty to forty years, there is a general continuity in that most registrations are under FCI auspices and Shepherd breeders throughout the world maintain some sort of relationship with the mother land. Historically Schutzhund has provided a common competitive venue; if your German Shepherds worked well then people could take them to most any other nation and expect comparable success on the IPO fields.

The Malinois, not so much. Indeed, the Belgian motherland was characterized by incessant strife and lack of unity from the beginning, with none of the ongoing national promotion which so effectively projected the German Shepherd, and later the Doberman and Rottweiler, into international prominence. The popularity of the Malinois worldwide has not emerged so much from Belgium as from the Dutch, French and even Germans. And these dogs are not interchangeable in a sport field sense, that is, if you buy a KNPV titled dog or a Belgian Ring dog and take it to France there is no place to trial or showcase the dog. There are no international championships, other than IPO, with the opportunity for creating a coherent international community and culture, because there is no common working venue. As a result, the Malinois is much less of a worldwide community, and there is much more variation in physical type and character attributes. Although it is of course an over simplification, there are basically three predominant populations of serious European working Malinois:

The Belgian Ring dogs under the NVBK in Belgium.

The Dutch police or KNPV dogs in the Netherlands.

The French Ring dogs in that nation.

The Belgian Ring dogs tend to be more massive and robust, due to the nature of Belgian Ring, that is, the heavy suits, the small ring area, the emphasis on the full bite and the training of the helpers, who typically are able to work to an older age. The French dogs tend to be more refined and elegant, quick rather than powerful, high in prey drive. This is of course because the French suits are very light and the decoys young men who pride themselves on speed, quickness and cleverness in deceiving the dog. The KNPV dogs have enormous variation in physical appearance and structure, making it difficult to generalize. Many of these dogs have other breeds and mixes in their immediate background such as GSD, Great Dane, or something in the neighborhood that looked interesting. Overall the tendency is larger rather than smaller, robust rather than elegant, motivated by fighting drive rather than simple prey drive.

The Belgians have always been animal trainers, and at the forefront of the protective heritage working dog movement. They led the way in the police dog application and the Belgian Shepherds, particularly the Malinois, were on the trial fields and police forces as soon or sooner than the German Shepherds. The Flemish created the Malinois which became the basis of the French working dog world and the KNPV and the Bouvier des Flandres with a population base of approximately six million compared to a German population over eighty million, and twice in the twentieth century were subjected to a German occupation which severely damaged all aspects of Belgian society, the fabric of the canine community especially as the German authorities sought out good dogs for their own use.

In a certain way the Belgians have been lost in the shuffle. The Malinois has gone on to stardom in the French Ring and on Dutch KNPV fields, but the Belgian Ring trial has fractured into three organizations, none with any serious international visibility. The NVBK people are belatedly beginning to seek an international presence, particularly in America, but the Belgians have always been a day late and a dollar short in the publicity and promotional sense, even as the Malinois almost without notice emerges as the premier working dog worldwide.

In an era when eager Americans stood by to overwhelm the winners with proffered cash at the annual GSD conformation shows, ignoring the working lines, these Belgians breeds remained in obscurity. Even in Belgium, France and Holland they have always been much less visible and popular among the public at large than the German breeds; Americans are not alone in their preference for the exotic imports. When in attendance at major Dutch conformation shows in the 1980s I can

recall seeing Belgian shepherd entries of a mere hand full of dogs, as compared to more than a hundred Bouviers. The breed clubs were there of course, you could look up names and address on the internet, but they just did not seem to matter very much.

The Malinois base was always a full order of magnitude smaller numerically because Belgium and Holland are so much smaller than Germany, and because the brunt of the two German atrocities fell on these small, virtually helpless nations. Until almost the end, the Second World War was not fought in Germany but rather in the invaded nations, and Hitler's policy was to keep the German standard of living as high as possible in order to maintain support during what he believed was going to be a quick and easy victory. It is true that events such as the air raids on Dresden were great hardships, and from 1943 onward the Russian front for the German infantryman emerged as a living hell, but the civilian population was substantially protected until relatively near the end. In occupied Belgium and Holland the Germans were actively looking for Jews and taking whatever they wanted for their war efforts, including dogs in large numbers. In Belgium particularly the post war recovery was slow and difficult, with canine activity, as reflected in registrations and trial records, greatly suppressed through the 1950s.

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[Angel's Lair All Breed](#)

[Angel's Lair Schutzhund](#)

[Police Dog Book](#)