

Extract from:

The Police Dog: History, Breeds and Service

Copyright James R. Engel

December, 2018

Preface

A police dog book is an enormously daunting project, especially for an American physically and culturally so remote from the European origins of this heritage. Yet it is a tale that needs to be told in depth and with perspective, with a sense of history, rigor and culture – even a trace of skepticism – in order to deal with the contradictions, the frailties of human and canine nature.

A long professional career as an electronics and systems engineer in the communications industry, largely involved in providing communications and information systems for police and other first responder agencies, has provided close contact with police personnel at diverse levels, ranging from technical presentations in board rooms before high ranking administrators, politicians and their ever present consultants to riding along in a squad car to learn first-hand the realities of on the street service, how the equipment and systems we were providing worked in the real world. Many years of Schutzhund training and breeding, including extensive time in Europe, provided contact with many officers and trainers, European and American, and first hand insight into many aspects of practical police dog deployment.

Although the police dog as we know it today emerged from the herding dogs of northern Europe at the advent of the twentieth century the use of dogs in the service of those in power, be it the nobility of the ancient regime or the modern state, goes back as far as history tells its story. Often these were of the Mastiff style – massive, powerful and intimidating – serving to keep the working and agrarian classes, those providing industrial and agricultural labor, in their preordained place. The industrial and concurrent political and social revolutions of the latter nineteenth century marked a real shift in power to a more egalitarian basis, and as the social and economic status of the common man improved his dogs, especially the herders, took on new roles, especially in police service. As the Industrial Revolution progressed and the rural population migrated to burgeoning industrial and commercial cities the modern police force evolved to maintain law and order. These incipient police forces found ever expanding roles for herding dogs whose historical work in the fields and meadows was evaporating.

The use of the term herders rather than referring to herding breeds is appropriate, for these formal breeds were emerging concurrently, in the same era, driven by the same demographic and societal currents as the modern police forces and their emerging canine partners. As we shall see the evolution of formal canine breeds, kennel clubs and dog shows has had insidious detrimental consequences, and increasingly the actual police dog candidates are emerging from the fringes or outside of this mainstream conformation show oriented world.

Our subject is the traditional patrol dog breeds with the protection, interdiction, search and detection roles of the classic police dog, as it emerged in Belgium, Germany and the rest of northern Europe, and as exemplified by the German Shepherd Dog, known colloquially throughout the world as the police dog.

The original role of the police dog, evolving early in the twentieth century, was as a partner for the officer on foot patrol, providing protection and deterrence, especially at night. This involved both alerting on the presence of a potential

adversary – through the sharp canine hearing, olfactory prowess and keen night vision – and engagement as necessary. In the era before squad cars, radio communication and even street lighting the patrol dog expanded the presence of the officer, projecting authority and respect.

While aggression is still often the public perception, that is the biting dog, today the typical police dog serves multiple purposes, particularly those involving search or substance detection, notably drugs. In our modern world the police dog who can only bite is essentially obsolete or very special purpose, for the olfactory potential, the sense of smell, is as or more important than deterrence and aggression. Some of these olfactory functions – including drug, explosive and cadaver detection and search and rescue – are at times fulfilled by specialist dogs without the protection or aggressive role. An inherently much less aggressive breed, such as the Labrador Retriever or Beagle, can be less threatening in a school or airport environment and can be smaller and thus easier to maintain and more agile in searching restricted areas such as the cargo bay of an airliner or a shipping container. The military also uses many such dogs for bomb detection. Thus not every police or military dog is a biting dog, and many search and detection dogs are civilian trained and handled, usually in cooperative conjunction with police authorities.

Search and rescue functions – in urban disasters or wilderness areas – are often conducted by civilian volunteer organizations, using a wide variety of medium sized dogs, such as the Golden and Labrador Retrievers in addition to the more traditional police breeds. In general, these dogs are selected and trained to be non-aggressive, since disaster victims are not criminals and are likely to be injured, unconscious or in a severely stressed mental state. These civilian search and rescue dogs and special purpose detection dogs – the Labrador Retrievers, Beagles and mixed breeds – that search for drugs, explosives or accelerants are discussed briefly in the chapter on scent work, and then left for another author and another book. A little more detailed discussion of the Bloodhound has been included in the scent work chapter because of the close historical association with police work.

While the more primitive protection dog of the Molosser type has a long and complex history, the focus here will be on the more modern, more formal police service dogs. Since the military dogs – beginning particularly in the First World War and serving with distinction in Iraq and Afghanistan even as I type these words – have commonality in function, training and breed they are included to the extent possible. The modern dual purpose police dogs and the military scout and patrol dogs are essentially the same in training and function and come out of the same breeding heritage, and are thus appropriately included here.

The police community by history and the nature of the work tends to be cohesive and parochial, a band of brothers providing mutual support, right or wrong, in the ongoing turmoil of fighting crime. Our so-called war on drugs has over the past several decades accentuated this, and secrecy and deception, necessary in any war, have also tended to estrange our police services from the public at large. In the real world, serve and protect is an extremely difficult balance to create and maintain.

Police service by its very nature requires suspicion, the natural tendency toward the default attitude of mistrust and distance from outsiders. Sometimes gathering information for publications concerning police affairs tends to bring forth this distrust, the sense that secrecy is fundamental, that enhanced public knowledge of training and tactics can only be to the benefit of the adversary, the criminal element. But my belief is that while this is quite understandable, and that while many areas – such as details of drug concealment and detection – need to be closely guarded secrets, broader public understanding of the realities of police service, especially canine deployment, are good public relations, are to the long-term benefit of police

agencies and individual police officers as well as the community at large. Serving this need for shared understanding is one of the primary reasons for this book.

Early chapters explore the evolution of the dog and the ongoing relationship with mankind, particularly as regards the pastoral existence and the canine herding function. Subsequent chapters explore the historical development and contemporary application of police style canines, both in the formal police and military context and in terms of civilian training, breeding and personal and home protection. In order to understand these applications, it is necessary to have a broad understanding of the historical evolution of the protection breeds and the trial systems – such as the German Schutzhund, Dutch Police Trials and the Belgian and French Ring Sports – that have played such a fundamental role in the evolution and preservation of effective police canine breeds.

Although much of this will provide background information and insight helpful to the breeders, trainers and users of police style dogs, this book is in no sense intended as a practical training manual. Rather it will cover the broad historical evolution of the police, military and civilian working dog breeds, applications and the supporting organizations and trial systems. While details of training methods and procedures are not our subject, hopefully the understanding of the history and evolution of these breeds, and the realities of contemporary police and military service, will prove useful to the practical trainer as well as the student of history.

In a work of such broad scope and diverse audience there is always the tendency to fall into jargon and assume knowledge common to the experienced but foreign to the casual or inexperienced reader. As an example, using the term "Koehler method" or just a reference to the man immediately conveys a great deal of information and implication to most serious dog trainers, but is oblivious to a great many readers. I generally deal with this with brief introductions, and often put explanatory information in a footnote.

This work has evolved from many years of training, research and living with the Bouviers des Flandres and from extensive European travel. Many sections of this book are rooted in articles appearing over the years, beginning with my days as a contributing editor to Dog Sports magazine in the 1980s and subsequently on my various web sites and magazine articles. Much of this research was in preparation for our award-winning book *Bouvier des Flandres, The Dogs of Flanders Fields*, appearing in 1991.

From the beginning the concept for this work has been to strike a balance between the need for a sequential narrative appropriate to those unfamiliar with the police canine culture and the natural inclination of the more experienced to go directly to the subject of interest at the moment. Thus each chapter and section is as much as possible a standalone work for convenient reference, and the order of the material is thus in a certain way arbitrary. The consequence has been that some information has been repeated in slightly different ways in the varying contexts; this has been a necessary compromise in order to render the individual chapters more complete and readable on a stand-alone basis.

One of the difficulties in a book such as this is the seemingly never-ending organizations with long names and arcane abbreviations, such as AKC, FCI, KNPV, SV and on and on. But it just cannot be avoided, politics is life and any human activity involving three or more people is fundamentally political in nature; to understand the emergence and function of the police dog one must come to terms with all of these human frailties, conflicts and sometimes even the nobility of the people driving the process. For reference, there is an appendix with a complete listing and brief explanation; perhaps in some future parallel universe this sort of thing can be overcome.

Beginning January 1, 2012 the Schutzhund trial program, created and largely controlled by the Germans and especially the German Shepherd bureaucrats, was phased out in favor of the IPO program under international FCI control. This is much more than a bureaucratic realignment, and in fact represents a major watershed in working canine affairs, as will be extensively addressed in later chapters. In some places, references to Schutzhund should more formally and correctly be to IPO, but old habits die hard and the meaning should be taken from the specific context. In general usage the generic use of the term Schutzhund for the historic trial system as well as ongoing IPO practice seems likely to persist into the foreseeable future.

Through the years many people have contributed to this book, both directly and indirectly. These include:

- Kathleen Engel, my wife, always the real breeder at *Centauri* and the person who more than any other made this work possible.
- Caya Krisjne-Locker: dog trainer, breeder, KNPV judge and proprietor of the world famous *Caya's Home* Bouvier kennel in the Netherlands. Caya knows as much about Bouviers as anybody in the world, and shares this knowledge unstintingly.
- Erik Houttuin, now passed on, served as friend and mentor for many years. As a Dutchman with extensive European experience, he introduced me first hand to the Dutch Bouvier community and the exotic world of the KNPV, the Dutch Police trainers.
- Michael Hasbrouck, French Ring enthusiast, trainer and promoter.
- Gordon Garrett, German Shepherd historian and authority.
- Kimball Vickery, police dog pioneer in Oregon, provided background material, answered questions and did a detailed review of the manuscript.
- Rik Wolterbeek, Dutch police trainer with many years of American service.
- Lee Jiles provided historical information on the Belgian Shepherds and reviewed various related text sections in draft form.
- Edmee Bowles, American foundation of the Bouvier des Flandres.
- Ria Klep, pioneering Dutch Schutzhund Bouvier trainer and breeder.

Photos not otherwise credited are my work, or an inadvertent omission, which please bring to my attention. I am, of course, responsible for all errors, and would be most grateful to anyone reporting them to me.

Jim Engel,
Marengo

© Copyright 2018, James R. Engel

[Police Dog Book](#)

[Angel's Lair All Breed](#)

[Angel's Lair Schutzhund](#)