

1879 TIMECAPSULE – CHINESE PUZZLE – The little “Chow” girl who started it all



As defined in the dictionary: Chinese puzzle; an intricate puzzle consisting of many interlocking pieces.
A very complicated or perplexing situation.

The above definition certainly describes this perplexing little girl who was the first “chow” representing the breed at shows. Public interest in Chows for breeding and exhibition began in 1880 when well known fancier of exotic breeds and authority on domesticated foreign dogs, Mr W K Taunton, exhibited a black smooth chow bitch named *“Chinese Puzzle”*. The all breed dog show was held at The Crystal Palace in London, and as there was no classification for chows at that time, she was shown in the FOREIGN DOGS class, which included everything from the Australian Dingo to the Thibet Colley Dog. There was no sex division in the classes.



The Crystal Palace in London where prestigious dog shows were held until it was destroyed by fire in the 1930's

Born in China in 1879, Chinese Puzzle reached an adult weight of thirty-two pounds and her height was sixteen inches at the shoulder. In the article Mr. Taunton wrote below he compared her to a wild animal with the face resembling a raccoon for lack of a better way to describe this unique dog. She had straight hindquarters and a blue/black tongue.

Chinese Puzzle was only shown the one time and also produced a litter that died at a young age...regardless, because of the public's fascination with this lovely "Celestial", she paved the way for many more chows to be imported into England from China to be bred and shown. The majority of importations ceased around 1900 due to stricter regulations, so it was a small window in which our earliest true Chinese Chows could be acquired .

The third article below from The Illustrated Book of the Dog has a fascinating and detailed description by Taunton of Chinese Puzzle.

Book snippet below: The Popular Chow Chow by Lydia Ingleton
1954

"It is difficult, while writing of this comparatively early history of the breed, not to mention the bitch, "Chinese Puzzle" (owned by Taunton), who was brought over from China in 1879, described as "a genuine edible dog of China". Judging from her picture, she was a "wonk" or native dog, of which better specimens may be seen today on many a Chinese farm!

One feels bound to mention her, however, because she is generally accepted as being the first Chow Chow to be shown in this country. True, she was not described as a Chow Chow, but merely entered in the foreign class at the Crystal Palace Show in 1880, where she was awarded a prize, and an extra silver medal. One would like to know by what standard she was judged!

Below: The Fanciers' Journal circa 1890 – An article detailing Mr. Taunton's notes on the Chow Chow

No one in this country, I believe, has paid so much attention to these, and many other rare breeds of foreign dogs, as Mr. W. K. Taunton, who has been kind enough to supply me with the following note :

"In China there are several different breeds of dogs showing a marked contrast to one another. The one best known, and most commonly to be met with in this country, is the edible dog, also called the wolf-dog, but more frequently the Chow or Chow-Chow dog. I am not aware whence this name originated ; and I believe I am correct in saying that it is not known by any such name in its native country. These dogs are broad in forehead, with a pointed muzzle, but not so pointed as in a Pomeranian ; the ears are small and rounded, and carried pricked well forward ; the eyes small and jet black ; the body short and compact ; the hocks straight ; the coat thick and harsh, with good undercoat ; the tail carried well curled. These dogs are both red and black ; but although the former color is most common, the majority of specimens which have been seen on the show bench for the past few years have been black.

"The principal feature of the breed is the color of the tongue, which should be black, or, rather, a bluish black. It is not very commonly known that the puppies when born have the ordinary red tongue, and it is not till after a week or so that a small black spot may be seen on the tongue, which gradually spreads till the whole tongue becomes of the orthodox color. This, however, is not always the case, and I have had puppies from the same litter in some of which the tongue has turned black, whilst in others it has only become partially so, and in the remainder it has not changed at all. H. R. H. the Prince of Wales once owned a fine red specimen of this breed, but he was spoilt from a show point of view by having a red tongue, although he nevertheless won several prizes.

"There is also a short-coated dog resembling the above, except in coat, which is like a thick fur. They are not so handsome as the long-coated variety, although very much more rare; in fact, I can only call to mind having seen two or three specimens besides those which I have owned or bred myself."

The black color of the tongue and lips of these dogs appears to me to be the most extraordinary feature about them, being, so far as I am aware, strictly peculiar to dogs of the Flowery Land. I have seen no attempt made to account for this peculiarity by any naturalist.

In another communication, Mr. Taunton states, on authentic information, "that in China the consumption of dog is limited to the lower classes, that the black is preferred, and that only the fore-legs and feet are eaten," which is surely a waste of dog flesh at variance with the usually frugal character of the Chinese.

Article below....."Chinese Dogs by W.K. Taunton" from the Illustrated Book of the dog 1840-1910

For the whole of the following remarks on the dogs of China, we are indebted to Mr.

W. K. Taunton.

In China there are several breeds of dogs showing a marked difference from one another.

The common dog of the country is not unlike a large, coarse Pomeranian, and is in all probability very closely related to the Esquimaux breed.

The muzzle is pointed, ears erect, coat long, straight and rather coarse in texture, but with a soft furry undercoat, tail closely curled over the hip. The lips and tongue are black, which appears to be a peculiarity of most of the Chinese breeds.

A dog with a black tongue or one spotted with black would lead me to suppose there had been a very recent cross of Chinese blood, for I am not aware that this colour is found in the tongues of dogs of any other country. I say a very recent cross, because I imagine the peculiarity would be lost in a generation or two.

These dogs are seen in a variety of colours, but most commonly of a deep red, and most rarely of a jet-black. In this country they are generally known as the "edible dog of China," as they are used for eating by the inhabitants of China, but only by the poorer classes of the population, and very rarely if ever at all by the upper and middle classes.

Packs of these dogs, I am told, are used in North China for hunting the wolf, and are often called the Chinese Wolf-dog.Lang Gou (*wolf dog*)



I will now endeavour to describe the subject of your illustration, which is certainly a singular specimen of the canine race. The head is more like that of a racoon than any other animal I know of ;

The skin on forehead slightly wrinkled ; small eye ; flesh-coloured nose ; tongue black ; pricked ears ; wide chest ; short, thick neck ; compact body ; short, thick, but not bushy tail, carried somewhat high, with a slight curve, but not turned over the back ; colour sandy red,

the legs being rather deeper in colour than the body ; toe-nails white, and dew-claws.

The coat is short and thick, and was very soft, like the under-coat of the Esquimaux, but it appears to have got harsher lately, especially on the back.

The inside of the ears, instead of being protected with hair which is the case with most, if not all, pricked-eared dogs is perfectly smooth.

She has a peculiar gait when out, and has little or no idea of following, but when let loose at once starts off" on her own account.

I am unable to say what part of China she comes from, and only know she was brought direct from that country. When she was given to me

I had some doubts as to her belonging to a distinct Chinese breed, never having seen any of the kind before ; but I have since been told

by a gentleman from China, as well by others who have seen her, that she is true breed, an opinion endorsed by Mr. Lort at the last Crystal Palace show.

When first she arrived she acted more like a wild animal than anything else, retreating to the back of her cage and showing her teeth in a most

determined manner. She is now, however, perfectly quiet with people as well as other dogs, and will allow puppies to play about with her without

attempting to molest them. I have bred one litter from her, but the puppies died suddenly when between three and four months old.

I may add that the height of Chinese Puzzle is 16 inches, weight 32 Ibs., and that she won an extra silver medal, Crystal Palace, 1880, only time exhibited.

CHINESE PUZZLE'S PUBLISHED AWARDS IN SHOW CATALOG FROM THE

CRYSTAL PALACE SHOW IN ENGLAND

"Admiral" mentioned in the classes also owned by Taunton was a *Norwegian sheep dog*

CLASS XLVIII.—FOREIGN DOGS.

DOGS AND BITCHES.

ADMIRAL (11,056).—Mr. W. K. Taunton's, 86, Hatton-garden, E.C.; whelped 1880.

Breeder and pedigree unknown; imported from Norway.
Alexandra Palace, medal.

BOGIE (7845).—Capt. D. F. Allen's, Grosvenor District, Military Prison, Dublin.

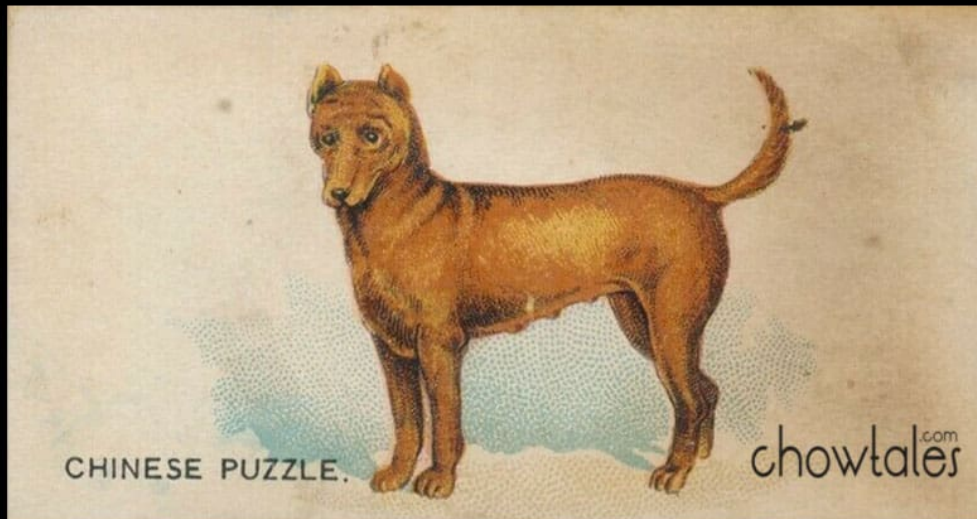
Dublin, equal 2nd (variety class).

CHINESE PUZZLE (11,057).—Mr. W. K. Taunton's, 86, Hatton-garden, E.C.; brought from *China*.
Crystal Palace, extra medal.

1. Sharpies Sister Mary; 2nd, J. Fawcay's Ada.

EXTRA CLASSES, FOREIGN DOGS.—*Over 40lb.*: Medal, F. Adcock's *Lobo*; W. K. Taunton's *Sir John Franklin*. *Under 40lb.*—Medal, Miss J. Brooke's *Trojan I.* Extra Medal, W. K. Taunton's *Chinese Puzzle*.

Don't forget to see Sir John Franklin's class at the Crystal Palace.



CIRCA 1889 Goodwin & Co - Old Judge Cigarette Card

From the DOGS series -Chinese Puzzle [Chow]
Chinese Puzzle was the first "chow" on record to
represent the breed at dog shows in England



Note the artist colored Chinese Puzzle as a red dog even though she is well documented to be black coated