

2004 MRS MANNOOCH-CHOONAM CHOWS

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A touch of genius with the Chow Chow

Immediately after the first world war a new kennel burst upon the Chow Chow scene in Britain, and within a very few years had established a line which produced champion after outstanding champion for the next two decades. Its owner, Violet Mannooch, died during the second world war but her astonishing ability to breed great dogs has ensured that her name and that of the Choonam Chows has passed into legend. Among her successes was BIS at Crufts 1936 with Ch Choonam Hung Kwong. Here MILDRED BENNETT tells the story of how this record was achieved.

IN WRITING this article on Violet Mannooch I must make it clear that I did not know her personally; she was long before my time in Chows. It is compiled from some of her own records and articles written about her during her lifetime and after her death.

I am fortunate enough to own two of her large leather-bound photograph albums, embossed with the one word 'Choonam', dating from 1919 to 1929, and her beautiful leather-bound book of pedigrees, all five generations clearly written up by herself, some adding extra details like the dog's pet name or to whom it was sold.

Brought to life

It is fascinating to read her notes and annotations in the albums, for although in some instances written over 80 years ago they bring the writer to life. One can understand what an influence she must have been in the breed and to those who knew and came into contact with her.

I well remember how the late Miss

Collett (Barwick) never tired of regaling one with her memories of the Choonams and her many visits to the kennels at the Chalfonts. The great admiration she felt for Mrs Mannooch was so obvious, as was the impression those long-dead Chows had upon her for the rest of her life in the breed.

In appearance a tall, elegant woman, Mrs Mannooch apparently had a keen sense of humour and a wonderful understanding of both animals and human beings.



'Puff', a Choonam puppy, by Ch Akbar ex Ch Choonam Prunella.

She was utterly devoted to her beloved Chows; nothing was too good for them — clockwork precision for kennel management, records of every kind were kept, puppies' meals and progress were recorded three times daily.

Her dogs were always perfectly turned out — that is obvious from looking at the photos of her winning dogs — but this was not confined to show dogs; all the kennel received the same care and attention.

She did of course employ staff, and kennelmaids often feature in photos of the Choonams, but she herself worked tirelessly with them.

Miss Collett told me she would frequently be seen taking a dish of rice pudding she had made to give as an extra special for a dog she considered required it.

Mrs Mannooch herself attributed much of her success to meticulous attention to detail, with rearing, intelligent feeding and a reasonable amount of exercise as the chief determining factors. All this certainly paid dividends for year after year she produced Chows entirely true to her own unmistakable type.

Her first Chow, **Ping Suey**, a dark red bitch, was born in January 1919, bred by Madam George. Her incomplete pedigree shows she was descended from two early Hildewell champions. The first photos in the album depict this bitch with puppies.

Then followed **Ashvale Chop Chop**, bred by Miss Seeger in 1920. She was shown with a modicum of success as the cuttings from reports in *Our Dogs* and *Dog World* show, as was **Betze Yen**, by **Ch Lenning**.

The first champion

What brought Mrs Mannooch to the fore was **The Lotus Flower**, a red bitch, cream shaded, bred in the purple in July 1915 by Mrs Allwright, by **Ch Princes Double** ex **Ch Pickles**, a great-granddaughter of **Ch Chow VIII**.

Mrs Mannooch first showed her in 1922, winning the RCC at the Crystal Palace and at the Scottish Kennel Club in Edinburgh. DW, Sept 29 commented: "Mrs Mannooch's select little kennel of Chows, which have been so prominent of late at recent shows, particularly that exceptional beautiful red bitch **The Lotus Flower**."

She wasn't shown again until

Left and left below: **Ch Choonam Hung Kwong**, seen with his owner after their BIS win at Crufts 1936. Through a number of different progeny, **Hung Kwong** is behind virtually all the Chows who made a mark on the breed in Britain after the second world war, including the revolutionary imports from Belgium.

photos Fall/Sport and General



Mrs Mannooch's brilliance as a breeder can be seen from these photos of her first Chow, **Ping Suey**, and her main foundation bitch, **Ashvale Chop Chop**, dam of **Brilliantine** and **Brilliantina**. Within a very few years she had upgraded her stock to produce the superb homebred Chows illustrated on these pages.

photos Adams



Violet Mannooch with Ch Choonam Brilliantina.

photo Adams

November 1923 when she won a first CC for her owner under Mrs (later Lady) Faudel-Phillips at the Metropolitan and Essex at Holland Park. A week later at Birmingham she won her second CC and at Manchester 1924 she became a champion. A fourth CC was awarded at Leicester. She was campaigned until she was competing in veteran, winning two RCCs in 1927.

Around about this time the affix Choonam was beginning to appear; as most will have realised Choonam resembles Mannooch spelt backwards.

In 1923 Chop Chop was mated to **Ch Ragavarno**; from this came two puppies **Choonam Ju Lee** and **Choonam Tang Foo**. The latter came out at Manchester in '24, taking the RCC. His English show career was cut short when he was sold to the Maharajah of Patiala in India. In cuttings from *The Statesman*, *Calcutta* under the heading *Items from India* and in *Will Hally's Chow Chow Chop Chop* it is reported how he went BIS at the Calcutta KC championship show and won the grand challenge class, 62 entered all breeds with 20 UK champions competing. The judge, Holland Buckley, had to place 11 in order. Not surprisingly **Tang Foo** became an Indian champion.

The thought and judgement Mrs Mannooch put into her breeding is now becoming apparent; so early in

her career as a dog breeder she not only had the eye to buy in a good bitch who became a champion but the ability to choose the right stud for her bitches. I remember Miss Collett saying how she studied pedigrees so carefully but also took into consideration phenotype — putting like to like. Surely she had was a touch of genius, aided by a natural 'eye for a dog'.

For 'Choppie's' next mate she picked Miss Peck's **Akbar**, winner of 22 CCs, sire of four champions and looked upon as one of the breed's all-time greats by all who knew him, including the late Percy Whitaker and Joan Joshua. But when Mrs Mannooch chose him as a mate for her bitch he had not even won his first CC.

Brilliant debut

A litter of six was whelped in March 1924, one dog and five bitches. She obviously liked what she had got very early on, for we have snapshots of this litter from three weeks with 'George' and 'Tina' being singled out by seven weeks. On the back of **Brilliantina's** photo is pencilled in 'bitch, keeping'; on that of another bitch, **Sal Lee**, 'for sale £10'.

Choonam Brilliantine (George) is shown at 13 weeks with his sister sitting on a bench, then again at five months.

At Crufts in February 1925, at the age of ten months he made his debut under Mrs Rawson, who had for a time owned Chow VIII. He won all eight classes he was entered in, 15 special prizes, the CC and first in the Puppy International, competing against 32 puppies of all breeds.

The reports in *Country Life*, *The Field*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* all hailed the appearance of this gorgeous puppy, an undoubted future champion. DW correspondent F B Fowler called him a sensation, the most typical specimen on the show bench since the great Chow VIII was shown from 1896-1900.

Miss Collett in her book, *The Chow Chow*, alludes to Mr Burrows





Head studies of Ch Choonam To To and his sister Ch Choonam Moonbeam. To To, through his two sons, Ch Choonam Hung Kwong and Ch Rochow Adjutant, had an enormous impact on the breed the world over. photo Adams

(Penhow) recalling when Brilliantine made his sensational debut and hearing older breeders, including the judge, comment on his likeness to Chow VIII upon whom the original Standard was based.

He continued his magnificent performance at Manchester, winning the CC and the Grand Challenge Class for best dog in show against 45 other dogs, 11 being champions, the judges being Theo Marples, Jack Holgate and Holland Buckley, the latter stating in *Our Dogs* that he was 'without doubt the greatest Chow seen for many years and he must be about the best in the world'.

£1,800 sale

At LKA in May under Miss Peck he took the CC, his third, at his fourth show thus becoming a champion before 14 months of age. He again won the grand challenge for BIS. He repeated this performance at Ranelagh, Taunton and Richmond.

His litter sister **Choonam Brilliantina** won the CC at LKA where they also won the non-sporting brace class.

Mention was now being made of prices being offered for the dog, £150 after Crufts, £1,000 after LKA, all of which were turned down.

At the Royal Show at Chester in July he won his seventh CC and the grand challenge for best dog or bitch in show and his litter sister took her second CC. Rumour was rife at the show that he had been sold.

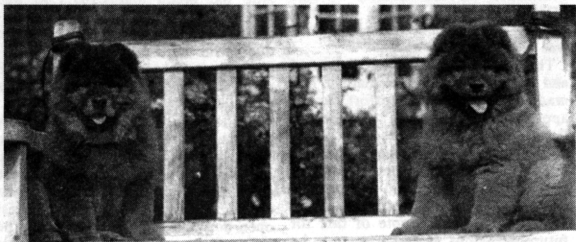
Eight days later he hit the headlines in the national press. The *Daily Express* headline ran: "£2,000 for a prize dog, liner journey to New York"; the *Evening Standard* proclaimed: "£2,000 Chow sails across the Atlantic in the liner *Aquitania* to America."

The *Daily Telegraph* called it 'the most sensational happening in the dog world for some time, sold for the remarkable price of £1,800'; these two quoted figures did cause confusion, the difference apparently being commission paid to Mrs Tidd of the Long Acre Chows.

He travelled in the care of Dr and Mrs Baer who were themselves American Chow breeders and at the same time took back some Choonams for their Moossilaue kennels. The buyer, Mrs Earl Hoover of Chicago, the owner of the celebrated Manchoover kennels, came from Chicago to New York to meet him.

He quickly became an American champion and sired six more.

In *Dog World* and *Our Dogs* the



'Tina' and 'George' at 13 weeks: the spectacular siblings Chs Choonam Brilliantina and Brilliantine.



Ch Choonam Prunella, a daughter of Brilliantine and dam of To To and Moonbeam. photo Adams



Ch Choonam Moonbeam as a junior.
photo Adams



Ch/Am Ch Choonam Brilliantine, a multiple BIS winner in his short UK show career before being sold to the US for what was then an enormous sum.



Mrs Mannooch with four of her Chows. Note the characteristic cars of the 1920s.

65

CHONAM CHOW CHOWS

CHONAM HONG T.V. (1910-1990)
CH. CHONAM HONG KWONG
CHOWMAY LAO HO

PEDIGREE OF

K.C.S.B. 262 QQ

COLOUR Red BORN August 4th 1933

BRED BY Mrs V.A.I. MANNOOCH

MATED TO

KENNELS:

Hill Cottage, Chalfont Common, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks.

Telephone CHALFONT ST. GILES 111.

PROPERTY OF MRS. MANNOOCH.

27 Chester Terrace, London, S.W.1.

Telephone SLOANE 2615.

1 Ch. CHONAM To Jo.
SIRE

1. Li-Po

1 Ch. CHONAM BRUNHELS

CH.
2 CHONAM Ping Weng
DAM

2 Ch. ROCHOW DARGOON

1 CHONAM GOLDEN DISNEY

7. ASHVALE PRINCE SHAM

8. ASHVALE NINGEE
(Ch. USA)

WAT Ch. CHONAM BRILLIANTINE

10. RUSHFORD CHU CHIN

11. CHO SEN PETER

12. SINGH KO

13. CHONAM KEE LIT

14. ASHVALE CHOP CHOP

15. ODSLOPOGRAS

16. SEN SEN

17. BLUE WANGKO

18. CHUNEE

19. Ch. AICAR

20. ASHVALE CHOP CHOP

21. NINOS TODOS

22. WYNDHAR'S WANG WOO

23. CHANG OF KANGSHI

24. FEN CHEN BETTY

25. COOCHI ONE

26. PRESTWOOD JESSIE

27. CHONAM LI KUNG HONG

28. FARLYN VARNOS GIRL

29. PECKNALL FENG TAI

30. CHUMEE

31. PEKKE GOLZIE

32. BLUE VEIN

33. PHAIBART II

34. WENDY

35. BLUE LAM

36. CLAPHAM BEAUTY

37. PECKNALL LUMK

38. WYNDHAR'S FAIRY QUEEN

39. LEE LU

40. Ch. CHEFOO

41. PECKNALL FENG TN

42. CHUMEE

43. FIK GRIGG

44. ROUGEETTE

45. CHOW CHUNG YAT

46. WYNDHAR'S BEAUTY

47. RUSHFORD CHING

48. WALK OF KANGSHI

49. Ch. LAMHUNG

50. JOE

51. YUNG LU LI

52. ANG SKY

53. BLUE YANG CHU

54. PRESTWOOD BESS

55. CHONAM HONG TAI

56. CHONAM SEN YEN

57. MELITA

58. PECKNALL CHEN SON

59. PECKNALL BOB BOB

60. PECKNALL CHUNG

61. WYNDHAR'S FAIRY QUEEN

This hand-written pedigree of Ch Choonam Hung Kwong comes from Mrs Mannooch's leather-bound book of pedigrees of all her Chows, now owned by Mildred Bennett.

CHOONAM CHOWS

● CONTINUED FROM PAGE 61

none, she knew what she wanted and was never afraid to put any dog down if she did not like it, whether from large or small kennel, but was only too pleased to see the small fry win provided their exhibit was good enough."

By 1927 she had six champions in her kennel, five bitches and one dog. In 1928 she mated Prunella, whose breeding was impeccable, to a dog called Li Po, small but very typy, bred by Miss Seeger and owned by Mrs



Ch Rochow Adjutant, a son of Ch Choonam To To and tail male ancestor of most British Chows of today. Mr Rotch and Mrs Mannooch both produced influential stock by using each other's dogs.

photo Moore

Montefiore. He was a descendant of Ch Pusa of Amwell. This produced five puppies of which a bitch Moonbeam and a dog To To were kept.

The bitch caused another sensation when she made her debut at Birmingham under Baroness Burton in December who wrote: "A most lovely puppy with glorious head." She won her first CC at the SKC in '29 and was made up at Leeds in August '30, being campaigned at the same time as T'swe T'song who won her third CC in June at Windsor.

She amassed a total of 25 CCs, the final one at LKA in 1935. This was a period when competition and quality were very high. The three great kennels, Lady Faudel Phillips' Amwells at Balls Park, Hertford, Mr Rotch's Rochows at Southside House, Wimbledon Common, and the Choonams were in fierce competition, so this was no easy achievement.

Beautiful heads

Moonbeam had the most beautiful head properties as did her brother. Head studies of these two appeared in many publications on the breed. Lydia Ingleton in *The Popular Chow Chow* wrote: "To my mind the finest bitch ever bred in this country. In every detail she was perfect. It was indeed a tragedy that she was unable to bear progeny."

To To was apparently rather a delicate dog and shown only rarely, but was made up in 1930. Red with cream shading, he had a truly gorgeous head and expression but regrettably a narrow front. According to Miss Joshua who knew him he was narrow all through; possibly that's why most of his photos depict him lying down. But it was as a stud that his name has gone down in Chow history.

Mrs Mannooch had bred Choonam Golden Dream in 1929. She introduced Mr Rotch's breeding into her line by putting her to his Ch Rochow Dragoon (36 CCs). This produced Ch Choonam Ping Weng, dam of three champions.

For her first litter she was mated to To To and whelped in August '33 three puppies one of whom was a red dog, Choonam Hung Kwong. Podge to his friends.

Mr Rotch introduced Choonam blood into his lines by using To To which resulted in Ch Rochow Adjutant, thought by some to be the best Mr Rotch ever had. These three males, Dragoon, Adjutant and Hung Kwong, were the founders of the most dominant lines in the breed which have predominated right up to the present.

Mrs Mannooch brought out her puppy dog at Belle Vue, Manchester in 1934 under Mr Hurst. He made his debut in the novice class, aged seven months. In all, he won four classes, the CC, the Puppy Lincoln and the Puppy National in varieties, a magnificent start to his show career. Moonbeam took the bitch CC. Mr Hurst years later wrote: "I was criticised at the time for my judgment but later events proved me right."

His second CC came at Bath in May; he could not be entered in April at Kensington as his owner was the judge. At his next show, WELKS at Cheltenham, he became a champion under Mme du Bois de Roest.

Will Hally wrote in *Chow Chop Chop*: "The big performance at this event was the full championship win by Mrs Mannooch's homebred puppy Choonam Hung Kwong, a truly remarkable feat, benched at only three shows, unbeaten at all of them and taken the title when a few days over nine months old."

By the end of the year he had won eight CCs, often with Moonbeam being his opposite sex winner. He was up against stiff competition as he was alternating with Dragoon who by then had 34 CCs.

BIS mix-up

Wherever he went the young Chow was causing a sensation. Mr Hally commenting how at SKC he held the crowd at his benches all the two days. He said it was the first time he had seen the dog; he had secretly wondered how good he was as his photograph had not appeared. He considered his expression ideal, 'as he was all over, only an atom of difference between him and Brilliantine'.

This opinion was obviously held by others as not only was he beating all his Chow opponents but had beaten all comers by winning RBIS at Blackpool, when he won his fourth CC, and BIS at Darlington and again at Metropolitan and Essex where the entry was 4,600 exhibits.

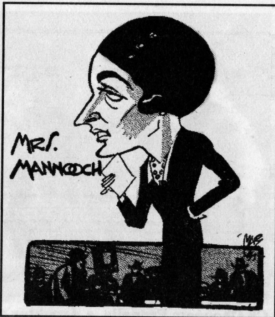
The first championship show of 1935 was Crufts. Mr Hurst had drawn an entry of 70 exhibits, 46 dogs, 24 bitches. Hung Kwong won the DCC and went on to win the Petanelle Cup for best conditioned exhibit in show and the best non-sporting exhibit.

On the second day he achieved his greatest triumph by being declared runner-up for BIS, being beaten by a Pointer who had not entered in her breed classes. Apparently the new KC rule for necessity for exhibits to be entered in a breed as a preliminary to competing for BIS did not come into force until the day after Crufts — this curious situation caused a mix up at the time.

During the year he won all but four dog CCs on offer, the others being awarded to Ch Niclos Marksman, one of which was awarded to him by Mrs Mannooch at Glasgow. At Kensington in April he won BIS, his third such win, and he was runner-up



This photo is one of many in the extensive scrapbooks compiled by E A Burrows. It may well show Ch Choonam Brilliantine with his American owner, Mrs Earl Hoover, who paid a record price for him.



A caricature of Violet Mannooch from DOG WORLD.

at Blackpool, Glasgow, Manchester and SKC.

He entered Crufts' golden jubilee show in 1936 with 22 CCs to his credit. The judge was S Simpson. He went home with his twenty-third but made Chow history by being awarded BIS.

According to reports at the time this award in the big ring was greeted with loud applause and cheering. The metropolitan press had never been known to get so excited about anything doggy before, an experience which neither Mrs Mannooch nor the Chow exhibitors would ever forget.

Even the usually calm Hung Kwong got a bit scared as photographers flashed time and time again (one can imagine that as photography in those days was nowhere near as sophisticated as now) and followed him wherever he went. Huge crowds made a bee-line for the Chow benches which quite alarmed the exhibits, it so resembled a cup tie. His wins had indeed made him something of a public idol.



Ch Choonam Sun Fang, through his dam half-brother to Hung Kwong. In a 1938 catalogue Hung Kwong is advertised at stud at the then very high figure of 15 guinea; Sun Fang and two other dogs at ten guineas, four more Choonams at six guineas and others at four guineas.

Mr Hally wrote that he could say what until then he had refrained from saying: he was quite the best Chow ever in the breed, yes considerably better than his relation Brilliantine.

Of his owner and breeder it was written that to breed one super dog in a lifetime is the lot of few fanciers in any breed but for a kennel to produce two such dogs is a triumph, all within the space of a decade.

'Truly magnificent'

As well as Hung Kwong's win Choonam Sun Fang won BP all breeds, an achievement which was rather overshadowed.

From his photographs, which certainly are not the quality of present-day photography, Hung Kwong was obviously an upstanding type of Chow, a large dog, 22½ inches at the shoulder according to the late Owen Grindey who collected heights of dogs and bitches who were celebrated in the '30s and '40s (Dragoon was 21½ inches) with excellent proportions for a dog of his size with a perfect off-standing coat with what one would surmise to be correct texture.

Miss Collett described him as a truly magnificent Chow; intelligent, impressive and masculine, with bal-

ance and great substance, and in full bloom unbelievably beautiful. Miss Joshua summed him up in a few words to me: "A magnificent piece of dog flesh by any standard."

In all he won 44 CCs, his last one at Windsor in 1939. He sired three champions, all Choonams.

His win did a tremendous amount to popularise the breed at home and abroad. Many notable people bought them; the then Duke and Duchess of Kent had a Choonam as did the Marchioness of Milford Haven, Baroness Burton and Baroness Eugene de Rothschild.

Choonam breeding went all over the Chow world including to breeders in this country whose original Chow was a Choonam.

The Choonams were mostly reds but Mrs Mannooch did breed the occasional colour. Ch Choonam Pee-Che was a black (one certainly wouldn't guess this by her name). Early on blues were bred including Ch Choonam Blue Rane, apparently a really good colour blue. Ch Choonam Sun Fang's litter sister was a cream, Mong Fang; these two, known as Sugar and Candy, were brought out at Glasgow in the March after the Crufts win.

Perseverance

Mrs Mannooch was a prominent member of the Ladies Branch of the Kennel Club and served on several Chow Chow club committees, often attending meetings at great inconvenience, always gracious but very determined and willing to take on anything that was for the betterment of the breed.

It was mainly due to her indefatigable work and perseverance that the breed's first 'specialist open championship show' was run by the Chinese Chow Club at Tattersalls in 1937 with 165 benched making 420 entries. She had 19 Choonams benched making 44 entries, four of whom were champions including Hung Kwong who was entered not for competition.

The following year at the Chow Chow Club championship show she benched 13 exhibits and Hung Kwong took BOB.

With the outbreak of war exhibiting was reduced with all the many restrictions on travel, and food shortages forced kennels to cut down their numbers. Mrs Mannooch continued to breed and the last pedigree in the book is that of Choonam Fang Weng, whelped on Sept 14, 1944.

396 registered

She had registered 396 Chows from 1923 to 1944 including one UK/American champion, Brilliantine, 20 UK champions and two Indian champions. Mr Burrows in the 1948 Midland Chow Club Year Book commented that she must have held the record for the largest number of registrations at one time; in May 1935 she registered 23 (including five future champions) and in October 1937 she registered 20 (including two future champions); whether this still stands I don't know.

For some years before the war she had lived under the shadow of different health and during the war years it got steadily worse.

She judged Chows at Birmingham in July 1944. It was restricted to eight classes and drew what was considered a good entry of 98 from 38 Chows. Mr Grindey in his breed notes expressed his disappointment that she had not written her own report; a ringside critique had been written by Tom Scott and he took exception to some of the comments on the quality of the Midland Chows. It seemed there had been a secretarial mix-up as to who was to do the write-up.

This all became rather protracted and on Aug 25 she wrote that she had made a tremendous effort under appalling difficulties to get to Birmingham, and stated: "I judge dogs as they appear to me on the day, not on their reputations nor what they have been or may be, and shall always do so, and people who object to being beaten should make note of this for future occasions when I happen to be judging."

On September 22, 1944 the breed



The Ch Choonam Brilliantine Cup, presented by Mrs Mannooch to the Kennel Club for BIS at the KC show. First winner was Lorna Countess Howe's Labrador, Ch Banchory Danilo.

notes were headed "Death of Mrs Mannooch, the passing of the world's greatest Chow Breeder". She had died on Sept 16 at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. Her husband was himself in hospital seriously ill at the same time and twice a week she had been undertaking the journey up to town to visit him. He died on Oct 18.

Her death came as a great shock to the whole Chow world. Tributes poured in from all quarters expressing the utmost appreciation of, as one correspondent put it, 'the lady who has done more for the Chow world than anyone else'.

The greatest care was taken in placing all her dogs in suitable and caring homes, ensuring her wishes as to regards her Chows were carried out. Mrs Wolstenholme had five of them



Ch The Lotus Flower, Mrs Mannooch's first champion.

including Hung Kwong. When he died in 1945 they gave a trophy in his memory, a statuette of him modelled in golden bronze on a marble base to be awarded annually to the best red dog or bitch. It is now the property of the Midland Chow Chow Club.

Memorial trophies

Enid Nichols immediately launched the Violet Mannooch Memorial Fund for a trophy to be bought in her memory. Contributions poured in from friends and admirers inside and outside the breed and £107.1.6d had been raised when it closed the following April. It was then agreed that due to the high purchase tax on trophies the purchase of a trophy would wait until more normal conditions prevailed.

At the same time the Chinese Chow Club had its own fund and bought two trophies, the Choonam Memorial Cup and the Amwell Memorial Cup. These trophies are now awarded annually at the club's championship show for best open dog and bitch respectively. The KC offers at Crufts the Violet Mannooch Memorial Trophy for best Chow Chow.