

Dogs *not* in Canada

by Ria Hörter

THE CANADIAN KENNEL CLUB RECOGNIZES 164 BREEDS, BUT THERE ARE HUNDREDS MORE WORLD-WIDE, SOME OF THEM RARELY SEEN OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

KROMFOHRLÄNDER

THE YOUNGEST BREED IN GERMANY

Many stories describing the history of a breed proudly start with: “This breed was known in Roman times” or “The ancestors of this breed can be seen on Egyptian tombs.” We could start the history of the Kromfohrländer with: “This breed is by far the youngest breed in Germany” or “This breed is the result of a meeting between two neighbouring dogs, shortly after the Second World War.” And indeed this breed is the result of a chance hit with two leading actors, a French pointing dog – probably a Grand Griffon Vendéen – and ‘Fiffi,’ a Fox Terrier. If nothing had happened afterward, the puppies would just have been mongrels, and if they were lucky, they might have found good homes. End of story.

Those two dogs however, became the ancestors of a new breed in Europe.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS

At the end of the Second World War, a dog was taken eastward by American soldiers quartered in western Germany. In the county of Siegerland – in the territory of Kromfohr, to be precise – the dog deserted and found a new home with Mrs. Ilse Schleifenbaum. She cleaned the dog up and identified him as a Grand Griffon Vendéen, a French pointing dog. Others claim that he was a Breton Griffon, a pointing dog originating from Brittany on the west coast of France.

Schleifenbaum named the drifter ‘Peter.’ One day, Peter seized the opportunity of meeting his neighbour, a Fox Terrier bitch. He not only met her, but mated her. It was quite difficult for the family to raise the puppies, due to the shortage of food. Looking at them, it was clear from the beginning that the pups shared many characteristics, and at the same time did not resemble any other breed. This was remarkable, the litter being a mating between two completely different breeds. The little dogs were cute; they are not too big, but robust, and they proved to be excellent companion dogs, in-



Origin: 20th-century Germany (Siegerland)

Original purpose: Companion dog

Description: Medium-sized dog. The length of the body is slightly greater than the height at the withers. The skull is slightly roundish, stop well defined. The length of the foreface is in relation to the length of the skull. The lips are close-fitting with dark pigment. The medium-sized oval eyes are dark brown, but medium brown is permitted. The triangular ears are very mobile and set on high at the side of the head. They are semi-drop with rounded tips, lying close to the head, with the fold not above the top of the skull. The neck is of medium length and well muscled. The back is strong and straight with well-developed loins and a slightly sloping croup. The belly is tucked up. The shoulder blade is moderately long and sloping. Forefeet are lightly arched with tight toes. Seen from the rear, the hindquarters are straight; the upper thigh is well muscled. The medium-long tail is not docked and is strong at the set-on; a slight ring tail is permitted. Gait is flowing and active, with even strides and strong drive from the rear.

Coat varieties: Rough and smooth. The basic colour is white with light brown or tan to very dark-brown markings in patches or a saddle. The head is light brown, with tan to very dark-brown markings on the cheeks, above the eyes and on the ears, and is divided as symmetrically as possible by a white blaze. Serious faults are light eyes, distinctly uneven markings on the head and absence of markings on the body.

Height/Weight: 36 to 46 centimetres (14 to 18 inches)

Information: www.kromfohrlaender.info (the German breed club)



Mrs. Ilse Schleifenbaum, pictured with Fax vom Wellersberg and Dina vom Lenneberg.

quisitive and loyal. It was one of the reasons Schleifenbaum decided to breed more litters of these dogs, at the same time trying to create a new breed.

UNIFORM APPEARANCE

Schleifenbaum was assisted in her attempts by Otto Borner, who tried to set up a second line of the new breed. Both worked hard and at one time owned more than 20 dogs. Promoting the new breed was not easy in those years after the Second World War. Germany had suffered heavy bombardment and getting enough food for humans was difficult and expensive, let alone for animals. Schleifenbaum promoted the breed by visiting national dog shows and after about 10 years the two breeders were able to present dogs with a uniform appearance – quite an achievement in such a short time. The kennels vom Wellersberg, owned by Schleifenbaum, and vom Lenneberg, owned by Borner, formed the cornerstones of the Kromfohländer breed.

It's not difficult to guess where the breed's name comes from. Kromfohr ("crooked furrow," in modern German) is a region in the county of Siegerland; *länder* denotes "coming from."

In 1955, 10 years after the first litter, the breed was recognized by the German Kennel Club (VDH) and the FCI. The most recent breed standard dates from 1998.

ILSE AND OTTO

As a young woman, Ilse Schleifenbaum (born in 1897) was a professional piano player. She travelled extensively and met many other celebrities while touring in Europe. The Second World War changed her life completely; she married, had children and stayed at home. She must have been a lively woman, because every day she took the puppies of the first litter to the town of Siegen, in her Volkswagen. She once said in an interview, "I had to make the breed known among the people." We can be sure that she attracted a great deal of attention in those days.

As a young boy, Otto Borner began his breeding career with mice and rabbits; he became involved in dogs after the war. The German Kennel Club had to be rebuilt, and Borner was one of the fanciers involved in this job. With Schleifenbaum's dogs, it was love at first sight, and creating a new German dog breed was just what he wanted to do.

A club was formed, called the *Förderverein*, for promoting the breed. At that time, Schleifenbaum and Borner had long discussions about the breed, for example about whether or not it



The Kromfohländer is a rare breed, even in its homeland Germany.

should have a beard. I'm convinced that being so close to the German Kennel Club helped Borner make his dream come true. Although Schleifenbaum didn't like the idea of an official breed club, one had to be formed after the official recognition in 1955. The club's bylaws stated that breeding should be a hobby exclusively. It was also agreed that the highest purpose should be breeding a healthy dog with steadfastness of character. Schleifenbaum was chairman of the *Rassezuchtverein der Kromfohländer e.V.* until 1980. She died in 1991, 94 years old. The breed club still exists and is very active.

In the first years, there were only two breeders, but in 1969, other German breeders – for example, the kennels vom Antareshof, vom Dieke and vom Weddern – got involved. The second generation of breeders, Countess Wanda von Westarp, Werner Rahmen and Helmut Koschnicke, broadened the base. In the first generations, Schleifenbaum and Borner had no choice but to inbreed their dogs. The Countess von Westarp is still around and has written some books about the breed.

FINLAND

Maria Akerblom, a well-known breeder in Finland, visited a dog show in Oldenburg (northern Germany) in 1956. She fell in love with the breed and after meeting Schleifenbaum, bought a bitch from her kennel, Nisba vom Wellersberg, as well as some other dogs. She became the first Kromfohländer breeder outside Ger-



The breed's triangular ears are set high and very mobile.



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continued from page 13 many. Under the affix av Ros Loge, her first litter of six puppies was born in Finland in 1962.

Today dogs from Germany are still sold to Finland, the second homeland of the Kromfohländer. The contact between the two counties became a lot easier after the removal of the strict quarantine rules. Schleifenbaum and Akerblom became friends for life and it has to be mentioned that the Finnish are breeding beautiful Kromfohländers. The first specialty for Kromfohländers was held in Finland in 1984.

COMPANION DOG

The Kromfohländer is still a rare breed, even in its homeland. In 1999, the 2,000th Kromfohländer was registered in Germany. Apart from Finland, the breed can be found in Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark. There should be a few in the U.S.

Looking at pictures of the Kromfohländer, it's obvious that this is a young breed. Remembering that, it's remarkable that most dogs, although there are rough- and smooth-haired varieties, are more or less of the same type. Apart from the coat, the distinction between the two varieties is the beard; the smooth-coated is beardless. In the beginning, breeders were confronted with the usual problems of a (new) breed: ear carriage varies and the first cases of cataract were reported.

The temperament of the Kromfohländer is lively, loyal and obedient. The breed standard says, "Aggressiveness and timidity not desired." It's not difficult to train this dog for agility, obedience or flyball. The breed is watchful, alert, intelligent and devoted to its family, which makes the Kromfohländer an ideal companion dog. Some still possesses a moderate hunting instinct inherited from their terrier/pointing-dog ancestors, but overall the breed does not roam. One of the typical features of the breed is that it does not smell at all. The coat needs little in the way of care.

People speaking or writing about the breed sometimes use the name "German Terrier"; fanciers call him simply "Kromi."

A retired bookseller and publisher, Ria Hörter is a contributing editor of De Hondenwereld, the national dog magazine of Holland.