

Imperial pugs, splendid spaniels, regal beagles and lots of courtly corgis – **Bonnie Yuill** rounds up a pack of royal pets

Originally brought to England by the Dutch monarchs, William and Mary, pugs already had a royal pedigree by the time they were adopted by Queen Victoria, who banned the cropping of their ears as unnecessarily cruel and, later, by the Duke of Windsor and Wallis Simpson.

Originating in China around 150BC, pugs were bred from the same stock that produced the Pekingese. They lived royally in the Imperial Palace, sharing the luxuries accorded to their masters – they even rode in specially-built carriages. Long before the Communist Party branded them a bourgeois luxury, pugs had safely made their way to the royal courts of Europe, probably escorted by Portuguese traders or by the Dutch East India Company.

In November 1688, the Dutch Prince, William III of Orange, and his wife the English Princess Mary, landed in south Devonshire, accompanied by several pug dogs, adorned with orange ribbons to signify their status as symbols of the House of Orange.

This honour dated from the time when a plucky little pug, called Pompey, saved the life of William III's grandfather, Prince William the Silent, who was sleeping soundly in his tent at Herminghy in 1572, unaware that Spanish assassins were silently approaching. The dog tried frantically to wake his master by barking and scrabbling, but to no avail. Then just before they broke into the tent, Pompey jumped up on to his master, woke him and saved the day. A carving of the monarch and his brave pug can be seen at William's tomb in Delft Cathedral.

There are several ideas about how the pug got its name. One idea is that the name pug is a shortened version of the Latin *pugnus*, which means "a fist", because to some, the little dog's face resembles a clenched fist.

Another explanation is that they were called "pug dogs" at the time rather than just "pugs", because they resembled marmoset monkeys, also known as pugs, which were popular pets in the early 1700s. Royal pug-fanciers have always been extremely attached to their pets.

Poor Marie Antoinette was heartbroken when she had to leave her pug behind when she travelled to France as a bride. The Empress Josephine Bonaparte was another pug-owner. Unfortunately, her favourite, Fortune, who had helped romance along by carrying messages to Napoleon under his collar, thought his new master was taking liberties with his mistress on the wedding-night and bit him on the leg.

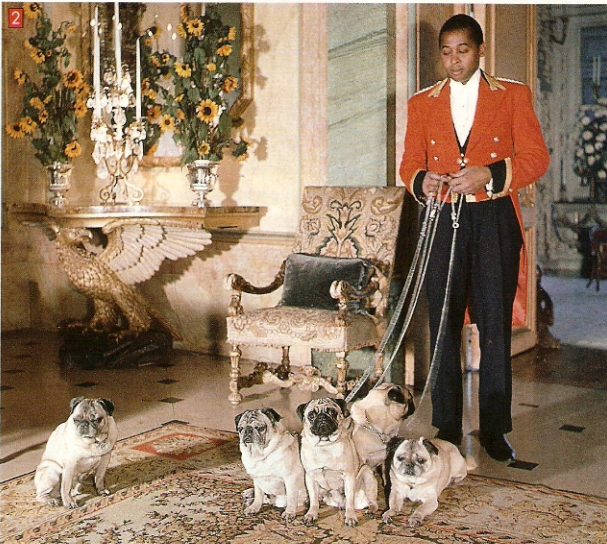
The artist and printmaker, William Hogarth (1697-1764), portrayed pugs in semi-human social situations. He owned a number of these little dogs and his favourite was called Trump.

But the pug probably reached the height of



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## ROYAL DOGS



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its popularity during the Victorian era, after the Queen received one as a gift from the Emperor of China. The popularity of pugs had been on the wane until two – Lamb and Moss – were imported from China in 1860. The breed became fashionable after Queen Victoria took an interest in them. Her favourite, a fawn-coloured pug called Bully, was a gift from Prince Albert.

She also loved black pugs, which were bred in Japan in the late ninth, or early 10th, century and brought to England in 1886. They were highly valued because the closer a pug was to the original breed, the more likely it was to produce black offspring. The Queen did pugs

1. Charles II takes the air with his mistress, Nell Gwynne, some courtiers and two King Charles spaniels, his favourite breed that took his name
2. A valet with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor's pugs: Mr Disraeli, Mr Chu, Trooper, Imp and Davy Crockett
3. The Queen takes one of her many corgis and two of her dorgis (a dachshund and corgi cross breed) for a walk
4. Prince Charles, in 1978, with his faithful labrador

the great service of banning the cropping of their ears (and those of all other breeds) as unnecessarily cruel. Her love of the breed was inherited by her daughter, Beatrice, whose favourite pug, Bosco, is buried at Windsor. Her daughter-in-law, Queen Alexandra, also had at least two. Later, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor kept many pugs – perhaps as child substitutes.

Perfect lapdogs, pugs are happy to spend their time amusing their human companions and they need little exercise.

But lapdogs are not the only type of canine companions to be treasured by royalty. Hunting dogs have been kept for centuries for their invaluable help to humans. Beagles, or their ancestors, were used in hare-hunting as early as the reign of

Edward III, who had a pack of up to 120 hare hounds with him on the battlefield

during the Hundred Years War. Regal beagles are mentioned in literature as early as 1475 and the word beagle is thought to have originated from the old French *beegueille* (which means “open throat”) referring to the musical baying they make when they scent their quarry.

Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and James I were all keen beagle-keepers. Elizabeth I had a pack of miniatures, called “pocket beagles”, bred to ride comfortably in a saddlebag. The popularity of the pocket beagle carried on into the 18th century, but these days, most beagles are at least 10 inches taller.

Queen Elizabeth II, on the other hand, moved on to corgis, which she has kept all her life, and they rate highly in the palace pecking order – footmen have been rightly demoted for mistreating them. The word corgi comes from the Welsh *corr*, meaning “dwarf” and *gi*, meaning “dog”.

In 1933, the Duke of York, the future George VI, bought a Pembroke corgi puppy, called Dookie, for his daughters, Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret.

Several more corgis followed including Susan, who was an 18th birthday present for Princess

Elizabeth from her parents.

As befits a royal pet, this little dog was hand-fed, by the two princesses, from a silver platter held by a footman. It is said that Susan was even smuggled by a servant into the going-away carriage after Princess Elizabeth married Prince Philip and went on the honeymoon without his knowledge.

Susan is just one of the pack of corgis and dorgis that accompanies the Queen, and the royal connection with corgis has certainly added to their popularity.

The intriguingly named “dorgi” was born when Princess Elizabeth’s corgi, Tiny, was bred with Princess Margaret’s dachshund, Pipkin.

On the night that an intruder entered the Queen’s bedchamber in 1992, her protective corgis were unfortunately out being taken for a walk by a footman



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– otherwise the intruder might have suffered, at the least, nipped ankles from a pack of around a dozen dogs keen to protect their mistress.

In spite of the official line that dogs are allowed on to the furniture only for photo opportunities, forensic experts investigating the break-in discovered corgi hairs on the bedcovers – a fitting testimony to the monarch’s love for her pets!

Each corgi has its own specially-made basket, raised above floor level to avoid draughts; they also have specially made rubber boots to protect their paws from sharp gravel when at Buckingham Palace.

The Queen mixes up her pets’ food every day and places it in bowls arranged in order of seniority. The royal corgis and dorgis are fed on a mixture of wheat, soya, barley, vitamins, proteins and dried meat, supplemented by royal jelly, ensuring a long and healthy life. When they die they are traditionally buried in the garden of the royal residence where they expired – Susan, Sugar and Heather, for example, all have gravestones at Sandringham. There, she breeds spaniels and labradors, but these are Gundogs as much as pets.

Her canine companions are obviously an important part of the Queen’s life; they are often even in attendance when she is meeting other heads of state or politicians.

Other members of the Royal Family tend to favour breeds other than corgis. Prince Charles owned a labrador, named Harvey, for many years, and he has also had, at least, two Jack Russells, one of which, Tigger, made the news when it ran off and was, tragically, lost forever – but Tigger’s line has continued because Prince Charles gave Camilla one of his puppies.

Prince William has owned Widgeon, a labrador, since he was a teenager and the Princess Royal, has two English Bull Terriers, Dottie and Florence, and a boxer. Her daughter, Zara, also has a boxer, called Spey. Indeed, most of the Royal Family are confirmed dog-lovers.

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