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## HOOUNDS OF UTOPIA?

### Singing the praises of the chestnut bassets from Brittany

THESE are hardly the days for tugging up new packs of hare-hounds but a Master of Harriers hoping to re-establish a kennel of hounds after a disaster, or any other 'ger Free' style of 'bobbery' enthusiast wishing to go it alone, would be well advised to take a look at the Brittany hound, the chestnut basset of Brittany.

They are believed to have been introduced into Brittany in the fifteenth century by Welsh sportsmen who took with them their rough, thick-coated hounds and crossed them with the ancestors of the Breton basset. Related to the basset Griffon Vendéen, they were once 10 per cent taller and used widely to hunt in packs — even wolf and boar.

After a lean period in which

tempered and enterprising, the Brittany hound has a very definite mind of its own — without the self-willed stubbornness of more famous hound breeds. They are exceptionally robust and have a rough, thick, trouble-free coat which lies almost smooth to the body and glows with health, varying in colour from rich chestnut to golden fawn.

#### Neat appearance

With their fine, elongated heads carried nobly, their lively expression, healthy black noses and neat, well-constructed appearance Brittany hounds are a picture of what an unspoiled working hound breed should represent. They have a wonderful nose for scent, never give up

strong, somewhat sloping; the thighs muscular.

The feet are close and compact, strong and short. The tail is not over-long, thick at the root and tapering to the tip, carried sickle-like when alert or between the hocks in repose. The ears are fine, thin and pendulous but not as long as in the standard basset. The nose is black with the nostrils well-opened. Their whole appearance is that of a well-made, well-balanced hardy little hound without any exaggeration.

#### Docile pets

It would surely be difficult to find an animal more suitable for companionship — with its sweet temperament, lovable disposition and friendly, comfortable appearance — than the chestnut basset of Brittany. They have been described admiringly as the best example of a 'big dog on short legs'.

It must be remembered however that these stout-hearted, mild-natured, unspoiled dogs have an inborn talent for tracking and possess exceptionally sensitive noses. As pets they are delightful, docile without being dull, obedient yet having definite minds of their own.

A year or so ago I voiced my disappointment to a French sportsman over the fact that we did not see this breed in Britain. He looked at me with a look of mingled scorn and anguish and then launched into a torrent of impassioned criticism of basset hounds as hare-hounds in Britain, complaining they were "all haw, bloodhound heads and crooked heavy bone".

I explained the role of the English working basset as distinct from the show-ring basset, in an attempt to mollify him. He studied me coolly for a few moments and then said, "You go on 'improving' the poodle, leave the Fauve de Bretagne to us."

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