

The Barbet: Ancient French Water Dog

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The origins of the Barbet, or French Water Dog, are believed to trace back to ancient times, and according to the [Barbet Club of Great Britain](#), “The generally accepted theory is that the Barbet is descended from corded herding dogs originating in North Africa, which were brought to Europe with the Moors as they occupied the Iberian Peninsula during the 7th and 8th centuries.”

Henry IV of France, who reigned from 1553 until 1610, is said to have enjoyed hunting waterfowl with his Barbets, and Napoléon Bonaparte is reported to have owned the breed. The breed is believed to be in the background of many of today’s purebred dogs, including the Poodle, Bichon Frisé, Newfoundland, Briard, Otterhound and perhaps others.



This painting, “The Water Dog,” by Philip Reinagle (1749-1833) was used to illustrate an article that appeared in an 1803 edition of the periodical “Sportsman’s Cabinet.”

The breed’s more modern evolution occurred in France beginning in about 1930. Its heritage cannot be traced precisely, but it is a breed similar in many ways to the other water dogs, such as the Poodle, Portuguese Water Dog, Spanish Water Dog and Irish Water Spaniel, all willing water retrievers with curly coats and long, pendulous ears.