

# **Griffon Bruxellois, Griffon Belge and Petit Brabançon**

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HISTORY AND GENETICS

**Jean-Marie Vanbutsele**

Belgian Dog Publications  
BELGIUM

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*I want to thank everyone who made this book possible  
and who contributed to both the original French edition  
and this translation in which quite a few things have been  
corrected, improved and supplemented.*

***About this second edition***

*The chapter about coat colour genetics contains updates that occurred after the publication of the first edition.*

*Dog breed names are usually written in lower case unless they contain the name of a person or place, and words relating to them. In case of doubt I have used the Oxford English dictionary as a reference.*

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## Introduction

“I have repeatedly stated how regrettable it is that there are no publications focusing on indigenous Belgian breeds. While this should be a major responsibility for our canine clubs, they have never had the required financial means.” A somewhat bitter observation written by F.E. Verbanck in 1965.

Verbanck goes on to say: “In England, a publishing house has published more than thirty small books about popular breeds. One such volume is devoted to the Griffon Bruxellois, well known in English speaking countries, but out of favour in its country of origin. This book has provided us with documentation hitherto lost to us. Miss Marjorie Cousens, one of the most ardent supporters of the breed is its author and has created such a detailed study of the breed that a companion volume for breeders has followed it.”

This book is the result of our setting to work to repair or fill this gap. It includes some of the most informative documentation on the breed from the period of its foundation in Belgium to the present day. The primary source of information is the weekly magazine *Chasse et Pêche* which was the official publication of the Société Royale Saint-Hubert (SRSH) and its affiliated clubs.

The book is also richly illustrated with paintings, photos and prints, most likely new to many readers. It also highlights and pays homage to Louis Vander Snickt who was unquestionably the godfather of the Griffon Bruxellois and its two brothers, the Griffon Belge and the Petit Brabançon.

Jean-Marie Vanbutsele, Brakel, October 2011



Grand Place of Brussels.  
On the left is the tavern À la Croix de Fer indicated by a little green cross.

# The period from 1880 to 1918

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## The start of modern cynophilia in Belgium

In 1880, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Belgium's independence, a few celebrities gathered under the name Société Saint-Hubert (the patron saint of hunters) to organize the first all-breed international dog show at the Parc du Cinquanteenaire in Brussels from 21 to 25 July 1880. Five whole days, imagine that! In this limited time, five judges examined 976 enrolled dogs, the majority of which were hunting dogs.

The success of the dog show in 1880 encouraged several fans, almost all hunters owning retrievers, to officially form a permanent group. On 18 February 1882, the Société Saint-Hubert was founded. A few years later, King Leopold II granted her the title of Société Royale in recognition of the services rendered.

In the group's first year of existence, its leaders created the *Livre des Origines Saint-Hubert* (LOSH). The first issue of this studbook appeared in 1883, and contained 172 registrations of dogs and other information about the early activities of Belgian dog enthusiasts.

On 5 November 1882, the first issue of *Chasse et Pêche* was published. Until 1970, the illustrated weekly served as the official voice of the Société Royale Saint-Hubert and numerous other dog clubs. Vander Snickt's column 'Le Chien' (The dog) was a constant and significant source of information about the description of breeds, competitions and the life of the dog club community.

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## Louis Vander Snickt



Louis Vander Snickt (1837-1911)

Born in Geraardsbergen (Grammont) in 1837, Louis grew up with small and large animals on the family farm. As the eldest of the children, he took over the management of the family home, continuing to raise large and small livestock. As soon as he could be replaced, Louis became employed as the director of the zoological garden of Ghent, later moving on to manage the zoological garden in Dusseldorf.

On returning to Brussels in 1883, he joined the staff of the magazine *Chasse et Pêche* becoming its chief editor responsible for numerous articles which were beautifully illustrated, very informative and enjoyable to read. Louis Huyghebaert later said that several volumes would not be enough to list the services rendered to stockbreeding by this tireless and always alert spirit.

## The small rough-haired griffon

From *Chasse et Pêche* of 13 April 1884

Brussels, 10 April 1884

Sir,

Would it not be the right moment for us to lay claim to the varieties of dogs that are clearly Belgian?

The Count of Beaufort, president of the Société Saint-Hubert, has set an example for the schipperkes. In the Ostend and Spa shows, they were assigned a special class.

There is another breed formerly known as the small rough-haired barbets and now called small rough-haired griffons. Would it not be useful to establish the characteristics of this breed and give it points, like for other breeds? Although I am not implying that my work is faultless, I have taken the initiative of establishing the appropriate points. In opening the debate, I hope that the columns of your esteemed magazine will receive thoughts and observations on the small Belgian griffons. Why is it that our old established breeders and exhibitors are not more involved with our Belgian dogs?

I speak of Mr Waefelaer, aged 83, a tireless dog enthusiast and of Henri Kessels, Thielemans and Pierre De Coster. If these gentlemen connoisseurs of our Belgian breeds established a breed club, just like the English enthusiasts did, the varieties in our dog breeds would soon be fixed.

The show in Spa presented us with different types of griffons, some with long muzzles and some short. At the Ostend show, we saw four that were much more alike, all short-nosed, which is the most popular here. The engraving that accompanies your edition today is the portrait drawn from nature of two examples of the breed: The male Bibi, owned by Mr Delvaux, won second prize in Ostend. The female Coquette, belonging to me, won second prize in Forest.

Little is known of the background of these absolutely beautiful dogs; this breed has been neglected, a little abandoned, but they are becoming fashionable again.



PETITS GRIFFONS A POILS DURS

Bra, (L.O.S.H. 342) 2<sup>e</sup> pr. Osterdam et 1<sup>er</sup> pr. Forest 1883

A M. J. Delvaux

Cocatta, 2<sup>e</sup> pr. Forest 1883

A Madame Bodin, née Hoffmann.

In my opinion, Mr Limbosch has some beautiful dogs, and Arthur Maes also has a nice dog of this breed, a bit above average size. Mr Notermans has a nice little male Fox, from Mr Limbosch's kennel. A beautiful dog, Kiki born in 1879 and bred by Mr J. Delvaux, was exhibited in Ostend by Charles Gomrée.

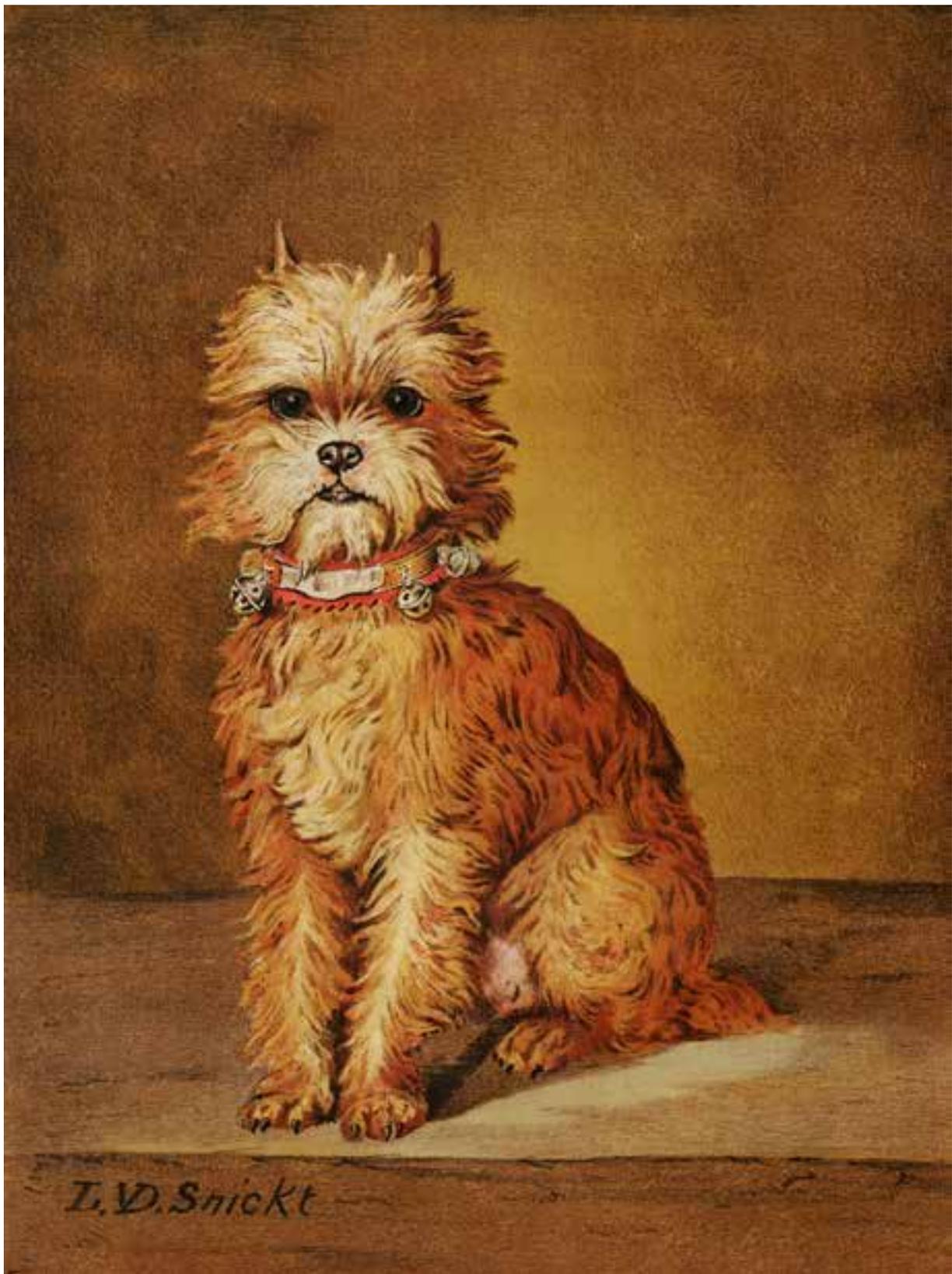
This breed is loved, and much appreciated here. The best proof that I can provide of its popularity is that when I go out with a King Charles spaniel or another English dog, they are much less admired than my little griffon Coquette.

Accept, Sir, the expression of my respect and devotion.

Mrs C. Bodinus



The Griffons Bruxellois Marquis and Lack owned by J. Van Cauter. Marquis (LOSH 1933), born in 1885, by Fox (LOSH 516) out of Miss. Breeder Mr. Béguinne. Lack (LOSH 1939), born in 1887, by Marquis (LOSH 1933) out of Colette. Breeder J. Van Cauter.



Coquette (LOSH 517), female born in 1882, owned by Mrs Bodinus.  
Artwork by Louis Vander Snickt.

## The origin of the small griffon

The distant origins of the little rough-haired griffon are based on various theories. Marjorie Cousens describes them in her book. A very early reference is the dog in Jan van Eyck's famous painting. More recent is the portrait of colonel Keenens, whose dog is unmistakably reminiscent of the Brussels griffon. The colonel was one of the judges at the May 1847 dog show in Tervuren near Brussels. This event was intended only for pointers born or raised in the country.



The Arnolfini spouses, 1434,  
by Jan Van Eyck (c. 1390-1441)



Colonel Keenens  
(Royal Army Museum collection)

The origin of the Griffon Bruxellois is more recent than the Van Eyck painting. It coincides with the first all-breed show held in Brussels in July 1880 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Belgian independence. What do we know about this show? Nearly a thousand dogs, 976 to be exact, were presented. The ninth group was made up of 'stable and apartment dogs'. In this group, the program