

## = Alpine Spaniel =

The Alpine Spaniel is an extinct breed of dog which was used in mountain rescues by the Augustinian Canons , who run hospices in the region around the Great St. Bernard Pass . The spaniel was a large dog notable for its thick curly coat . One of the most famous specimens of the Alpine Spaniel is Barry , however his preserved body has been modified on more than one occasion to fit with descriptions of the extinct breed from earlier time periods . Due to the conditions in the Alps , and a series of accidents , extinction was discussed as a possibility by authors during the 1830s , and at some point prior to 1847 the entire breed was reduced to a single example due to disease . Evidence held at the Natural History Museum in Bern show that two distinct breeds of dog were being used in the area during this time period . The breed is thought to be the predecessor to the modern St. Bernard and the Clumber Spaniel .

## = = Description = =

The Alpine was a large breed of spaniel , described as reaching two feet at the withers and six feet from the nose to the tail . It had a closely set coat , curlier than that of the English Cocker Spaniel or the English Springer Spaniel . An intelligent breed , it was particularly adapted to the climate of the Swiss Alps .

Old skulls in the collection of the Natural History Museum in Bern demonstrate a diversity in head shapes . The collection proves at least two distinct variations during the same time period . The larger skulls have a greater pronounced stop with a shorter muzzle while the smaller skulls show a great deal less stop whilst having longer muzzles .

## = = History = =

Alpine spaniels were kept by the canons of the monasteries in the Alps in order to search for travellers during heavy snow storms , including the Great St. Bernard Hospice in the Great St Bernard Pass between Italy and Switzerland . The dogs would be dispatched in pairs to search for fallen travellers , and were trained so that upon finding them would return to the canons in order to lead rescuers back to the unfortunate individuals . The Alpine breed was also used as a watchdog to guard sheep and cattle of mountainous regions , including the Himalayas .

Between 1800 and 1814 , a dog named Barry lived as a rescue dog at the hospice , and was famous enough at the time for his body to be preserved at the Natural History Museum of Bern . However , during the preservation , the taxidermist and the director of the Museum agreed to modify the body towards what they thought was a good example of the breed during that period . The head itself was further modified in 1923 to represent the Saint Bernard of that era . Prior to this the skull was a great deal flatter with a moderate stop .

In 1829 a Mastiff like dog was brought from the Great St Bernard Hospice and was exhibited in London and Liverpool to thousands of people . This publicised the existence of an Alpine Mastiff , but drawings of the dog did not match descriptions of the Alpine Spaniel from before the exhibition , and the descriptions of the Spaniel were ridiculed by later publications .

Because of the treacherous conditions in which this breed of dog was used , coupled with a succession of accidents , talk of the whole stock becoming extinct was raised as early as 1839 . However at some point prior to 1847 a pestilence swept through the region and reduced the number down to a single specimen , which forced the canons into crossing it with other breeds .

## = = Legacy = =

## = = = St. Bernard = = =

The Alpine Spaniel was one of the direct genetic progenitors to the St. Bernard . Starting in 1830 ,

the monks and canons of the Swiss Alps began crossing the dogs with the Newfoundland , expecting that the resulting offspring would have the longer hair of the Newfoundland and this would protect the dogs better from the cold . Unfortunately ice would form on the longer hair , and seeing that the dogs were no longer effective rescue dogs , the monasteries gave them away to people in the surrounding Swiss valleys .

In 1855 a stud book was opened for these crosses , which supplied the hospice with suitable dogs and also exported the dogs overseas . Many people began breeding them indiscriminately , which resulted in their modern appearance . By 1868 , the breed was commonly being referred to as the " Saint Bernard Dog " first and the Alpine Spaniel second .

= = = Clumber Spaniel = = =

It is thought that the Clumber Spaniel originated in 18th century France from the Basset Hound and the Alpine Spaniel . The name " Clumber " itself comes from Clumber Park , Nottinghamshire .