**Q&A**

**Q –** ‘Charles I’s nephew, Prince Rupert, was thought to have a dog with dark powers. But what breed of dog was it’?

Stories that Prince Rupert possessed a ‘necromantic dog’ first began to circulate during the winter of 1642-43, a few months after Charles I had appointed his nephew as General of the Royalist cavalry at the start of the English Civil War. Accounts of the dog’s name, its colour and even its sex are bewilderingly diverse, though. According to one source, Rupert had been given ‘a rare bitch called Puddle’ several years before the war began, ‘which dogs were so renowned’ that the Ottoman Sultan himself had been anxious to procure a similar specimen. This report clearly indicates that Rupert’s dog was a poodle - and the fact that several later writers stated that the beast was named ‘Puddle’ tends to point the same way. (The fact that the dog was more commonly known as ‘Boy’ suggests that this was its given name, while ‘Puddle’ referred to its breed). Little can be gleaned from the image purporting to depict Rupert’s dog which was published in early 1643, for this was, in fact, a reproduction of an old illustration of a water-spaniel. It is possible that a painting of a large, white poodle sitting on a cushion provides a more accurate representation of ‘Boy’ - but the claim that this painting depicts the prince’s famous dog cannot be traced back all that far. Perhaps the most helpful contemporary testimony is that of Lady Sussex, who, in 1643, informed a correspondent that, during a recent day’s hunting, the prince had shot ‘five bucks … and his dog, Boy, pulled them down’. Rupert’s dog was clearly quite large, then, and, this, together with the information noted above, makes it seem reasonable to suggest that Boy was a standard poodle – but we will probably never know for sure!

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