



## HISTORY OF CRUFTS

### **Crufts today**

Crufts is one of the largest dog events in the world. No longer purely a dog show, Crufts celebrates every aspect of the role that dogs play in our lives.

It has changed in ways that couldn't possibly have been imagined when the show was set up in Victorian times by the late Charles Cruft. Although it was a very different event in 1891, Charles Cruft was a great showman and would surely have enjoyed the size and scope of the event today, which is an essential date in any dog lover's calendar.

Crufts is ultimately a celebration of all dogs. It celebrates working dogs, which are fit and healthy enough to perform the jobs for which they were originally bred, such as those in the Gamekeepers classes and those participating in displays including the West Midlands Police Dogs. The show hails hero dogs through The Kennel Club Hero Dog Award, and crossbreeds are honoured through the final of the Scruffts Family Crossbreed of the Year competition. Rescue dogs are celebrated in the rescue dog agility competitions and the speed and agility of dogs is clearly seen in ever popular competitions including flyball and heelwork to music.

For prospective dog owners and dog lovers, Crufts is a prime opportunity to speak to breed experts about how to responsibly buy, rescue, train and enjoy life with your dog. The Discover Dogs booths offer a chance for potential owners and dog fans to encounter hundreds of different breeds of dog, including some they may have never heard of before!

And of course, with hundreds of trade stands selling anything and everything for dogs and their humans, it is also a four-day shopping extravaganza.

### **How it all started**

Crufts is named after its founder Charles Cruft. The young Charles left college in 1876 with no desire to join the family jewellery business and instead took employment with James Spratt who had set up a new venture in Holborn, London selling 'dog cakes'.

Charles Cruft was ambitious and a relatively short apprenticeship as an office boy led to promotion as a travelling salesman. This brought him into contact with large estates and sporting kennels. His next career move with Spratts saw him travelling to Europe and here in 1878, French dog breeders, perhaps seeing entrepreneurial talents in Cruft, invited him to organise the promotion of the canine section of the Paris Exhibition. He was just two years out of college.

Back in England in 1886 he took up the management of the Allied Terrier Club Show at the Royal Aquarium, Westminster. It was in 1891 that the first Cruft's show was booked into the Royal Agricultural Hall in Islington and it has evolved and grown ever since.

## Timeline

**1891** – The **first Cruft's show** in that name takes place at the Royal Agricultural Hall, Islington with 2,437 entries and 36 breeds.

**1918-1920** – Cruft's is not held due to the **First World War**.

**1928** – **Best in Show** award starts. The first winner is a Greyhound called Primley Sceptre.

**1932** – **First female owner** of Best in Show, Lorna Countess Howe with Labrador Retriever, Bramshaw Bob, who remains to this day the only Dual Champion (ie Show Champion and Field Trial Champion) to win Best in Show at Crufts. He repeated his win the following year

**1936** – Charles Cruft celebrates his Golden Jubilee five years early, breaking the **10,000 entries mark** for the first time.

**1938** – Charles Cruft dies. His widow, Emma Cruft, takes over the running of the show.

**1940-7** – Cruft's is not held due to the **Second World War**.

**1948** – The **first Cruft's Show under Kennel Club auspices** takes place after Emma Cruft gives over control. Held at Olympia, it proves an immediate success with both exhibitors and the public, with 84 breeds entered, almost double the number of breeds at the first Cruft's in 1891. Since then, Crufts has increased in stature year by year, now with 222 breeds competing for Crufts Best in Show annually.

**1950** – Cruft's first televised by the **BBC**.

**1952** – The **death of King George VI** on 6<sup>th</sup> February threatens the possibility of the cancellation of Cruft's for that year but the show is allowed to take place two days later.

**1954** – **Electricians strike** action leads to the show being cancelled, as electricians refuse to disconnect the stands from the previous show held at Olympia, and the venue can therefore not be cleared to make way for Cruft's.

**1955** – Cruft's becomes an **obedience championship show**. Working Sheepdogs are entered, becoming the first **crossbreeds** to compete at Cruft's. Crossbreed dogs are now a central part of the show, taking part in a wide range of competitions including agility.

**1961** – Entries **break the 15,000 mark** for the first time.

**1974** – **Cruft's changes to Crufts**. During a rebrand it is decided that the apostrophe is no longer needed.

**1978** – **Agility** first demonstrated at Crufts.

**1979** – The show moves to **Earls Court** as the increasing number of entries had the show outgrowing its former venue at Olympia.

**1980** – First official **agility** competition at Crufts - with the move comes a new atmosphere at the event.

**1982** – The show is extended to **three days** to accommodate the increasing numbers of dogs and spectators.

**1985** – The **Kennel Club Junior Organisation** is launched. Now the Young Kennel Club (YKC), its competitions form an important part of the current Crufts show.

**1987** – The show is extended to **four days** to accommodate further increases in the number of dogs and spectators.

**1988** – More than 110,000 people come through the doors making Crufts not only the **biggest dog show**, but also the most popular show to be held at Earls Court.

**1990** – **Flyball** first demonstrated.

**1991** – **Crufts Centenary Show** is held at its new venue, the Birmingham National Exhibition Centre - the first time the show had moved from London. The move accommodated the growing number of dogs and spectators.

**1994** – **Discover Dogs** area introduced as part of The Kennel Club's commitment to encouraging responsible dog ownership, enabling dog loving visitors to find out more about the different breeds and how they may fit into their lifestyle. **Good Citizen Dog Scheme Ring** introduced, enabling dogs to demonstrate their pet obedience credentials, and owners their responsible attitude to dog ownership, through obtaining a range of certificates from bronze to gold.

**2000** – **Rescue dog agility** introduced to the show, enabling rescue dogs to shine in the fun and fast paced demonstration.

**2001** – **Crufts moved** from March to May due to foot and mouth disease. The **International Agility competition** takes place at Crufts for the first time.

**2004** – The popular competition, **The Kennel Club Hero Dog Award** (formerly the Friends for Life competition) first appeared, then called Hero Dogs. The popular annual competition ensures that man's best friend gets the recognition he deserves for bravery, support and companionship.

**2007** – As the event continues to grow, the **Resorts World Arena** is used for the first time, for competitions including agility, The Kennel Club Hero Dog Award and Best in Show.

**2008** – Crufts develops its own **Facebook** page, now with more than 1.7 million followers. **Canicross**, canine cross country, is introduced to Crufts for the first time as people look for ever more ways to get fit with their dogs.

**2009** – Crufts **streamed online** for the first time and becomes the most watched channel on YouTube in the UK. The **Health Zone** is introduced, with breed and scientific experts providing information and advice about breed health and scientific advances. **Breed rescue charities**, the unsung heroes of the dog world are given a high-profile area, so that the public can find out more about their work. They are supported by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust.

**2010** – **More4** becomes broadcast partner, providing one hour of footage a night and two hours on Sunday.

**2012** – **Vet checks** for the Best of Breed winners for breeds in category three of The Kennel Club's Breed Watch system introduced.

**2013** – For the first time in its history, the final of the prestigious **Scruffts** Family Crossbreed Dog of the Year competition, run by The Kennel Club and sponsored by James Wellbeloved, takes place at Crufts at the NEC in Birmingham. Crufts was broadcast on both More4 and Channel 4.

**2014** – Crufts televised on **Channel 4** across three nights for the first time. **Obreedience**, a display competition to showcase competitive obedience with different breeds launched.

**2015** – The Young Kennel Club celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday at the show.

**2016** – Crufts celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. First official Obreedience and **British & Irish Vulnerable Breeds competitions** take place.

**2018** – **Any Variety Import breeds** can compete for the **Best in Show** title for the very first time in Crufts history.

**2023** – Celebrations of **The Kennel Club's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** take place at Crufts with a special anniversary class. Stand Up To Cancer and Crufts launch the first walkies challenge raising **£1.4 million**.

**2024** – Clare Balding celebrates **20** years presenting Crufts. Discover Dogs marks its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Hoopers is displayed for the first time in the Resorts World Arena.

**2025** – The Young Kennel Club celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the Polish Hunting Dog makes its debut in the Discover Dogs area.