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Diana Schilizzi (Chacombe Cavaliers & King Charles) 1931 — 2022



Written for the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club by Evan L Ryan

Like all members of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club, I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Diana 'Dido' Schilizzi who died 24 January, 2022, aged 90. Diana was of course, the highly regarded and internationally respected Patron of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club.

Diana was a scion of the Allfrey family, formerly of Wokefield Park; born 26 April, 1931, daughter of Eustace William Hayter Allfrey, of Chacombe Priory, Banbury, co Oxford, and his wife the former Mina Darling Wyllie. She married on the 3rd October, 1959, her husband, Stephen Noel John Schilizzi – son of Major John Stephen Schilizzi of Chacombe, Banbury, and his wife the Lady Gabrielle Sophia Annette Waldegrave, daughter of the 11th Earl Waldegrave.

Over a great many years, Diana and her husband Stephen's beautiful home, Chacombe Priory, was given over to the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club for many committee meetings and latterly Amice Pitt Rallies and that is only a small part of the generosity and kindness Diana showed for the breed and its band of devotees. It is hard to imagine a more beautiful home than Chacombe Priory & the Chacombe dogs certainly lead a truly charmed life.

Diana's Black and Tan dog, Ch Ivan The Terrible of Chacombe, was born in April 1967, heavily linebred to the influential Ch Royalist of Veren. He had an equally well known Ruby sister, Ch Cordelia of Chacombe & so Diana was quickly making a name for herself with the wholecolours; and it is no secret that in the late sixties and early seventies, they were perhaps seen as the poor relations – it was a challenge Diana clearly relished. Cordelia produced the Ruby Ch Chacombe Camilla, born July 1974 & she became a Crufts CC winner, the day she gained her title, under Mr Chandler in 1978.

Not content with producing top quality wholecolours, Diana was also breeding superb particolours at this time. Having bought in Venitia of Littlebreach, who was born in 1970; and gained her title with apparent ease, she went on to produce Ch Chacombe Alexis, born in the same year that Ch Alansmere Aquarius went BIS at Crufts – 1973.

Ch Chacombe Alexis was used by Mrs Percival to produce Littlebreach Zachary, who went back to Chacombe and became Ch Littlebreach Zachary of Chacombe; born July 1978 & becoming the final Chacombe Cavalier titleholder in England. He was also the final Littlebreach titleholder.

The Chacombe affix was carried by exceptionally successful Blenheims too, perhaps the most notable being Irish Ch Moorfields Beatrice of Chacombe, who also had a successful career in the English showings, as well as Chacombe Chatanooga; who, even today, has many descendants in the ring.

Diana first awarded CCs at Richmond 1974 (in December as it was then!) and the CC winners were Rhosnessney Prince Ivan of Rhybank, winning his 2nd CC & Ch Bredonvale Mirabelle winning her 5th CC. Over the years, she awarded CCs a great many times – including judging the breed at Crufts in 1982. Interestingly, in eleven days from the date I write this, the 10th February 2022 – it will be forty years since Diana judged the breed at Crufts. Her CC winners on the day, were a first for Spice of Kindrum at Charmsbourne and a second for the later Ch Kindrum Sylvia. Her RBCC on the day was Maxholt Love Story & indeed, 18 months later – Diana awarded Love Story a CC at the Scottish CKCS Club. Diana judged the

breed at the majority of the major championship shows in the UK, including the Cavalier Club, Crufts, UK Toy Dog Society & many club shows up and down the country.

The Chacombe story would certainly not be complete without mentioning the Chacombe King Charles Spaniels. From the late 1980s, there has been a steady stream of Champions carrying the Chacombe affix, namely the Irish Champions (in no particular order) Kara, Anastasia, Sloan, Sorrell, Titian, Horatio and Peregrine. The Champions in this country included Marmaduke, Hector, Jackson, Retained Asset, Royal Gift to Brendek, Baldragon Royal Warwick and Albert. Pam Healey has been to the forefront of the Chacombe kennel for many years & through her dedication to Diana and the Chacombe dogs, the recent Chacombe Champions have been made possible. I will leave it for others to chronicle the achievements of the Chacombe King Charles Spaniels.

The death of Diana marks the end of an era and with her passing, the Cavalier has lost one of its most devoted and staunch supporters. The breed is poorer for her loss, but fortunate to have had her involvement for such a great many years.

Evan L Ryan, 1st February 2022

Lucy Koster writes:

I was so very sad to hear of the passing of Diana 'Dido' Schilizzi. She was always such a familiar and 'stand-out' figure at Dog Shows — from when my Mum & I first started showing in the early 80's — with her shock of bright blond hair and raucous guffaws!

We met her & Stephen at one of our very first shows when my dad used to take my Mum & I. My Dad noticed another chap sitting around the ring looking not dissimilar to him — same sort of age and just a little bit bored! He took himself over and struck up a conversation and they soon discovered a mutual passion for cars....particularly racing cars, and through that we were issued with an invitation to Chacombe Priory for lunch.

So, on our first visit, and not just a little nervous, we were subject to Didos warm hospitality and her knack of making you feel completely at ease.

Over the years we paid many visits to Chacombe and that was one thing that never changed!

Dido was also always so so encouraging to me as a youngster and one of the future 'custodians' of the breed, and I learnt a lot from her. Knowledge that was so generously and freely given....never more so than when we were sat on the floor at my house if she'd come to use one of the dogs.

In later years, she cut quite a figure at shows, whizzing round on her mobility scooter as she became less mobile....but always as enthusiastic as ever. It was a sad time when that stopped.

It was so lovely when, just a few years ago I received a call from Pam to ask if I might have an older cavalier that would be suitable for Dido as her bed dog. As luck would have it, I'd got a young ruby boy who'd decided he hated the ring. It was therefore arranged that we take him to Chacombe....along with the obligatory lunch invitation....to see what he & Dido thought of each other. We had a wonderful afternoon, meeting some good friends of Didos, who herself was able to join us for lunch...albeit briefly, but who had still managed to look fabulous complete with her 'slap' on (as she used to call it.) And to say it was a love match between her & Jarvis is an under-statement.

The last memory I have is of Dido sat up in her beautiful 4 poster bed, Jarvis nestled in the crook of her arm, and both grinning from ear to ear.

RIP Dido....there will never be another like you.

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