

the
chartreux
a living legend...



Moumoune's Ragout, a 7 mo. female Chtx. owned by Mary Campbell, has almost attained her adult size; eye color is complete; coat color has evened-out.

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A recent advertising campaign for the mink industry featured photographs of famous, glamorous women garbed in opulent furs, and bore the caption: "What befits a legend most? Mink." While sable may befit the long-limbed actresses, the four-legged feline stars of France sport their own elegant fur coats of iridescent blue/grey, far rarer than mink. Beneath the fur, and richer in history and nobility, exists one of the most enduring members of the cat world, a living legend - the Chartreux.

FANTASY AND FACT

All too often a profusion of myth, however irresistible, can render one's credibility suspect. In the case of felines, such legends run the gamut from archaic folklore in the Aesop tradition, to quaint fantasy, to utter absurdity. To understand the wealth of lore tied to the Chartreux cat as well as the lack of cogent, reliable information on the breed in English speaking countries, it is necessary to realize three important phenomena. First, the very antiquity of the Chartreux breed makes it susceptible to myth. Secondly, the cat is something of a French national treasure and the French, as we know, prefer to keep a good thing to themselves. Third, and most important is the virtual monopoly of British authorship in feline publications found in our North American libraries. Perhaps publishers deem the feline book market too insignificant to warrant the translation of foreign literature, so with precious few exceptions we find none of this valuable reference material on our own bookshelves. This is unfortunate since much of the scientific data attesting to the Chartreux's antiquity is printed in 18th or 19th Century literature composed in Latin, French, Dutton, etc. While we owe most of our beautiful breeds and our feline husbandry educations to the ingenuity of the British cat fanciers, these sagacious islanders, for the same reasons mentioned above, are sadly unin-

formed on the subject of France's well-guarded secret, the Chartreux cat. As one Frenchman put it: "You can't spend very long in France without seeing a Chartreux, yet you could live in Britain and not be aware of the existence of the breed. How wide *is* that Channel?"

Within the past ten years, as the Chartreux emerged from its isolation in France to become one of North America's most desired breeds, numerous English language publications, if mentioning the Chartreux at all, have described it variously as: a green cat; a Siamese derivative; a breed identical to the British Shorthair Blue; and have even related the dubious tale of patron monks sexually altering the cats before releasing them from the cloister. While I don't dispute the 17th Century monk's ability to neuter a Tom, the idea of one of the good friars performing ovariectomies is supremely difficult to accept!

Imply to any patriotic 'francais' that his Chartreux cat is a new breed and he will probably, with customary gallic fervor, escort you to the nearest guillotine, all the while protesting passionately that, "Mon Dieu, the others are mere upstarts by comparison! Was not our 'petit bleu' brought to us by the 'peres de Chartreuse' during the Crusades and was he not named by the great Buffon, Diderot, and our beloved Colette?" Fiction or fact, in any case the Frenchman should be justifiably proud.

AUTHENTICITY AND PROBABLE ORIGINS

It remains to us seekers of truth to begin our quest at two sources: with the Chartreux's traditional mentors, the French and, above all, with the cats themselves, whom we may trust to never deceive us.

Is the Chartreux a natural-breed?

How old is it?

Where and under what circumstances did it originate?

To these questions we can answer respectively: yes; we don't know; and Ditto.

The first question is simple enough and must generate nothing less than an affirmative response. The Chartreux fulfills all the requirements of the natural breed. It has an enviably strong genetic material which reproduces itself consistently, and has done so for centuries with little, if any, interference from man, under the most difficult assimilation-defying conditions. Regardless of origin, the Chartreux progenitor's make-up was strong enough to have allowed its descendants to remain distinctly different from the European Domestic with whom it was compelled to mate.

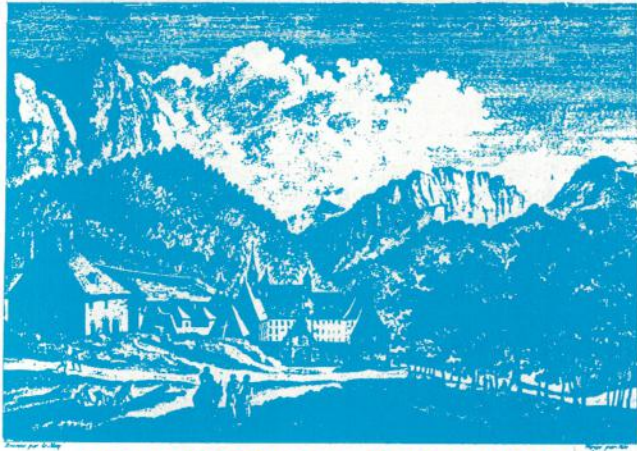
The Chartreux's credentials are impossible to dispute. The name, "Chat des Chartreux," first appeared in the DUTCH UNIVERSAL DICTIONARY OF COMMERCE, NATURAL HISTORY, AND THE ARTS AND TRADES, by Savarry des Bruslon, 1723, where the cat's origin was attributed to the Chartreux's monks whom, it said, "had the first [ones] of the breed." Written references to the unnamed, "en-

tirely gray," or blue cats of France, however, extend beyond four centuries; verbal legends among the French people being older yet. The Chartreux cat was cited as a race separate from the common Domestic by the patriarchs of Natural History, i.e. Linnaeus and Buffon (circa 1700's), making it one of the longest continuously recognized breeds of *Felis domestica* in the Western World. The Chartreux cat and its appellation became so commonplace to the French that the 1865 GRAND LAROUSSE conferred the name to a species of mushroom whose color resembled the cat's own. Never did this blue/gray hue identify with the robes of the Chartreux monks, as these were an off-white color. Nor were the monks' woollens fabricated from cat fur (a conventional practice in olden times), but from goat hair.

Appearing at a time in history when the cat was alternately revered and despised, misunderstood and virtually ignored, how did the Chartreux maintain its name, iden-



Here, Ragout displays the beautiful straight nose of the breed.



VUE DU MONASTERE DE LA GRANDE CHARTREUSE.



Motto of the Carthusian Order:
"The Cross Stands Firm While The World Turns"



Seal of the Chartreuse Wineries.
Note insignia @ center

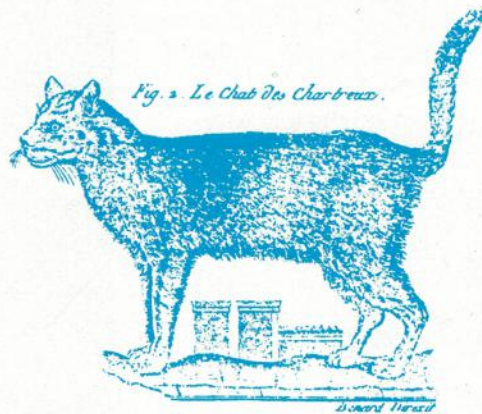


Fig. 2. Le Chat Des Chartreux.

1820 Mammalogie de Desmaret. Le nez est droit sans stop, et fort du bout.
(Book title) • The nose is straight without stop & strong at the end.

tity and breed integrity, resisting total incorporation into the European Domestic population? Some suggestions of human interference are found in many of the venerable Natural History texts which described the cat. These sources are far too numerous to list, but the oldest of these, the 1723 Dutch DICTIONARY, made two such suggestions: one, which linked the cats to the monks; and another which revealed its use in the fur/textile industry. In the former case one could assume that the cats were kept (and possibly bred) as ratters. The hunting aptitudes of the Chartreux cats are legendary: one Canadian individual reputedly killed and dragged home a full grown bobcat! In the latter case, concerning their employment as a commercial item, one need only see the Chartreux's coat to understand its value to furriers. At that epoch the fur of the newly introduced Angora was prized for its resemblance to white fox, while the Chartreux's coat passed for blue otter pelt.

In any case the Chartreux cat, by reason of its hunting skill, its beautiful thick fur, or its sturdy anatomy, has always been considered special to continental Europeans and was always viewed with more respect than the free-bred Domestic. It seems fairly certain that, despite the lack of

records to prove it, the Chartreux cat might have been, from time to time, selectively bred, or at least encouraged to breed by man. Although the original purpose would have been practical rather than esthetic, we should not forget that this animal's unusual grace and companionable nature would have played a part in its desirability, and are the primary reasons for the breed's popularity in our modern age.

The most frequently repeated legend of the Chartreux cats is that a monk of the Chartreux order carried one home to France from South Africa. There is such persistent identification between this religious order and the cats that we must yield some connection. South Africa doesn't seem to provide this, though, since there has never been any relationship between the Carthusians and that country; it being dominated by the Dutch Reformed Church. There were, however, semi-wild blue cats mentioned by the early Capetown settlers, whose skins were used medicinally. Furthermore, the first name for the breed appeared in a Dutch commercial dictionary naming it as a trade item, and what was Capetown but a trading post? While its size and structure suggests descendancy from a semi-wild cat, its coat suggests an animal accustomed to or having evolved in a more frigid, rainier climate, possibly in rugged mountainous terrain. It's woolly texture is created as much by an overproduction of water-repellent lanolin as by a substantial thermal undercoat which causes the fur to raise and 'break' like a sheep's. It would appear we must go elsewhere to seek the ancestor(s) of the blue cat of France.

According to M. Jean Simonnet's book, LE CHAT DES CHARTREUX, 1980, it is possible that this ancestor reached Europe via caravans from the mountainous extremities of the Old Russian Empire, i.e. Afghanistan. After the Crusades, such caravans followed

the overland routes of the returning Christian soldier-monks (or Monastic Knights^b). Along with the cats, but mostly via the water routes from Africa, came the treacherous and prolific black rat which was soon to overrun Europe. Cloisters, convents and abbeys were the first institutions to benefit from the influx of vermin-destroying felines and welcomed them openly¹. It may well be that the Chartreux 'religieux', regardless of how they obtained it, chose as their personal rat eradicator a species of hefty blue cats who would eventually share their name.

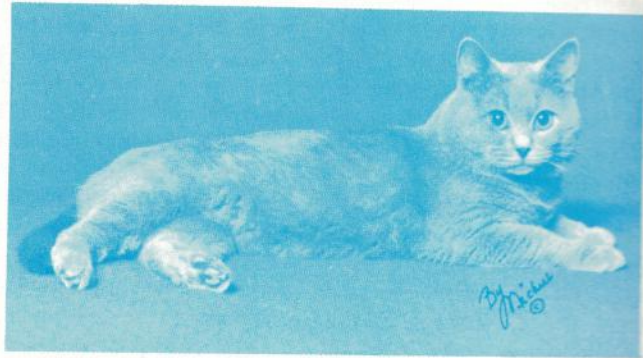
The Grande Chartreuse in the Alps contains in its archives no records of the cats but, if such records ever did exist, their destruction during a religious or political upheaval would be almost a certainty. The Chartreux order was beset by natural calamity and political problems from the time of its formation in the 11th Century on the 'desert of Chartreuse' near Grenoble. The order was twice expelled from France: once, during the French Revolution, and again in the early 20th Century. Furthermore, one of the black rat's worst offenses in the religious houses was its destruction of their archives by its voracious gnawing and eating habits. The Grande Chartreuse is but a remnant of a once vast and far-flung religious network which, prior to the French Revolution, numbered over 30,000 establishments; afterward, less than 3,000². At the height of its greatness the Carthusian order counted some 226 institutions in Europe and it has been suggested that, because of the breed's particular popularity among Parisians, its first French home might have been at a Chartreuse which once stood on the present site of the Luxembourg Gardens.

Regarding Afghanistan as the possible spawning ground of the Chartreux cat's forefathers, I recently noted an article on the Turkish Angora³ wherein the author, Charlene Beane, stated that, "When the

British became interested in cat breeding, they used a rather woolly cat from Afghanistan and the Angora to create what we know today as the Persian." Fernand Mery's *LIFE, HISTORY, AND MAGIC OF THE CAT* states that, "In no breed, except perhaps the Chartreux, is woolliness of coat accepted by show standards . . ." Based on this, can we presume that the, "woolly cat from Afghanistan," could be none other than our Chartreux or its ancestor? Long before the British work with the Persians, Buffon (in his 1756 work) attempted to describe a cat from the province of Chorazan in Persia which he had not seen, but whose existence had been reported to him. To accomplish this he used as comparative examples the breeds with which he was familiar: the only blue/gray cat, the Chartreux; and the only longhaired cat, the Angora. " . . . their size and their form is like the ordinary cat; their beauty consisting in their color and in their fur, which is gray without any specks and without blemish . . . One sees by this description that these Persian cats resemble by color those whom we call Chartreux cats and except for the color they resemble perfectly those whom we call Angora cats." This hardly sounds like the Persian we know today and it is interesting to speculate on its more prehistoric connections to the Chartreux.

In questioning the Chartreux's probable origin we must consider that, even though the name, "Chat des Chartreux," did not appear until the early 18th Century, we know from sources such as Joachim du Bellay's *Verse on the Death of a Little Cat* that, "entirely gray," cats were common in France by the year 1558. How much further beyond that date could we trace the arrival of the Chartreux's progenitor in Europe?

Once again, some archaic testimony comes to our aid to reveal yet another suspect in the mystery of the woolly blue/gray monastery cats



The cats pictured on this and the following page echo the words of French novelist Colette's descriptions of her most beloved cat, La Chatte/Saha, a Chartreux. Arista Naxos of Ronronneux, 3 yr old male Chtx. owned by Wm. and Ruth Brady exhibits the pale ash (cendre) tone. "pearl colored demon . . ."



two descendants of Michou and Taquin: Moumoune's Ombrage (top) and Moumoune's Ouragan (bot).



1902. Photo from Flammarion's *ANIMAUX VIVANT DU MONDE*.



1980. Lancelot de Vaumichon, Br/Ow; M. Jean Simonnet, 2 yr. old male Chartreux is a veritable reincarnation of the 'natural' Chartreux robust body and straight nose.

whose roots are shrouded in the apathy of the Middle Ages. Prior to the close of the Crusades, France's link to Africa and Asia was via the Mediterranean basin where a network of way-stations provided entrepôts between the various Christian Kingdoms it had established in the Holy Lands by the 11th Century. Among these were the islands of Cyprus and Malta, through which all manner of trade goods and booty made their way to Europe in spite of incessant fighting. Cyprus was held in French hands until 1485, at which time it came under control of the Venetians. It was during this Italian period that the Bologne intellectual, Aldrovande (1522-1607), published in Latin a work dealing with quadrupedal animals. One of those he listed in his work was a breed of cat marked by, "a diversity of gray ash colors, pale and dark," coming from Syria. At that time "Syria" was not limited to the Syria we know today, but encompassed an area including Lybia, Jordan and Israel. Aldrovande's text included several illustrations of these, "Syrian cats," most are tabby, gray on gray, but one individual is clearly solid colored with barring only on the tail (a trait which persists in the Chartreux often until two years of age). They all appear woolly coated and are described as calm, loyal, and excellent hunters. This cat contrasts dramatically with the sleek, slender, tight-coated cats indigenous to that area, and, most likely, the 'Syrian cats' had their origins in the colder, mountainous terrain of neighboring Turkey, Iran, or Afghanistan (ancient Persia).

Aldrovande's Syrian cat was apparently well known and not the Italian's exclusive discovery. It was mentioned again and bestowed another name by Ray, who referred to it in 1693 as, "Felis syriaca or Cyprus cat." A century after Cyprus fell to the Turks (1571), a Flemishman named Drapper visited the island and wrote in 1688 of a place known as the

Cape of Cats. It was generally held, he said, that the area was so named for the Cyprian cats which the Greek ecclesiastics kept in their monastery for snake eradication. These animals left the cloister at the height of day, hunted and killed, it did not eat the venomous serpents of the area. They were summoned obediently back to the cloister by the tolling of a bell calling them to eat. "It's in this manner that the island was delivered of serpents." The monastery was destroyed by the Turks, leaving us no other records of its snake-killing cats. Could these loyal hunters of the Greek Cyprian monastery have also figured in the Chartreux's geneology?

During the entire period of the Crusade (11th through 13th Centuries) it is conceivable that, along with a wave of foreign feline blood following the black rat's migration, a woolly, gray/blue cat having its origin in the middle Orient could have reached Europe (specifically France) via the Christian outposts and/or monasteries in the Holy Lands and Mediterranean.

A Hindu saying tells us that "Coincidence, if traced far enough back, becomes inevitable." We can see the various ways in which African or Asian cats might have reached Europe in olden times and that any of the legendary 'Blues' could have figured as the Chartreux's predecessor. But, besides being beyond absolute verification, all these possibilities are so mind boggling that only the following points need be made: that the Chartreux is a very ancient, distinct breed traditionally removed from the European Domestic cat, which has been recognized from at least the time of birth of the science of Natural History (a seniority matched *only* by the Angora).

MODERN HISTORY AND HUMAN INTERVENTION

The first recorded selective breedings of the Chartreux cats began around 1930 with the Legar sisters on the small Brittany island of Belle-Ile-sur-

Mer. Here, the demoiselles located a healthy population pocket of Chartreux-type cats known locally as the 'Hospital cats', so named for their attachment to the local hospital which was run by a religious group^c. These sturdy blues answered perfectly the Chartreux descriptions found in ancient documents as well as the oldest illustrations of the breed. The ladies, having been involved in cat breeding for some time, then undertook to revive the legendary Chartreux, their country's only native breed. Under the cattery name, "de Guerveur", the Legar sisters founded their Chartreux line from the island's natural stock of gold-eyed blues, and continue this activity today, a full half century later.

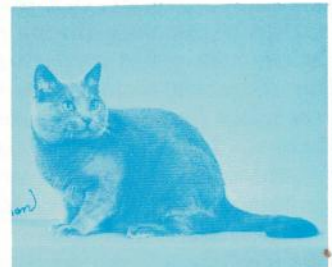
For its small, reasonably pure concentration of Chartreux cats, Belle-Ile was not exceptional. Jean Simonnet, our foremost historian on the breed, reports that genuine Chartreux seem to be found invariably in such population 'pockets'. Among those he has personally located is a section in his home city of Paris where the Chartreux has long been popular and where the great French author, Colette, obtained her famous Chartreux, La Chatte, who served as the model for one of her most successful novels^d. Coincidentally, the section of Paris where M. Simonnet has found these blue cats was, in times past, the commercial district of the furriers. He also cites the cats as commonplace in the Forest of Lyon where he makes his summer home, but one of his most discouraging observations was made on the tiny island of Brehat. "In 1958, on a trip to Brehat, an island situated on the northern coast of Brittany, we met an old woman whom we found in the garden of her small house and at whose side was a blue cat. We engaged in conversation and she indicated to us that once these cats were very abundant on the island, but they were tending to disappear for they had difficulty in reproducing. Her female cat



Taquin de St. Pierre of Gamonal, first N. American male Chtx., imported in 1970



Michou de Fernine, Male Chartreux owned by Madame Bastide, Ambert, France. Michou sired Taquin de St. Pierre of Gamonal, father of the N. American Chartreux.



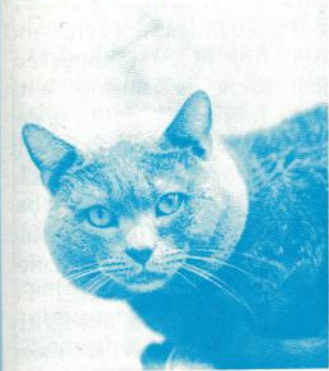
Gamonal Oliver, 2 yr old male Chtx. owned by Helen Gamon displays the medium blue coat. "rain blue ... iridescent ... my little bear with fat cheeks ..."



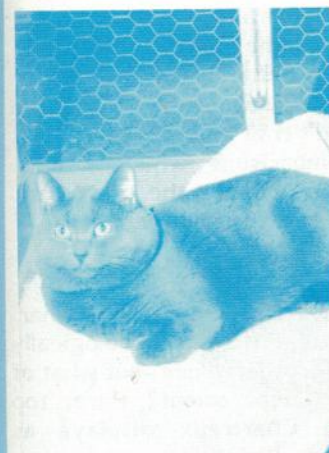
Moumoune's Ombrage, 2 yr old male Chtx. owned by Andrea Hawkins in the slate (ardoise) hue. "shadow bluer than shadow ..."



Bo-Wood's Orchidee of Moumoune, 2 yr old female Chtx. owned by Andrea Hawkins shows extreme type for a female. [all males weigh 11-12 pounds; this female is 6 pounds]



FATHER AND SON: Both these male Chartreux exhibit well-developed jowls. Gamonal Noctambule of Moumoune, 4 yrs, shows a woollier coat than his son. Moumoune's Ombrage, 2 1/2 yrs, has reached maturity, though his 'prime' will be attained at 4-5 yrs.



Photos this page by Andrea Hawkins

was, herself, sterile. This phenomemon was perhaps due to excessive inbreeding, the island being smaller than Belle-Ile."⁴ There is a sad irony here, for while invasions of tourists to Belle-Ile now threaten its natural Chartreux population, precisely the opposite is destroying the indigenous Chartreux of tiny Brehat. The cat who was once so commonly known among the 'vulgaire' is fast disappearing from its native habitat, making the work of the professional breeder all the more urgent and vital.

Frequently it is suggested that the term, Chartreux, does not actually apply to a specific breed of cat, but is merely the French designation for any shorthaired blue Domestic. This assumption is doubtless based on the mostly American term, Maltese. But, the Chartreux (and *not* the 'Maltese') is a true natural breed, contrasting physically and temperamentally with both the European Domestic cat and the svelte Oriental 'Blues'. Its predisposition to harsh climatic conditions and high resistance to common feline viral diseases are furthermore in opposition to the others. This hardiness comprised one of my first and most pleasantly unexpected experiences with the Chartreux and I soon discovered I was not the only recipient of such good fortune. In an article appearing in *Life in the Country Magazine*, 1935, Mlle. Leger writes: "... the horrible typhus, it [the Chartreux] is more resistant than the Persian and infinitely more than the Siamese. At Belle-Ile we have an extremely rigorous climate due to the humidity and the wind and I had to give up breeding my Siamese cats who all died from colds. My Persians resist well enough, my Chartreux likewise. Though I have installed catteries, I leave my Chartreux in complete liberty ..."

COMPARISON TO OTHER 'BLUES'

Judge and breeder alike are continually asked to define the differences among the

various blue breeds and, even for the professional, this is a tedious and highly technical undertaking requiring voluminous information. An effort of such magnitude being prohibitive, I shall attempt to draw out the most pronounced similarities and differences between the Chartreux, the Russian Blue, and the British Shorthair Blue. These comparisons are gleaned from existing Standards, advice from breeders knowledgeable in their respective areas, and the author's personal observations.

The three breeds mentioned share one important connection which is that all are related through the European Domestic. Just as the European vineyards were saved from disease destruction by grafting onto American grape stocks, many fine cat breeds with foreign roots were preserved and strengthened by their marriages to the Europeans. The Russian Blue and the French Chartreux were probably more similar in the past than they appear today, perhaps even sharing the same remote ancestors: the Chartreux appearing in France from parts unknown around the time of the Crusades; the Russian arriving in England from Archangel after the Crimean War, there to be advanced through European Domestic stock and, later, crossings with the Siamese. The British Shorthair Blue was essentially European, but with recent Persian influences. Since, in Far Eastern origin, type, and coat, the Korat is so vastly different from the other three, I shall not include it in this essay.

To borrow a canine comparison, the Chartreux and the Russian Blue are rather like the Chow and the Greyhound: the former being stockier, with a longer, woollier coat; the latter being quite svelte, more Oriental in type, with a shorter, dense fur. They share the same type of shading in the individual hairs of the coat: from base to tip, light-dark-light. Both are silver-tipped, but the Russian

has been bred to display a larger proportion of tipping than the Chartreux. The Russian's coat is shorter, making for a texture like cut-pile, while the Chartreux produces longer guard hairs, creating a subtly different effect. The Russian is categorized as a double-coated breed, owing to the contribution of its pale undercoat to the overall silvering effect. In North America we class the Chartreux as a single-coated breed; the French (FIFE) Chartreux Standard states, "double coat." Confusing, perhaps, but not if we understand that the French conception of a double coat differs from our own. All breeds have an undercoat and that of the Chartreux is substantial enough to 'raise' the top coat, yet isn't extraordinary in the cats we exhibit. The quantity and quality of the undercoat are affected by age, sex, and environment, leaving our younger Chartreux, our females, and our indoor animals with considerable less 'down' material than their older, male, or outdoor counterparts. Habitually, the French cats spend the majority of their lives outside in a fairly cold environment, quite opposed to the conditions under which we raise our Chartreux in North America. It should suffice to say that the Chartreux cat exhibits neither the 'cut-pile' effect of the Russian, nor the 'padded' or 'bunny' coat of the Manx. Finally, the Russian is a green-eyed breed; the Chartreux has apparently always had amber colored eyes. The oldest color illustration of a Chartreux (Buffon, 1832) shows an animal with pale gold or yellow eyes, no green influences. If I may again quote from M. Simonnet, "If the two cats had the same origin, the Chartreux being closest to the primitive type, the selection [crossing of Russian x Siamese] happily created in the Russian Blue a most agreeable new type."

Most often the Chartreux is compared to the British Shorthair Blue and, as in the case of the Russian Blue, there are similarities. But, the two



Moumoune's Roughrider of Frenchcon, Approx. 4 months, O: Roy & Reggie Horine



Chartreux kittens are very rambunctious, yet most affectionate. Example: this kitten delivering his young cousin a slap.



Followed by a kiss. Photo by A. Hawkins



These Siamese and Chartreux litters are same age, yet Chtx. are much larger. Chtx. kittens grow rapidly, yet 'refine' slowly. photo: A. Hawkins

share quite different origins and, ideally should resemble each other no more than the Korat does the Russian. True, for the sake of expediency, the breeds were crossed after World War II creating such havoc that a move was made to meld all the 'Blues' into one breed which would be known as Maltese. Quelle horreur!! Fortunately, this practice is now disallowed in most associations including all of those based in North America. Typically, the Chartreux cat is more densely muscled than the British Shorthair and should weigh more than his British counterpart of the same dimensions. There is greater sexual dimorphism in the Chartreux breed than perhaps any other. The male is, in fact, a walking fortress in whose description the term 'stocky' is an understatement. Broad-chested, bull-necked, narrow-hipped, he is often jokingly referred to as the Arnold Schwarzenegger of the felines. On straight, unbowed legs and small, round paws, this powerhouse walks with the felt-like steps of a fawn. Seeing such a massive fellow gamboling thus brings to mind old cartoons of hippo ballerinas cavorting in tutus and toe shoes. Yet, there is nothing coarse, fat or cloddish about this graceful animal; he moves with a lithe agility and suppleness which belie his formidable physique. The smaller female Chartreux is a scaled down version of the male, but nonetheless a robust cat who might be termed a voluptuous 'Rubens lady'. The legs of both the Chartreux and the BSH are comparatively short for body size, but those of the Chartreux are generally finer, though this aspect is sometimes difficult to appreciate owing to their heavy musculature. At any rate, we will find no stovepipe legs in the French breed. It could never be classed as a 'cobby' for it simply does not convey that squarish impression and the body length is somewhat greater than the ideal cobby.

In the heads of the two breeds we find the most strik-

ing contrasts. The Chartreux has medium sized ears generally taller than the British cat's, which are placed very high and erect on the skull, giving an alert expression. The BSH has similar ears, placed lower on a very round skull (described as "une pomme", or apple, by the French). They are more separated than the Chartreux's and pricked slightly forward. The Chartreux's high ear set allows it a generous forehead which progresses without a 'break' into a straight nose and fine, tapered muzzle. The nose and chin should be well defined without a flattened look to the former nor a heavy whisker break in the latter. While both breeds have fairly short muzzles, the nose of the Chartreux should be longer on the muzzle and not as broad. The Chartreux's cheeks are very full owing to its massive jaw and the jowly head of the adult male is of eye-popping dimensions. The French Standard describes the head and neck as an "inverted trapezoid," but it puts many in mind of a large old fashioned valentine. Perhaps the best image, though, is to liken it to the silhouette of a hooded monk: the high, close-set ears (like a Kliban cat's) forming the peak of the monk's cowl, and the fat cheeks dissolving into the broad, well descended chest in much the same manner that the cloth of the monk's garment would rest upon his shoulders.

The Chartreux, like the BSH, has very large, round, expressive eyes but, unlike the British Blue, the range allowed is greater: going from pale gold, to orange, to copper. The indigenous Chartreux of Bellelle had pure gold eyes, but deeper, coppery shades asserted themselves in the third and fourth generations of the Leger sisters' breedings. The polygenes for the deep tones were obviously present in the breed, so it was never necessary to outcross to either the BSH or the Persian cats to deepen them. It is unfortunate that some European breeders have, in recent times, used

this esthetic improvement as an excuse for a dangerous practice.

The Chartreux coat has already been discussed, but we should note that its color, too, has considerable range: from pale ash to deep slate, but always with silvery highlights. Those considered the most beautiful are those which are unblemished, most even in tone and cast the bluest reflections. The color is variable with sexual activity, climate and habitat, so the North American breeders do not specify a preference in the depth of coat color. Because it has always been described in the ash to slate color range, we seek to conserve this elasticity of color in the same manner we preserve the full eye color range. Improvements are sought in perfecting the evenness of tone and elimination of coat imperfections such as salting with white hairs or dark areas along the spine and tail. The British Shorthair Blue should have a lighter textured coat than the Chartreux. It should also have no tipping, the color being, "sound to the root." Finally, the BSH has a slightly thicker tail which is more blunted at the tip than the Chartreux's.

It is difficult to make comparisons between the Chartreux and the BSH since there is some disagreement between U.S. and U.K. fanciers on several points. Additionally, some European associations still class the British Blue as separate from the BSH and the standards differ. Comparisons which I have used are, for the most part, universally accepted.

HEART AND SOUL

We can see how the Chartreux differs morphologically from other 'Blues', but what of its temperament? Here, too the Chartreux displays as much distinction as any other natural breed of animal. Not only are the Chartreux's beauty and hunting skills the subjects of legends, but its character as well. It is an extremely quiet, well-behaved, and



6 wk old Chtx. litter mates. The male @ left, though smaller at birth, has already outgrown his sisters @ right. Chtx. males often outweigh their mates doubly.
photo: A. Hawkins



Chartreux kittens, by 4-6 weeks, already display the hunting instincts of their 'working' ancestors who earned their livings as ratters. The same instincts are evidenced by their mother's birdwatching.
Photos by A. Hawkins



Moumoune's Rocky II at 7 weeks.
O: Karen McKinney

self-sufficient animal, neither overly curious nor possessive of its owner. It is quite adaptable and friendly toward other creatures. As Fernand Mery says, "The Chartreux accommodates itself to everything. It is a simple and good-natured peasant, but a sure friend."

This, "placid equilibrium," may be the reason for another of its French nicknames, the Dog-Like Cat. Described as utterly fearless, the Chartreux displays uncanny devotion to the one he calls master, though the latter is really the cat's happy slave. His loyalty manifests itself in a protective attitude toward its owner and a non-aggressive, yet undeniably cautious attitude toward strangers. A contented homebody, his faithfulness may be one of the reasons the Chartreux has survived in small, isolated populations such as the area around the Belle-Ile hospital. This breed is not afflicted with the wanderlust of so many others. In the absence of hunting quarry he expends his great strength and energy in hearty play and retains his 'joie de vivre' into old age. The Chartreux gives the over-

all impression of great dignity, patience, discretion and stability. It is only in play that he appears the clown, having perhaps the best humor in the cat world. A paradoxical behavior? Maybe, but such that it serves to make the Chartreux one of the most fascinating felines in existence.

Another popular legend tells that the cats, while living with the monks, took on their same vows of silence and thereby became mute. Actually, the cat is not entirely mute, but the faint 'chirps', 'trills', and cooing sounds it so seldom uses to communicate are unlike the sounds made by any other breed - as distinctive as the well known bawling of the Siamese. The lack of voice could possibly be another indication of inadvertent selecting breeding in antiquity, for the contemplative monks would have cast out any noisy individuals, leaving the silent ones to reproduce in protected isolation within the monastery. Sadly, one of the consequences of the post WW II 'Blue' crossings was the loss of this charming characteristic and we in North America are

pleased with having preserved the trait along with all the other enchanting aspects of the Chartreux.

DELIVERANCE

In 1970, Mrs. Helen Gamon of La Jolla, California, began importing the first FIFE and FFF registered Chartreux into North America and was soon joined by other breeders in the U.S., Canada, and now Japan. Though our numbers are yet limited, our cats have achieved enormous acceptance in both the show world and on the domestic scene. In October, 1979, CFA became the final North American based feline association to accept the Chartreux for registration as a natural breed. Chartreux may now be shown in CFA as 'Exhibition Only', but we are working diligently toward Provisional and eventual Championship status.

The fact that the Chartreux is such an ancient, historical race should make its preservation imperative for scientific as well as sentimental reasons. It is, by far, the most primitive of the Old World 'Blues', the truest to that mysterious

woolly ancestor who bequeathed to his descendants a legacy of strength, beauty and vitality. Therefore, it should remain essentially in this state - built for survival, a miracle of natural selection and not the breeder's art. Perhaps the durable Chartreux cats should also share the maxim applied to the 900 year old religious sect which donated them its name: "Cartusia numquam reformata quia numquam deformata," or, "Chartreuse has never been reformed because it has never been deformed."

The *BRITANNICA WORLD LANGUAGE DICTIONARY* defines a legend as: "An unauthenticated story from early times, preserved by tradition and popularly thought to be historical." But, any scientist or theologian will concede that all legend is based upon a solid reality.

I know. The Chartreux cat is more than a story, more than a legend. A monk, a clown, a relic, a friend, it is a bona-fide Original, as rich in character as it is in history. It is a solid, living, and loving,

REALITY . . .

Photos below by Rick Glisson



Bo-Wood's Orchidee of Moumouse o: Andrea Hawkins



Moumoune's Ombrage makes the celebrated 'clown face'.

- a Also known as the Carthusians. This name is also given to the cat breed, such as the German, "Karthaeuser."
- b Such as the Knights Templar, Knights Hospitaler, and Knights of Malta.
- c The religious group operating the Hospital was not Chartreuse, but at Quiberon, a point of embarkation for Belle-Ile, an abbey is still in existence.
- d La Chatte's literary 'twin' was Saha, heroine of the novel, LA CHATTE, whom Colette described as, "my little bear with fat cheeks . . . mauve and bluish like the throat of woodpegeons . . ."

HEAD and NECK 15

Head large and broad but not round. Nose short and straight with very slight break. Muzzle narrow in relation to head but is not pointed. Cheeks well developed in adult male. Neck short, strong and heavy set. Powerful jaw especially in adult males over two years. Sweet smiling expression.

PENALIZE: Nose longer than head is wide; severe nose break or humped nose.

Head 10, Neck 5

EARS 10

Small to medium ears set high on head with slightly rounded tips. Inside furnishings cover one-half of ear. Extremely fine coat on outer ear.

Placement 5, Size 5

EYES 20

Large, round very expressive. Color range pale gold to copper.

PENALIZE: Almond shaped eyes. Eyes too close together giving angry look. Color 15, Size 3, Placement 2

CHARTREUX STANDARDS

BODY and TAIL 15

Body large, well proportioned, robust but not gross. Shoulders large and muscular. Well developed chest giving solid, sturdy appearance. Tail heavier at base, tapering slightly to tip. Males much more massive than Females. Mature Males weigh from 10 to 14 pounds and mature Females from 6 to 9 pounds

Body 10, Tail 5

LEGS and FEET 5

Legs straight, finely boned and comparatively short for body size. Feet small and round.

Legs 3, Feet 2

COAT 15

Coat texture is dense, soft and plush, and of medium length.

Texture 10, Length 5

COLOR 15

Blue only. Any shade of solid blue with silver highlights. Nose coat is silver grey on blue leather. Blue lips. Foot pads are rose-taupe. Allowance to be made for faint striping and tail rings in kittens and young adults. Tail rings sometimes persist until two years of age.

CONDITION and BALANCE 5

Excellent muscular condition giving appearance of a solid, muscular lithe cat. Calm, affectionate, intelligent, easily handled, gentle voice but seldom used.

Footnotes to text:

1. *THE LIFE, HISTORY, AND MAGIC OF THE CAT*, Fernany Mery, p. 54
2. *THE CHRISTIANS*, Bamber Gascoigne, Television series by Granada Intl.
3. *Cat Fancy Magazine*, June, 1980
4. *LE CHAT DES CHARTREUX*, Jean Simonnet, June, 1980



Arista Naxos of Ronronneux ©: Wm & Ruth Brady

I was incubated, while in my mother's womb, by a cat named Thomas who enjoyed the dubious comfort of a human's very pregnant abdomen. Thomas later known as Mrs. Thomas when "he" presented my parents with five healthy kittens. Mrs. Thomas was also my nurse, so from infancy I have had no other choice than to be the most ardent ailurophile.

My breeder experience began in adolescence and continued into my teenage years. When my Siamese queen was retired from these extracurricular activities, a long interruption followed, but my pre-occupation with cats, particularly strays and their welfare, continued. In 1975 I lost Souki, my eldest, at the ripe old age of eighteen years and this personal tragedy was immediately followed by another when Coco, her dear companion, died literally of a broken heart. To prevent this situation from ever again recurring,

I had to decide whether to keep just one cat or many and opted, as you can see, for the 'many'. I very seldom regret my decision.

Through the aid of my good friends, Richard and Hatcher Granville, I became involved once again in Siamese breeding, and for the first time directly with the Cat Fancy. Through its connections I was able, in 1978, to obtain my first Chartreux. I had been interested in this elusive breed for many years and once I obtained several individuals, I was hooked. Maybe my fascination with the 'French Blues' was hereditary, my mother being French-Belgian and my father influenced by a potent 12½% Frkish blood. Or, perhaps, it was the phenomenon the Eastern religions call Karma because the first time I saw the Chartreux I felt I had known them before (also known, in French, as *deja vu*). I had to have one and, once I did, I knew I

must also raise them and do everything in my power to preserve the breed.

The mystique of the cat is not appreciated by everyone, but has always intrigued me. I found that, in no other breed, is this mystique more marked than in the Chartreux. They are the most devoted of friends to the pet owner and the most challenging of subjects to the professional breeder. They are living relics of the past to be revered, in my estimation, as ancient natural masterpieces, yet they are very much cats for today and pets for the future. As our American lifestyles change, as we move from farm to city, from forest to concrete apartment, our need to touch, to know things natural and basic within ourselves becomes urgent. We spent small fortunes on miniature indoor greenhouses to replace the verdure now absent from our surroundings, but would be wiser to

acquire a cat to warm us at night, to welcome us home, to stroke and feel the physical manifestation of joy in its contented purring, to be our companion and our friend - the one who accepts us and our foolish ways without qualification. A cat does not judge, he just lives. I must admit, I am obsessed by the Chartreux.

Writing is merely a means of conveying information and, hopefully, feeling.

andrea hawkins, 5195 winters chapel rd., doraville, ga. 30360 404-396-4949

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specializing in chartreux - the blue cats of france



CHARTREUX MALE
"NAXOS"

OWNER: William M and Ruth H Brady
PO 218431

Houston, TX 77218

BREEDER: Gen. Scudder

CHARTREUX

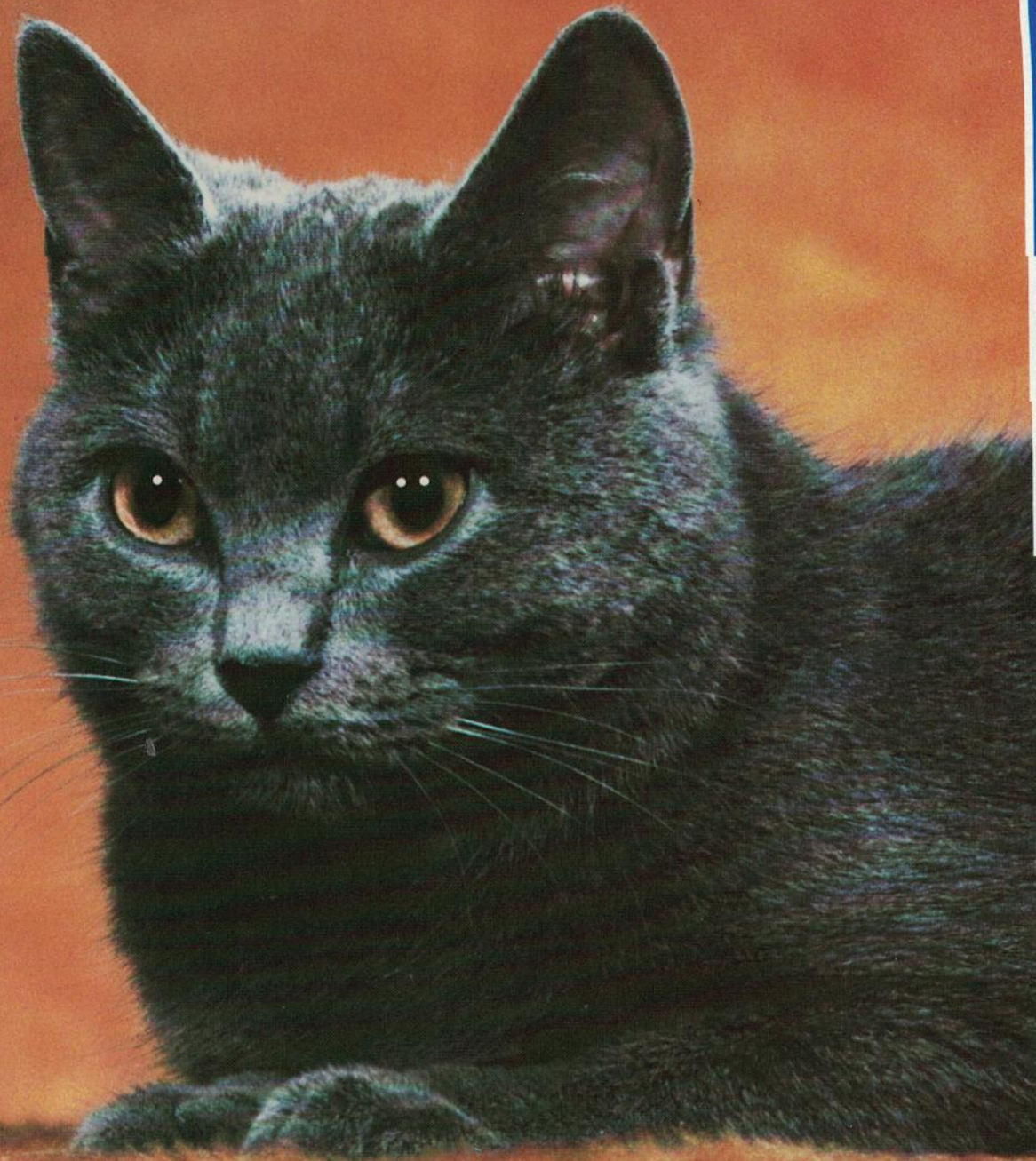


Photo Credit: Arista Reina, Br. Qw Gen Scudder, Photo Courtesy of Robert Peary

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