Lynsted with Kingsdown Society

Lynsted's forgotten artist - 'The Lady Landseer"

On 7 February 2021 saw the centenary of the death of Lynsted born, Frances Caroline Fairman.

Frances was a watercolourist, illustrator and painter in oils. Her focus on canine portraits, many commissioned by royalty including Queen Victoria and Alexandra, earned her the nickname 'The Lady Landseer'. In Edwardian times she was the painter favoured by his patron royalties including "Monarch of the Glen", and, perhaps best known for sculpting the lions at the foot of Nelson's Column.

Queen Victoria's short haired terrier dog "Sharp" painted by Frances Fairman in 1891

Frances was a member of the Association of Women Artists, exhibiting twice at the Royal Academy, and at the Glasgow Institute of Fine Art, the Royal Scottish Academy, the Royal Society of British Artists, the London Salon, the New Gallery, the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, the Dudley Gallery and many more.

Frances Fairman pictured shortly before her death in 1923 as featured in The Times

Some of her paintings are held in the Royal Collection and others are displayed in National Trust properties.

Frances also was a member of the Society Women's Research Association and was particularly associated with the oriental breeds of dog, in particular, the Japanese Chin.

To set the scene, here is the obituary penned by Margaret - Rarew of Sarawak, that outlines Fairman's eventful life:

THE TIMES, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1923

IN MEMORIAM

FRANCES FAIRMAN, ARTIST, HUMANITARIAN, AND SAINT.

The Ranee Margaret of Sarawak has written the following tribute to Miss Frances Fairman:-

Great in years, rich in service, beloved of many, a friend has gone from us. Frances Fairman died on Friday night. Perhaps it is that such a personality leaves so great a hole of kindness and goodness behind. Nearer 90 than 80, this dear woman had been granted a fullness of years, beyond the usual, and those years were filled with thought for helpless things.

She was born in humorous surroundings and at her mother's death came into an income of some twelve thousand pounds a year *[£1.4 million in today's money]*. But, knowing little of money matters, and having a generous nature, ever ready to help those in poverty and distress, she spent most of her fortune on pursuits and hangovers. An ill-advised speculation brought the final financial crash. She purchased tracts of land in Florida - orange groves which ultimately proved sterile - and kept-hearted Frances Fairman, hitherto so ready to lavish on others found herself almost penniless, with barely a hundred a year she could depend upon *[£12k in today's money]*.

Then began that career which death has now interrupted. From early childhood she had been an artist. Bird-lore and her water-colour lost in hand, she was often found — even as a tiny child — sketching the horses and ponies in her mother's stables, from the impressed seat of an upturned bucket, or wandering about the village near her home in search of stray dogs whose features she would fix on canvas. As time went on her remarkable talent as an animal painter became celebrated among her numerous friends and acquaintances, and artists like the great Frith himself became loud in her praise.

When evil days descended, she turned her accomplishment to good account, and used it, and until the Great War came to ruin and shatter so many fortunes in the artist world, she managed to make a certain amount of money by her talent.

There are some who will tell you now that her paintings are old-fashioned, for certainly this great animal painter held the Cubists and Futurists in abhorrence. However, that may be, and whatever some may say, she stood in the first rank of animal painters in England. Queen Victoria had most of her pet dogs painted by her, King Edward gave her an order for his favourite dog, Caesar, and Queen Alexandra was one of her most generous and kind patrons.

Although she earned good sums by her pictures, she never became rich again. Money seemed to burn in her pockets. Yet, though she had none too much for her needs, she schemed to every society whose object was to mitigate animal suffering. That admirable institution Mr. John's Canine Lounge, the Dumb Friends League, the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, always found her a generous giver and helper in their needs. She would travel for hours by omnibus and train to allay the sufferings of cat or dog she might have heard about, and she has often been met marching up Piccadilly, a great bag of wool in her arms, sprinkling the slippery thoroughfares for the sake of weary jaded horses.

Taller than most, nearly 6ft in height, in her young days Fancy Fairman was a handsome woman. Unencumbered almost to the point of eccentricity, she cared little about her personal appearance, and as time went on the problem of suitable clothing mattered less and less to her. With short, cropped hair, a felt hat devoid of ornament stuck anyhow over her head, a long overcoat in friend of many years, and enormous boots she made herself the strangest about London intent on animal rescue when she was not at home busy on some dog portrait.

During the war she rushed out of her little home in Chelsea whenever air raids were taking place in order to revive any dog or cat wounded or maddened by the terrifying falls about the streets. She was impervious to fear, for she cared nothing for material things. Her soul and spirit could come to no harm; the word danger had no place in her vocabulary.

Fancy Fairman leaves behind her a small knot of most loving friends rendered desolate at her departure.

The other evening Queen Alexandra, getting news of her illness, sent a personal telegram of sympathy to her old friend. Conscious for a few moments, the message was made known to her. "How wonderful!" she whispered, her face lighting up with pleasure. "Queen Alexandra thinks of me." Miss Fairman adored the Queen. Life attracts like, and it is beautiful to remember that on the threshold of the next world a ray of sunshine from one who so believed should speed her on her way to that other life.

MARGARET OF SARAWAK

Frances Caroline Fairman

The register entry of Frances's Christening in Lynsted Church

Frances Caroline Fairman, known as "Fanny", was born on 15 January 1839 in "Millers House", Lynsted, Kent. Millers House is established in Milton Road, now as "Farmers".

Frances was the only child of Samuel Creed Fairman, son of *William Creed Fairman of Faversham, Gentleman*, and Frances, daughter of General Goodwin of "Mount Ospringe". She was christened in Lynsted church on 20 March 1839.

Her father was a "landed Professional". With five house servants, he was also a large employer of local people on his farm of 360 acres. Frances enjoyed a privileged background and from early childhood it was evident that she was a talented artist. She was often seen around the village sketching her mother's horses and any dog that would sit still long enough.

The following year, Christiana and Frances prepared to move to London and the contents of the house were auctioned. This was advertised in the **Kentish Gazette on 25 September 1859**:

AUCTION. EXTENSIVE HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE. Three Valuable Aviary Cows, Pigs, Poultry, Pheasants, Dog Carts, Harness, Garden Light Spring Van, Spring Cart, and Miscellaneous Effects. TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY MESSRS. ELLIS, Saturday, the 15th day of October, 1859, at Lynsted, near Sittingbourne, the property of Mrs Fairman, (who is removing)

Six weeks later, on **4 October 1859, the Kentish Gazette** gave a more detailed account of what was to go up for sale:

THE HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE - Consists of handsome Rosewood and Kidderminster carpets and hearth rugs, set of mahogany chairs in morocco, two pedestal side boards, pole and other screens, set of chairs and other window curtains, handsome rosewood cabriole sofa, covered with tabaret and loose covers, (by Gillow), Canterbury, music stools, mahogany desk and bookcase, mahogany dining, Pembroke, card, and tea tables, whatnot, mahogany 4-post, tent, and French bedsteads with chintz and other furniture, superior bookcase and wood bookcase (etc), seven bedroom and other feather beds, bolsters, and pillows, mahogany wardrobes, double and single chests of drawers, night convenioences, mahogany and Japanned washstands, dressing tables and glasses, cane and rush seat chairs, wheel barrowse, 8-day clock, bronze fan and coffee urns, kitchen furniture, a few lots of ware and glass, and about 200 vols. of books, &c.

Among the Miscellaneous Articles will be found a PHOTOGRAPHIC MACHINE AND STAND, by Hland and Long, Fleet Street; stone garden roller, garden water barrel and carriage, light spring-cart, superior ditto van, dog cart, two phaetons in good condition, three lathers, working machine, garden tools, melon frames, ditto pit with frames, wheel-barrow, hand cart, three capital Alderney Cows one with calf, and six stocks, chaff-cutting machine, cart harness, red cut, carriage setter, horse clothes and rollers, hose caps, tow bridles, sea saddle, side saddle, dog kennel, fowl coop, bottle rack, &c. Also a pair of handsome young bay carriage horses, quiet in double and single harness, and the front ends and top of a greenhouse, 18ft by 8ft, &c.

The whole of which will be arranged in catalogues, to be had a week previous to the Sale, at the Bell Inn, Sittingbourne; Ship Hotel, Faversham; at the Place of Sale, and of the Auctioneer, Graveney Court, Faversham.

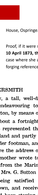
The Effects may be viewed on the Morning of Sale, which will commence at Eleven o'clock in the Forenoon.

A new life in London

By the time of the 1861 Census, Christiana and Frances were living at 7 Queen's Gate Place, Kensington, along with a lady's maid, two housemaids, a housekeeper, a maid, a footman and a butler.

For the 1871 Census, Frances was back in this area visiting the family of Colonel Hall (gunpowder manufacturer) in Sandale House, Orpington.

Proof, if it were needed, that Frances was made of stern stuff, on **10 April 1873, the London Evening Standard** reported on a court case where she and her mother had to restrain a mad Irish Barley to court for forging references when applying for the post of butler:



Louis Henri Desoulages

During her time in Europe, Frances visited Switzerland and returned with watercolour sketches that were exhibited in London.

View near Aosta

HAMMERSMITH

A FALSE CHARACTER. - James Bartley, a tall, well-dressed young man, who was brought up as a warrant charged with embezzlering his employer, a widow of Mrs. Fairman's, 7, Queen's-Gate-Terrace, Kensington, by means of fictitious character.

Mrs Frances Caroline Fairman said that about a fortnight ago the prisoner applied to her mother for the situation of butler. He represented that he had been living in the Hon. Mrs. G. Dutton, who lived partly in Ireland and partly in London. He also said that he was previously page to Sir Henry Ponsonby, and added that he only left because of the alterations in the establishment. He gave the address of the Hon. Mrs. G. Dutton, in Gresham-terrace, Hampstead-heath. Her mother wrote to the address, and an answer was received purporting to have been sent from the Marine Hotel, and stating that the prisoner had been in the service of the Hon. Mrs. G. Dutton for eight years, and was a good attendant at table. Not being satisfied with the character, witness telegraphed to the Marine Hotel at Kingstown, and received an answer stating that no such person as the Hon. Mrs. G. Dutton had been staying there and there was no such person as the Hon. Mrs. G. Dutton. The prisoner did not enter her mother's service.

Mr Bridge said that did not matter. The attempt was equally an offence under the act.

Police-constable Smith, one of the officers of the court, said he was at Mrs Fairman's house at the time the prisoner came with his luggage. In his portmanteau the witness found several characters in different handwritings. Gun, however, resembled the writing of the character sent to Mrs Fairman.

Mr Clayton said the prisoner denied that he wrote it. Acting under his advice, the prisoner would plead guilty to the charge.

Mr Bridge then fined the prisoner £15 and 10s. costs, with the alternative of two months' imprisonment.

The £15 and Ediblings fine is equivalent of around £2,000 in today's money. He paid the fine.

Just five months later, Frances had her mother. Her death was announced in the Whitstable and Herne Bay Herald on 11 October 1873:

DEATHS. LONDON. Sept. 27, at 7, Queen's-gate-place, Christiana, widow of the late Samuel Creed Fairman, of Millers, Lynsted, aged 75.

Christiana was buried in the Fairman family vault in Teynham church on 3 October 1873. Frances was then 34 years old.

Frances's travels

St Brelade's

A scene in the British West Indies

Not a formally trained artist, we know that Frances travelled to Paris to study and perfect her art under the tutelage of Louis Henri Desoulages. An unusual achievement for a young woman in those days. Desoulages was an appropriate painting teacher who enjoyed academic and commercial success.

In 1885, AT THE AGE OF 61, Frances sailed from Liverpool to New York on the SS Britannic, arriving on 19 January. She visited Brazil and the British West Indies after which her paintings of the areas were exhibited in London and around the country.

Financial downfall

In 1886, while in the Americas, Frances stayed for a while in Jacksonville, Florida. Possibly because of her family's background in fruit farming and, knowing that this considerable wealth was about to be bolstered by a legacy from her uncle, George Goodwin, Frances invested in several hundred acres of orange groves.

At the time of the purchase, Florida was already beginning to suffer winter freezes, seriously damaging the orange industry. Worse was to come after Frances returned to England.

The following extract from an article by Mr Ted Burrows, of Florida's St. Lucie Historical Society explains:

Historic freezes cause havoc and changed Florida's agriculture

"A mass of bitter arctic air advanced through the Florida panhandle and down the peninsula. First a line of storm-gray clouds brought stinging rain squalls or freezing flurries. Then came the killing cold.

Snow fell as far south as Tampa and lingered on the ground for three days in Tallahassee. Winter's icy breath swept across the central Florida hills and probed southward across Lake Okeechobee.

For decades afterward, Floridians would recall this storm as the "Great Freeze." Actually, it came as the separate cold waves, nature's savage one-two punch in the winter of 1894-95. It altered life in Florida vastly and permanently.

During the three decades following the Civil War, Florida had attracted thousands of new settlers, many of whom began cultivating citrus fruit for an expanding northern market. One agricultural journal of the time said a homebuyer could "become the monarch of all he surveyed" from a little grove.

Up until the early 1880s, most new groves were in the northern and central regions. Southern Florida then was still sparsely populated. Both landed owners and speculators spread between Jacksonville and St. Augustine, and by far upstate as the outskirts of Jacksonville. Hopes were high as the trees matured. By all indications, prosperity was on the way.

The Great Freeze changed everything.

On Dec. 29, 1894, temperatures fell to 14 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 10 centigrade) throughout most of northern Florida, ruining unprecedented fruit and tilling many trees. But the new growth brought better weather, an unusually warm and rainy January. Undamaged trees began sprouting new branches earlier than normal.

Then the second freeze hit. Trees full of rising sap and new growth began cracking as the mercury plummeted to 11 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 12 centigrade) on Feb. 7, 1895. The next day, temperatures in the frigid Florida wonderland dropped to zero. Hundreds more trees died, or lost their strength to pests. Nothing survived.

Fruit growers froze down in the ground and looked, as one writer said, "as if a terrible plague had swept through them." In disgust, many growers simply cut their once-productive trees into firewood. Others packed up and moved away. A few tiny citrus communities, mostly around Lake Apopka, survived the disaster.

Starved of citrus income, or business suffered, in Cocoa, both banks failed. Damage to Florida's economy totalled more than $100 million, a staggering sum in 1895. Recovery was slow. Some groves never regained their productivity. Six years later, in 1901, Florida harvested only 975,000 boxes of citrus, compared with five million boxes in 1894 before the freeze."

Return to England

By the end of 1886, Frances had returned home and was now living at 4 Lansdown Road, Drydale, Streatham, with her lady companion/housekeeper.

The following year was to be a high point of her professional career. In recognition of her work at the Jubilee exhibition there were also multiple purchased of works in the March of the future King George V and Queen Mary to an exhibition

Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York, honoured the Clifford Galleries in the Haymarket with a visit to view Miss F. E. Fairman's pictures of dogs on Tuesday.

"The Sketch" and illustrated weekly publication at the this time, carried the following article on the 9 June 1887:

Chief among the painters of dogs at the present time, and specially favoured by royalty itself, is Miss Frances Fairman, sight of whose pictures are hung in a prominent position in the forty-third Annual Exhibition of the Society of Lady Artists (of which she is a member), now open in the gallery in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, and where "Dog Show on Canvas and Paper" was one of the attractions at Clifford's Gallery in the Haymarket during the early months of year. Miss Fairman is a devoted lover of animals, dogs and horses especially, but she has painted the Princess of Wales's little Dane and Tibet Spaniel, Lillie, Princess Victoria's Irish Water Spaniel Nous, the Duchy Diamond owned by the Duke of Clarence, and now the special pet of the Prince of Wales, and others. Miss Fairman was sent for from Windsor to paint some of her Majesty's pet dogs. Among them was the collie and the Pomeranian which accompanied the Queen to Cimiez last year. Since then Miss Fairman has been repeatedly sent for from Windsor to come there and paint at her Majesty's kennels. Some years ago she spent many months in South America, and her water-colour sketches of flowers, fruit, birds and butterflies taken there prove that her gifts as an artist are not confined alone to her well-beloved dogs.

NEW YORKER
1885 S.S. Britannic

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The following extract from an article by Mr Ted Burrows, of Florida's St. Lucie Historical Society explains:

Another house move and a brush with the law!

In 1898, Frances moved to 4 Avenue Studios, Fulham Road. This was one of the twenty assorted artist studios known collectively as "The Avenue". Here Frances was neighbours with artist such as John Singer Sargent, the American artist. Frances was not shy or retiring. She became a staunch advocate for animal welfare and this was to get her into trouble. The Daily Telegraph of Tuesday, 28 February 1899, reports on a court case where she may have gone a step too far:

THE ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT

At the Brompton County Court yesterday, his Honour Judge Stonor and a specially empanelled jury heard an action brought against Miss Frances Fairman, the animal painter, by the Co-Operative Cab Company, who claimed £50 as compensation for damage to a horse and cab owned by them. For plaintiffs Mr A Lincoln Reed appeared, while the defendant was represented by Mr. H. G. Booth.

It was stated that on Nov. 8 1898, a hansom cab, the property of the company, was being driven along the Fulham Road by a man named Childs. The horse became restive and the driver took it round by way of Summer Place to Cromer Square, where the animal once more gave trouble, and an application of the whip became necessary. The defendant (Fairman) then ran up from behind and sprang at the horse's head, catching the off-side rein, and crying, 'Tou lents, leave the horse alone.' The nobleman of her rods caused the horse to rear and plunge towards the railings, over which the near-side rein was thrown. In order to save his life,' as he said in evidence, Childs left his 'delapy'. Defendant released her hold, and immediately the animal bolted, eventually colliding with a four-wheeled cab, and overturning the hansom. Childs requested the lady to go with him to the scene of the accident, and as she refused took her by the sleeve to prevent her leaving the spot. A police officer who came up declined to arrest the driver for assault, and would not agree with Miss Fairman that he was drunk, nor did he find any marks of the ill-treatment on the horse. Proceedings were taken not against the driver before a police magistrate, but the charge was dismissed, the justice upon that occasion telling Miss Fairman that her action had caused all the trouble."

Miss Frances Caroline Fairman, the defendant, described herself as an artist, living at 4, Avenue Studios, Fulham Road, and stated that she had been used to horses all her life. She asserted that the horse had been flogged, that the rein never went over the railing with which the cab had collided, and so come to a stand-still before she caught the horses head, and that Childs had struck her hand with his fists to compel her to release her hold on the reins.

Mr Reed: Have you ever driven a hansom cab in the streets of London?

Defendant: As you ask me – I have. On one occasion I had a drunken driver, and I had to take the reins myself. I have taken the reins on another occasion, the driver then being drunk also.

Mr Reed: Did you mount the dickey on those occasions?

Defendant: No, I drove from inside.

Mr Reed: You were lucky not to have met with an accident; don't you think so?

Defendant: Oh, I got through it all right.

Mr Reed: When the cabman hit you, what did you do?

Defendant: Struck him with the other hand. (Laughter)

Further evidence was given and eventually the jury brought in a verdict for plaintiffs, awarding the damages at £20 (equivalent to £5,400 in today's money). Judgment for the amount, with costs, was entered.

The following extract from the Dundee Courier on 20 April 1908, also gives us a hint of her love of animals:

"A RARE DOG LOVER."

Of all dog lovers and dog painters none holds a more pronounced or distinguished place in modern work than Miss Frances Fairman. She is at once the staunch friend and the most conscientious portraitist of the dogs of all countries. Fourteen times has English Royalty commissioned her to paint the Royal pets. Several of the orders were from the late Queen Victoria, while her most recent order was that for a portrait of His Majesty's Edward VII favourite terrier Caesar. Many champion dogs of the past ten years have sat to her for their portraits, and the stories she can tell of the dog world, aristocratic and plebeian, would fill volumes. Miss Fairman is the most unpretentious and simple of women, with none of the boastfulness and 'pose' of modern life. Her big studio in Fulham is well-nigh over-run with dogs, big and little, strong and infirm. Her heart goes out to the homeless and weak of London's dog world, and her influence and energy have done much to help and promote their care and protection.

By royal command

Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901. Just two weeks later on 7 February 1901, it was reported that Frances had received commands from the new Queen, Alexandra, to proceed to Windsor Castle:

Miss Frances Fairman, of the Avenue Studios, has received several commands to proceed to Windsor and paint not only Her Majesty's dogs but those of nearly every member of the Royal Family. The late Queen, herself an keen artist, was greatly interested in Miss Fairman's work and paid several impromptu and unexpected visits to the studio while they were in progress, as did the Empress Frederick and Princess Henry of Battenberg.

The Westminster Gazette 1 March 1910, reported Frances had again been summoned, this time to Buckingham Palace:

By command of her Majesty the Queen, Miss Frances Fairman, who held an exhibition at the Ryder Gallery in January, is painting her Majesty's dogs at Buckingham Palace.

Her final years

By 1915, Frances's financial security now considerably reduced due to the failure of the orange grove, saw her living alone at 19 Selwood Terrace, South Kensington. Here she continued to fill the house with animal wafts and strays.

On 1 December 1920, under the "Ladies Kennel Association Notes" section of The Tatler, a "new treatment" for distemper was being tried by Frances:

We are much interested to hear from that celebrated artist, Miss Frances Fairman of the great success of her carbolic acid treatments as a preventive of distemper in dogs and of influenza and colds in human beings. It is now fifteen years since Miss Fairman started this treatment, and although in those days she obtained lot few converts, now even members of the medical profession are convinced of its efficacy. Miss Fairman has kindly promised to give the writer full particulars of the treatment to be published shortly in these notes. We feel the information will be welcomed by members, especially as so many shows are held during the winter.

I think it is probably just as well that I could find no published report on how to administer the carbolic acid as promised by Frances!

On 2 February 1923, Frances Fairman died of pneumonia. She was 86. Amongst the floral tributes at her funeral was one from Queen Alexandra:

Western Mail 9 February 1923

GREAT ANIMAL ARTIST

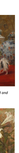
"In deepest remembrance of a great animal artist. We shall all miss her greatly." This was the inscription on the wreath sent by Queen Alexander in memory of Miss Frances Fairman, the artist, who was buried at Kensal Rise Cemetery on Wednesday, after a Requiem Mass in Brompton Oratory. Miss Fairman painted nearly 30 Royal pets in her time. She painted Caesar, King Edward's famous fox terrier, which, at his death, followed the funeral procession to the grave.

Gallery

Royal commissions

Frances Fairman painted around 30 royal pets in her time, including Edward VII's fox terrier, Caesar, and she had the use of a studio at Buckingham Palace. These paintings are held in the Royal Collection:

"Tun" Sprite Pomeranian Osborne House 1897



"Roy" 1897

"Spot" Queen Victoria's short-haired terrier 1895

"Oswald" 1895

"Marco" Queen Victoria's Pomeranian, 1897

"Oscar"

Held by the National Trust

"Chinchilla" Cake Abbey, 1895

"Longhorn" Cake Abbey, 1895

Other portraits

Brindle and white bulldog, 1896

Four white Samoyeds, 1896

Four generations of Pomeranians, 1897

"Gordon," 1898

Portrait of Walter, 1899

Dotted Manchester Terrier with leg, 1900

The odd one out, 1902

Boxer Rebellion England and Japan, 1903

Pomeran Perfection, 1903

A King Charles Spaniel, 1904

Japanese Chin on table, 1905

An English Toy Spaniel puppy, 1906

Champion Bulldog - Silent Duchess, 1907

A Borzoi, 1908

Two Japanese Chins, 1912

Portrait of a poodle, 1914

A Japanese Chin bitch and her puppy, 1919

Lady Christian's Japanese Chin - Danski

Wire-Haired Fox Terrier

Portrait of a Welsh Terrier, 1877