

The dog in art

by Nick Waters



Newfoundland art at the Kennel Club

Few breeds of dog have such a fascinating and romantic background as the Newfoundland. Even its size commands attention. It is immortalised in literature by Lord Byron and J.M. Barrie, in art by Sir Edwin Landseer, companion and work horse for man as he explored new boundaries, and the hero in countless stories of bravery and determination that enthralled Victorian children.

It is against such a background that the Kennel Club Art Gallery stages its latest exhibition, 'The Newfoundland: An Exhibition of Art and History Portraying this Noble, Loyal Breed'. The Newfoundland is one of the fortunate breeds that has appealed to artists, sculptors and writers over the years, consequently there is much available. Drawing from all this and bringing it all together in one place to tell the story of the breed could not have been easy and all those who worked on it have managed, in my opinion, to stage one of the best exhibitions seen in the gallery.

Lambert's A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society (included in the exhibition) is a defining image influencing artists and craftspersons for decades and as a theme that runs throughout the exhibition - copies by lesser artists, prints, plates, tiles, jewellery, medals, by Crown Devon and German porcelain factories, there is even a most unusual Victorian toilet picture.

It was through the breed's heroism and bravery, particularly rescuing sailors from shipwrecks and children from drowning, stories that have been a lot of canvas matter, all these years ago, that first attracted artists. They told a

story that appealed to the age. One of the earliest of many images is a colour print published in 1803, possibly after the original, by the German artist John Eckstein.

Barrie's Peter Pan story is well known throughout the world and thanks to Barrie's generosity, Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital has benefited enormously. They

Apart from Landseer's 'Distinguished Member', there are other important pictures on show, including John Errol's portrait of a Landseer with its terrier friend on a beach. A number of contemporary artists were invited to complete pictures for the exhibition and these include the French artist Martial Robin and the Canadian

artist Mia Lane.

The Newfoundland exhibition runs until January 10 and can be viewed by appointment Monday to Friday.

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have loaned a number of Peter Pan items from lantern slides to a Jacob's cake tin.

Sculptures in their various forms include a life-size bronze head by Marjorie Hurley, Staffordshire pottery groups, Vienna bronzes and a large porcelain group by Royal Dux. Among the more quirky items is a life size rope dog by Dominic Gubbio, a seated dog woven in willow and a hat covered in Newfoundland badges.

The Newfoundland Club's magnificent silver trophies from the 1890s are on display, alongside some particularly unique images of Charles Haddenby and his dogs, including Master Jumbo, winner of the Black Dog Cup four times in the late '70s which can be seen beside the dog.

