

The Russian Imperial Family and their Fabergé French Bulldogs

Part 1

The Breeding of French bulldogs at the start of the 20th century



L'Entente Cordiale. (Sir) John Lavery (1856 - 1941). A portrait believed to be Violet Manners, Marchioness of Granby later Duchess of Rutland with her English bred, rose or drop eared, bulldog. The painting was purchased from Thomas Agnew and Sons at their *Independent British Art Exhibition* of 1906 by the Manchester Art Gallery. The Entente Cordiale was an agreement signed on the 8th April 1904 between Britain and France in an effort to improve Anglo French relations. A new breed name the Bulldogue Francais was introduced by the Kennel Club in 1905 for the smaller French bred version of this English breed. Illustration courtesy of the Manchester Art Gallery.



Robert Williams Daniel and American insurance broker and banker photographed before returning on the maiden voyage of the Titanic with his, champion, bat eared, French bulldog, *Gamin de Pycombe*, wearing a fashionable badger bristle collar. He survived the sinking while the unfortunate dog perished, as a result Daniel claimed on his insurance.

In Paris by the last decade of the 19th century a smaller French bulldog had been bred to type thereby establishing a new breed weighing no more than 20 lbs. -the *Bulldogue Francais*. At the beginning of the 20th century these smaller French dogs became highly fashionable and sought-after particularly by society ladies in London and New York.

Country Life through its column *Kennel Notes* confirmed this interest and the fashion by publishing on 29 April 1899 the first definitive article on the history of the Toy Bulldog as this new French breed was known in England:

The Toy Bulldog at the present time bids fair to become the most fashionable and popular of all dogs in England, and, as an offshoot of the national breed of Britain, he is certainly entitled to the position which it appears probable he will shortly occupy.....

Some thirty five years ago the small sized or light-weight bulldog was common in this country so that dogs of the breed that scaled over 28 lb. were not encouraged at shows such as Birmingham...Then by some freak of fashion the Toy Bulldog became all the rage in Paris, with the result that the celebrated Bill George of Canine Castle, Kensal New Town, the most eminent dog dealer of his or any other day received carte blanche commissions from French customers to procure them lightweight bulldogs and by this means England was denuded of all her best specimens.

Charles Dickens is believed to have visited Bill George at Canine Castle when researching Bill Sikes' dog Bull's-Eye for *Oliver Twist*

.....the French breeders deserve all credit for having sustained the breed when English breeders had completely lost sight of it; although opinions may differ regarding the question of ears the Parisian taste is entirely in favour of the upright "bat" ear as shown in the accompanying illustrations....in France the "bat" ears are much preferred to the rose shape, in which the tips lay back so that the interior of the ears and the burr are fully exposed. This assertion is born out when a comparison is drawn between the prizes offered at the forthcoming Paris Dog Show... two special prizes of 2000 fr. for bat eared specimens and two of the value of 500 fr. apiece for rose eared....

The *Country Life* article illustrates and comments on four specimen French bulldogs then owned by the Duchess of Sutherland:

The accompanying illustrations represent some extremely choice specimens of the French or bat-eared variety, the property of Her Grace the Duchess of Sutherland. Of these the brindle pie ZoZo is Her Grace's special favourite, and accompanies her everywhere, his affection for his noble mistress and his intelligence causing him to be a pet wherever he goes. Coquin is a dark brindle pied, and will be seen to be unusually large in the skull for his weight whilst his perfect bat ears must cause him to be accepted as an unusually fine specimen of the French variety...

In 1885 the first of the French breed was brought to New York in order to set up an American-based breeding program. The dogs were mostly owned by society ladies such as Rockefeller and Morgan.

The breed was first publicly displayed at the New York Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in 1896. The following year with even more entries the judging of the breed would go on to have future ramifications over type - for the judge in question, a Mr. Sven Feltstein, only chose winners with:

"Rose ears" – ears that folded at the tip, as with the standard for English Bulldogs.

The first of this new French bulldog breed arrived in England in 1893 creating uproar amongst the English bulldog breeders as the French imports did not meet the breed standards and they wished to prevent the larger rose eared English stock as depicted in *L'Entente Cordiale* from cross-breeding with the French. As a result the Kennel Club only recognised them as a subset of the English bulldog rather than as an entirely new breed.

On 10 July 1902, at the house of Frederick W. Cousens the leading English Toy bulldog breeder, a meeting was held to set up a breed club to seek individual recognition for the French breed. The adopted breed standard was to be the same as that already in use in America, France, Germany and Austria.

In 1905, the Kennel Club changed its policy and recognized the breed separately from the heavier and more substantial English variety, to be initially known as the Bulldog Francais.

The Bulldog Francais *Gamin de Pycombe* was bred by Cousens and sired by his *Charlemagne of Amersham* the first British pied champion French bulldog. This dog was the grandson of the Paris bred *Napoleon Buonaparte* who may in turn have been related to Prince Yusupov's *Gugusse*



**Coquin, a bat-eared French bulldog, the property of the Duchess of Sutherland,
*“An unusually fine specimen of the French variety”***

The Russians particularly the Romanov's had been importing larger English type rose or drop eared bulldogs since the early 1880's where the cropped ear was fashionable. The three dogs owned by the Tsar, and his sons the future Tsar Alexander III and the Grand Duke Vladimir were thick-set cream large English French bulldogs with cropped rose-ears with the fold removed.

Prince Felix Yusupov, who was to later murder Rasputin and the Grand Duke Alexei a third Romanov brother owned carefully selected smaller cream/fawn French bulldogs with tulip-ears that could not be easily cropped but whose coats had faded out to a pale, almost white, colour.

In the first decade of the 20th century these cream/fawn French bulldogs with tulip-ears were uncommon anywhere in the world.

In 1901 Prince Yusupov with his mother visited Paris for the Great Exhibition where they purchased in the Rue de la Paix the family's first cream/fawn rose or drop-eared French bulldog. This dog *Gugusse*, was later replaced in the Prince's affection by the more fashionable tulip-eared but English bred French bulldog, *Punch*, from whom the Yusupov's bred puppies with tulip-ears, as seen in the three surviving Fabergé statuettes the principal subject of this four part series.



FIG. 129.—TULIP-EARED FRENCH, ROSE-EARED ENGLISH, AND BAT-EARED FRENCH TOY BULLDOGS.

British Dogs their points, selection and show preparation, published, New York 1903.
Using this photograph the author Mr. St. John Cooper discusses the three ear types then found in French bulldogs at the turn of the century.

Part II: The Romanov family and their French bulldogs



A painting now at Tsarskoe Selo by Shvabe dated 1867 depicting in some detail 10 dogs and two monkeys the family pets of Tsar Alexander II; including three non- standard French bulldogs all with cropped ears.

Contemporary photographs indicate that three generations of the Imperial Family owned at least 13 individual French bulldogs between 1867 and 1914: Tsar Alexander II (3), Tsar Alexander III (1), the Grand Duke Vladimir (1), his wife the Grand Duchess Marie (3), the Grand Duke Alexei (2), his mistress Elizabeth Balletta (1) and in the third generation the Grand Duchess Tatiana (2).

It could be suggested that the British Royal Family's acquisition of French bulldogs came about by gift through the Danish Royal sisters to whom the two sovereigns were married. In the late 19th century the Prince of Wales later Edward VII and his wife owned two French bulldogs, possibly acquired from Russia or vice versa. In this context it is interesting that the dogs had the given names of Peter and Paul, possibly after the island fortress and its cathedral in St Petersburg in which the Romanov family are buried.

The Grand Duke Alexander became Emperor Alexander III on 13 March 1881 when his father Alexander II was assassinated, his older brother Nicholai having died in 1865. After the death of his brother Alexander married his intended wife the Danish Princess Dagmar, who took the Russian name Maria Feodorovna in November 1866.



The children of the Grand Duke Alexander later Tsar Alexander III, the Grand Duke Michael and the Grand Duchess Xenia later mother of Prince Yusupov's wife with their cream English, French bulldog with cropped rose-ears not as yet bred to type. Photograph: Circa 1880.



The Grand Duke Vladimir with his wife the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna and their cropped rose-eared cream/fawn French bulldog photographed in 1883.

This dog was probably represented in the first of the Fabergé hardstone portrait carvings in an exhibition of the Romanov collection of Fabergé held in St Petersburg in 1902. The Grand Duchess went on to own a further three French bulldogs without cropped ears.



The Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich, seated, the third of the French bulldog owning Romanov brothers. This key photograph is of great interest because of the Romanov black and white collar around the neck of his cream/fawn French bulldog with uncropped tulip-ears, unlike the dogs owned by his two brothers. This may be the earliest photograph of a Romanov French bulldog bred nearly correctly to type. It shows that even at this early date, circa 1885, the Grand Duke Alexei was interested in both the breed and breeding and that his dog wore a black and white Romanov collar.

In 1880 the Grand Duke Alexei was appointed by his brother, the Tsar Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy. He was relieved of his command when the Japanese destroyed the Russian fleet at the battle of Tsushima on 2 June 1905. As a result, Alexei, still unmarried after a life of '*Fast women and Slow Ships*,' retired in 1905 to a luxurious Paris apartment in the Gabriel Avenue 38. He died in the apartment of his mistress in November 1908. It is recorded that the executors of his estate were left with a Fabergé invoice for 800 roubles for '*A hardstone figure of a dog*.' It has been incorrectly assumed that this is the statuette of *Cody* presented to the actress Elizabeth Balletta by the Grand Duke Alexei now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.



Detail Miss Balletta's portrait painted soon after 1910 by de Tade Stypka showing her wearing a Fabergé bracelet, a gift from the Grand Duke Alexei and a magnificent star sapphire.



The funeral of the Grand Duke Alexei in Paris with his magnificent hearse drawn by 6 driven caparisoned horses with black ostrich plumes led by the Romanov standards and his staff carrying his medals.

With no official family the duke's property was shared between his two surviving brothers. With the sudden death of his brother the Grand Duke Vladimir in 1909 this share of his assets went to his wife the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna who dealt with the administration and payment of debts.

In May 1909 an auction was held in St Petersburg of surplus objects from the estate.

Agathon Fabergé was allowed to choose certain items for the firm before the sale. Fabergé wrote to a member of staff of late Grand Duke Alexei's one surviving brother the Grand Duke Pavel: *On Friday 8 May I saw in the halls of Auction at Moika the second run of things that belonged to the late Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich.....In connection with it. I ask you to inform me when I could send for the things that Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna promised to let me choose and that she promised to let me have according to billing rates as you had told me earlier....*

Fabergé must have completed the order for the bulldog puppy *Cody* which had been paid for by the Duke before his death and given by him to Elizabeth Balletta. The success of the concept causing him to commission a second statuette, called I suggest *Custer*, completed but not yet paid for as a: *Hardstone figure of a dog, 800 roubles*. This may have been sold by negotiation to the firm of Fabergé before the 1909 auction for it remained with the firm of until sold by their London branch in 1916.

The key is the Grand Duke Alexei and his female, cream, tulip-eared, French bulldog, the mother of *Cody* and *Custer*. Was it this dog that was taken in by Elizabeth Balletta on the death of the Grand Duke to return to St Petersburg with Prince Yusupov in 1913 to become the mother of a tulip-eared litter fathered by *Punch*?

The purchase of a bitch with a Romanov pedigree from the mistress of his future wife's late uncle would suit the thinking of this young, unconventional and daring Prince.



The Grand Duke Alexei with a cream/fawn coloured, tulip eared, French bulldog bitch with Elizabeth Balletta seated taken in Paris circa 1908.

A newspaper report in the Sydney paper the *Newsletter* 30 Jan 1909 describes the death and funeral of the Grand Duke Alexei in Paris: *dying in the apartment of a Parisian actress. No one was present at the time of death but a French music hall singer known in Russia by the name of La Ballet[t]a.... Alexis found nothing better to do than to come to Paris and display as publically as possible his affection for La Balletta....La Balletta who has been amply provided for out of imperial funds was allowed to accompany the funeral cortege in a closed carriage.*

Part III: The Grand Duchess Tatiana, Prince Felix Yusupov and their French Bulldogs



Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaevna of Russia (10 June 1897 – 17 July 1918), second daughter of Tsar Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia, and of the Tsarina Alexandra. The brindle colour and upright bat-ear's suggest that this is *Ortipo II* and that this dog is from a different litter to *Ortipo I*.

According to a 29 May 1897 diary entry written by her father's distant cousin Tatiana was born at the Peterhof, palace Saint Petersburg and given the name "Tatiana" as the Tsar's homage to the heroine in Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse Eugene Onegin.

On the outbreak of the First World War with her older sister Olga, she became a nurse to wounded soldiers in a private military hospital created in the grounds of the family home Tsarskoye Selo. It was here that the Imperial family were arrested following the first Russian Revolution in 1917.

Tatiana was closer to her mother than any of her sisters and was considered by many who knew her to be the Tsarina's favourite daughter and the conduit of all her mother's decisions.

Peter de Malama wrote of his cousin wrote of his cousin: *Dmitri Yakovlevich Malama was an officer in the Imperial Russian Cavalry who met Tatiana in hospital as his nurse when wounded in 1914 where they fell in love. The romance developed and later the young man was appointed an equerry to the court of the Tsar at Tsarskoye Selo.*

Ortipo was reportedly the name of Malama's favourite horse this name was Tatiana's tribute to Dmitri. I suggest that the puppy was obtained from a litter belonging to the Yusupov's, for the Princess Yusupov was both a close friend and her only female cousin.

It appears that when this dog died Malama provided the replacement, also a bitch which Tatiana again named *Ortipo*. Tatiana took this dog with her into exile at Yekaterinburg, where it was later bayoneted and thrown down the well with the Imperial family when they were shot in July 1918.

Malama was killed in August 1919 while commanding a unit of the White Russians fighting the civil war against the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine.

The Imperial Family was arrested during the Russian Revolution of July 1917 and imprisoned first at Tsarskoye Selo and later at private residences in Toblosk then Yekaterinburg in Siberia.

Tatiana's English tutor, Sydney Gibbes, recalled that Tatiana had grown razor thin in captivity and seemed "haughtier" and more inscrutable to him than ever.

Pierre Gilliard the family's Swiss French tutor records his last sight of the imperial children at Yekaterinburg:

"The sailor Nagorny, who attended to Alexei Nikolaevitch, passed my window carrying the sick boy in his arms, behind him came the Grand Duchesses' loaded with valises and small personal belongings. I tried to get out, but was roughly pushed back into the carriage by the sentry. I came back to the window. Tatiana Nikolayevna came last carrying her little dog and struggling to drag a heavy brown valise. It was raining and I saw her feet sink into the mud at every step. Nagorny tried to come to her assistance; he was roughly pushed back by one of the commissars ..."

Late on the night of 16 July, the family was awakened and told to come down to the lower level of the house because there was unrest in the town at large and they would have to be moved for their own safety. They emerged from their rooms carrying pillows, bags, and other items to make Alexandra and Alexei comfortable. They asked questions of the guards but did not appear to suspect they were going to be killed. Yurovsky, who had been a professional photographer, directed the family to take different positions as a photographer might. Alexandra, who had requested chairs for herself and Alexei, sat to her son's left. Yurovsky came in, ordered them to stand, as he read the sentence of execution. Tatiana and her family had time only to utter a few incoherent sounds of shock or protest before the death squad under Yurovsky's command began shooting. It was the early hours of 17 July 1918.

Anya Vyubova the Romanov family's Lady-in-Waiting recounts in her biography: *Alexei's pets were two, a silky little spaniel named Joy and a beautiful big grey cat the gift of General Voyeikov....There were two other dogs Tatiana's French Bull and a little King Charlie which I contributed to the menagerie*

A later account mentions the bayonetting of *Anastasia's lapdog*, in Yekaterinburg, this was almost certainly *Ortipo II* – the only dog in Yekaterinburg small enough to be described as a lapdog, the two other family dogs that had followed them into exile being Joy and Jemmy, the Tsarevitch Alexei's and the Grand Duchess Anastasia's spaniels. The spaniel Joy survived and died in England.



The Grand Duchess Anastasia with her King Charles spaniel *Jemmy*, the Grand Duchess Tatiana with the brindle bat eared *Ortípo II* and the Tsarevitch Alexei with his spaniel *Joy*.

From diaries and letters of Grand Duchess Tatiana Romanov:

30 September, 1914 – Tsarskoe Selo. Mama darling mine, forgive me about the little dog. To say the truth, when he asked should I like to have it if he gave it me, I at once said yes. You remember, I always wanted to have one and only afterwards when we came home I thought that suddenly you might not like me having one. But I really was so pleased at the idea that I forgot about everything. Please, darling angel, forgive me. Tell Papa about it. I hope he won't have anything against it..."



**Nurse Tatiana Romanov and her infirm patient Dmitri Malama
who gave her *Ortipo I*.**

Ortipo seems to have lived for less than a year. Tsar Nicholas noted his death in a cable to Alexander on 5 September 1915*Too bad about Ortipo*. When Dimitri Malama learnt of this, he arranged for another French bulldog to be delivered to Tatiana; which she promptly named *Ortipo* [II]. It is unusual for two different dogs to be given the same name, but if you look at the family correspondence it seems that this is exactly what happened.



The only photograph of the Grand Duchess Tatiana with her first tulip-eared, French bulldog puppy *Ortípo* taken in late 1914.



The two elder Grand Duchesses with shaved heads in 1917 with the female brindle dog *Ortípo II* which slept in their bedroom and snored.



This important musical box is enamelled with the views of six of the Yusupov palaces. The palace to the front is on the Moika where Prince Felix was later to murder Rasputin. This musical box was a gift by Prince Felix and his brother to their father in 1907 to mark his 25th wedding anniversary.

That the two young Yusupov princes could afford and were blessed with sufficient good taste to commission two superb objects from Fabergé as personal gifts to their parents boded well for the firm of Fabergé. The commission provides us with evidence of a close family association with the firm of Fabergé at an early age, an association that would have given Yusupov the experience to commission, as the owner of *Punch*, a portrait carved from a citrine of a French bulldog puppy from his litter as a gift to the daughter of the Tsar, the Grand Duchess Tatiana.



A twenty fifth wedding anniversary gift from Prince Felix Yusupov and his brother, to their mother, now in the Sandoz Collection, Switzerland.

The Yusupov's were among the wealthiest and most influential families in Tzarist Russia; their estates dotted the Russian landscape from the Crimea to Moscow and to St. Petersburg. A flamboyant young man of striking good looks, Prince Felix was born in 1887, the second of two sons to Princess Zanaida Yusupova and her husband, Count Elston-Sumarkoff.

Felix was considered to be vain regarding his looks, perhaps not surprisingly since he was often referred to as *'the most handsome man in Russia'*. This vanity extended to Felix's French bulldog, *Gugusse*, who is pictured with him in his famous portrait.

Gugusse, originally christened *Napoleon*, was purchased by Felix, then aged 13, with his mother on the Rue de la Paix in Paris on a visit to see the Paris Exhibition in 1901.



Felix with his elder brother, soon to be shot in a duel, and his mother and father. *Gugusse* is on the table; he has English rose-ears uncropped, later considered incorrect for a French bulldog for this fashion had passed. He and his future wife's uncle, The Grand Duke Alexei, also understood the importance of the ears to the configuration of the breed.

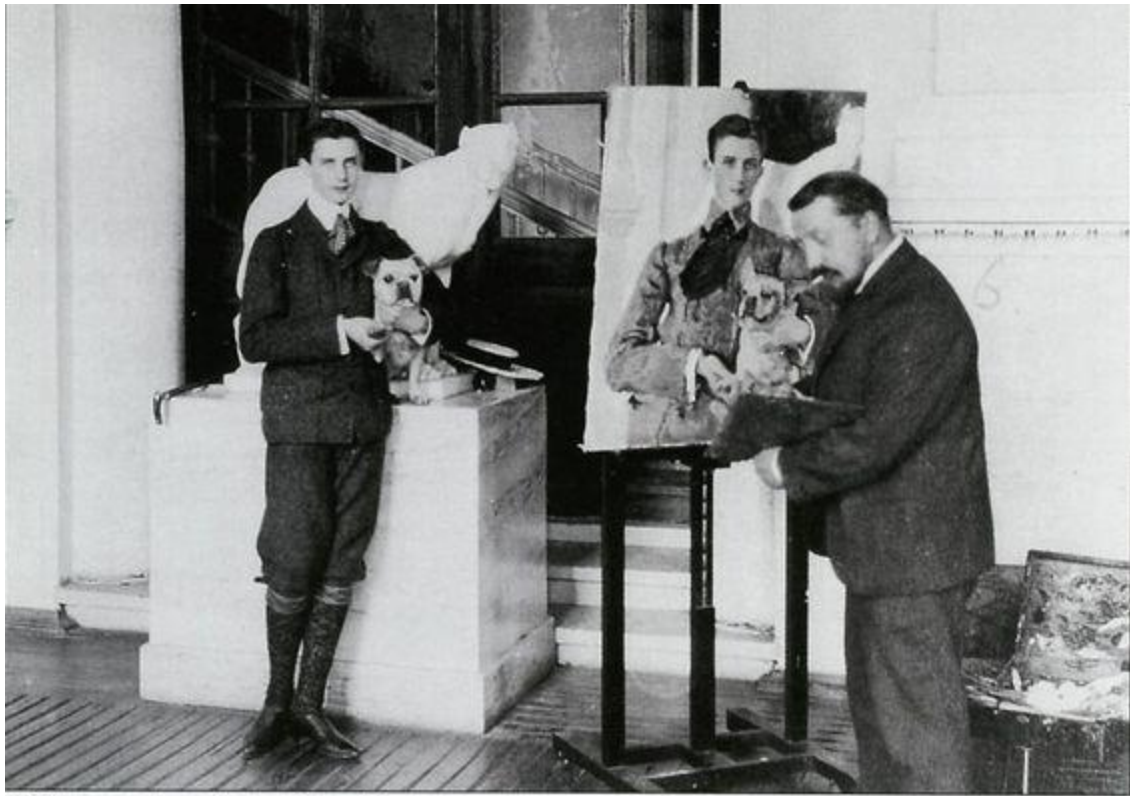


The 16 year old Prince Felix Yusupov and his cream French bulldog *Gugusse* painted by Valentin Seroff in 1903. The dog clearly has tulip- ears, presumably on the orders of the princely owner, who, on this evidence, must have had a considered and knowledgeable interest in this breed of dog. The Collection of The Russian Museum St Petersburg

Felix, not wanting to have his French bulldog portrayed as anything less than perfect, had Seroff paint the dog with tulip-ears, then specified as a standard under the newly-written English Kennel Club rules.

This portrait was painted before the Prince's departure for Oxford in 1909 where he studied Fine Arts at University College until 1913. He returned to Russia with *Punch*, a cream/fawn French bulldog with tulip-ears, acquired whilst at university.

He married into the Romanov family on 22 February 1914.



Félix avec le peintre Seroff posant pour son portrait. © Collection particulière

Felix writes quite extensively about *Gugusse* in his autobiography:

For eighteen years, Gugusse was my devoted and inseparable companion. He soon became quite famous, for everyone knew and loved him, from members of the Imperial family to the least of our peasants. He was a real Parisian guttersnipe who loved to be dressed up, put on an air of importance when he was photographed, adored candy and champagne... He was most amusing when slightly tipsy. He used to suffer from flatulence and would trot to the fireplace, stick his backside into the hearth and look up with an apologetic expression.

Gugusse loved some people and hated others, and nothing could stop him from showing his dislike by relieving himself on the trousers or the skirts of his enemies. He had such an aversion for one of my mother's friends that we were obliged to shut him up whenever she called at the house. She came one day in a lovely gown of pink velvet, a Worth creation. Unfortunately, we had forgotten to lock up Gugusse; no sooner had she entered the room than he made a dash for her. The gown was ruined and the poor lady had hysterics.

*Gugusse could have performed in a circus. Dressed as a jockey, he would ride a tiny pony or, with a pipe stuck between his teeth, would pretend to smoke. He used to love going out with the guns, and would bring in game like a retriever. The head of the Holy Synod (*Supreme Council of the Russian Orthodox Church.) called on my mother one day and, to my mind, stayed far too long. I resolved that Gugusse should create a diversion. I made him up as an old cocotte, sparing neither powder nor paint, rigged him out in a dress and wig and pushed him into the drawing room. Gugusse seemed to understand what was expected of him, for he made a sensational entry on his hind legs, to the dismay of our visitor who very quickly took his leave, which was exactly what I wanted.*

While in London, Felix acquired another French bulldog, an event he mentioned in a letter to his friend Dmitri Yannovich:

"I have now a new pet, a charming little French Bull Dog, given to me by our friend Andrei. He is simply too charming with his little prick ears, but does snore rather insufferably. I shall bring him with me when I return home".



Prince Felix with his mother father and Punch, bottom left, the Oxford, cream, French bulldog with tulip-ears. This is the only photo I have been able to trace of this dog which has an unusual oversize head akin to the Duchess of Sutherland's Coquin illustrated earlier.

One day when I was at Davies my tailor's, a very smartly dressed old gentleman, wearing a checked suit, came in. Before I could stop him, Punch rushed at him and tore a huge piece out of his trousers.

On another occasion I went with a friend to her furrier's; Punch noticed a sable muff encircled by a black and white checked scarf. He immediately seized it and rushed out of the shop with it. I, and everyone else at the furrier's, ran after him halfway down Bond Street, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we managed to catch him and retrieve the muff, happily almost intact.

As he had mentioned in his letter to Dmitri Yannovich, Felix did bring *Punch* back home to Russia with him during the holidays, and planned to then bring him back to Oxford when classes resumed. Felix, unfortunately, had forgotten that dogs entering England were required to stay in quarantine for six months. Not one to conform to society's requirements, Felix devised a plan to spare *Punch* jail time:

As six months in quarantine was out of the question, I decided to evade the law. On my way to Oxford in the autumn, I passed through Paris and went to see an old Russian ex-cocotte (prostitute) whom I knew. [Elizabeth

Balletta?] *I asked her to come to London with me; she would have to dress as a nurse and carry Punch, disguised as a baby. The old lady agreed at once, as the idea amused her immensely, although at the same time it frightened her to death.*

The next day, we left for London after giving "Baby" a sleeping draught so as to keep him quiet during the journey, Everything went smoothly and not a soul suspected the fraud.

Prince Felix apparently owned several more French Bulldogs during this period. In a letter he wrote to a family friend in 1914, he stated:

"I am greatly pleased with the French Bull bitch my friend has just sent me from Paris. [Elizabeth Balletta?] She is of finest quality and pleasing colour.

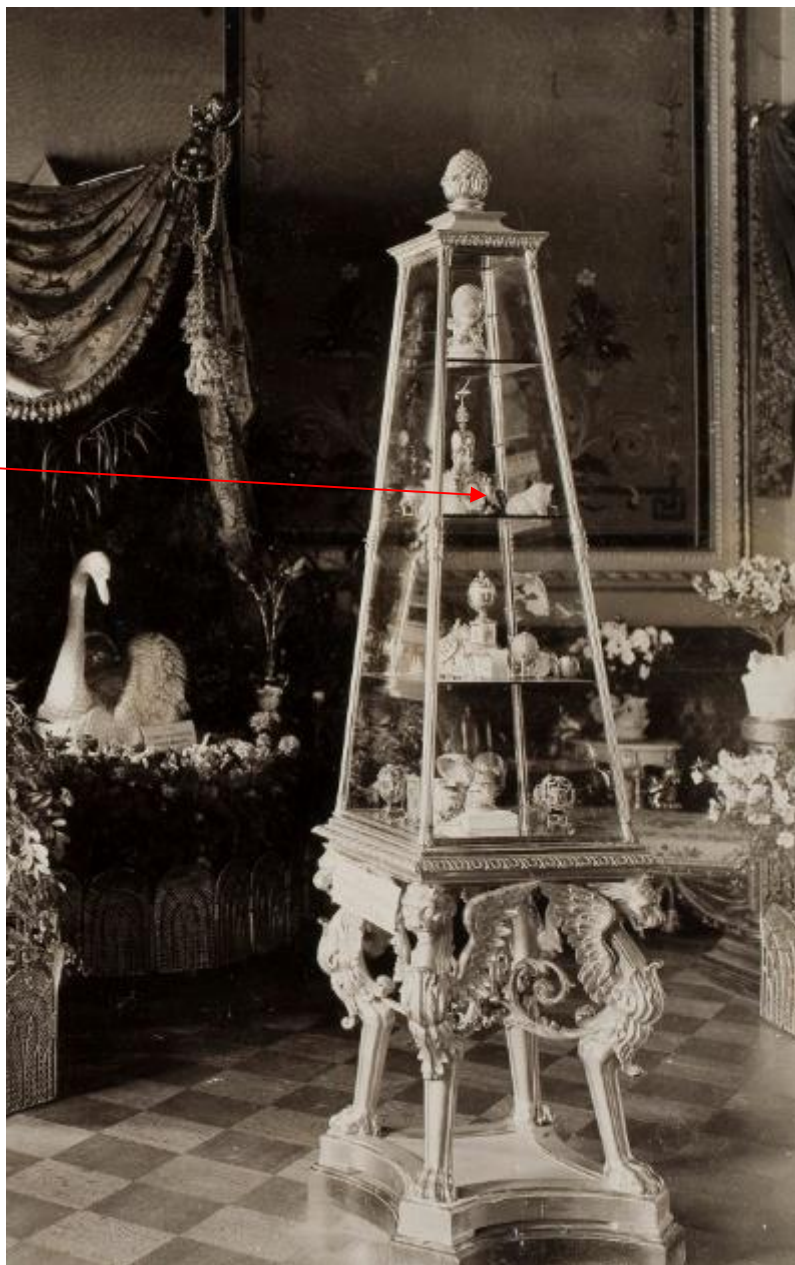
I shall look for another such when I travel there again in May

That *Punch* was his favourite can be ascertained by an entry in Prince Felix's autobiography. After his wedding into the Romanov family he writes:

The time for our departure arrived at last; a crowd of relatives and friends were waiting at the station. Once more we had to shake hands and be congratulated. After the last demonstrations of affection were over, we entered our coach; a black nose suddenly emerged from a profusion of flowers and there was my Punch triumphantly ensconced among the roses.

The newly-weds took *Punch* on honeymoon with them to Egypt and Jerusalem where *Punch* bit a policeman and launched an attack on the Greek Patriarch.

Part Four: Four Fabergé Hardstone French bulldogs from the Imperial Collections.





The von Dervis 1902 exhibition cabinets in his St. Petersburg house displaying the Imperial Family's collection of Fabergé with a hardstone cream/fawn French bulldog sculpture with cropped ears, arrowed.

This original photograph suggests that in the rear cabinet on the second shelf down from the top there is a hardstone statuette of a full grown French bulldog with cropped ears sitting on its haunches.

This portly dog bears many similarities to the bulldog belonging to the Grand Duke Vladimir. His elder sister, the Grand Duchess Xenia, the mother of Prince Yusupov's future wife is recorded as lending hardstone animals to the 1902 von Dervis exhibition.

The cabinets also contain the then Imperial collection of Fabergé Easter eggs gifted by the Tsar as Easter presents to the Tsarina before 1902.

There are three known surviving Fabergé hardstone miniature sculptures made between 1908 and 1914 that accurately depict French bulldog puppies as pets within the Imperial family: These are *Cody*, *Custer* and *Ortizo*.



***Cody*, Elizabeth Balletta's cream tulip-eared French bulldog now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.**

The Museum states:

"Lapidary artists in the Fabergé workshops employed a wide range of semi-precious stones to create exquisitely carved animal sculptures. Their selection, and the manner in which the stones were employed, depended upon the design and in many cases imitated patterns and hues found in nature. Some of the animals, including this bulldog, were actual portraits of living creatures that were prized pets. Both the name and address of the dog represented here, Cody, Av. Bosquet , are inscribed on an applied gold plaque secured to the dog's be-jewelled collar. This ornament also features a diamond-studded buckle, a polished gold bell in the front, and a ring at the back for a leash. Cody's arresting eyes are cabochon rubies set in gold and his body is made of tan-coloured agate. The ears are slightly darker in colour and the skin folds, fur, and posture are highly naturalistic."

The sculpture of Cody was a gift to actress Elizabeth Balletta from Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich. Ms. Balletta, who performed for many years at the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg, was a favourite of the Grand Duke who often purchased gifts for her from Fabergé and Cartier. After twenty-five years of acting, she settled in Paris at Avenue Bosquet 9, the address inscribed on the collar.

Up until 1908 Fabergé's carved animals were made in Idar-Oberstein, Germany. A move to the Imperial Peterhof Lapidary Works in St. Petersburg after the arrival of two lapidary artisans P. M. Kremlyov and P. Derbyshev saw the standard of carving improve dramatically. Kremlyov had graduated from the Yekaterinburg Art School and specialised in stone carving as a result Fabergé could now produce, in house and under the firm's control an infinitely finer series of hardstone sculptures.

The Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich, the brother of Tsar Alexander III, is the link that ties the actress Elizabeth Balletta and her French bulldogs to Prince Felix Yusupov, for the Grand Duke's intimate *Journal* has been recently discovered amongst the Yusupov papers in the Russian National Library.

These family papers have remained virtually untouched since the Yusupov's banishment by the Imperial family from St Petersburg after the murder of Rasputin. It is of note that certain possibly compromising pages have been removed, probably by Elizabeth Balletta.

The logical way for this document to have come into the possession of Prince Felix Yusupov is for Elizabeth Balletta to have given this very personal and revealing *Journal* to Yusupov for both safe keeping and return to St Petersburg during his visit to Paris in 1913 when he acquired a female French bulldog as a mate for *Punch*.

Elizabeth Balletta must have been gifted this statuette of *Cody* by the Grand Duke Alexei before his death in November 1908. After his death it is highly unlikely that the Imperial family would have agreed to make an individual payment that would allow the delivery of a hardstone image of her puppy to his former mistress.

That the statuette related to a puppy then living at Elizabeth Balletta's Paris address is confirmed by the engraved address on the collar. I suggest that the actress, or more probably the Grand Duke, gave the bulldog puppy the most unusual name *Cody* after his friend Buffalo Bill Cody with whom the duke had shot his first American buffalo in January 1872. It is of interest that the details of this buffalo hunting expedition were carefully recorded in the surviving *Journal* now in the Yusupov papers and that Buffalo Bill Cody was in Paris and Europe in 1904 and 1905.

Was it this statuette of *Cody* that gave Yusupov the idea for a citrine bulldog statuette as a gift to the Grand Duchess Tatiana to commemorate her acquisition of Ortipo?

These rare tulip-eared cream/fawn French bulldogs are to be found only in the Yusupov/Alexei bred dogs as evidenced by the photographs and hardstone portraits that illustrate this series of articles.

June 17 Colonel Cody's valet suddenly disappeared with a lot of jewels, viz.: A diamond studded pin, given to Colonel Cody by King Edward VII, at Olympia; a double gold rope chain; a diamond horseshoe pendant, presented by the Wild West company; buffalo head cuff links, given by the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, and about £4 (\$20.00) in gold coin.

The matter was placed in the hands of C. C. Murphy, our special Pinkerton detective, who, after three days, captured the thief, recovered the jewels, and had the culprit sentenced to "gaol" (that's the way they spell it over there) for six months at hard "labour."

In 1903 Col Cody had brought his *Wild West Show* to London where his Grand Ducal buffalo head cuff links were stolen. The Show toured in Paris in April 1904 for 2 months and again in 1905 throughout Europe. It would seem certain that the Grand Duke Alexei and Ms Balletta met Cody on this latter tour providing the prompt for the naming of *Custer* and *Cody*.



General Custer, Grand Duke Alexis and Buffalo Bill.

The next day was Duke Alexis' birthday and spirits were high in camp, and grew mightily when, after a hearty breakfast, scouts rode in with the word that a herd of buffalo had been spotted. As the hunting party neared the buffalo herd Cody gave word that the Duke should have first shot. Aboard Cody's favorite horse, Buckskin Joe, the Duke rode to within 20 feet of the herd, then shot wildly, emptying six pistol shots -- into the air. The buffalo looked vacantly at the Duke and began to walk slowly away.

Cody rode up to the Duke and gave him his famed .48-caliber rifle, "Lucretia," the one with which he had killed 4,200 buffalo. This time, from a distance of only 10 feet, Duke Alexis fired and successfully killed his first buffalo.

This was cause for a real celebration. Alexis severed the buffalo tail and proudly waved it for all to see as he rode back to the camp. The Russians immediately began to pop the corks on the champagne bottles to celebrate. Spotted Tail offered his pipe to the Duke in congratulations -- to which the Duke declined, saying he preferred cigarettes. Before they arrived at the camp Alexis accidentally killed a buffalo cow, and again the Russians began to pop more champagne bottles. Later Cody remarked, "I was in hopes that he would kill five or six more before we reached camp, especially if a basket of champagne was to be opened every time he dropped one."

A newspaper report and photograph of the buffalo hunt with General Custer and Buffalo Bill Cody in 1872 after whom at least one puppy and a portrait Fabergé statuette was romantically named.



Custer

This tulip eared French bulldog is almost certainly the one referred to in Fabergé's account for: *A hardstone figure of a dog*, unpaid by the Grand Duke Alexei on his death in 1908. The account for 800 roubles was settled in an as yet unknown way in 1909 by order of the recently widowed Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna who inherited part of Duke Alexei's enormous estate through her late husband, his brother, the Grand Duke Vladimir. The Grand Duchess owned during her life at least three French bulldogs of which one may have been portrayed as a small hardstone statuette with its cropped ears exhibited in the von Dervis cabinet of 1902.

By virtue of its survival this twin to *Cody* allows for a second *hardstone figure of a dog*, in petrified wood wearing an enamelled collar in the Romanov heraldic colours of black, white and gold. The collar confirms that it belonged to the Grand Duke Alexei who is known to have owned at an earlier date, a tulip-eared French bulldog photographed wearing a similar Romanov collar. I suggest that the Grand Duke when he saw how much pleasure the puppy and the statuette of *Cody* had given his mistress ordered another using as a subject another puppy from the same litter which he had kept for himself. If so the puppy as the brother to Elizabeth Balletta's *Cody* would have certainly rejoiced in the name *Custer*.

If this Romanov French bulldog statuette is *Custer*, I suggest it was obtained under the authority of the executors of the Grand Duke Alexei's estate in 1909 by Fabergé in lieu of the outstanding debt of 800 roubles. It was later offered in 1914 by the House of Fabergé to the King of Thailand.

The King as Crown Prince had visited Russia before sending his son to be educated under the care of the Emperor. On his return to Thailand this son, Prince Chakrabongse, arranged for the London branch of Fabergé to stage an exhibition of their stock in Bangkok in November 1908. With the outbreak of the Great War business in luxuries throughout Europe collapsed and the Romanov bulldog puppy was taken to Siam for sale in July 1914 the last such selling trip by the House of Fabergé. Siam was one country as yet unaffected by the conflict that destroying the Fabergé business, the King decided against the purchase and the figure was returned to the London shop.

The statuette's Romanov connection may have been known to Mrs Marie Mango the daughter of the former Greek-born Turkish ambassador to St Petersburg, Karatodori /Karatheodori Pasha, who left St Petersburg in 1908. She may have recognised the understated significance of the Romanov colours portrayed on the collar, providing her with a perfectly good, if unspoken, reason to purchase this Royal object, for the high price of ninety pounds, in November 1916, then the darkest days of the Great War. Her husband John was the son of Anthony Mango of the Greek shipping company, *The Foscolo Mango Steamship Company*, running from London a branch of the family business shipping coal out of Cardiff and Newcastle to the Middle East. The onset of the Depression in 1929 caused this business to implode, for empty ships cost a lot to run. The sale by the firm of Fabergé London to Mrs Mango on the 21st November 1916 was virtually the final entry in the firm's London ledgers which closed some six weeks later, on 9 January 1917, with the remaining stock being sold to Lacloche Freres.

The statuette was purchased by Wartski and then sold to Sir Bernard Eckstein. Eckstein, a famous collector and old Etonian, had inherited the family's South African Rand fortune enabling him to purchase the bulldog in the aftermath of the Great Depression. He died, unmarried, leaving a large part of his collection to the British Museum. The Fabergé statuette was sold at Sotheby's, together with his Imperial Winter Egg, in February 1949. The Winter Egg now belongs to the Qatari royal family who purchased it in Christies New York in 2002 for \$9.6 million.

At the Sotheby's sale in 1949 the puppy was again repurchased by Wartski then sold to the then leading British film actress Valerie Hobson.

Valerie Hobson, like many film stars of the time had both breeding and class. She was spotted lunching with her mother at Claridge's by Oscar Hammerstein, who having previously seen her on stage, went to her table and offered her a part in his show at Drury Lane. She almost immediately became a superstar with her performances as the resourceful double agent in *The Spy in Black*, the haughty Estella of *Great Expectations* and the shrewd widow in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, films that gave her the funds to make the bulldog purchase.

Hobson accepted the lead role of Anna, the governess in the musical *The King and I* at Drury Lane and starred for 18 months before retiring in 1954. She stood resolutely by her husband, John Profumo, The Secretary of State, after his affair with Christine Keeler and the bulldog was sold back to Wartski after her death in 1998.

Wartski then sold the bulldog to Lord Thomson of Fleet, the businessman and newspaper baron whose principal interest was collecting the decorative and fine arts. His passion for exceptional works of art never faded, nor did his generosity in handing over his collections to the principal Canadian public art galleries. Thomson had just acquired the bulldog from Wartski when he died in June 2006 and the statuette was again repurchased by Wartski.

I have recently purchased *Custer* from the great London Faberge dealers Wartski who have owned him four times over the last sixty years giving rise to this series of articles.

A third, French bulldog Faberge puppy with tulip ears and therefore closely related to Cody and Custer survives with an Imperial provenance.



A Fabergé carved hardstone statuette probably *Ortipo I* depicting a tulip-eared female puppy was seized by the Bolsheviks in 1922, from the Romanov Estate and is now in The Kremlin Museum Moscow.

I suggest that this not so well carved war time citrine and sapphire set statuette depicts a French bulldog puppy that belonged to the Grand Duchess Tatiana, the second daughter of Tsar Nicholas II. This puppy the first dog to be named *Ortipo* was given to the Grand Duchess by a wounded officer in 1914. This dog died within a year to be replaced by *Ortipo II*, another female French bulldog later bayoneted and thrown down the well in July 1918 by the Bolsheviks along with the Imperial Family.

If I am correct, this is the last of three individual portraits of French bulldog puppies created in hardstones by Fabergé between 1908 and 1914. It represents a puppy out of a litter probably fathered by a tulip-eared French bulldog called *Punch* owned by Prince Felix Yusupov who had recently married Tatiana's cousin. In 1913 the Prince had returned to Russia from Oxford, where he obtained his French bulldog, *Punch*, and a degree. He records in his autobiography that on the way home he acquired a female French bulldog in Paris to breed from *Punch*. This bitch must have had tulip ears to produce this puppy, hence was probably sourced from the former St Petersburg actress Elizabeth Balletta, then living in the Avenue Bosquet, Paris and the owner of *Cody* although in his biography he does not make the connection.

The birth of a rare litter of puppies of a breed of dog much favoured by the Imperial Family to a recently returned Prince Yusupov would have been common knowledge amongst the family and their close associates in St Petersburg.

The Great War commenced in July 1914 and the female puppy *Ortipo I* was a gift from a wounded officer, a Cornet in the Ulahn Lancer Regiment, Dimitri Malama, to his royal nurse Tatiana, working in a military hospital set up in the grounds of the family palace at Tsarskoe Selo. The puppy was collected on Malama's behalf on the 1 October 1914 by Anna Vyrubova, Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress Alexandra who delivered the puppy to Tatiana, noting in her memoirs that it was: '*a little French bulldog*'.

It is recorded that the first dog given to the Grand Duchess Tatiana died nearly a year later, on or about 5th September 1915, to be almost immediately replaced by a brindle bitch, again gifted by Malama, this time a fully grown dog which Tatiana also named *Ortipo*.

This dog has a different origin with its very straight upright bat-ears and may have been in pup, for *Ortipo II* soon produced a litter.

In the small closed family circle of the Romanov's I suggest that the citrine Fabergé portrait statuette of *Ortipo I* was a present from Prince Yusupov to the Grand Duchess Tatiana on her receiving her first puppy from the wounded officer Dimitri Malama, the statuette being commissioned by Yusupov from the firm of Fabergé based on his memory of the similar statuette of *Cody* belonging to Elizabeth Balletta.

The Grand Duchess Tatiana was his new wife's only female cousin and close friend for in February 1914 Yusupov had married the Princess Irina Alexandrovana of Russia, the daughter of the Tsar's sister, the Grand Duchess Xenia.

Prince Felix Yusupov poisoned and then shot Rasputin in the cellar of his St Petersburg Palace on the Moika in December 1916. As a result he immediately became persona non grata at court and was banished from St Petersburg. He and his wife finally escaped from Russia with the sister of Queen Alexandra of England, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovana, Tatiana's grandmother.

It was the end of an era of whimsical luxury objects created irrespective of cost yet these hardstone sculptures still send shivers down the spines of Romanov historians, Fabergé collectors or connoisseurs of beautiful objects.



Collection Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Signature: Unsigned The dog does not appear to fit in the case and the collar does not feel right when compared to the group of three larger studies.

Marks: original fitted case lining stamped with imperial warrant, St. Petersburg, Moscow, London. Date: ca. 1905 Aventurine, gold, enamel, emeralds

Dimensions: Overall: $1\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{8}$ in. ($4.45 \times 5.72 \times 2.86$ cm) It is half the size of the other 3

Object Number: 2003.188. Gift of Ernest J. Hillman Jnr. No other provenance.



This male French bulldog by Fabergé is a sculpture by Fabergé has been stolen from the Hermitage Museum. It is the third portrait sculpture in this Imperial group which as with *Custer* and *Cody* the dog depicts an individual dog wearing a Romanov collar indicative of both commission and ownership. It is possibly the same size. The colour of the stone suggests that the firm in all three of these larger statuettes was working closely towards representing the colouring of the original dogs. With nothing in terms of evidence I ask could this be a portrait commissioned by Prince Yuspov of another puppy fathered by *Punch* and given to his Romanov wife?

Further research by scholars in the Russian archives will contribute to this most interesting subject as we move towards the centenary of the murder of the Imperial family.

Part V: King Edward VII and his French Bulldogs



King Edward VII's French Bulldog *Peter* with bat-ears and diamond eyes poorly carved in Idar – Oberstein before 1908 for the Sandringham Commission. Purchased by King George V from Fabergé's London branch, stock no 19470 on 7 November 1910 (£38), bowenite, rose diamonds, gold. RCIN 40408.

This poorly realised German carving of a French bulldog was almost certainly modelled from a wax made at Sandringham in 1907. It is on a larger scale than the majority of the Sandringham animal carvings and is enhanced with a gold and enamelled collar and gold bell. Its large scale dictated the higher-than-average price of £38 this should be compared with the £90 for the Grand Duke Alexei's *Custer* made in St. Petersburg.

The poor carving is a possible reason for non-collection or payment by Edward VII a factor that may have forced the firm to change the source of production to St. Petersburg.

King George V presented this animal sculpture to his wife, Mary of Teck in 1910 along with several others purchased from Fabergé's London branch shortly after his father's death. While it was an addition to her existing collection of Fabergé animals, it continues a subset collection of precious stone French bulldogs of which there are five in the current Royal Collection all of varying quality.



Edward VII's Favourite Dog – *Caesar*. RCIN 40339

This superb miniature sculpture of a Wire Fox Terrier cost £35 and was modelled in St. Petersburg. *Caesar* has a gold Collar inscribed “*I belong to the King*”. This is a third Fabergé dog mounted with a collar related to the specific dog being depicted. *Caesar* walked on a lead held by a Highlander behind the coffin of his master the King in his funeral cortege.

King Edward VII's initial idea for the ‘*Sandringham Commission*’ of hardstone animals was for Fabergé to immortalise his favourite dogs and racehorses, the actual commission eventually extended to other animals on the Sandringham Estate. As King Edward doted on *Caesar*, he was arguably the most important subject of the commission, indeed, when His Majesty unveiled the wax models Fabergé's team had prepared on the Norfolk Estate, *Caesar* was at his side.

The actual carved stone model was not delivered to England until several months after the King's death. Carved from chalcedony and embellished with gold, enamel and rubies, it was purchased from the London branch of Fabergé by the Honourable Mrs Greville, a close friend of Queen Mary, who gave the model to Queen Alexandra.

A comparison should be made between the Fabergé French bulldog carved in Idar–Oberstein and *Caesar* who was carved in St. Petersburg. The two statuettes are noticeably different in terms of their lifelike stance and the quality of execution.



The two Danish sisters on holiday at their Fredensborg palace circa 1890 with an unknown French bulldog. RCIN 2926643.

The two sisters had married the heirs to the Russian and British thrones and this photograph provides a French bulldog link between the two Imperial family's.



King Edward VII with his bat-eared, French bulldog, *Peter* at Sandringham, circa 1902 the dog was acquired before 1900. RCIN 2107220



A miniature on ivory of *Paul* the bat-eared French bulldog belonging to Queen Alexandra, the sister of Empress Maria Feodorovna who may well have given her this dog.



Paul is a pied brindle in colour. To the reverse is written in ink on cards: 'French Bulldog A Hordern 49 Redcliffe Rd. S.W. 10', with a further inscription 'Agnes Hordern South Kensington 49 Redcliffe Rd SW10, H. M. King Wolverton [Wolverton is the King's kennel name] Sh....ton' [The dog's registered name is illegible]. Illustration courtesy Hamshire Gallery.



King Edward VII French bat-eared Bulldog "Peter" by Gertrude Massey (1868-1957) Painted circa 1905. Courtesy Bonhams

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J B Hawkins Antiques Bentley Mole Creek Road, Chudleigh
Tasmania - Sunday 6 August 2017.