


BOOK REVIEW

Michael Worboys. *Doggy People: The Victorians Who Made the Modern Dog*

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Michael Worboys's latest contribution to dog history examines the life and work of a prominent cast of Victorian "doggy people." Worboys derives this terminology from fancier Charles Lane's 1902 reference book *Dog Shows and Doggy People*, which surveyed 114 influential Victorians who owned, showed, or bred dogs or otherwise influenced British dog culture. Worboys narrows his focus to twenty-two influential individuals. By illuminating the actions of prominent Victorians within breeding, showing, and sporting circles, this work serves as a companion piece to his recent coauthored book with Neil Pemberton and Julie-Marie Strange, *The Invention of the Modern Dog: Breed and Blood in Victorian Britain* (2018).

Aligning with that prior study's thesis, Worboys contends here that the Victorians created a new dog—the modern dog—by prioritizing form over function. This divergence occurred once Britons took greater interest in dogs during the nineteenth century due to a pervading humane sentiment toward animals, an increasing emotional and economic interest in dogs, and evolving roles for domestic, sporting, and show dogs. Victorians reimaged what role dogs served in society at the same moment they remodeled canine bodies and standardized their pastimes. Collectively, these forces altered Dogdom in ways ranging from refining diverse canine physiologies into breed conformation standards to standardizing regional field trials into a uniform national contest. Humans and dogs continue to live with these physical and ideological changes first enacted by the Victorians.

Five groups composed of twenty-one Britons and one American anchor this monograph. Every chapter within these divisions examines how each person(s) altered dogs, dog culture, or both. The first section examines how socially distinct Britons altered dogs' companion and sporting roles. Queen Victoria's love of dogs and her commitment to supporting humane causes and charities helped normalize dogs as pets. Dash, her Spaniel, engendered her affection for the canine race during her adolescence. Victoria entombed him at Windsor Park following his death in 1840. Prince Albert shared his Queen's canophilia. Painter Edwin Landseer and photographer William Bambridge immortalized their multispecies family in resplendent artistic works. All told, Victoria owned an astounding 640 dogs over her lifetime! The second section centers on wealthy celebrities who propelled dogs into popular culture. Victoria's favored painter, Landseer, was renowned for his remarkable dog portraits. His artworks delighted royalty and commoners alike. One 1838 painting, titled *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society*, paid homage to a piebald Newfoundland named Bob that had saved scores of Londoners from drowning in the Thames. Black and white became a popular palette for the breed that today carries the moniker of Landseer Newfoundland. Landseer's popularity, stemming from his ability to impress emotion onto his canine characters, helped stoke the broader British fascination with dogs.

In the third section, *Worboys* examines sportsmen and showmen who worked to standardize dogs and their pursuits. Teenager Charles Cruft began selling dog biscuits for the British petfood firm Spratt's in the 1860s. His retailing acumen targeting the dog show circuit coupled with a showman attitude helped him rise to prominence. He organized his initial dog show for terriers in 1886, which spurred greater shows in the years to come. His wife, Emma, sold the Crufts name to the Kennel Club in 1942, which remains in use today for their premier showcase. The fourth section examines scientists and doctors who reconceived British treatment of, and relation to, dogs. William Youatt, a clergymen-cum-veterinarian who treated dogs alongside colleague Delabere Blaine, functioned as an early influence shifting the British veterinary profession to accepting dogs as valued patients. Youatt, too, advocated for humane methods to contain rabies and wrote one of the Victorian era's most popular dog books that helped many middle-and-upper-class owners attain a greater knowledge of dog behavior, health, and sickness. In the fifth section, *Worboys* surveys reformers and politicians who worked to advance the legal and cultural treatment of dogs. Mary Tealby created the world's first dog shelter in Holloway in 1861 that grew into the Battersea Dogs' Home in 1871. She was inspired to help elevate these canine urchins after helping a friend care for an injured dog. The Home prevailed despite her death in 1865 due to ample funding and renown from the support of luminaries like Charles Dickens. Her humble canine asylum influenced the humane premise beneath—and the practical applications for—all subsequent animal shelters.

While *Worboys* begins and concludes each case study with a statement of significance explaining how each individual altered Victorian dog culture, the evidence supporting these takeaways occasionally gets lost in the narrative itself or, at times, does not support the conclusion. For example, the chapter on Harry Panmure Gordon and J.P. Morgan analyzed how each financier became involved with breeding, purchasing, and showing collies. However, the information provided did not explicitly address the chapter's concluding claims that their actions helped transform this breed's identity and population from working dogs into popular pets.

Worboys's text encyclopedically analyzes a handful of Victorians—and their dogs—that are vital to grasping the evolving human–dog relationships during the nineteenth century. Importantly, it delineates how these changes remain in place today—ranging from understanding the parson sportsman Jack Russell, whose name today identifies a breed of terrier, to contemporary sheepdog trials that draw crowds long after advocate Richard Lloyd Price's death. This accessible, concise, and entertaining book is invaluable for animal historians and pet owners alike seeking to understand the origins of particular breeds, institutions, and activities that remain part of modern dog culture. *Worboys's* cast of characters is so diverse that every reader will find at least one piquing their interest. In ways both pronounced and subtle, these “doggy people” continue influencing modern dog culture in Britain and across the world.