

# 1843 Queen Victoria's Painting of Basenji

## First note from Glenway Dymock, Afrika Basenjjs, Kent, England

By happy accident, I was given an art book recently and you can probably well imagine that my eyes came out on stalks when I looked at the hitherto unpublished photograph of a painting of three dogs belonging to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

The painting is entitled "Esquimaux, Niger and Neptune" and was painted in 1843 - almost 100 years before Olivia Burn's "Blean" dogs were imported from the Belgian Congo.

To my mind, there is no question that Niger is a Basenji. The hooded ears, tapering muzzle and fine bone leave me in no doubt. What do you think?

It is well documented that an 'Eskimo dog' had been given to Queen Victoria in 1843 by Captain Wemyss, and in the list of dogs in Home Park Kennels, Windsor, in 1846 (a copy of which is in the Kennel Club library in London is Niger, an 'African dog' brought back from the Niger expedition in 1842. Ever since I first heard about that book, I wondered if Niger could have been a Basenji.....

The painting is by T. M. Joy and, as the copyright belongs to the Queen, I am currently in correspondence with Windsor Castle in the hope that permission can be given for some of the Basenji clubs to reproduce the image. As with all royal images, strict protocols must be followed.

You can read more about Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's exotic collection of dogs at Windsor here:

[http://www.dogworld.co.uk/story.php/3319/1/stocking\\_the\\_royal\\_kennels\\_at\\_windsor\\_by\\_nick\\_waters](http://www.dogworld.co.uk/story.php/3319/1/stocking_the_royal_kennels_at_windsor_by_nick_waters)

## Second Note:

I have now heard back from the archivists at Windsor Castle who say the painting is damaged and in storage. They have suggested possibly reproducing a 'segment' of the painting instead - a strange state of affairs given that the picture already appears in a book!

Anyway, the damage more than likely explains the part of the painting which at least one person thought might be a bushy tail. Either way, there is no way of knowing what Niger's tail was really like; such a shame as a curly or curled tail would have been exciting news for us. One of the archivists was able to tell me that Niger lived until five years of age, which was not too bad when one considers the various disastrous fates which befell African imports in the early part of the twentieth century.

I have no idea at this stage if the Royal Archives expect a fee to reproduce a segment of the painting. However, all is not lost as I have actually found the painting of Niger on their website. Please note the archivists already have their own ideas about which breed Niger is! Oh - and Neptune has suddenly become Nelson. (Queen Victoria definitely had a dog called Nelson so I suspect the caption in the book is wrong.)

It is probably just easier to drive Basenji owners to this site so they can see for themselves, without breaching any complicated copyright laws.

Please go to:

<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/406602/three-dogs-an-eskimo-dog-a-basenji-from-the-niger-and-nelson-a-poodle>

If I receive any further updates, I will be in touch again.