

Anne Louise Falkner
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Anne Louise Falkner was born in March 1862 in Dorchester, four years after her brother John. The 1881 census records the family living in the Dorset town of Buckland Ripers, their location determined as always by the Reverend Falkner's living. Something of the family culture is revealed by only Anne Louse's brothers being credited in the census with occupations, while she and her elder sister May (Mary, born 1856) are identified in customary middle-and-upper-class fashion by their familial roles (daughter, sister). In 1889, Annie Falkner's life can be assumed to have broadened considerably when she went up to the Slade School in London, following the example if not the footsteps of her older sister May, whom she remembered vividly in their girlhood as a keen art student whose learning she tried to emulate: "The supreme interest of those days was drawing: it seems to me that mamma put pencil and paper into my hand before I could walk and May was very early sent to the School of Art" ... "Often May and I took sketchbooks out into the fields and meadows and whatever she did I tried to do too". Strangely, there is no record of Falkner's attendance at the Slade in the School's records and archives, so just what kind of preparation she may have acquired there remains uncertain.

In the 1890s, exhibition records have Falkner living variously in Bedford (possibly a misprint for Burford) and at 8 Earls Square, London, though in this decade she is also documented as subscribing to the Art Society in Southampton (the artistic community closest to her birthplace). Her first exhibition appearance seems to have been at the Royal Society of British Artists in 1893. Her address was given as care of Miss Hervey, of Cleveland, Bedford. This was Yorkshire woman Florence Leslie Hervey, a fellow artist whose presence in Falkner's life continued until the end of their lives (a beneficiary of Falkner's will, Hervey died a year or so after her friend and colleague in 1935). In 1897, Falkner appeared at the Royal Academy annual exhibition, with *Haytime* (1). In 1900, she was living in the Berkshire village of Chieveley, and in 1901 she had her own home at the nearby village of Winterbourne, North Heath. Hervey was also there, though recorded in the census as a visitor, and both women were recorded on that occasion as living on their

own means - a genteel expression that suggests neither woman was modern enough to assert themselves as an 'artist'.

By 1908, Falkner's address was still a Berkshire one (Faringdon), but documents suggest that already in 1907 she was working in Cornwall, and she is soon recorded as living at a St Ives address shared by Leslie Hervey which they both retained for the better part of the next thirty years. St Ives distinguished itself from the rival artistic community of Penzance/Newlyn by a preference for landscape over figure painting - certainly a pointer to the way Falkner's oeuvre was shaping up.



Falkner's exhibits at the 1909 annual show that the St Ives artists put on for their local public before sending their works up to London for the capital's exhibition season were largely harvest or field scenes in which animals were emphasised.

The following year, the local paper reported "two studies in oil of farm horses and a St Ives harbour scene", while a recent auction-room lot dated to 1910 was described as *Hens in a Farmyard* (2). If animals were indeed emerging as the artist's favourite subject matter, it was a long-standing preference: in her later unpublished recollections, recalling her first toy, she wrote, "Thus at 2 and a quarter years old did my love of horses show itself!", while copying Rosa Bonheur's "bold studies of birds and beast" alongside her sister May some years later stood out in her memory.

In this pre-war period in St Ives, Falkner shared a studio with Hervey and fellow painters J.H. Titcomb and Gertrude Rosenberg, while exhibiting more and more widely. Thus *The Breeze*, *St Ives* appeared at the 1910 Academy, *A March Morning* and *The Farm Stable* at the 1911 Academy, while from 1908-12 she could be seen at the Institute of Oil Painters shows, and in 1913 she joined the

Women's International Art Club, remaining an exhibiting member until 1922. This last association, though located in London, was essentially meant to showcase female artists with a Paris connection, so it can be assumed that Falkner crossed the channel in 1912 or earlier. Certainly French subject-matter became increasingly evident in her output from the early teens.

In 1914, Falkner and Hervey had a joint show of paintings and drawings at the Baillie Gallery, in the heart of the London art market. Falkner's 27 exhibits, ranging in price from £3.10s to £21, included several French subjects, from *The Luxembourg Gardens* to *La Chaleur*, with some locations duplicated in Hervey's listing, confirming that the two women travelled and worked together (their addresses both in Cornwall and Paris, remained the same). Falkner's range, as suggested by her titles, was consolidating the vein that her Cornish period had begun: landscape, farming and field scenes featuring animals - essentially an art of rural subject-matter. This is confirmed by the only finished painting of Falkner's in a public collection, Southampton City Art Gallery's *The Lunch Hour*.

The Lunch Hour's elements recur constantly in the work which Falkner showed subsequently in both France and Britain. She appeared at the annual salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, the Salon d'Automne, and twice at the more progressive Salon des Indépendants from 1921 to 1928 with titles indicative of farm animals and rural landscapes (none of these oils is currently identified). At the same time, in May 1925 a reference to recent sales in a *Colour* magazine indicates her maintaining visibility in England (3), and indeed she showed work at an additional venue, the Pastel Society, from 1920-22.

In 1926, the 64-year-old artist held a second joint show with Hervey at the Beaux Arts gallery in Bruton Street. An entire series of watercolours was devoted to the hilltop settlement of St Paul-du-Var (57-62), with one oil amongst the seventeen on show also entitled *St-Paul-du-Var* (27). Some of these exhibits are undoubtedly among the handful of Falkner's works held by the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum, donated by the artist's nieces and nephew after her death. One review of the show also suggests an affinity with Southampton's painting: "Miss Falkner has a special turn for horses and cattle, and some of her best pictures, reminding one a little of the work of the late Mr Robert Bevan, are concerned with

them. *Noon*, ploughing teams in repose, is an excellent example. In it we see Miss Falkner's power of reducing the complexities of nature to a few tones of colour, so nicely related in their values that the effect of solidity is maintained..." (4).



Her brothers John and Charles both died that year, 1932, leaving her the sole remaining sibling, a circumstance which may have motivated her various attempts at autobiography and family history at this time, now held as manuscripts by the Dorset County Record Office. Tantalisingly, in these documents she made little mention of her professional life, and the particular question for anyone of Falkner's generation - what did she do during the war? - can be answered only in the most rudimentary sense in that she seems to have spent it in Cornwall. One also longs to know what she thought of the burning issue for her generation, women's suffrage.

When she died in 1933 (some sources say in Paris but the official notice of death gives Hampstead as the place), Annie Falkner was described in *The Times* as 'Societaire du Salon d'Automne', a fitting hint of the reach of this independent modern artist. Her closest living relatives, Charles' widow Eva and that couple's daughters, her nieces, and Lesley Hervey were her beneficiaries. The will had been made six months earlier, suggesting that illness may have characterised the last stage of the artist's life. On her death, four watercolours were deposited by Tom on behalf of Drusilla and Christiana with the Victoria and Albert Museum, two with the Walker

Art Gallery, Liverpool, and six works on paper with the British Museum. The subject matter is predominantly outdoor scenes in France and scenes featuring horses and donkeys, not at rest in fields this time, but working in urban streets. As members who gathered in Dorchester last year will know, the museum in that town also holds a considerable number of examples of Falkner's work, donated later by her nieces and her niece by marriage, Tom's widow. There are more fine examples of her work in watercolour, pastel and print in the possession of family members still living. Anne Louise Falkner was clearly held in fond regard by her family, whom she, in turn, obviously cherished. It is a shame that the wider world has no knowledge of this considerable artist.

1. From Clevelands, Bristol, suggesting that either this or the same location as the 1893 address was in some respect in error.
2. "Show Day at St Ives", St Ives Weekly Summary, 26 March 1910,
3. Colour, May 1925, vol. 1 no.2 (n.s), p. 22; Hervey is also cited.
4. "Beaux Arts Gallery", Times, 19 March 1926, p. 12.



***View of a Walled Town with Roof
Rising to a Square Tower on a Hill
(Oil on Canvas)***



***View of Grimaud
(oil on canvas)***