

A peep into the Victorian Image Collection

part 1 - Dogs

By Ron Cosens

The Victorian Image Collection has been built up since 1987 and consists of over 100,000 Victorian cartes de visite and cabinet cards.

(visit online at: www.cartedeviseite.co.uk)

The carte de visite was reputedly introduced in France in 1855 but it is very rare to find a carte de visite dated before 1860 when the format really took off. A camera with four lenses and a repeating back was usually used which could take eight images on a single plate so that they could all be processed and printed onto one sheet of albumen paper simultaneously – thereby considerably reducing processing costs (see image below).

The individual images measured approximately 57mm x 89mm and were cut up and pasted onto cardboard mounts approximately 63mm x 103mm.

A similar, but larger format was introduced in 1866 by the London photographers Window & Bridge. This was called a cabinet card which was about 104mm x 150mm and

pasted onto a thick cardboard mount measuring 108mm x 165mm: so called because it was big enough to be framed and displayed on a cabinet or table.

By 1905 both formats started to be replaced by portraits on postcard stock – a much cheaper medium to use and one which encouraged customers to buy extra copies for sending through the post.

Many of the visually more interesting images in the archive are categorised and it is worth having a brief peep into the past.

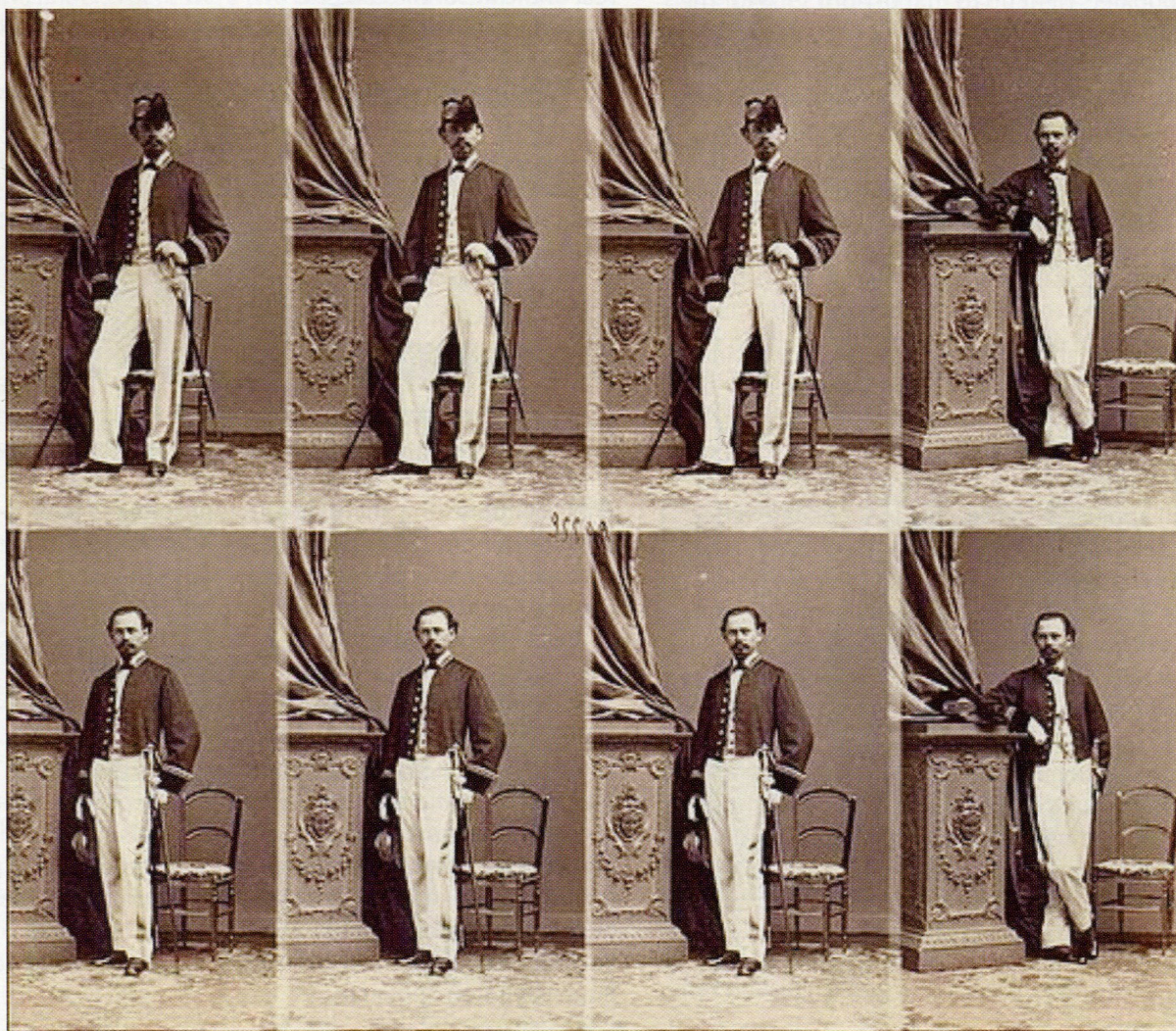
Having just bought a beautiful puppy, I thought it might be fun to have a look back at some Victorian dogs in all of their various shapes and attitudes.

Dogs have been kept by humans for more than 20,000 years. By Victorian times, however, small lap dogs were a fashionable accessory and Queen Victoria was particularly fond of her canine pets. This royal passion carries right through to our present Queen and her corgis.

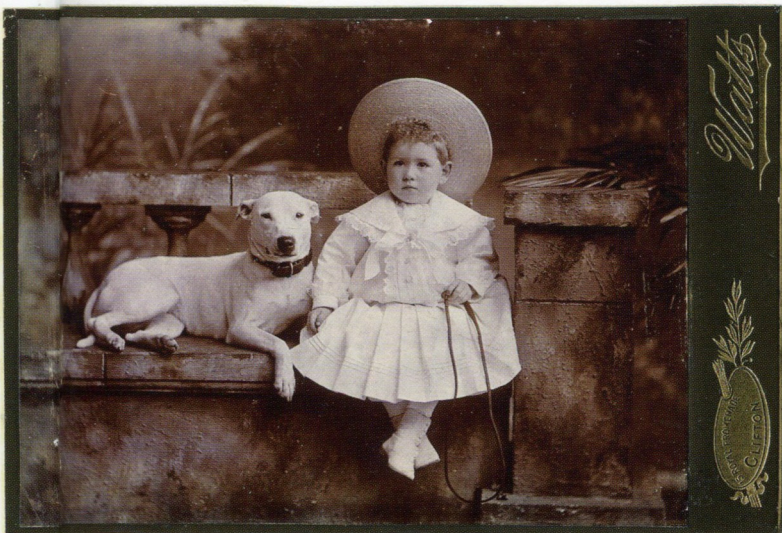
We all know, photographing a dog is not simple although some photographers did take dog portraits, i.e. with not a human in sight. However, most Victorian pictures which include dogs were portraits of humans with the dog or dogs invited along to add a personal touch.

As can be seen from the accompanying pictures, dogs were obviously important in the lives of the sitters for a variety of reasons; such as companionship, protection, prestige or even as a working aide.

Each picture has an interpretive caption, but why not make up some captions for yourself?



Uncut sheet of cartes de visite (by André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri c1860)



Boy's best friend dog
(cabinet card 1890s Bristol)



Toff's snooty dog
(cdv 1860s York)



Lucky dog cabinet card 1880s London



Look alike dog
(cdv 1880s Nottingham)



Who let you in dog?
(cdv 1870s Horncastle)



Do sit down dog
(cdv 1880s Welshpool)