

The Dorset Year Book 2025

Including:

Minterne Gardens - Philip Salkeld - The Roman Town House
GIs in Gillingham - Ernest Pitcher - Kate Scorgie - Worth Matravers
Jane Atkinson - Henry Moule - Portland horses - Edna Vincent Millay





Thundering hooves, colourful silks, grimly determined jockeys – Katie Scorgie's experience of all of these shows in her paintings of point-to-point races

From saddle to studio

Artist Katie Scorgie's love of horses, dogs and Dorset is the inspiration for much of her work. John Newth has been to meet her.

The transition from jump jockey to successful artist is an unusual one, but Katie Scorgie exchanged point-to-points for the palette and has made her living as an independent artist for the past 24 years. She has a well-established reputation in Dorset and further afield, but she was originally from Surrey, where the family lived while her father commuted to his work in the City. She was schooled initially at Downe House, but when her father retired and her parents moved to Dorset, she transferred to Sherborne School for Girls for A level. There she showed early artistic promise, being one of only five girls in her year to take Art at A level.

An Art foundation course in Bournemouth followed, but then she rejoined the mainstream of her contemporaries and gained a secretarial qualification: 'It's very useful even today,' she says. She worked for the Jockey Club in Portman Square for two years before moving to jobs in the City.

Her parents had always owned and bred racehorses – her 92-year-old mother has only just given up her place in a syndicate – and Katie learnt to ride at the age of six. She progressed through Pony Club to competitive riding and, while living in London, came back most weekends to ride out and to race in point-to-points throughout Dorset and in the surrounding counties. She was able to buy her own horse (called False Economy, which some might say is an appropriate description of owning racehorses). She enjoyed some success and even rode in one National Hunt meeting at Chepstow racecourse.

Katie's reputation today as an equestrian artist owes much to her long understanding of horses and to her personal experience of the colourful excitement of point-to-points. But anyone who has owned horses knows that they can offer quiet, restful companionship as well as strength and vigour when competing, and Katie's range of work depicts both these moods.

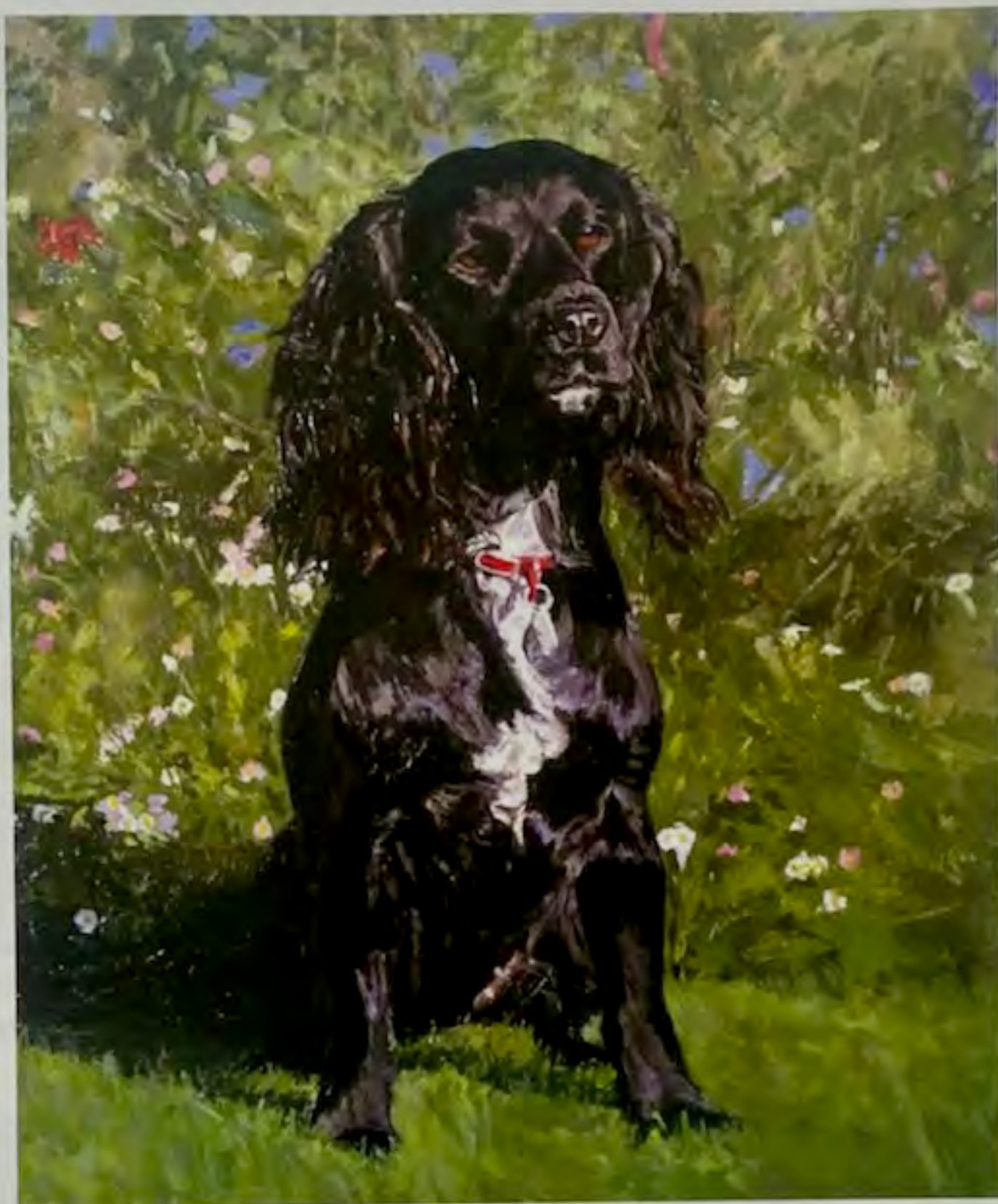
At the age of 28, the attractions of both London and secretarial work had

This stunning picture of The Queen's Life Guards riding through snow is the result of the year that Katie spent with the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment



Katie succeeds in bringing out the character of a dog in its portrait, just as the painter of a portrait of a person would aim to do

begun to wear thin, and Katie decided it was time to rekindle her interest in art by returning to college. She chose the University of Plymouth's Art faculty, which at that time was based in Exeter. 'There was no house style,' she recalls, 'so it



was a chance to develop in one's own way for three years, to bounce ideas off other people and to educate oneself as an artist.' She found stabling for False Economy and continued to race-ride alongside her studies for one more year.

On graduating, she decided to take the plunge and set up as an independent artist, and to do so in Dorset: her parents, who lived on the outskirts of Child Okeford, still had a field full of horses, and Katie wanted to be not too far away so she could offer help as they grew older. The answer was Hinton St Mary, just north of Sturminster Newton, and today her home and studio are in a former blacksmith's forge on the cross-roads where the lane to the village meets the busy Marnhull road.

One of the highlights of Katie's career came in 2011, when Lt-Col Dan Hughes of the Household Cavalry had the idea of inviting her and two other artists to depict the two regiments (the Life Guards and the Blues & Royals) both behind the scenes and on parade on ceremonial occasions. For a year, Katie had free access to Hyde Park Barracks and was present at all the major events in which the Household Cavalry took part, including the wedding of



Two landscapes by Katie in slightly differing styles. Above the classic aspect of Milton Abbey. Below a more impressionistic interpretation of the view to Hengistbury Head.



Prince William and Kate Middleton. On one occasion, Katie was painting at Windsor Castle when she saw a lady approaching wearing a headscarf and with two corgis at her feet. She was about to jump to her feet when she remembered that she was in Windsor because the Garter Procession was in progress and that HM would be too preoccupied with that to be walking her dogs! The culmination of the year was an exhibition of all the resulting pictures in aid of the Household Cavalry Foundation.

Horse-lovers know that each animal has a personality, but it is not always easy to define the visible signs of that personality. Dogs, on the other hand, can have quite expressive faces, and canine portraits form a significant part of Katie's work. She has a gift for conveying the character of her subject, just as a good painter of portraits of people does. Asked how she does it, she explains, 'I think you have to channel the animal, if that doesn't sound too far out. I spend time around the dog and talk to its owners to get its essence, its feel.' More prosaically, she will take photos and videos to use later for reference. To complete the picture, literally, she chooses the background with care to be appropriate to both the owner and the dog.

Katie is as well-known for her landscapes as she is for her horse and dog paintings. She works both from photographs and *en plein air*, that is from life. Although the latter can present practical challenges, one senses that it is her preference: 'If you work from life, there's a real fluidity,' she says, 'and the more you do it, the more accomplished it becomes.' It is certainly true that for the most part,

Katie is as adept with charcoal as she is with oil paints. This drawing of Little Fire was commissioned by William Fox-Pitt.



her paintings from life are in a looser style and have a more personal, creative feel about them. She draws most of the inspiration for her landscapes from the countryside and coast of Dorset – although she has also painted in Zambia when visiting her brother, who works as a pilot there.

Oil on canvas, board or linen is Katie's preferred medium for her paintings, but her drawings are full of interest, too, not least because they give her the freedom to experiment with different styles. 'If you draw every day, it really benefits your other work, but I don't always achieve it,' she admits.

It is a cliché that artists lack any commercial sense, but it is not one to which Katie subscribes. Having brought up two daughters, now aged 19 and 16, on her own, she has always had to be aware of the importance of making her work pay. Her time is divided about half and half between painting on spec and commissioned work. As well as her originals, she also offers prints and cards. Her work is sold through her website, social media (particularly Instagram and Facebook) and events like Dorset Art Weeks. She had an exhibition a few years ago at Dukes in Dorchester and is looking for an opportunity to stage another exhibition in the not too distant future.

Katie maintains a sensible balance, though, between worrying about profit and loss, and the creative inspiration without which her commercial acumen would be worthless. She animatedly describes what she would like to be her next project: 'I'm going to get a giant canvas, turn off all distractions and paint from the heart, and just see what happens. I think it could be quite exciting.'

<https://katiescorgie.com>

Katie at work in her studio

