

Where is René Delin's Painting "Ghent Cropper"?

Text and photos: Aviculture Europe



Under this title, the well-known publicist R.R.P. van der Mark placed a recall in the magazine *Avicultura* of August 1978 to find the Ghent Croppers painting, of which you see an image here. It is not 'just another painting'; it concerned Ghent Croppers in the five known varieties, painted by René Delin in 1927. The painting remained however missing, until the end of 2008; thirty years after the search operation had started.

But first let me give you some details on the search and recall of Van der Mark, which I obtained from his archives.

Above, an impression of a colour print of the painting in question, from the archives of R.R.P. van der Mark, presented to him by the secretary of the Cropper Club Ghent KCG, Mr. C.S. Depraet on 15th of December 1961. In his book, published in 2009, "Cropper breeds" C.A.M. Spruyt wrote that the best Ghent Croppers from the known Antwerp breeder A. Matthijssens modelled for this painting.

Right: An unknown (till now) painting from René Delin, representing several Belgian Bearded bantams and the Antwerp Smierel.

Where is the 'Ghent Cropper' painting of René Delin?

René Philippe Delin (Augusts the 2e 1877 - September the 15e 1961) was one of the famous Belgian animal painters; he started his career as an art painter at the academy in Molenbeek, afterwards in Brussels, where he was educated by the painter Stallaert. Shortly after René felt in love for the painting of animals, which he could observe closely at its father's - in that time a known breeder of pheasants - and in the Antwerp Zoo. When fifteen years old Delin came into contact with the 'Poultry world', starting to assist at exhibitions, and later acting as a Judge in Belgium and in foreign countries. Already in 1913, Delin judged in the famous Crystal palace Show in London, where also the Dutch Nestor of the fancy pigeon sport, Mr. C.A.M. Spruyt and the unforgettable





C.S.Th van Gink left many footsteps. Already in 1913, Delin judges in the famous Crystal palace Show in London, where also our Nestor of the fancy pigeon sport, Mr. C.A.M. Spruyt and the unforgettable C.S.Th van Gink placed many footsteps. The works of René Delin are surprisingly extended and it is moan that practical never an exhibition of its work has been; only in 1917, this seems to have been taken place. The official standard of the Ghent Cropper of 1940, drafted by the Cropper Club of Ghent (Belgium), contains several delicate drawings of this noble breed, but also a colour image of a number of five Ghent Croppers: with bib, self, dominican, splash with coloured tail (verhemelstaart) and tiger.

Left: Oriental frill satinet, painting of René Delin; one of the paintings which were in Mr. Simoens's possession in 1978. He had got it from Kortrijk-Marke (Belgium) and then sent pictures of it to Mr. van der Mark.

Lately the paintings of René Delin have become a collector's item by collectors all over the world and unfortunately some of the best paintings have already been sold to the U.S.A., even though they should have remained in Belgium. As homage to the famous Delin and to the Ghent Croppers, which

have been regaining some of their popularity lately, I would gladly add a colour page dedicated to the Ghent Cropper of René Delin in my new book 'Sierduiven'. But where has the splendid painting gone, in order to take a quality colour slide from it? I hope the owner of this painting will inform me; after all we are talking about an irreplaceable cultural possession of our South neighbours (Belgium), painted in the original colours of the famous animal painter R. Delin and worth keeping for the future.

R.R.P. van der Mark.

According to the found file data, the number of responses to this article has remained restricted to one. It was Mr. Theo Bellekens from Heide-Kalmthout (B), breeder of Antwerp Bearded bantams, who wrote that he had, if necessary, a colour photograph of that painting available.

Right: Painting of René Delin with brooding Oriental frills satinet; one of the paintings which were in Mr. Simoens's possession in 1978. He had got it from Kortrijk-Marke (Belgium) and then sent pictures of it to Mr. van der Mark.

But about the result of this nothing has been found and published. Obviously Van der Mark was already searching for the images of the paintings of Delin in 1961, as we can learn from the letter of Mr. O.S. Depraet, secretary of Cropper Club Ghent KCG of 15 December 1961.

To Mr R.R.P. van der Mark . . .

Ghent December the 15th 1961

Dear Sir, about your letter from December 11th.

I regret but I can't provide you with any printing plate, because in older days these plates contained zinc and during the war the conservation was



not optimum, so most of them oxidised and are unusable. The current number of members of KCG-Gent amounted to 34, of which ten specialists in Dominican. This specialty club has known its ups and downs. The evolution of use in free time space - travel, sport, youngster programs and other factors - has given the fancy pigeon sport a real knock down. The Cropper breeder must be a true idealist with this beautiful breed, taken into consideration the breeding difficulties and possibilities. There is hardly a perspective of rebirth, which may possibly happen, still we can say with our famous Flemish poet: 'We can win or we can lose'. Hoping to have been at your service, Yours sincerely, O.S. Depraet, Ghent Belgium.



Right: Painting of René Delin with Oriental frills satinet; one of the paintings which were in Mr. Simoens's possession in 1978. He had got it from Kortrijk-Marke (Belgium) and then sent pictures of it to Mr. van der Mark.

In 1978, Mr. van der Mark started searching more seriously for that Ghent Cropper painting of Delin. Earlier, on January 24th 1976 he had received a letter from Mr. S.B. Claeskens, secretary / treasurer of the Belgian Shortface Pigeon Club from Tamines (B) writing that he would start searching for the four-colour printing plate of that Ghent

Cropper painting. On March 5th 1976 Claeskens wrote again to Van der Mark to inform him about Mr. Koenraad from Marke (B) inheriting a substantially part of the art treasure of the painter Delin and undoubtedly he could be of further assistance. According to a note by Van der Mark on this letter, dated June the 10th 1978, he spoke with Simoens, but having seen the later recall in Avicultura we must assume that this phone call had no result.

Right: Ghent Cropper, yellow dominican. Painted by René Delin, photographed by Dick Hamer. Part of the art collection of Juul Lauwers, Mechelen (Belgium).

On August 15th, 1978 Mr. Simoens from Kortrijk-Marke (Belgium) sent a certain quantity of photographic material to Mr. v/d Mark, among which 2 black and white negatives of the painter Delin's and a number of 6 x 6 colour slides of paintings by Delin, which had been in the possession of Mr. Simoens. He could keep the diapositives

On September 18th 1978 Van der Mark wrote to Mr. Simoens, thanking him for the material that he certainly would use in his future projects, but that unfortunately the recall for the painting with the Ghent Croppers of Delin in Avicultura had no result so far.



Exactly 30 years after the search operation of R.R.P. v/d Mark, a Dutch Fancy pigeon breeder and also art collector was searching for contact with me and told me that he had been able to gain the Delin painting with the Ghent Croppers in his position. Under the condition that the name of this collector weren't published, I had permission and I could publish this. My task with regard to publishing this news item was now ended, but in the meantime I have looked around and I am fascinated by the work of the celebrated painter René Delin, so I'll gladly inform you of it.

Who was René Delin

René Philippe Henri Delin, by J. Lauwers, Malines (Belgium)

Born on August the 2e, 1877 at Sint Jans Molenbeek (Brussels)
Died on September the 15e, 1961 at Ukkel Groeselenberg (Brussels)



I personally met R. Delin two times in 1957. The first time during a meeting of the club "Les Fervents du Pigeon" in Brussels where he was giving a lecture and, on the spot, made a drawing of a cow on a chalkboard. The second time I saw R. Delin at the exhibition of "Neerhofdierentoonstelling" in the South Palace in Brussels.

Left: This photograph of Delin was donated in January 1976 to R.R.P. van der Mark, by S.B. Claeskens, Secretary/treasurer of Shortface Pigeon Club in Belgium.

R. Delin lived first at the Vanderlindenstraat in Ukkel and from the end of 1912 he lived several years in Merchtem. There he bred pigeons, poultry, rabbits, goats etc. Then he moved back to Ukkel where he only bred pigeons and Bearded Bantams.

He descended from a family of artists and animal lovers. One of his grandparent's brothers was a known painter. Two of his paintings are still in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Museum in Antwerp. R. Delin's father was a well-known pheasant breeder;

in 1890 he imported two pairs of Lady Amherst pheasants from their original biotope for the price of 1400 Belgium Francs, a fortune at that time. He also cooperated closely with the Zoo of Antwerp in the field of the pheasant breeding.

In his youth, René Delin had already been interested in all kinds of animals. This is how he got to the Small Animal Fancy. He became Club member and afterwards Board member of the association "Les Aviculteurs Belges" in Brussels in 1910. He was judging Poultry, Waterfowl and Ornamental Fowl and he was delegated in the standard commission for these animals. As a judge he was also invited abroad. In 1913, he judged at the Crystal Palace show in London, in 1924 he judged in Paris and in 1937 at the Avicorni show in Amsterdam.

In Brussels he studied at the Academy of Molenbeek, where he had the well known painter Stallaert as his teacher. Afterwards he worked for 32 years as a teacher at the Academies in Molenbeek and Brussels.

To my knowledge, the Delin's oldest paintings are those made for the De Donder brothers in Merchtem. They were well known breeders of Belgian draft horses at that time. Delin painted for them the stud book horses Cynthere (stud book 4688) in 1901, Calypso, (stud book 5685) in 1902, and Beau Lyzeron (stud book 2238) in 1904. In 1903, at Knocke-Zoute, he painted a shallop at the beach and a cow in the meadow at Knocke-Heyst. I presume that in his undated work there are possibly some already made before 1900. He made pencil drawings of small boats in the port of Zeebrugge, a small farmers home in Heyst aan Zeex in 1921, and in 1922 a wooden house front in Brugge. In the years 1927-28, Delin made a number of drawings of both wild animals and house animals for the well-known printing office Van den Bossche at Mechelen.

Right: This photograph was offered to R.R.P. v/d Mark on the 12th of August 1978 "Out of sympathy for his profound books, for the glory of the fancy" by Mr. Koen Simoens Marke (Belgium).



In the thirties Delin often stayed in France. There he specialised in painting and drawing horses. In Saumur he painted horses at the Equestrian centre. In a veterinary college he painted old and sick horses as well as a unique series of horses and cow leg studies. He also painted horses in Angers and in Tarbes. In his own country he was guest at the castle of Itterbeek, he painted there harnesses. Delin designed also splendid posters, diplomas, medals, pig moulds etc. for small animal associations. He painted advertising panels for the animal food industry. He also designed posters and diplomas for competitive exhibitions of cattle, dogs, cats and agricultural products. The cover of the catalogue of the Société Royale St Hubert Bruxelles 1938 shows a splendid Saint Hubertus dog painted by Delin. Sometimes he did wood carving. The posters which he designed for the world exhibition for Zeevaartkoloniën and Flemish Art in Antwerp in 1930, and for the world exhibition in 1935x in Brussels are true pearls of art. Also, the catalogues for the small animal sections which were located at these exhibitions were decorated with Delin's paintings, respectively a Belgian Game and a Malines. Delin designed the poster for the 1924 World Poultry Congress in Barcelona as well. For the racing pigeon sport, Delin painted winning pigeons and diplomas. Casting moulds and medals were designed for the associations 'Les Aviculteurs Belges', 'Les fervents du pigeon' and 'Le Club de Pigeon cravaté'. He worked for the animal food supply industries; Schepkens Gembloux, Paraiso Arenys de Mar Spanje, Zeelandia, Sparenberg etc. Delin also illustrated numerous books such as those written by E. Carpiaux, A. Moureaux, Pulinckx-Eeman, F. Van Hout, F. Lahaye, A. Keymeulen, O. Dresse, Ornito, Mundo Avicola, la Vie Rurale, Chasse et Pêche, the Ministry of Agriculture – and also the Belgian standards for small animals etc. For the Royal Belgian Institute for Nature Sciences in Brussels he painted 108 aquarelles with Bantam breeds, ducks, geese, the Belgian horses and cow breeds. All these aquarelles were also published as post cards. The company Fort products at Itegem also published 99 of this aquarelles on post cards and a small selection of it was printed on match boxes. For the company Schepkens he made a beautiful collection of 8 post cards with poultry breeds. For the Société national d'Aviculture sportive he made 4 splendid cards with 7 Belgian bantam breeds.

In 1929, he painted a number of rabbit breeds which were also published on post cards. When having a talk after a meeting in a bar with friends, Delin often sketched pigeons and chickens at beer-mats. He even painted a couple Schmalkalden Moorheads on a metal beer tray. Rene Delin was an all-round artist. He did not only painted cattle but also wild animals, flowers, furniture, cartoons and persons.

EXPOSITION RENÉ DELIN (1878 – 1961) **Painter of farm animals and backyard animals**

Open: each Sunday from February 20th to April 24th 2005, from 13.00 to 19.00

Location: Midzeelhoeve, Midzelen 27, 2869 Sint-Katelijne-Waver.

Organisation: Erf en Heem vzw & Midezeelhoeve vzw.

Free entry.

René delin was a famous Belgian painter. His works date from the period 1903 to 1958 and he was mostly known for his animal paintings and landscapes.

At the exposition we will show you both oil paintings as aquarelles and drawings.

Apart from that we shoe you a fine series of postcards and posters.

All exhibited works are from the collection of Juul Lauwers from Malines.

A number of his paintings are presently spread throughout the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and United Kingdom. Fortunately, the largest part of his work is still in his own country Belgium. In total I know 261 owners of works by Delin, who together have approximately 1300 original paintings, in oil or aquarelles, pencil and pen drawings and all other kinds of drawings.

That R. Delin enjoys no large reputation comes by his discretion. The statement that he has never exhibited his paintings is wrong. I have two posters which announce an art exhibition in which Delin took part. According to Paul Piron, writer of the Belgian performing artists from 19th and 20th century, the Delin's preferences were landscapes, scene pictures and horses. He exhibited his works at the Salon Triennal des Beaux Arts in 1903, and with the circle; 'La Guirlande in Brussel in 1909'. After his death, his daughter brought the complete contents of his work shop to the cellar of the house. Some years later this cellar came entirely under water by a violent thunder shower, along several days. Because of this, his complete library and a part of his work have gone lost. René Delin worked up to 1958. He was at that time already one eye blind.



**Left: Scandaroon, painted by René Delin.
This painting is part of the art collection of Juul Lauwers.**

Right: France Bagdad, painted by René Delin.
This painting is part of the art collection of Juul Lauwers.



Above: Carrier, painted in 1950 by René Delin.
This painting is part of the art collection of Juul Lauwers.



Right: France Bagdad, painted by René Delin.
This painting is part of the art collection of Juul Lauwers.



Left: Scandaroon, painted by René Delin.
This painting is part of the art collection of Juul Lauwers.

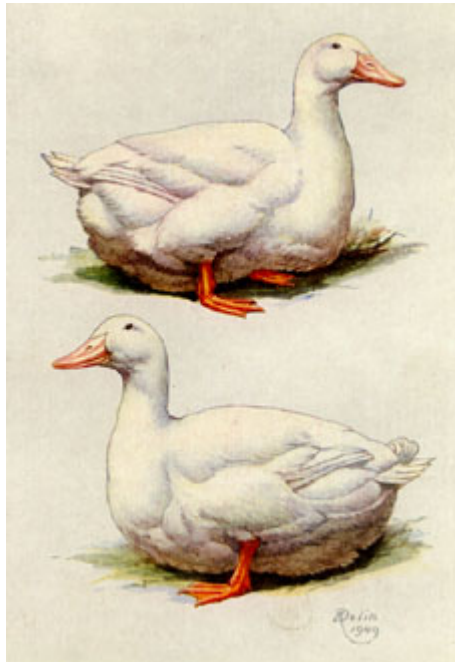
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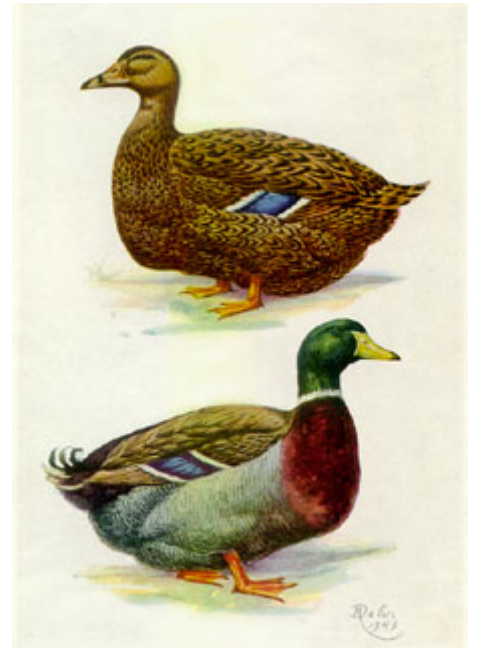
Selection of painted postcards with images of waterfowl,
painted by René Delin and distribute by the;
Royal Belgian Institute for Nature Sciences
that gave us authorisation for this publication.



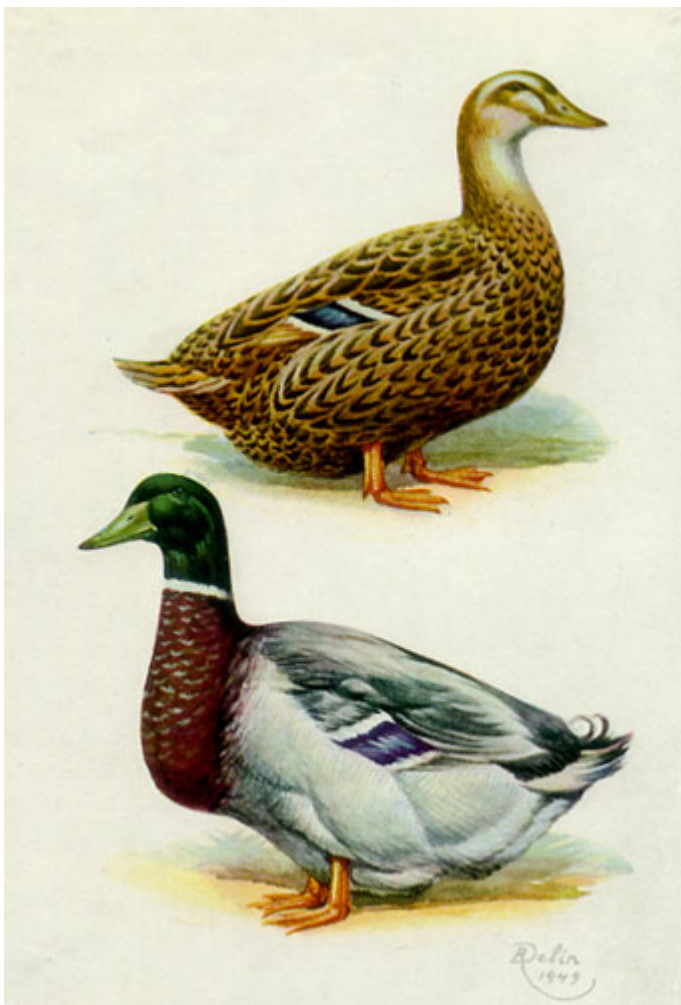
German Pekingduck



Aylesbury duck



Rouen duck



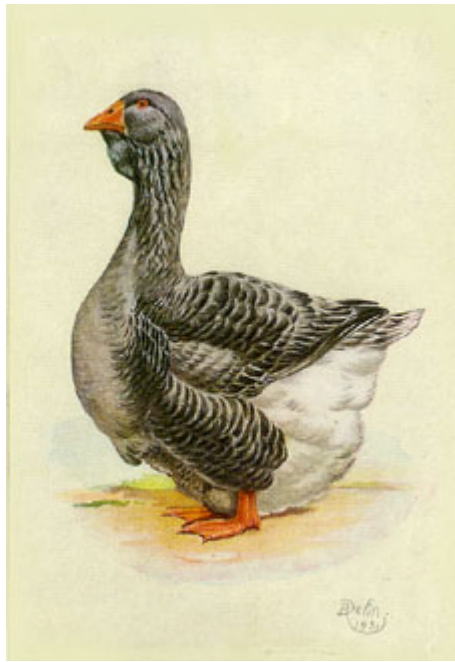
Rouen clair duck



Swedish duck



Cayuga duck



Toulouse goose



Cambell duck



Flemish goose



Emden goose

Take into account the time, in which these paintings have been made, around 1950!



Sabastopol goose



Emporda goose



Japanese goose



Left: Siam goose



Right: African goose

To the editorial staff of Aviculture Europe,

Gladly that interest still exists for our best Belgian pigeon painter. In 2005, the Flemish Frill pigeon club organised the European Frill days in Houthalen (Belgium) with an international participation of 90 breeders. At this meeting I showed a power point presentation of René Delin's paintings concerning the Frill pigeons. The original work is almost all in the hands of Juul Lauwers from Mechelen. He organised, in 2004, a specific exhibition concerning the work of this painter, biography etc

In advance much success with your splendid magazine, and enjoy my presentation.

With pleasant regards,

Luc Kerkhofs,

Secretary of the "Flemish Frill Pigeon Club" - President "European Frill Pigeon Club"