

NEWS



A London Fancy canary circa 1850

Posted on 03/09/2020 by [Huw Evans](#)

Wonderful news. A specimen of a London Fancy canary dated to circa 1850 has come to light; the holy grail for canary historians. We can thank Hein van Grouw for the discovery; he seems to have made a speciality of investigating birds that became extinct. (1)

Hein's photograph of the bird was first published in the August 2020 edition of *De Witte Spreeuwen* (the magazine of the KBOF, the Flemish bird keepers' federation) to accompany a pair of articles written by Didier Mervilde. I only became aware of the bird because Didier kindly sent me copies of the magazines. I considered it a major discovery and Rob Innes, editor of *Cage & Aviary Birds*, agreed. You can find the news report in this week's issue (September 2).

News report from *Cage & Aviary Birds* 2 September 2020.

170-year-old London fancy discovered

By Huw Evans and Laura Welch

CANARIES

THE OLDEST KNOWN specimen of the original, now-extinct London fancy canary has been discovered in a private collection.

The cased specimen was found by Hein van Grouw, senior curator of the bird group at the Natural History Museum Tring, and is reported to be in "remarkable" condition.

According to Mr van Grouw, the case label and other clues in the way the bird was displayed, indicate that the specimen had been prepared and mounted about 1850. "We were visiting a friend and he showed us his taxidermy collection," he said. "I recognised it straight away and was rather excited about it. My friend was a bit disappointed as, in his opinion, he had rarer specimens of fish by John Cooper than the canary."

Mr Cooper was a London taxidermist – best known for his cased fish – who started business in 1825. The Cooper name was still in use up to about 1960.

Huw Evans, vice-president of the London Fancy Canary Club (LFCCL) became aware of this specimen after seeing a photo taken by Hein



Left: This cased specimen of the original London fancy canary going back to circa 1850 was discovered in a private collection, its owner apparently unaware of how special this specimen was. The specimen will remain in the private collection. Right: A Piet Ronders London fancy. Says Hein van Grouw: "The breed is back thanks to the effort of a Dutch canary breeder"

the bird caught my attention," Mr Evans commented. "It is undoubtedly an over-seas London fancy and is by far the oldest specimen known to the LFCCL. To find an example of the original London fancy, from an era when it was still

Evans is aware of are held at the Natural History Museum Tring, "but these birds were from the

Mr van Grouw first discovered the specimen in 2011 and says he

drawings, even the plumage and never sure whether the London fancy as it was described in the past ever existed for the first time. This is a real discovery. The London Fancy Club is proud to have this specimen in its collection.

To find an example of the original London fancy, from an era when it was still regarded as the most prestigious of all canary breeds, is an important and exciting discovery – Huw Evans, LFCCL



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