

USE OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE TO IDENTIFY THE MODELS IN THE FREDERICK SANDYS PAINTING, “AUTUMN” (1860)

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Introduction

The oil painting "Autumn", hanging in the Norwich Castle Museum, “fairly dominates the Gallery” (1), and has a captivating quality about it. Against a Norwich background it shows the reclining figure of a middle-aged soldier whose red jacket is bedecked with ribbons and brass buttons, outstretched in front of a younger adult female whose arms are wrapped around a young child, who is in turn gazing intently at the soldier (2). A copy of the painting from the Norwich Castle Museum is shown below:



“Autumn” by Frederick Sandys, 1860, Norwich Castle Museum

The purpose of this report is to inquire into the identity of the models (sitters) illustrated in the painting. First, however, some indication of how this item came to the attention of the author, and why it assumed a particular importance, will be outlined.

In May 1987 I visited Norwich, the city my grandfather had left 80 years earlier to take up permanent residence in Canada. A goal at the time was to explore military collections or other likely sites where there might have been a photograph of my great – great grandfather Sgt. Charles Warren Clarke Faux (1814-1879) in his uniform. Genealogical research had provided a very comprehensive story about Sgt. Faux, however this could be “capped off” if perchance there was a picture of the man which I could duplicate. While in Canada, prior to leaving, I had multiple vivid images come to mind showing the old Sergeant, and ultimately these came to include his wife and child (my great grandfather Robert Faux (1857-1931)). These visions came to me not in the form of a dream, but vivid imagery while I was wide awake. I interpreted all this as “wishful thinking”, with an over active imagination, and was well aware that the probability of ever finding an image of a “mere” Sergeant who died prior to 1879 was highly unlikely.

This being my first trip to England, I was glad to be accompanied by my friend, the late Colin Gray, who wanted to visit his old stomping grounds in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Part way into the vacation we parted ways so he could drive up north, while I rented a car and toured family – related sites in Norfolk. Just before the end of our journey we met back in Norwich and decided to visit the Norwich Castle Museum. By that time, I had pretty well given up any hope of finding a photo of Sgt. Faux, so was just “playing tourist”. Since Colin wanted to see the advertised “cat figurine” display, I bowed out and just ambled around the Castle with no particular goal in mind. As I turned a corner to enter an art gallery, I chanced to see a large painting with a distinctive splash of red colour. On closer inspection, the main character in the painting seemed hauntingly familiar – reminding me of my Grandfather Faux. Also in the scene was a much younger woman, and a child of about 3. I then noticed the date of the painting, 1860, and noted that the adult male was wearing a uniform which included a red jacket with three stripes on the sleeve, and three multicoloured ribbons on the left breast of the jacket. Realizing that my grandfather’s grandfather was a Sergeant in the West Norfolk Militia at Norwich in 1860, it occurred that the artist may have used Sgt. Charles Faux, his much younger wife Mary Ann (Williams) Faux, and their son Robert Faux (my great grandfather), who was age 3 at the time the picture was painted, as sitters for this work.

Subsequent to my return to Canada I began an analysis of the painting (having purchased a couple of prints of "Autumn"; as well as postcards featuring this painting) and a search for evidence to either rule out the possibility that the models were C. Faux and family, or to support the tentative identification with acceptable evidence.

Evidence can be direct or circumstantial. Direct evidence involves a fact which can be assessed by a sane and rational mind without the effort of interpretation. For example, if in a will a testator states, “*I give unto my son James John Smith ...*”, the fact stands on its own. A diary entry, similar to the following, would represent direct evidence: “*Today Charles Faux, wife and child posed by Bishop’s Bridge for the preliminary sketch to a painting I will entitle “ ‘Autumn’ ”.*” Circumstantial evidence is less straightforward in that the mind must assess the stated facts in order

to derive meaning. In other words, a fact deemed to exist through the process of inference (e.g., determining that two individuals with the same unusual surname buried within a fenced cemetery plot are related). Circumstantial evidence, in legal practice or genealogy, is no less useful than direct evidence as long as it is clear, connected, conclusive, convincing, and consistent (3).

What follows is an assessment of available circumstantial evidence to identify the models (sitters) in the painting by Frederick Sandys entitled "Autumn". Since Sandys left no diaries related to this painting, or similar first-hand information, we are compelled to use the available data and interpret it cautiously. A consideration of other aspects of the painting (e.g., use of symbolism) is included in the appendix.

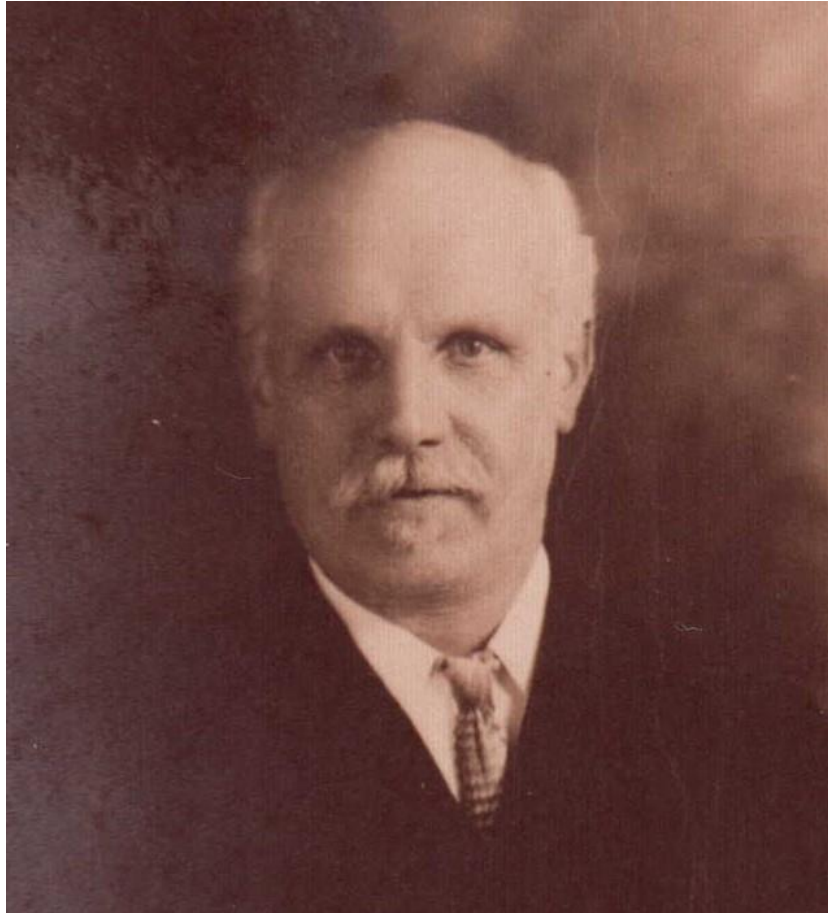
The Evidence Pertaining to "Autumn"

Technical Skill of the Artist:

In order to determine whether the painting can be considered a reliable document, some consideration must be given to the ability of the artist to accurately transcribe on canvas what he observed with his eyes. Reviewers and critics appear to be consistently favourable to Frederick Sandys (1829 - 1904) in terms of technical skill. For example, it has been reported that: Sandys, *"painted some portraits in oils, which for their extraordinary fidelity and high finish have often been compared with Holbein"* (4). In addition, it has been said that, *"As a draughtsman he was so brilliant and so true that only Millais among the Pre-Raphaelites equaled him"* (5). As a member of the group of artists known as Pre-Raphaelites, Sandys adhered to their central tenants of, *"complete fidelity to nature, studying each figure from a model, and painting landscapes on the spot, out – of – doors"* (6). The author of a dictionary of painters and engravers reported that a copy of "Autumn" exhibited in 1862 was, *"carried out to a logical issue, with marvelous perfection"*. Also, Sandys was noted for his, *"real regard for truthful expression in subject and detail ..."* (7). Therefore, it would appear that a painting by Sandys would be a trustworthy representation of the external world in the same sense that a photograph taken by a good camera can give reliable information about objects on the other side of the lens.

Family Resemblance:

The adult male in "Autumn" bears a striking resemblance to a son and various grandsons of Charles Faux. No photo of his son Robert Faux has survived; and the two photos of his son Charles Williams Faux are with the man wearing a hat and the facial features are indistinct. However, in relation to the oldest son, Francis Warren Faux, photographs taken when he was approximately the same age or older than the man shown in the painting, could easily be mistaken for the same person (8), as seen below:



Francis Warren Faux (1853-1928) – Collection of Sheila M. (Faux) Geard

Admittedly, this observation contains a considerable subjective component, so it is necessary to turn to other evidence which is clearly more objective.

Date and Place of Painting:

A convincing argument for the identification of the models will require that evidence be presented showing that the persons in question were actually present in the location, and at the time, when the artist executed the painting. An ink drawing of this painting, with Sandys signature and the date 1860, is found in the Castle collection (9). Therefore, it is probable that the models posed initially in 1860; and likely, considering the mature bullrushes shown, and the title of the painting, in the fall of that year.

The three persons in the painting are grouped on the west bank of the River Wensum in Norwich, with the north face of Bishop's Bridge seen in the distance (10). Considering the apparent distance, the models seem to be posing on a site where Riverside Walk is located today, just south of the Cow Tower.



Bishop's Bridge, north face, looking south towards the Cathedral and Castle, 1987

The above photo was taken in 1987. It is not possible to take an image of the bridge from the location where the sitters were positioned in 1860 due to the thick groves of trees blocking the way today.

It is important at this point to consider whether the sitters actually posed in Norwich, or whether Sandys completed the background there, left gaps where the models were to be inserted, then filled the space when he returned to London using models from that vicinity. His Pre-Raphaelite contemporary John Everett Millais employed precisely this procedure in completing, "The Blind Girl" - finishing the background on site in Winchelsea England, and later painting the human figures while staying at Perth, Scotland using local models (11). Fortunately, it is possible to recreate Sandys procedure on this point. One study of the female, and two rough sketches of the male sitter have come to light. In addition, Sandys original preliminary composition (a sketch in black chalk), plus the associated pencil tracing and a small oil painting of "Autumn" are found at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. The preliminary design, while relatively crude, clearly shows the major components, including the same three sitters and Bishops Bridge in Norwich in the background (12). It is probable that Sandys used the same three procedural steps he noted in a diary (the only one of this era that has surfaced) composed in 1862 while doing a portrait in oils

of Rev. Bulwer (13). The general preliminary sketch noted above was likely completed in one daytime session; the tracing of the main features of the sketch would be executed that evening using thin paper; and soon thereafter Sandys would have transferred the image on the tracing to the panel for painting, with details such as foliage being added later from other preliminary sketches. It is probable that all the above, in turn, predated the more finished and larger sketch and painting at the Norwich Castle Museum. It is important to analyze his technique in this way in order to support the proposition that the models were from Norwich.

In 1860 Charles Faux and his family were living in Norwich - a virtual precondition to seriously consider them as candidates for Sandys' models. In 1861 they were living on Pottergate Street (14) and, according to the 1868 Directory for Norwich, their address was 102 Pottergate Street (15).

Residence Proximity of Artist and Model:

If it can be shown that the artist and his alleged models lived in close proximity, this fact would tend to support the above hypothesis. In particular, it seems likely that the artist would choose models among those he knew, and / or those who lived nearby and were known to local informants (e.g., Sandys' father).

Sandys had apparently moved to London from his home town of Norwich by 1851 (16), so presumably he would have stayed with relatives while in Norwich. It would make sense that he would stay with his artist father, Anthony Sandys, who lived at 7 St. Giles Hill (17), where Frederick Sandys was born (18). Reference to a map of Norwich in 1789 (19), versus a contemporary road map (20), indicates that St. Giles Hill, intersects Pottergate just a few feet east of number 102 (21). Therefore, the proximity criteria has been fulfilled.



102 Pottergate, Norwich from Google Maps Street View

General Characteristics of the Sitters:

Since Sandys was noted as an accurate transcriber of what he saw, the ages of the proposed candidates must match with what is represented in the painting. In addition, the painting should yield clues as to the relationship between the three individuals depicted on the canvas.

There is an adult male, an adult female, and a young child portrayed in the painting. The nature of the grouping suggests a husband, wife, and their child out for a picnic along the river. The adult male is balding with salt and pepper (white and brown) hair, with a white moustache, muttonchops, and a light or fair complexion. The smoothness of his face suggests a man in his forties or fifties. Overall, he seems to be in his fifties. Charles Faux in 1860 would have been about 46 or 47 (22), and was observed in 1856 (military discharge papers) to be 5 feet 8.5 inches tall, and to have dark brown hair, a fair complexion, and grey eyes. While the "dark brown hair" description seems inconsistent with the image depicted in the painting", Charles Faux may have, as many men do, become quite white in a short period of time - in this case a four - year interval between 1856 and 1860. His stint in India had worn him out to the point where he was unfit for further service and so was given a disability pension (23). Furthermore, he died of "general decay" at the age of 65 (24). Therefore, it is likely that Charles Faux would have appeared somewhat older than his chronological age. There is also evidence that Sandys may have been taking a modicum of artistic license, perhaps to enhance the theme of "Autumn", that – is – to – say, the declining years in life. Reference to the two preliminary studies for the painting (25), plus a detailed pen-and-ink drawing of same (26) clearly suggest that the sitter had dark hair, with muttonchops and mustache containing relatively more white hair. Therefore, it seems reasonable to consider C. Faux as a candidate for the model since the available evidence is not inconsistent with the hypothesis.

The woman in the painting appears to be much younger than the male. She looks as if she was in her early to mid - thirties. If she is his wife, she gives the appearance of being between 10 and 20 years younger than her husband. Mary Ann (Williams) Faux was 14 years younger than her husband Charles (27). Again, the facts seem to fit here.

The sex of the child cannot be determined from the portrait. Children in the Victorian era were dressed in much the same way irrespective of sex. The size of the child suggests a possible age of not more than 6, however the face (mouth, cheeks) and consistency of the hair suggest a child of no more than 3. Charles and Mary Ann had children aged 1 (Charles W), another age 3 (Robert), and the eldest age 7 (Francis W) at the time (28). Logic would indicate, however, that while a 7 – year - old child would likely be at school, or could be left with relatives (e.g., grandfather Robert Faux lived nearby), a 3 – year - old would likely stay with his parents. Hence the interpretation that this child is 3 – year - old Robert Faux (born 1857).

Analysis of the Uniform:

In the Norwich Castle Museum version of "Autumn", the adult male is wearing a military uniform consisting of a red waist - length jacket with white or pale - yellow facings (lining, cuffs, collar),

a white shirt, and dark blue trousers with a gold stripe running down the side. On the jacket there are three ribbons on the left breast, three stripes on the right upper sleeve, 10 brass buttons down the front, two buttons on the left cuff, and a slender gold coloured loop of cord attached to a button on the collar side of the left shoulder - all are important clues. These characteristics are virtually identical with those seen in the smaller version of “Autumn”, with the exceptions that the facings are an “off white”, the right sleeve cuff is not rolled back, and the trousers and boots have more brown content (29). The above attributes of the uniform will be systematically explored in order to help reveal the identity of the model.

A soldier was issued two kinds of uniform, dress and undress, to be worn as the occasion required. A full - dress uniform, worn while the soldier was on duty, varied according to the particular branch of the military – all tended to be very fancy. For example, the rank – and - file infantry soldier in the 1860s had a single - breasted tunic whose length was below the waist and above the knee, having 9 buttons down the front, with “frilly” cuffs bordered with white piping and dark indigo blue trousers with a red stripe along the seam. Other divisions (e.g., Hussars, Lancers) tended to wear even more ornate uniforms. These contrast with the relative simplicity seen in the uniform worn by the soldier in “Autumn”.

It would appear that the soldier seen in “Autumn” was wearing an Infantry (Regiment of Foot) undress uniform. The infantryman spent most of his day dressed in this fashion, and the context suggests that he was off duty. This uniform tended to be light – weight, simple, and practical relative to full dress uniform. Undress uniforms, unfortunately for identification purposes, tended to be highly variable (e.g., form of shoulder strap) between regiments. One consistency, however, was that infantry regiments from 1830 were issued a red shell jacket with regimental facings for undress use. After 1855 the shell jacket had 10 brass buttons down the front and two on the cuff. Furthermore, trousers of the British Army in Victorian times came with either red or gold stripes - sewn along the external seams. If the practice of the heavy cavalry, light dragoon, and lancer units are any indication, the colour of the trouser stripes were reversed for dress (gold) and undress (red). Since infantry regiments wore a red stripe on their dress uniforms, it would follow that gold would be worn in undress. The red jacket, the number of buttons, and the gold stripe on the trousers accord with what is seen in “Autumn”. In addition, considering the plain chevron stripes on the right sleeve, they mark the rank of a Sergeant (other than Sergeant – Major, Quarter – Master – Sergeant, and Colour – Sergeant) (30) (31).

It can therefore be concluded at this point that the soldier in “Autumn” was a Sergeant, enrolled in an Infantry Regiment of Foot, either in a Line Battalion (Regular Army) or in an associated Militia Battalion, since they both tended to wear virtually identical uniforms (32).

Analysis of the Ribbons and Medals:

Next, a consideration of the ribbons and Medals, earned by a soldier, which were pinned to the dress uniform (33). The ribbons in the painting appear to be small sections of the longer ribbon

that would have accompanied each medal, and were commonly sewn to the undress jacket (33). It has been recorded that, “*the custom of wearing a small piece of ribbon without the medal when in undress uniform appears to have started in India about the middle of the nineteenth century*” (34). Again, this evidence supports the contention that the soldier in the painting was in undress uniform. Furthermore, an analysis of the characteristics of the ribbons indicates that the soldier earned a Long Service and Good Conduct medal (situated in the middle of the cluster of three), and participation in both the Sutlej Campaign of 1844-45 (left side), and the Punjab Campaign of 1848-9 (right side of the cluster) (35) (36).

A Long Service and Good Conduct medal / ribbon was granted to discharged soldiers who had, “*completed twenty one years of actual service in the Infantry never have been convicted by a Court Marshal, and must have borne irreproachable character, or have particularly distinguished themselves in service*” (37). It was suspended from a crimson - coloured ribbon. Since it was not until 1860 when the medal could be granted to soldiers in the Militia (38), and the Campaign medals to be described were earned in a Line Battalion (Regular Army) unit in the 1840s, it follows that the Long Service and Good Conduct medal worn by the model in “Autumn” was granted upon discharge from a Line (not Militia) Battalion. It is also apparent that any person shown wearing this medal or its ribbon had served 21 or more years, since this was an absolute requirement for earning the award. It also indicates that this individual was probably a Chelsea Hospital out - patient pensioner since, from a military perspective, any soldier who had served 21 years was “worn out”, and entitled to a pension upon discharge (39). Accepting a pension meant retirement from the Regular British Army, however after 1852 pensioners frequently volunteered for service with the Militia unit in their home counties (40).

The Campaign medals indicate that the sitter had served with the British Army in India, in a Regiment (or Regiments) that was present during the Sutlej and Punjab Campaigns against the Sikhs. Twelve Regiments fought in one or more of the four battles associated with the Sutlej Campaign (1845-6), and 13 were given medals for their role in the Punjab Campaign (1847-9), and 5 served in both Campaigns. The soldier in the painting did not necessarily serve with a single Regiment throughout both campaigns since it was common practice for soldiers to transfer to a regiment remaining on active service in India when their unit returned home to England. Four of the above 12 Regiments left India before July 1848, including the 9th Norfolk Regiment. It is apparent that the model was discharged from a Line Battalion other than the 9th since the 9th did not serve in the Punjab Campaign (41) (42) (43) – however the geographical location of Norwich in the painting points to a possible association with the 9th or Norfolk Regiment.

The uniforms of the Militia Battalions were similar to those of the Line Battalion with which they were associated. However, concerning the facings, there were differences. Concerning the 9th Foot Regiment, those of the Line Battalion were yellow. The Militia units of the 9th wore black facings (seen, for example, in the colour of the collar) until 1830 (44). However, by 1852 both the East and West Norfolk Militia units had changed to white facings (45). The colour of the facings, seen in the copy of the oil painting at the Birmingham Museum is, relative to the white shirt, an

“off white” (i.e., with a brownish tinge); whereas in the Norwich Museum version they are a clear white with a slight yellowish tinge (depending on the light). In other words, the only thing that can be said with absolute certainty is that the facings are not green blue or other colours incompatible with an identification with either the Line or Militia Battalions of the Norfolk Regiment's documented colours.

A letter enclosing a postcard of the painting “Autumn”, sent to the museum of the Norfolk Regiment, brought the reply that the identification of the uniform as pertaining to the Norfolk Militia in 1860 was correct in their opinion. They did, however, indicate that the lace (including buttons and epaulettes) should have been silver at this date - not gold - coloured as seen in the painting (46). However, tunic and jacket buttons from 1855 were brass (previously they had been pewter) and, for the Battalions of the Norfolk Regiment, included the number 9 surmounted with a crown. However, the East and West Norfolk Militia units each had their own stamped embossed design, featuring Britannia, in silver (47). It was not, however, until 1857 that an order was given to change the Militia lace, and presumably the associated colour of the buttons from gold to silver (48). Therefore, a soldier in the Norfolk Militia who enlisted between 1855 and 1857 would presumably have been issued a uniform with brass buttons and gold epaulettes (as seen in “Autumn”). Whereas after 1857 the uniform would likely have been adorned with silver - coloured items.

Neither the 1st or 2nd Line Battalions of the 9th Norfolk Regiment were in Norfolk between 1858 and 1862 (49). The East Norfolk Militia was located at Great Yarmouth, and between 1858 and 1862 all musters took place in that city (50). The only other battalion of the 9th Regiment of Foot was the West Norfolk Militia, which was stationed in Norwich between 1858 and 1862. The Volunteer Battalion of Norfolk was stationed at Norwich, however their uniforms until 1877 (both tunic and trousers) were of grey cloth - not the red as shown in the painting (51).

To summarize at this point, the soldier in the painting was a veteran of the Regular British Army who had earned medals for the Sutlej and Punjab campaigns, and one for Long Service and Good Conduct; and who was probably a Chelsea Pensioner serving as a Sergeant with the West Norfolk Militia Battalion of the 9th Regiment of Foot in 1860 when he posed for Sandys.

Assessment of the Relevant Evidence Pertaining to Sgt. Charles Faux:

It must now be demonstrated that the proposed candidate for the sitter, Sgt. Charles Faux, possesses all the above characteristics.

According to the discharge papers of Sergeant Charles Faux, he was discharged from the 53rd Regiment of Foot (Regimental No. 2530) as a Chelsea Pensioner on 5 August 1856, with the stated intention of settling in Norwich, the city he had left 21 years earlier (52). These discharge papers of Charles Faux also indicate that he served with the 62nd Foot Regiment (Regimental No. 1330) from his enlistment at Norwich on 18 April 1835, until 30 November 1846 (53). During this time a medal was issued to the Regiment - to mark their participation in the Battles of Ferozeshah and

Sobraon in the Sutlej campaign against the Sikhs (54). According to the Sutlej Medal Rolls, then Corporal Charles Faux (No. 1330) received a medal to commemorate his role in the above two battles (55). Instead of returning to England with his regiment, Charles Faux transferred to the 53rd Regiment of Foot (No. 2530) in December 1846 where he remained until his discharge in 1856 (56). During this interval, the only medal issued to the 53rd was, "*in recognition of the services of the regiment during the Punjab campaign*" of the second Sikh War (57). Referring to the Punjab medal roles, it is noted that the then Corporal Charles Faux (No. 2530) received a medal for this campaign (58). Furthermore, the rolls for recipients of the Long Service and Good Conduct medals indicate that then Sergeant Charles Faux (No. 2530) of the 53rd Foot was awarded a £ 10 gratuity along with this medal on 10 December 1855 at Duqshai in the East Indies (59). Therefore, Charles Faux was in possession of medals for his efforts during the Sutlej and Punjab campaigns, and for Long Service and Good Conduct, and therefore had precisely the same set of three medal ribbons shown in the painting. However, was he a Sergeant in the West Norfolk Militia in 1860?

In 1857 (at son Robert's birth registration) Charles was noted as a "*Chelsea Pensioner and Serjeant in the West Norfolk Militia*" (60). The paylists of the West Norfolk Militia 1856 - 1867 indicate that Sgt. Charles Faux had enlisted sometime between March 1856 and November 1857, and served throughout the period of 1857 to at least 1867. During the interval April 1860 to March 1861 Charles Faux was listed as a "Permanent Serjeant" (61). In the 1861 Census of Norwich he was listed as a "*Chelsea Pensioner and Staff Sergt in militia*" (62). Therefore, he was indeed a Sergeant in 1860, the date of the painting "Autumn", and would have possessed a uniform of the West Norfolk Militia of the 9th Regiment of Foot which would probably have included brass buttons, gold lace, white facings, three Sergeant stripes on his right arm as a mark of rank; and on the left breast of his undress jacket he would likely have worn any ribbons earned during his previous service.



Sgt. Charles Faux's Sutlej (with Sobraon clasp), Punjab, and Long Service and Good Conduct Medals obverse side



Medals awarded to Sgt. Charles Faux as above but reverse side

In 2022 the author came into possession of the three medals awarded to Sgt. Charles Faux as shown above. Each is engraved with his rank, his name, and his regiment on the edge of the three medals.

It is clear then that Sgt. Charles Faux fits each of the requirements suggested by the characteristics of the soldier's uniform. Therefore, the evidence supports the statement that Sgt. Charles Faux and the Sergeant in the painting "Autumn" are the same man.

Conclusion:

To date no direct evidence (e.g., passage in a diary or account book written by Frederick Sandys) as to the identity of the models (sitters) for the painting "Autumn" has come to light. As a compensation for this lack, there is a substantial body of circumstantial evidence (and no significant contradictory data) which can then be used to support the hypothesis under consideration in this paper.

In essence, the argument presented in this report hinges on the concept of probability. In other words what is the likelihood that there would be more than one family in Norwich with the above - mentioned characteristics (e.g., a Sergeant with three particular medal ribbons from foreign campaigns but then enrolled with the West Norfolk Militia – the uniform seen in the painting)? The answer would seem to be something very close to zero. The above evidence, taken as a whole, although entirely circumstantial, points clearly to an identification of the models as Charles Faux, wife Mary Ann (Williams) Faux, and their son Robert Faux. All the evidence uncovered by the author has been "put on the table" to objectively assess whether the claim is supported by a "preponderance of evidence". Here, the reader, unclouded by a personal involvement in the matter, will ultimately be the best judge of what has been proposed.

Appendix

Toward the Interpretation of "Autumn":

Until recently there has been no thorough analysis of "Autumn" by any art critic. However, in 2001 (after the first edition of the present work) Betty Elzea published the definitive study of Frederick Sandys and all of his work (even the smallest drawing). She has catalogued each item, and done an analysis of each object at every conceivable level. Anyone who wishes to learn more about Sandys, or "Autumn" would be well advised to locate the Elzea publication (although it is out of print and very difficult to find, even used). This wonderful publication is superbly illustrated and so comprehensive that it is, and likely will be, the definitive study on Sandys and "Autumn" – unless by some miracle diaries written by Sandys surface, or further information on the provenance of "Autumn" comes to light (63).

Even the ownership history of the painting is clouded (but see the Elzea book for the most comprehensive assessment of the topic). It appears that Norwich was the initial "home" of all versions of "Autumn" and the preliminary work composed by Sandys prior to completing the two oils on canvas. Only one of the various versions in various mediums appears to have been exhibited near the date of completion (1860). The pen – and – ink drawing at the Norwich Castle

Museum was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1862 (64), and was described in one of the few (to 2000) comprehensive studies of Sandys' works.

It is unfortunately that Esther Wood, writing in Sandys lifetime, provided a very inadequate and somewhat bizarre description of the pen – and – ink rendition of “Autumn”. She terms it a, “*sunny healthy pastoral they [the children] have been birds – nesting and have come to show their spoils to the old soldier lying in the grass, regaling them in term with stories of his youth*” (65). Other than engaging in what appears to be wild speculation, she has apparently confounded or blended two drawings. Children who have been birds – nesting are seen in Sandys work “Spring” (66), not “Autumn”.

It is commonly reported (but without authority) that “Autumn” was, “*One of a contemplated set of four paintings representing the seasons, but the only one of the series executed*” (67). If this is true then the title “Autumn” probably has some symbolic meaning, and the various features of the painting would in some way contribute to this theme. Profuse symbolism was typical of the Pre – Raphaelites, for example in works such as “The Hireling Shepherd” by William Holman Hunt. Here the main male character is said to represent church officials who are ignoring their flocks due to worldly distractions (the young women), with the result that the sheep (parishioners) in the background are lacking (moral) guidance and so wander into the corn (trouble). It would not be obvious to the casual observer that this pastoral was laced with symbolic content. However, the author has provided a written record of this thoughts on the matter (68). We are not so fortunate with “Autumn” however, and are left with a very enigmatic picture whereby the “*significance of the Chinese jar, for example is unclear*” (69). Evidently the middle – aged soldier is meant to represent “Autumn” – perhaps a reflection of the declining years of human life. It is possible that the battle – weary soldier, who has been worn out fighting for the Empire, and who at last finds himself reclining on the banks of a quiet river in his native land, with the setting sun in the background, equates with a prediction of the future decline of the British Empire – then in its heyday. This, however, is nothing but guesswork – the truth may never be known.

If the symbolism is obscure, some of the apparent influences of this painting are somewhat less so. In other words, some of the major features in “Autumn” many have been consciously or unconsciously derived from, or stimulated by, other paintings known to Sandys. First, it is apparent that “Autumn” is a Pre – Raphaelite painting. In other words, Sandys employed the principles and techniques (noted earlier) common to most who engaged in this brand of Victorian painting. However, other than the bright colours over a white background, Sandys seems to have “borrowed” and adapted some specific items from other works. For example, “Sir Isumbras at the Ford”, painted by John Everett Millais in 1857, illustrates a group composed of a middle – aged knight with a younger female and a child, set against a background with a river, a stone bridge, and a dusk sky – all reminiscent of “Autumn”.



Millais – Sir Isumbras at the Ford

Ruskin opined that the Millais painting might be meant to suggest “*noble human life, tried in all war, and aged in all counsel and wisdom, finding its crowning work at last to be the bearing of the children of poverty in its own arms*”. Perhaps this comment also applies to “Autumn”, with the added facet that the soldier’s “crowning work” is to bear the next generation of Englishmen. In addition, Millais’ paintings, “The Vale of Rest” (1858-59) and “Autumn Leaves” (1856) are also “*all late afternoon and twilight scenes, and all three are concerned with death*” (70) – and all three share the same tonal qualities of “Autumn”.

Finally, there are interesting parallels between “Autumn” and an Italian work entitled, “The Tempest” (c.1505) by Giorgione (1478-1510). It has the same enigmatic quality as “Autumn”, and they appear to share a number of features. “The Tempest” is set in Venice with a river, bridge, and foreboding sky as the background. In the foreground, reposing on the river bank, is a woman, embracing an infant, with a soldier in a uniform of the period standing nearby.



Giorgione – The Tempest

However, as with the models in “Autumn”, the *“soldier and the nude mother and her babe have refused to disclose their identity, and the subject of the picture remains unknown”* (71). Furthermore, there are congruences in some of the details, for example the large crumpled white cloth behind the woman – also a noticeable feature of “Autumn”.

While these similarities may well be coincidence, one wonders whether Sandys (or Millais) was directly influenced by Giorgione, or whether perhaps the two men, separated by a wide gulf in terms of time and space, happened to share a common idea or emotion which ultimately found expression in a similar visual medium. It is to be regretted that, since there is a paucity of written contemporary documentation about these works, we are left to engage in these flights of fantasy without any clear insight into the painter’s mind.

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The 1988 Manuscript Versus that of 2022:

The first version of the work was printed on a dot matrix printer in a very “subdued” print. Adobe was unable to effectively convert the early pdf to Word, so the author was required to re type most of the manuscript, and add any data that has emerged in the subsequent 34 years. The content is largely the same between the two versions, but it occurs that were an author to tackle this task in 2022 from scratch, the obvious difference here would be the material available on the Internet today which was not extant years ago. Considering the Census for Norwich in 1861 and 1871, instead of ordering microfilm copies from the Mormon Church, and spending hours cranking through these reels to find individuals, now the data can be obtained via a couple of clicks on the Ancestry dot com site. Also, the versatility of the word processing programmes has dramatically improved to, for example, allow the addition of pictures in jpeg format. In addition, in the interval between the two versions of the manuscript, the author’s story of finding “Autumn” and its relevance to his family history was profiled in an episode of the American TV series “Unsolved Mysteries” with Robert Stack. Furthermore, the medals and ribbons granted to his great – great grandfather Sgt. Charles Faux, linked to the ribbons shown on the old soldier in “Autumn”, have only recently come into the possession of the author.

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