

**MRS. HELEN SLINGSBY'S**  
**CHAMPION DON PEDRO OF THORPE**

FROM AN ORIGINAL OIL PAINTING BY  
**MR. W. LUKER JNR.**

PHOTO: © 2017 JOHN G. SMITHSON



BY

JOHN G. SMITHSON

MRS. HELEN SLINGSBY'S CHAMPION

# Don Pedro of Thorpe

SILVER CLASSIC TABBY LONGHAIR (PERSIAN)

Adapted extracts from 'Don Pedro of Thorpe' @ The History Project

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Silver Tabbies have always been perennial favourites, in both the long-haired and short-haired varieties. The difficulty for the longhairs has been in their ability to display a clear pattern, over and through their profuse coat length.

In both cases, good examples are striking in their appearance, the extreme contrast of dark markings against a clear ground colour, always attracting instantaneous attention.

Probably the earliest Silver Tabby longhair of note, was 'Ch.Topso of Dingley', born in 1886. This cat was duly dubbed by American cat fancier and author Helen M.Winslow as *"the Best Long-haired Silver Tabby in England"*.

In her book 'Concerning Cats', published in 1900, she alludes to evidence of his early success on the show bench:-

*"Topso, a magnificent silver tabby male, belonging to Miss Anderson Leake, of Dingley Hill, was at one time the best long-haired silver tabby in England, and took the prize on that account in 1887; his sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters, have all taken prizes at Crystal Palace in the silver tabby classes, since that time."*

From 'Topso's' son, 'Ch.Felix', (b.1890) was descended both the Silver Tabby males, 'Felix Mottisfont' and 'Abdul Zaphir of Dingley', (b.1891); the latter of which, became the sire of 'Abdul Hamet of Dingley' (b.1898), who was in his turn the highly sought-after sire of many well-known Silver Tabbies, among them 'Ch. Don Pedro of Thorpe' and 'Roiall Fluffball'.

'Ch. Don Pedro of Thorpe' became the standard-bearer for the Longhair Silver Tabby variety. At that time, his confirmation and body pattern were considered as close to the ideal as had ever been seen to date, so very naturally it was against this accepted ideal, that all future

succeeding generations of this colour variety were duly measured.

For more than two decades, his portrait and full body image appeared in fashionable society magazines and in the dailies that covered the show results from the Crystal Palace and other major feline exhibitions.

Similarly, he features at least twice on the cover page of "Our Cats", held out as an exceptional example of a well-patterned tabby long-hair, one to be emulated.

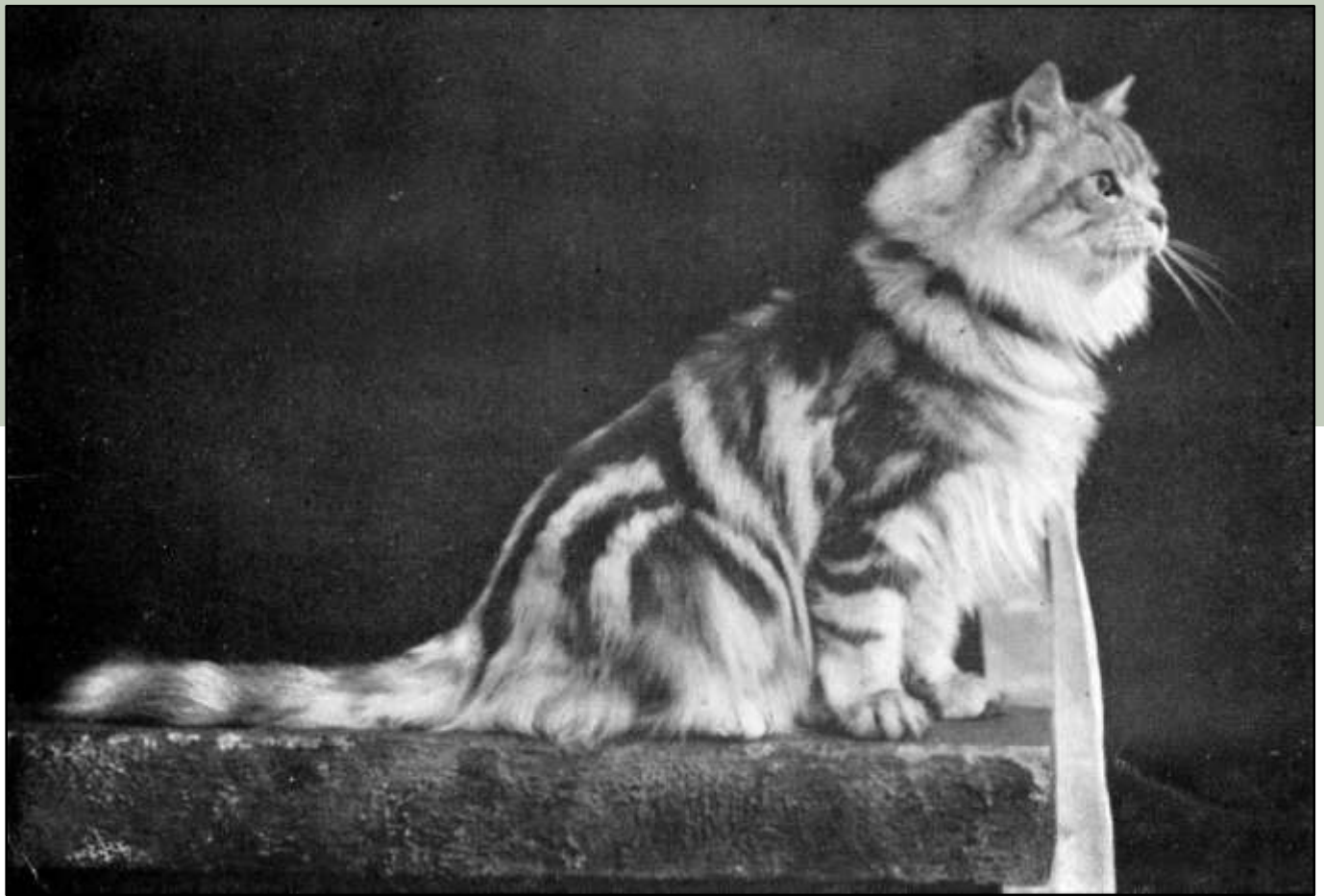
His fame was, as it happens, destined to last. His image was still appearing on postcards through the early war years and as late as 1925, his full body image appeared in the Cowan's "Noted Cats" Series of collectors cards, based in the main on many of the cats that had featured in Frances Simpson's later editions of 'Cats for Pleasure and Profit' from (1909) and (1920) respectively, revised from the first edition under the name 'Our Cats and All About Them' (1902).

Too young to appear in the earlier book, 'Don Pedro' was duly included in the revised editions, published in 1909 and again in 1920.

Despite the fact that in subsequent years, other Silver Tabbies arose which were equally if not more clearly marked than he, and with improved head type, one such being his beautiful grandson 'Garry My Lad' (b.1912), of all the Silver Tabby longhairs from the early era of cat fancying, his name still rises above all others as the most memorable.

## PARENTAGE & OWNERSHIP

'Don Pedro' was born on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1901. He was bred by Miss E.M. Cope, of 136 Bristol Rd, Birmingham, who appears to have adopted the cattery name 'Roiall' not long after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Miss Cope was a young but well-known fancier who bred Silver Tabbies, Brown Tabbies and Blue Persians, but it is more for her Silver Tabbies that she is particularly well known. She was also the capable Secretary of the Midlands Counties Cat Club.



**CHAMPION DON PEDRO OF THORPE – Photo: J. Russell & Sons, Crystal Palace, London.**

Image: Period Postcard from The Harrison Weir Collection.

In the CCR, (The Cat Club Register), many of Miss Cope's cats appear without a prefix, but in show reports and in captions to photos, most notably from the books by Miss Frances Simpson and Mr C.A. House, they are duly designated with the 'Roiall' cattery name.

And therein lies another mystery, for in the CCR, 'Don Pedro' is recorded under the name of '**Edgbaston Don Pedro**', with the correct date of birth, sire and dam.

This would tend to signify that originally he was intended to be owned by a Mrs McMichael, a breeder resident in nearby Edgbaston, Birmingham, who was already the owner of a Blue female named 'Edgbaston Pearl'.

But although registered with this name, 'Don Pedro' is clearly listed as **bred and owned** by Miss Cope, and as he duly became the property of Mrs Slingsby, located in Ouseburn, York; it would appear that the originally intended sale obviously did not proceed.

Mrs Slingsby was an astute breeder with an eye for a cat. She had already established a wide reputation for her Blues, but was also a lover of Silver Tabbies and patiently sought to establish a strain of her own.

The two leading breeders of Silver Tabbies at this time were Mrs Anderson Leake, of Dingley Hall, Reading (with a long history within the variety dating from the late 1880's). The other was a relative new-comer, Miss Cope,

of Birmingham, who, in a comparatively short space of time, had quickly developed a reputation for success within the variety.

Mrs Slingsby would have no doubt followed the proven success of the 'Dingley' strain, and was very probably one of the many admirers of Mrs Leake's stud cats, which at this time included the ever popular 'Ch. Abdul Hamet of Dingley'.

When Miss Cope bred her queen '**Roiall Dewdrop**' (a daughter of the winning 'Roiall Silver Tangle) to '**Abdul Hamet of Dingley**' Mrs Slingsby would have been among the first in line to follow the results of the breeding.

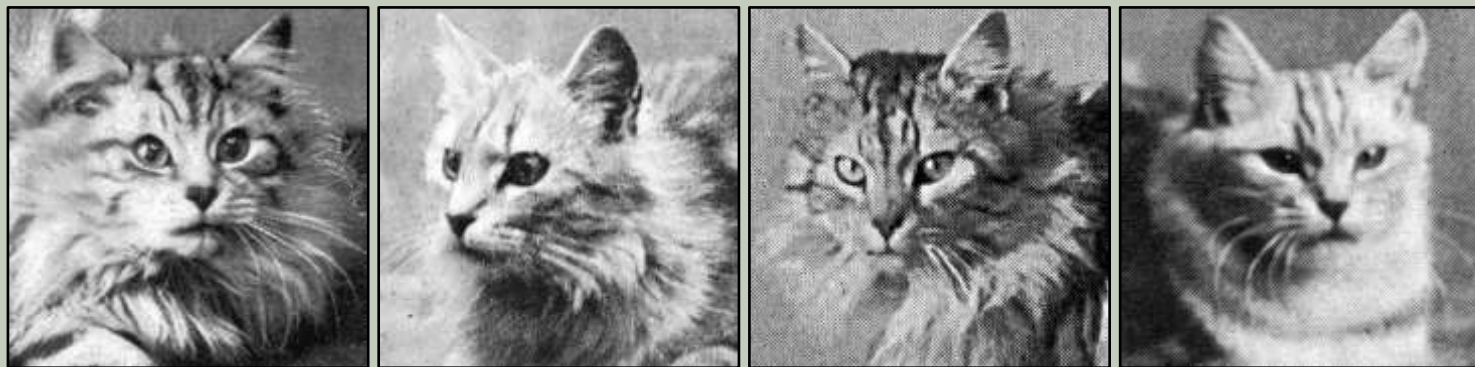
This particular breeding combined both their lines, including as it did, an outcross provided by Miss Derby Hyde's '**Thames Valley Silver King**' with a line-breed based on the descendants of Mrs Leake's original '**Ch. Topso of Dingley**', through the progeny of his pre-eminent son '**Ch. Felix**'.

On one side, descended directly through the male line, to a 'Felix' son named '**Ch. Abdul Zaphir of Dingley**', who in turn was the sire of '**Abdul Hamet of Dingley**'; while on the female line, through Miss Copes 'Roiall Silver Tangle', descended from another son of 'Felix', named '**Felix Mottisfont**'.

While it is unclear, as to exactly when Mrs. Slingsby may



## FOUR CATS FROM THE PEDIGREE OF CHAMPION DON PEDRO OF THORPE



**Left to Right: Sire, 'Abdul Hamet of Dingley'; Dam: 'Roiall Dewdrop';  
Maternal Grand sire: 'Thames Valley Silver King'; (outcross) Maternal Granddam: 'Roiall Silver Tangle'**

Photos: 'Cats: Show and Pet' (1903) by C.A.House. (Abdul Hamet, Dewdrop & Silver Tangle)

Photo: E.Landor, Ealing. 'The Book of The Cat' (1903) by Frances Simpson (Thames Valley Silver King)

have taken possession of 'Don Pedro', it is very likely that when he made his first public appearance at the Kitten Show in 1901, that he may have been duly claimed at the catalogue price by Mrs. Slingsby, prior to taking out Best long-hair kitten in Show!

But by whatever process he changed hands, upon being taken up by Mrs. Slingsby, his name was duly amended by the dropping of the 'Edgbaston' prefix and the addition of Mrs Slingsby's affix, to permanently become '**Don Pedro of Thorpe**'.

### FULL & SIRE SIBLINGS

#### ROIALL STARLET

A.K.A. 'STARLET', (Silver Tabby). Born April 7, 1901.

Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley. Dam: Roiall Dewdrop.

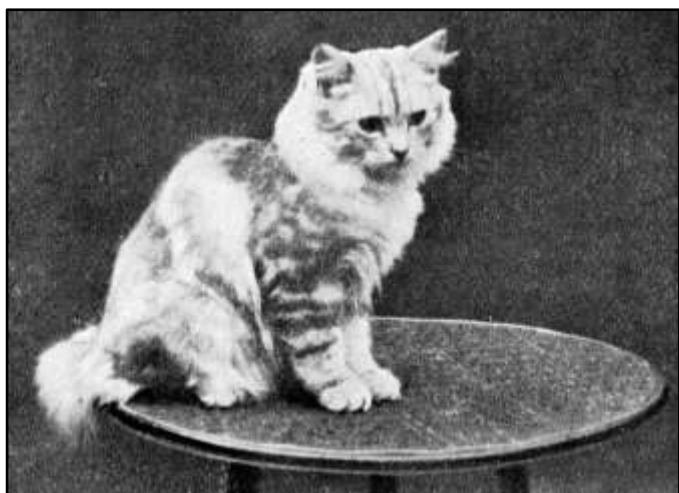


Photo: 'The Book of The Cat' (1903) by Frances Simpson

Bred and owned by Miss E.M. Cope.

A full litter sister to 'Don Pedro', 'Starlet' was retained by Miss Cope for breeding and showing.

Mr C.W. Witt, on a visit to the 'Roiall' cattery in 1903, comments on the shortcomings of her dam 'Roiall Dewdrop' whom he claimed – "*carries immense coat, lovely clear colour, but to me fails somewhat in head.*" But then

goes on to add – "*but is better known perhaps as the mother of **the sensational kittens of 1901, Don Pedro and Starlet**, by Abdul Hamet,*"

As far as can be ascertained, there are no other recorded offspring from this breeding, nor any subsequent offspring from 'Starlet'.

**THE MARQUIS OF DINGLEY** (Silver Tabby). Born March 21, 1901. Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley. Dam: Miss Fluffie of Dingley.



Photo: Cassell & Co.Ltd, 'The Book of The Cat' (1903)  
by Frances Simpson

Bred and owned by Miss S. Anderson Leake.

This lovely Silver Tabby male was out of one of Miss Leake's older silver tabby females, 'Miss Fluffie of Dingley', born in April 1894. As a daughter of 'Ch. Felix', she brought back a close breeding of Miss Leake's original great silver tabby, 'Ch. Topso of Dingley' as a close line-breed into any male bred down from that line. 'Marquis of Dingley' was the product of just such a breeding. That she considered it a great success, can be seen from the fact that not only was 'The Marquis' a top show winner, but he was retained by her and placed at stud.

A stud advertisement for the DINGLEY HALL cattery that appears in Charles House's book 'Cats: Show and Pet' (1903) records 'The Marquis' many successes on the show



**Two photographic head studies of Champion Don Pedro of Thorpe**

Left: From 'Our Cats' March 14, 1903. Right: From 'The Illustrated London News' November 5, 1904.

show bench, which included Firsts at Westminster in 1902, and 1903; also two gold medals, challenge and breeders cups, the Countess of Aberdeen trophy, and S.C.R. trophy and medal; as well as a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and four Specials at Slough.

In 'Fur and Feather' he was summarily described as: - *"A magnificent young Cat, superb coat and markings, lovely ground colour, rare head and face, good, bold hazel eyes."*

**MISS HAMET** (Silver Tabby). Born: April 13, 1901.  
Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley. Dam: Kittiwake.



Photo: 'Our Cats' December 19, 1903

Bred and owned by Mrs Kirk.

Other than this lovely photo of 'Miss Hamet' we know little other than she was the product of a mating with an outside queen. To date we have found no evidence of any progeny being registered from 'Miss Hamet'.

**ROIAL FLUFFBALL** (Silver Tabby). Born 12<sup>th</sup> July 1901.  
Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley. Dam: Roial Silver Tangle.



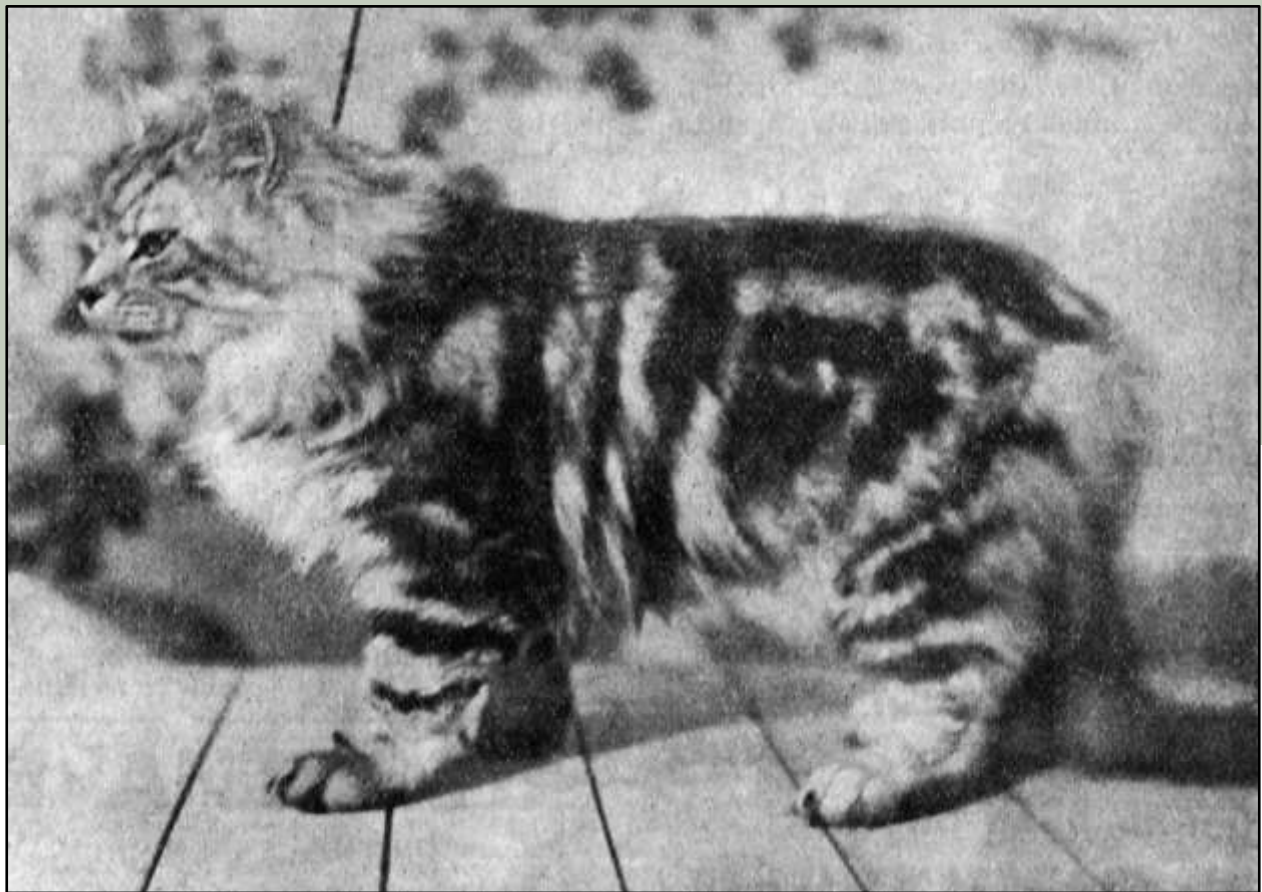
Photo: 'U.S.Register & Studbook' (1906)

Bred and owned by Miss E.M. Cope.

Described by Mr C.W. Witt in June 1903 as '**absolutely the best silver tabby queen living**', 'Fluffball' was in fact a three fourths sister to Don Pedro, being from the same sire and her dam being his grand-dam.

In this combination, which was another line-breed, there was no outcross to 'Thames Valley Silver King'. Like 'Don Pedro', 'Fluffball' was shown for some spectacular kitten





**A Study in Markings – Champion DON PEDRO of THORPE**

**Although out of coat, his heavy boning, deep chest, and well-rounded frame are apparent.**

Cover page image from 'Our Cats' Magazine, November 5, 1904.

wins, taking first at Westminster in 1902, then in 1903, taking first at both Westminster and Bath.

**ROIAL SILVER BUTTERFLY** (Silver Tabby) B: July 12, 1901.  
Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley. Dam: Roiall Silver Tangle.  
Bred by Miss E.M. Cope and purchased by Mrs. Slingsby.  
As a litter sister to Roiall Fluffball, 'Silver Butterfly' was a wise investment by Mrs Slingsby, as a future mate for 'Don Pedro'. Upon this purchase, she became '**Silver Butterfly of Thorpe**', was bred to 'Don Pedro' and produced the silver tabby male, '**Don Roderick of Thorpe**'.

**ARLINGTON DINGLEY BAR ABDUL** (Silver Tabby Male).  
Born August 3, 1901.

Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley Dam: True Love of Dingley  
Bred by Miss Anderson Leake. Owned by Mrs Dwight Cutler, of Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, imported directly from Miss Anderson Leake. Won a Third at Westminster in 1902, before export, and a Second at Clevedon, in the United States in December of the same year.

**ARLINGTON DINGLEY BELLE** (Silver Tabby Female). Born August 3, 1901.

Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley Dam: True Love of Dingley.  
Bred by Miss Anderson Leake and imported by Mrs F. J. Sarmiento, of Arlington Place, Detroit, Michigan. Litter sister to 'Dingley Bar Abdul'. Shown at Detroit winning First and Specials in 1901.

**THE DINGLEY OWLET** (Silver Tabby Female) Born February 25, 1903.

Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley. Dam: Miss Fluffie of Dingley.



Photo: A.Radclyffe Dugmore.

'Country Life In America', September 1908.

Bred by Miss S. Anderson Leake.

Owned by Miss Ava L. Pollard, of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Two factors muddy the waters of the siblings, 'Dingley Owlet' and her litter brother 'Dingley Fashion'. Both are sired by 'Abdul Hamet' and out of 'Miss Fluffie of Dingley'. The first, is in regard to their respective dates of birth. While 'The Dingley Owlet' is recorded as born February 25, 1903, 'Dingley Fashion' has for his birth date, March 5, 1903.

'Miss Fluffie' was already approaching 9 years of age at the time of their birth and of course it was not possible for 'Miss Fluffie' to give birth 8 days apart, so one of the dates is in error.



**ORIGINAL OIL PAINTING of CHAMPION DON PEDRO OF THORPE, by W. LUKER Jnr, commissioned by Mrs. H. Slingsby.**  
Private Collection (Circa, 1903). © Photograph 2017, by John G. Smithson

In this instance, we have decided to accept the earlier date as the correct one. The second point is that in the ACA Register, Volume One, 'The Dingley Owlet' is registered as a Shaded Silver, while in most data-bases, she is listed as a Silver Tabby.

Both parents are registered as Silver Tabbies, but 'Miss Fluffie' had on previous occasions, produced Silvers (Chinchilla's and Shaded Silvers) when outcrossed to predominantly unmarked silver Lines. Both parents contained marked and unmarked silver heritage.

Given that both her photos show a much lighter cat, with a general absence of bars except on the forelegs, we have erred on the side of Shaded Silver. There is no evidence of any progeny being recorded from 'The Dingley Owlet'.

**DINGLEY FASHION** (Silver Tabby Male). Born Feb. 25, 1903.  
Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley Dam: Miss Fluffie of Dingley.



Photo: 'J. Russell & Sons.  
Cover page, 'Our Cats' , January 16, 1904

Bred by Miss S. Anderson Leake and jointly owned by Mr R. Southby. A litter brother to 'The Dingley Owlet', and on paper, a full younger brother to 'The Marquis of Dingley', who had subsequently been sold.

Maintained at stud, his services were duly advertised in a number of 1904 editions of 'Our Cats', along with the NCC registrations of subsequent progeny. By the time this image was published, he had attended only his first two shows, gaining two first prizes at the Crystal Palace, and a second at Birmingham. This image by J. Russell was likely taken at the Crystal Palace Show in late 1903.

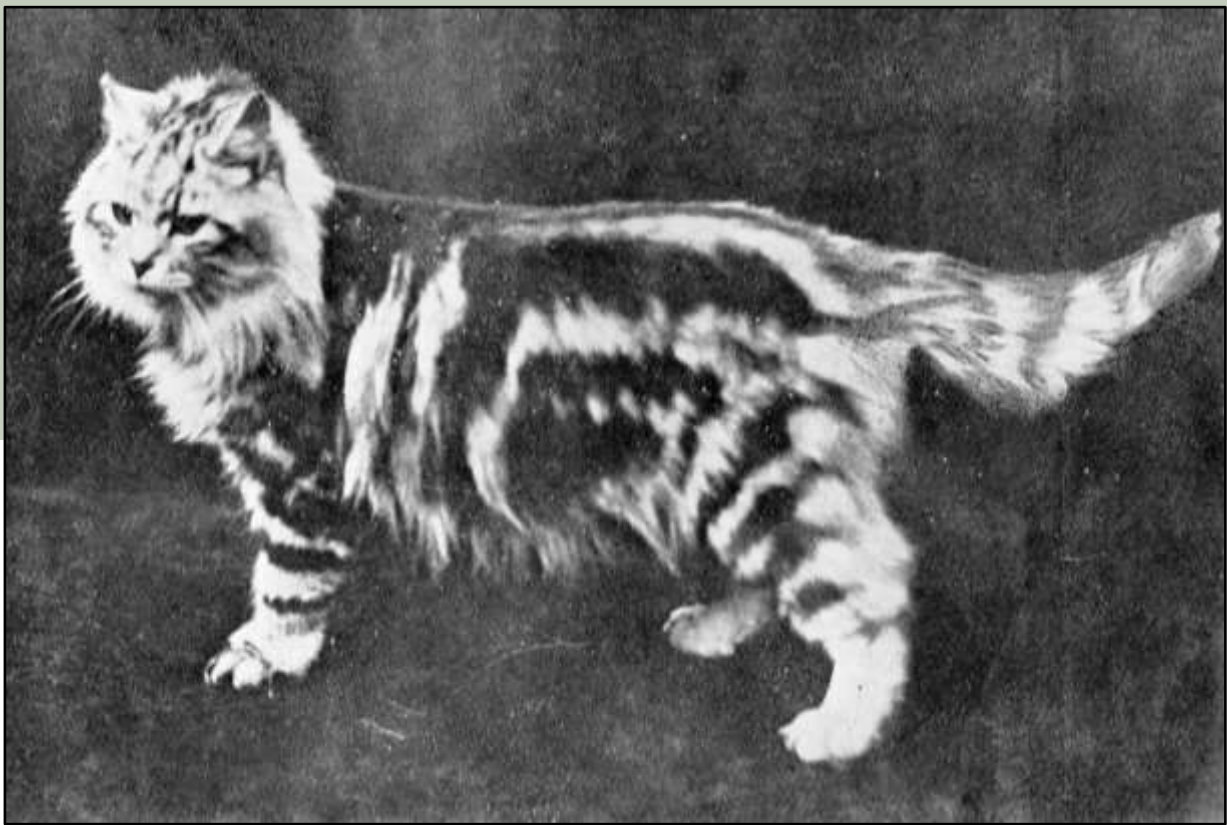
**DUNSDEN ABDUL** (Silver Tabby Male). Born c. 1903.  
Sire: Abdul Hamet of Dingley. Dam: Dunsden Duchess.



Photo: J. Russell & Sons. 'Our Cats' December 17, 1904.

Bred and owned by Mrs Stewart Dodd. This handsome male gained two seconds at the Sandy Show of 1904, and three seconds at the Crystal Palace, 1904.





The famous and now classic image of 'Champion Don Pedro of Thorpe' as he appeared in the revised edition of Frances Simpson's 'Cats for Pleasure and Profit', published by Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, London, in 1909. This photograph was the basis for image of Don Pedro in the Cowan's 'Noted Cats' series of Trading Cards, (1925) shown below.



Trading Card from the 'Cowans Noted Cats' series (1925) erroneously portraying Ch. Don Pedro of Thorpe as a Brown Tabby instead of a Silver Tabby, whilst also managing to misspell his cattery name!

Dunsden Abdul's seconds at Sandy were gained directly behind 'Don Pedro of Thorpe', who was Best of Variety and ultimately Best Long-hair Cat in Show; and opposite Mrs Collingwood's 'Miss Toodles', another Silver Tabby who was Best Short-haired Cat in Show.

Nevertheless, this did not impede 'Dunsden Abdul' from duly proceeding to become a full Champion in his own right.

FOR SALE.—Very choice  
**Blue & Silver Tabby Kittens**  
 — sired by —  
**Ch. Orange Blossom of Thorpe**  
 — and —  
**Don Pedro of Thorpe**  
 from 1st prize queens. £3 3s. to £5 5s.  
 Mrs SLINGSBY, Thorpe Underwood Hall, Ouseburn, York.

Mrs. Slingsby's Kitten advert, in 'Our Cats', May 28, 1904





**This handsome chalice style trophy was presented by Mrs E.T. Moore, on behalf of the C.S. & S.S (probably jointly by the Chinchilla, Silver & Smoke Society), to the Sheffield Show of November 17, 1904.**

Photos: Larry Johnson. Courtesy of The CFA Foundation

**The above trophy was located and identified by Karen Lawrence, and purchased by Michael W. Brim, CFA Public Relations Director, for the CFA Foundation, in November 2002**

### **DON PEDRO'S SHOW WINS**

'Don Pedro's' first appearance in public was as a kitten, while still owned by Miss Cope. At the Kitten Show of 1901, he took the Special for the Best Long-hair in Show.

At the Palace Show of the same year, 'Don Pedro' won first in single tabby kitten (18 entries), first in limit class (23 entries), among such well-known prize cats as 'Matthew of the Durhams', 'Teufel', 'Piquante Pearl', etc., and was second only to 'Ch. Zaida' in the challenge class, beating the two Romaldkirk champions and 'King Alfred'!

His wins were also be proudly listed in his 1903 stud listing as follows: -

1<sup>st</sup>, Manchester Kitten Show, 1901; 1<sup>st</sup>, Harrogate, 1901; Two 1sts and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Crystal Palace, 1901; 2<sup>nd</sup>, Manchester,

December 1901; 3<sup>rd</sup>, Westbourne Grove, 1902; Three 1sts and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Manchester, 1903. (these are indicated as the only times shown to that time), but we also know that he was successful at the Northern Counties Cat Club Show, in January 1904, and Best Long-haired Cat at the Sandy Show in 1904.

As an adult, 'Don Pedro' won many times, the following being a short description of his successes from the pen of Frances Simpson:-

*"Champion Don Pedro of Thorpe is owned by Mrs Slingsby, and has won 20 first prizes and several championships. He has frequently carried off the special prize for the best cat in the show. He is a most beautifully marked silver tabby Persian, and is always shown in grand coat and condition."*



**'DON RODERICK OF THORPE', by Ch. Don Pedro of Thorpe, ex Silver Butterfly of Thorpe.**

Photo: 'Our Cats', March, 1903. Image courtesy of The Harrison Weir Collection

## BREEDING & PROGENY

The sire of many lovely kittens, 'Don Pedro' became a valued and sought after stud, being bred over a number of Mrs Slingsby's females, including his three-quarter sister, 'Silver Butterfly of Thorpe' and a number of related queens from Mrs Copes 'Roiall' cattery. One of his earliest successes as a sire was Mrs. Slingsby's silver tabby male kitten, '**Don Roderick of Thorpe**' shown above, who was a successful exhibit at the Northern Counties Cat Club Show.

## SUMMARY

In the one hundred and twenty-six years that have elapsed since the appearance on the show bench of 'Ch. Topso of Dingley', no other Silver Tabby long-hair cat can claim the type of notoriety that has been enjoyed by '**Champion Don Pedro of Thorpe**'. He was indeed a worthy great-great-grandson of his famous progenitor.

But he also was sadly, an early herald of an almost dying color variety. For many decades, the silver tabby class simply languished, not following in the advances of type, made by other Persian colour varieties.

But those days are now well and truly over and the Silver Tabby Persian has made an amazing comeback. Over the last 25 years, through careful selective breeding and hard work, the Silver Tabby has recovered lost ground and there are truly some magnificent specimens, although not numerous, of quality equal to any. Cats such as '**GC NW Pajeau's Trinket Love**' (CFA's Best Cat 1993-1994), and '**GC DW Baloghshof Tin Soldier**' (CFA's 8<sup>th</sup> Best Cat 2000-2001), are indeed both demonstrative of what can be achieved, and a glimpse of what the future may hold for these stunningly beautiful cats of 'sheer class'.

**AT STUD.**

**DON PEDRO OF THORPE**

*Silver Tabby Persian*

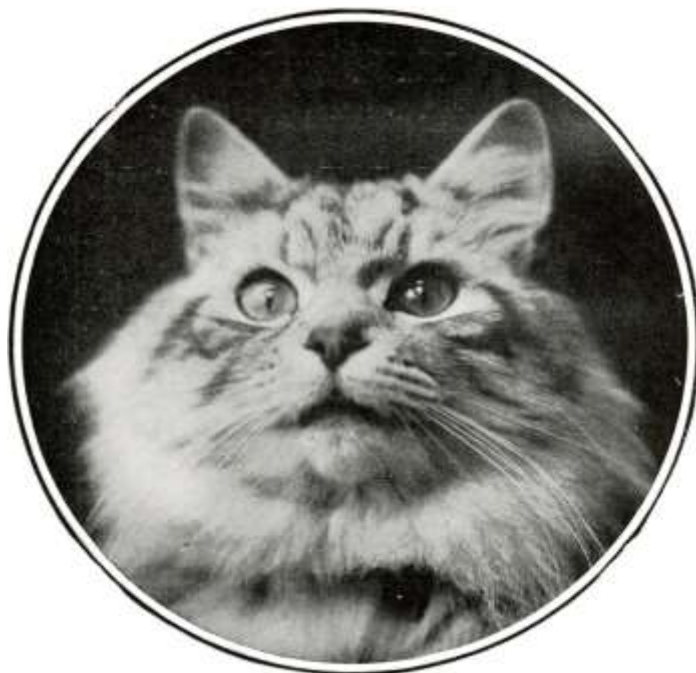
1st Manchester Kitten Show, 1901  
 1st Harrogate, 1901  
 Two 1sts and 2nd Crystal Palace, 1901.  
 2nd Manchester, December, 1901.  
 3rd Westbourne Grove, 1902.  
 Three 1sts and 3rd Manchester, 1903.  
 (Only times shown)

By Abdul Hamet of Dingley ex Dewdrop. Dewdrop by Ch  
 T. V. Silver King ex Silver Tang-e.

**Fee - 21s.**

MRS. SLINGSBY, Thorpe Underwood Hall, Ouseburn, Yorks.

Stud Advert. from the April 25, 1903 edition of 'Our Cats'



**A splendidly clear head study of 'Ch. Don Pedro of Thorpe'**

Photo: 'The Tatler', November 9, 1904



OUR CATS, MAR. 14, 1903.

2d. Weekly.

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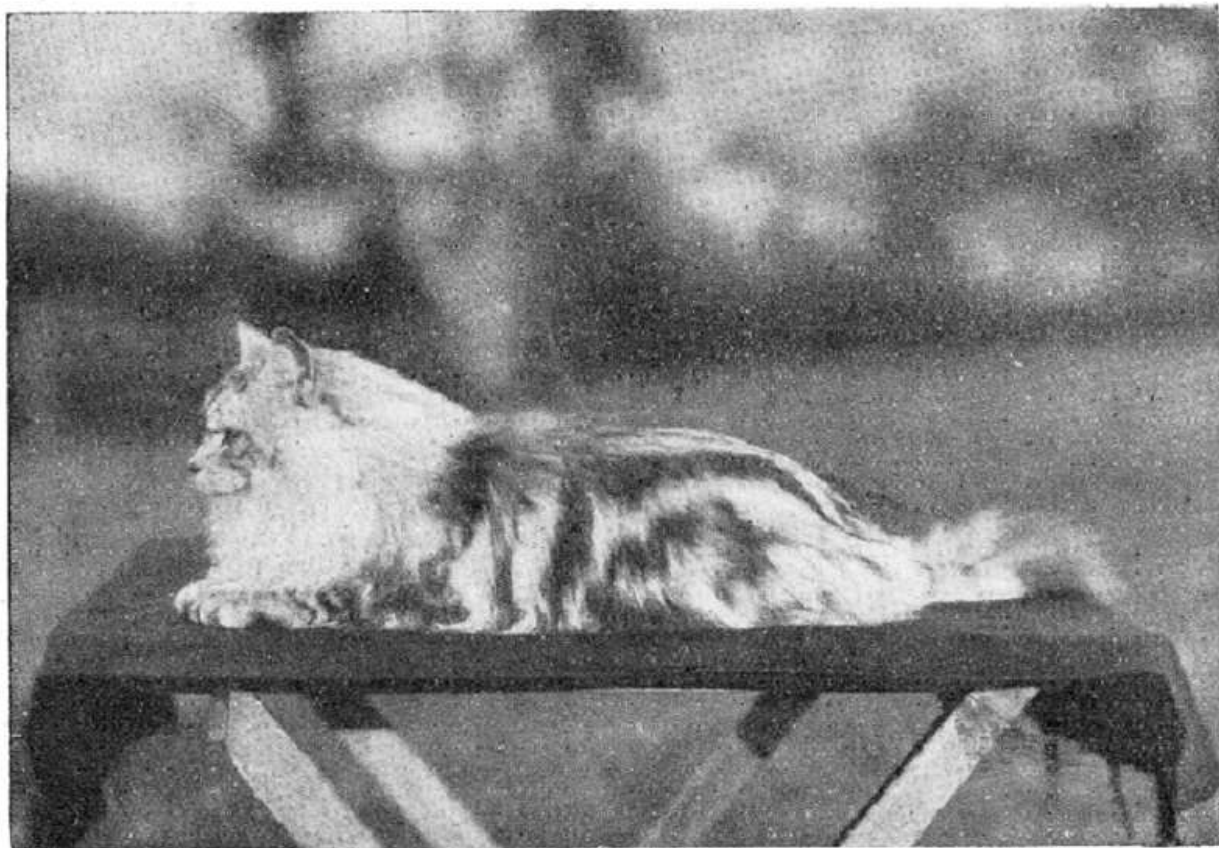
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