

# Fergusson

Christian Jane

1876 - 1957

## Her Life

Christian Jane Stark was born 14<sup>th</sup> September 1876 in Dumfries. She died 15<sup>th</sup> January 1957 at Dumfries. She was one of five children of James Stark, a solicitor, and his wife Agnes Waugh Drape. She attended school at the Dumfries Academy before travelling in Europe where she visited France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. When she returned to Britain, Fergusson studied at the Crystal Palace School of Art in London. From about 1900 to 1906 she attended the Glasgow School of Art, first as a student and then as a tutor. She was awarded one of the first Diplomas awarded at the School of Art. She also taught for a year between 1905 and 1906 on secondment at Kirkcudbright Academy and then as Principal Teacher of Art at the Glasgow High School for Girls. Later, she would also teach at the Benedictine Convent School in Dumfries.

As well as painting, Fergusson produced metalwork and tapestry pieces and came to be regarded as one of the group, later, known as the Glasgow Girls. She was also active in the Suffragette movement. Whilst studying at Glasgow she became engaged to David Fergusson, a young solicitor, whom she married in 1908. The couple settled in Maxwelltown where they began to raise a family. The family home was decorated in art nouveau style by Fergusson.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Fergusson travelled widely in Scotland and painted several views of the Isle of Arran, the East Neuk of Fife and of St. Abbs in Berwickshire which are considered among her best works. In 1922, a year after the birth of her third child, Fergusson was among the co-founders, along with Jessie M. King, E.A. Taylor and E.A. Hornel of the Dumfries and Galloway Fine Art Society, which in its early years, exhibited work by many distinguished Scottish artists. In 1928 Fergusson was elected to the Society of Scottish Artists. Fergusson won the Lauder Award from the Glasgow Society of Lady Artists three times, in 1933, 1938 and in 1954.

She also had strong connections with the Isle of Whithorn, where her mother was born, and with Kirkcudbright and Creetown, where she also had relatives.

The Fergussons spent their honeymoon and a number of subsequent holidays in Brittany, including visits to Pont Aven, where she was influenced by the French artists working in the area.

Chris Fergusson made frequent painting expeditions to Galloway with visits to Jessie King and E A Taylor at the Greengate, Kirkcudbright. It was with the Taylors, E A Hornel, Charles Oppenheimer and Robert Dickie Cairns, art master at Dumfries Academy, that Chris Fergusson was involved in the establishment of the Dumfries and Galloway Fine Art Society, which celebrated its centenary in 2022. Her husband David was the first Secretary of the society, which exists to this day.

Much of the above comes from the 'Wikiwand' website at [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Christian\\_Jane\\_Fergusson](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Christian_Jane_Fergusson)

## Her Work

An exhibition of some 116 paintings by Fergusson was held in Dumfries in 1952 and a retrospective exhibition of her work was held in the same town in 1957. Two works by Fergusson, *Salutation Inn, Dumfries* and *The Brig-end of Dumfries* hang in the Dumfries Council Chamber Room.

Chris Fergusson captured the essence of the coast and countryside of Dumfries and Galloway and its changing weather. She also captured on canvas and in watercolour a number of the places described by Dorothy L Sayers in her 1931 novel *Five Red Herrings* which was written whilst the author was staying at the Anwoth Hotel in Gatehouse.

Fergusson's painting of the Clints of Dromore shows one of the places described in *Five Red Herrings*.

We know that the author also visited the Fergussons at their home in Dumfries.

The following link leads to the website 'In the Artists Footsteps' in which there are at least 50 examples of this artists' paintings. <https://www.kirkcudbrightgalleries.org.uk/artists-footsteps/artist/christian-jane-fergusson/>

Her story and many of her paintings can be seen on the 'Webs' website <https://chrisjfergusson.webs.com/>

Her daughter Nan was also an artist and her story can be seen on the website 'In the Artists Footsteps'

<https://www.kirkcudbrightgalleries.org.uk/artists-footsteps/artist/nan-stark-fergusson/>



This photograph of Chris Fergusson is on the Daily Record website :

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/exhibition-paintings-glasgow-girl-go-27858574>



*This photo shows mum Chris with daughter Nan.*



*The Clints of Dromore*