

Art, Fish and Sail: Cornish Historic Art

Background notes

Catherine Wallace — 07 September 2022



**Walter Langley, *But o' for the touch of a vanished hand*, 1888,
Birmingham Museums**

This lecture looks at the relationship between art and the fishing industry in Cornwall in the 1880s – 1920s. In particular it analyses how the Newlyn School artists captured the lives of the families dependant on fishing, the hard work and the tragedies they suffered and the boats they used to fish in. The lecture begins with work, mainly in watercolour, by the Birmingham artist Walter Langley (1852 – 1922) who became known for his Social Realist portrayals of Newlyn fishwives.



Walter Langley, *Breadwinners*, 1896, oil, © Bowerman Charitable Trust

The lecture also includes the work of Frank Bramley RA (1857 – 1915) whose painting *A Hopeless Dawn*, 1888 caught the critics eye and cemented the Newlyners' reputation at the Royal Academy in London. Stanhope Forbes RA (1857 – 1947) had already created a stir with his major work '*Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*' when it was shown at the RA in 1885. It was the foundation stone of his long artistic career. Other artists such as Percy Craft (1856 – 1934) and Thomas Cooper Gotch (1854 – 1931) also created paintings of the fishermen and their wives and families. This lecture surveys their work amongst others and their involvement with the Newlyn Art Industries which included Newlyn copper.



Stanhope Forbes, *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, 1884-85, © The Box, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

On the other side of the Penwith peninsula, the harbour of St. Ives had been home to a thriving fishing industry since medieval times. We look at some of the depictions of the seine boats used to catch pilchards there. St. Ives had also become a mecca for artists after the branch line was built from St. Erth in 1877. The Olsson and Talmage School of Marine and Landscape Painting along with John Noble Barlow and Ruth and Charles Simpson running their own schools in St. Ives, meant there were many opportunities for artists who had been studying in the Ateliers of Paris and at the Arts Schools in London to further their studies in Cornwall. This included many women artists. We discover some of the work by these female pioneers including Maria Dorothy Robinson née Webb (1840—1920), (Mary) Winifred Freeman (1866 – 1961) and E. Charlton Fortune (1885-1969) who was one of the many American artists that came to paint in St. Ives.

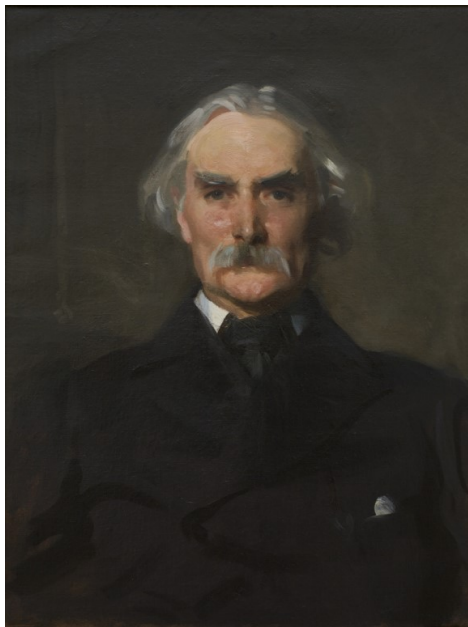


E. Charlton Fortune, *Summer Morning, St. Ives*, 1923, oil, ©Monterey Museum of Art

For the second part of this lecture, we focus on two marine and figure painters who came to live in Falmouth. Charles Napier Hemy RA (1841 – 1917) and Henry Scott Tuke RA (1858 – 1929). Hemy established himself as an important marine painter depicting the various fishing vessels at sea as well as capturing the thrill of yacht racing.

Hemy was born in Newcastle in 1841 and sailed to Australia, trained and lived briefly as a Roman Catholic Priest as well as working on a sailing ship before he finally decided to be an artist. Hemy trained in Newcastle where his tutor was William Bell Scott and he introduced Hemy to pre-Raphaelite Art.

Hemy married a wealthy woman in 1866 and could then afford to study art and went to Antwerp.



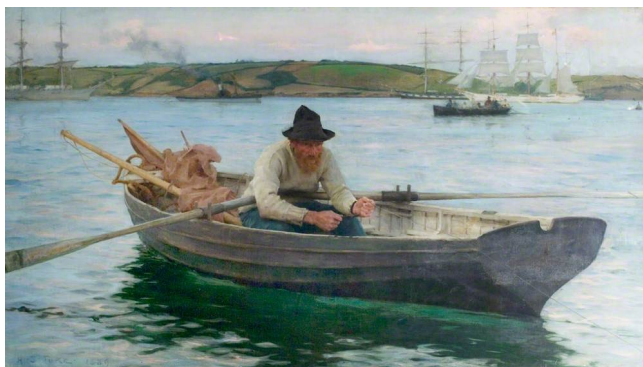
John Singer Sargent, *Portrait of Charles Napier Hemy*, 1905, oil, ©Falmouth Art Gallery

The love of all things nautical began to emerge in his paintings on his return to England where he depicted life on the Thames. In 1880 his wife died of meningitis. Within a year he had married again to Amy Freeman and moved to Falmouth Cornwall in 1881. They had 10 children together and Hemy built a large house called Churchfield in Falmouth next door to the Catholic church. This was his base for the rest of his life.



Charles Napier Hemy, *A Long shore Fisherman*, 1890, ©Falmouth Art Gallery

Henry Scott Tuke is synonymous with the port of Falmouth in Cornwall. It is where he grew up as a child from the age of 2 to 13. One of his earliest drawings is of a tall ship he did when he was just 10 years old. After studying painting in London, Florence as well as Paris he had a brief stay in Newlyn where he established himself as one of the Newlyn School painters before moving back to Falmouth where he was to stay for the rest of his life. Renting rooms in a cottage by the sea gave him access to the tall ships that sailed in to Falmouth for Orders. Many of his watercolour paintings he produced for the next 34 years featured these impressive vessels and his work captures the final days of sail.



Henry Scott Tuke, *The Fisherman*, 1888, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries

In this lecture we shall see the range of Tuke's paintings of not just tall ships but every kind of vessel from fishing boats to rowing boats. An enthusiastic yachtsman, Tuke spent most summers racing his own boats, and this lecture reflects his love of being on the water through his many paintings created onboard his floating studios.



Henry Scott Tuke, *A four masted barque*, 1914, watercolour

1. Newlyn Artists

Walter Langley (1852 – 1922)
William Banks Fortescue (1850 – 1924)
Frank Bramley RA (1857 – 1915)
Stanhope Forbes RA (1857 – 1947)
William John Wainwright (1855 – 1931)
Henry Meynell Rheam (1859 – 1920)
Albert Chevallier Tayler (1862 – 1925)
Thomas Cooper Gotch (1854 – 1931)
Ralph Todd (1856 – 1932)
Edwin Harris (1855 – 1906)
Percy Craft (1856 – 1934)
(Newlyn Copper)
John Drew Mackenzie (1861 - 1918)
Philip Hodder (1867 – 1907)

2. St. Ives Artists

Frederick Sargeant (1837 - 1899)
Edward Robert King (1863 - 1951)
Charles Simpson (1885 – 1971)
Gwendolin Margaret Hopton (1866 – 1913)
Mrs Maria Dorothea Robinson neé Webb (1840—1920)
Caroline St. Clair Graham (1868 – 1954)
(Mary) Winifred Freeman (1866 – 1961)
E. Charlton Fortune (1885-1969) American

3. Falmouth Artists

Charles Napier Hemy RA (1841 – 1917)
Henry Scott Tuke RA (1858 – 1929)

Further Reading

Books by Catherine Wallace

Wallace, Catherine, *Paintings from Cornwall, Henry Scott Tuke - The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society, Tuke Collection*, Halsgrove, 2008

This is a catalogue of the largest public collection of H.S. Tuke's work in the UK. Catherine has written the notes on each work and introductions to each period/ subject covered. With a preface by Alison Smith from Tate Britain this catalogue is a unique record of an outstanding collection of 277 works each one illustrated in full colour.

Wallace, Catherine, *Under the Open Sky: the Paintings of Newlyn and Lamorna Artists 1880 – 1940 in the Public Collections of Cornwall and Plymouth*, Truran, 2002 and 2007 (Out of Print – possible reprint 2023)

Wallace, Catherine, *Catching the Light: The Art and Life of Henry Scott Tuke 1858 – 1929*, Atelier Books/ Fine Art Society, 2008 (Out of Print)

Books with a contribution by Catherine Wallace

The Story of Anchor Studio, Borlase Smart John Wells Trust, 2021

This book provides a picture of the historic Anchor Studio and the two artists who owned it between 1888 when it was built and 2000. Stanhope Forbes and John Wells. Three distinguished specialists have contributed essays: Dr. Joanna Mattingly on the history of Newlyn, Catherine Wallace M.Litt on Stanhope Forbes and Anne Barlow, Director of Tate St. Ives on John Wells.

Laura Knight A Celebration, Sansom and Co in conjunction with Penlee House Gallery and Museum, 2021

This book is a very colourful publication and includes two essays by Catherine Wallace one on Laura Knight's time in Cornwall the other on her life in London and Malvern in the 1930s and 40s. Edited by Elizabeth Knowles other essays are written by Rosie Broadley, Alice Strickland, Neil Walker and Timothy Wilcox.

Other Authors

General

Gunzi, Roo, *Amongst Heroes – The Artist in Working Cornwall*, Two Temple Place, 2013

Hardie, Melissa (ed.), *Artists of Newlyn and West Cornwall 1880 – 1940 . A Dictionary and Source Book*, Art Dictionaries 2009

Tovey, David, *Cornish Light: The Nottingham 1894 Exhibition revisited*, Sansom and Co, 2014

O'Neill, Mary, *Cornwall's Fisherfolk - Art and Artifice*, Sansom and Co, 2014

Stewart, Brian, Roberts, Lynn and Mitchell, Paul, *Falmouth Frameworks*, Sansom and Co, 2011

Newton, Laura, (ed.), *Painting at the Edge – British Coastal Art Colonies 1880 – 1930*, Sansom and Co.

Hardie, Melissa, *100 years in Newlyn, Diary of a Gallery*, Patton Press, 1985

Connell, Louise, *The Little Book of Newlyn Paintings*, Penlee House Gallery and Museum, 2013

Cross, Tom, *The Shining Sands, Artists in Newlyn and St. Ives, 1880 – 1930*, Halsgrove, 1994

Monographs on Artists

Gunzi, F. R., *Fred Hall, Truran and Penlee House*, 2016

Langley, Roger, *Edwin Harris 1855 – 1906 An Introduction to his Life and Art*, Truran, 2008

Powell, Margaret, *Master of the Sea – Charles Napier Hemy RA, RWS*, Alison Hodge, 2004.

Pryke, Richard, *Norman Garstin: Irishman and Newlyn Artist*, Spire Books, 2004

Knowles, Elizabeth, *Stanhope Forbes, Father of the Newlyn School*, Sansom and Co, 2017

Lomax, Pam, *The Golden Dream – A Biography of Thomas Cooper Gotch*, Sansom and Co. 2004

Langley, Roger, *Walter Langley from Birmingham to Newlyn*, Sansom and Co. in association with Penlee House Gallery and Museum, 2011

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