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INTRODUCTION

A study of Walter Osborne is, in many ways, an examination of the profound changes emerging in the world of art in the closing decades of the 19th Century. Swept along on the tide of the Industrial Revolution, with its methods of mass production and scant attention to craftmanship, these social upheavals could not but affect all aspects of life at the time.

Artists were not immune to these external influences - they developed new and exciting concepts in their field, and which, with the benefit of hindsight, can be seen as a statement of their own emotions, as portrayed in their art, and as a reaction to the increasingly mundane demands of the new, traditionless, middle class.

Against this background, the essence of Walter Osborne must be viewed. The time of his birth - 1859 - and his premature death just 44 years later, place him within this period of change - but tragically dying before he could become a fuller participant in the general moves which came to permeate the world of art around that time.

My study of Walter Osborne, therefore, is an examination of his life and his progression as a painter, to discover the essential elements which combined to create in him the person and the painter that he was.

FAMILY BACKGROUND/EARLY SCHOOLDAYS

Walter Osborne was born in Dublin on the 17th of June 1859. He was one of three children born to William and Anne Jane Osborne (nee Woods). Walter was the second child, and came between an older brother, Charles, and a younger sister, Violet.

William Osborne was a successful painter.[1] He specialised in animal studies (mainly dogs and horses), which were very popular among the monied classes in Ireland. The Osborne home was in the respectable Rathmines suburb of Dublin, at 5 Castlewood Avenue.

William himself had had an uphill struggle to pursue a career as a painter. Orphaned at an early age, he was reared by a man named Parker. This Parker - a member of the strict Moravian Church - is described as a harsh man, who did not take too kindly to William's ambition to be a painter.[2] Despite this opposition William persisted, and in 1854 he was elected an Associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy, and a full Academician in 1868.[3]

Walter Osborne was enrolled in Dr Benson's School in Rathmines, where his record was respectable, although unremarkable. (In contrast, his brother Charles was described as brilliant). Walter was allowed leave school in the Summer of 1875 - he was sixteenyears old.[4]

As there are no records of his father having a separate studio, it is quite likely that William worked in the family home. In any event, there would certainly have been several "tools of his trade" around the house; sketch books, pencils, paints, perhaps finished paintings, brushes, etc. These home conditions, and the undoubted encouragement of his father, would have combined to interest Walter in a career as an artist. Proof of this paternal influence can be seen in the subject matter of much

of Walter Osborne's earlier work (pre-1880). For example, paintings titled "Head of a Scotch Collie Dog", and "Head of a Fox Terrier". Walter had another example and source of inspiration in his family - albeit a distant cousin, Frederic Burton.[5] Burton was a water-colourist, and was well known in England. He gained great recognition when he became Director of the National Gallery in London in 1874, and he remained in that position until 1894.

As Walter Osborne left school in 1875,[4] and did not start in the R.H.A. until the following year, we can assume that the intervening period was spent working with his father, assisting him and at the same time learning invaluable lessons from the older man's experience. He would have had a head start, therefore, over his fellow pupils when he enrolled in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1876. No doubt he would have had the chance to mix paint - and perhaps apply it, maybe completing parts of his father's work - an activity which did not come into the curriculum of the Art College until the pupils had proved they could draw.

Osborne got off to a tremendous start in his first year - he claimed four of the seven available annual prizes. He took first prize - a silver medal - for drawing from the living model; second prize of £3 for the best collection of meritorious works; £5 for the greatest number of meritorious works from the antique; and finally, second prize of £2 for the best drawing made during the session.[6]

Osborne's winning of all these prizes shows clearly that not only had he great talent, but also that he must have been very hardworking and dedicated. It also proves that he must have been content, and happy in his work, for, had he not been, then he would never have been able to apply himself fully.

Walter continued to shine throughout his student career. In 1879 he took another three prizes - a bronze medal for drawing from the antique, £5 also for the same subject, and a second prize of £3 for the greatest number of meritorious works from the living model.[6]

These successes must have boosted Osborne's confidence, and also confirmed his parents' belief in his ability. In 1880 he was awarded the highest prize offered by the Academy - he received £20 for a work entitled "A Glade in the Phoenix Park"(fig. 33)[6]. The prize was itself a great achievement, but what meant even more to the twenty-one-year old artist was the added bonus that the picture was included in the Royal Hibernian Academy exhibition of 1880. It must indeed have been a proud time for the Osborne household to have two R.H.A. exhibitors under the same roof.

It is interesting to note that Osborne, even though at this

stage he was probably more advanced than the others in his class, still followed the curriculum at the Academy. He obviously appreciated the method of teaching being practised at that time. It is very likely that Osborne was eager to experiment with paint, and to complete an entire painting. However, he suppressed these feelings, and understood that, in order to create paintings of merit, he first had to be able to draw. (The schools of art at this time followed the approach that the students had to be able to "walk before they could run". They started off drawing from the antique - that is, from plaster casts of classical statuary. This was tedious, but very important for improving draughtsmanship skills. When the students had progressed to a level that satisfied their tutors, they moved to drawing from life. The first life class using a real, live, model must have been an exciting change for the students - especially compared to the seemingly endless drawings of ancient forms. Finally, and only when the tutor decided they were ready, the students were allowed to start using oil paints).

Osborne also supplemented his Academy lessons by attending classes at the Metropolitan School of Art, in Kildare Street. This School was associated with the South Kensington School of Art (London) system - and which came under the Department of Science and Art in Britain. It seems that Osborne attended classes at the School from 1877 to 1880. This is borne out in a letter dated the 14th of April 1881, from Robert E. Lyne - who was Headmaster of the School - and which was included in the Taylor Competition Minute Books at the Royal Dublin Society. This states that Walter Osborne was a pupil there.[7]

These Taylor scholarships were established by the Royal Dublin

Society in 1878. They were awarded for works in oils, and the larger prizes were intended to help send Irish students abroad to study. Osborne was in the right place at the right time - he would have been one of the first art students ready to avail of the Taylor prizes, inaugurated in order to meet with the demands of the novel phenomenon of studying abroad. In 1879, and again in 1880, Osborne won the £10 prize.

It was, however, in 1881 that he won what was Ireland's equivalent of the Prix de Reme, when he was awarded the prize of £50. There was no higher award for Irish art students at this time, and it was recognised as a tremendous achievement. The same painting that had been awarded the Albert prize at the Academy also won this prize. Sir Thomas Jones, president of the R.H.A., and the Director of the National Gallery, Henry Doyle - both of whom were judges of the competition - recommended that Osborne continue his studies at an English,or foreign, School of Art. Thus, "A Glade in the Phoenix Park" became Osborne's ticket to Europe, and the chance to further his studies. Winning the prizes meant a considerable lessening of the financial burden on his father, and so, with a financially independent clear conscience, Osborne made his choice - the Academie Royale des Beaux Artes, in Antwerp.

ACADEMIE DES BEAUX ARTES, ANTWERP

In the early 1800's, Irish painters and students went to London to further improve and polosh their knowledge of Art. By the 1870's, however, they were travelling further afield in search of bigger studios and better methods of instruction. Irish painters and their English contemporaries were now turning to the Continent for these requirements.

Osborne decided on Antwerp's Royal Academy as his European destination. He travelled there in the company of two fellow-Irish painters, Nathaniel Hill (1861 - 1934) and Joseph Malachy Kavanagh (1856 -1918). Nathaniel Hill was from Drogheda, of a wealthy milling family. It is unlikely that he earned his living as a painter, but he did continue to paint until the end of his life.[8] Joseph Kavanagh, the eldest of the three, appears to have been Osborne's close friend, as they made trips to Howth together in their student days, to draw from Nature, and remained in close contact throughout their years in Europe.[8]

Osborne's choice of Antwerp may seem surprising to many people when, traditionally, Paris is considered synonymous with the centre of innovative art - especially at this time. The emphasis on Paris as an axis to all artistic activity in the 19th Century has led to the overshadowing of many other thriving communities. This can only be described as unjust, particularly when we consider that the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp had a tradition going as far back as the 17th Century. The Academy had been recognised in the 18th Century and, as a result, had gained a wide reputation - especially with the work of the Belgian School of History painting.[9]

The Academy in Antwerp had produced leading figures in the

European world of Art - Gustave Wappers was the Director there from 1839 to 1845, and was followed by Nicaise de Keyser from 1855 to 1879. Henry Leys (1815 - 1869), another leading and thoroughly respected name in European Art, lived and worked in Antwerp. Charles Verlat[10] (Osborne's tutor there) had established an international reputation, both as a teacher and as a painter. Verlat was Professor of Paintings from 1877 to 1883, and was then appointed Director of the Academy. Antwerp, therefore, with its established and historic reputation, offered as many attractions as an artistic centre as did Paris.

It is necessary to question why Osborne chose Antwerp rather than Paris. His choice shows him to be a sensible and thoughtful young man who could think an idea through. He showed discernment in his choice, and must have carefully weighed the pros and cons of his personal situation. Although he was only twenty-two years old, he apparantly knew what would be best for his artistic career.

The first Irish painter recorded as having gone to Antwerp was Vincent Gernon,[11] who was there from 1887 to 1880. Norman Garstin, from Limerick, attended the Academy there the following year.[12] Back in Ireland, either of these two painters could have told Osborne about the School of Art, and its many merits.

Undoubtedly, Osborne's father's influence was a powerful one, and the fact that the Academy in Antwerp boasted Charles Verlat, one of the most famous painters of animals of his day, as its Head of Painting, must have swayed Osborne's choice. Lennox Robinson later wrote of the Academy, "Antwerp was one of the few schools of painting, perhaps the only one, that put up cows and horses as models".

The international reputation of Charles Verlat - as a painter of animals and genre - is confirmed by an excerpt from an article written in 1893, about the painters exhibiting at the New Gallery in London,"In five cases out of six, the English Course was succeeded by a visit to the lapidaries of Paris.....or sometimes it was that fine teacher, the late M.Verlat of Antwerp".

According to Jeanne Sheehy, another factor that may be considered as a deciding influence - albeit less Art-oriented - was the simple fact that Antwerp was not Paris. Paris was seen by many as a decadent, wicked, place where many young art students could fall into the trap of a loose, Bohemian, life-style. Antwerp had a more respectable reputation - it was not notorious for the Rive Gauche, the Moulin Rouge, or Les Folies Bergere, and therefore did not offer so many distractions to a young man.[2]

Walter was also aware of the reality that he had only a limited budget, and decided that he had to get the best value for his money. No doubt he heeded the advice that,"If not too fond of frequenting music halls and other places of amusement (presumably, of course, for the purpose of character study!), the cost of living will, on the whole, be found cheaper at Antwerp than in most other educational centres".[13]

The result of all this was that many students from provincial art schools went to Antwerp as a "safe" alternative to Paris. Osborne showed by his choive that he could make sensible and well-balanced decisions.

Walter and his two companions set off on a trip that was for them the opening of several new chapters in their lives. They were embarking on an adult life-learning course away from home, with no parental guidance, and following their chosen careers

in a strange country. They were free - a great bonus in many ways - but that freedom also meant a certain amount of insecurity, and a fear of making mistakes. All of these aspects added to thelearning process which Osborne and his friends must have faced with a sense of excitement and expectation.

On their arrival in Antwerp, Osborne, Hill and Kavanagh found lodgings at 49, Kloosterstraat,[14] which was only a short distance from the new Musee Royale des Beaux Artes. Osborne immediately enrolled as a student of Charles Verlat's Nature Class - drawing and painting from life. Here the students were expected to put in a full day at the studio, starting at 9 o'clock in the morning with four hours of painting. After a break for lunch, they had to attend drawing classes all afternoon, until 5 o'clock. Further classes in the evenings were also involved regularly, making the day's work very long.[15] Osborne attended several evening classes - he knew he was in Antwerp to learn, and he did not want to waste any of the precious term time.

The athmpsphere at the Academy, and in and around Antwerp, was very cosmopolitan, and the young Irishman - away from home for the first time - must have revelled in the new sights and sounds. Verlat's Nature Class was comprised of a large percentage of foreign students.[16] The international athmosphere, foreign accents, and the food - together with the cafe society where Art was constantly discussed - undoubtedly must have made for a heady time for young Osborne. Along with everyone around him, he was actually living and breathing Art.

It is interesting to take a closer look at Charles Verlat, Osborne's teacher for life painting (Polydore Beaufaux taught the drawing class). Verlat, as I have mentioned, had an international reputation

as an artist and teacher. He must have been a very convincing teacher as well, because his influence is clear in the work of all the students who attended his classes. Verlat was a very academic painter, whosestyle was somewhat old-fashioned. He emphasised the importance of detailed drawings before commencing painting. The studies were to be completed on location outside the studio, but the painting was to be carried out in the studio, using the studies as reference notes regarding natural light, shade, etc. The resulting paintings were tight and controlled, and lacked spontaniety. Verlat was a strictly conventional artist, who was very set in his ways, and most of his students - after leaving the Academy -as they developed as painters progressed outside the boundaries imposed by Verlat's teaching. He gave his students a marvellous knowledge of paint and conventional painting methods, but - even having outgrown this rather tight, old-fashioned style - Verlat's teaching somewhat impeded his students' abilities to appreciate avantgarde art, such as Impressionism.

It is also interesting to note Verlat's influence on Osborne's work. At first sight, it is difficult to spot similarities between the work of the two artists. Verlat worked on a monumental scale, and the paint was applied in thick impasto, to huge canvasses. He preferred to depict highly tense and dramatic scenes. For example, his painting, "Le Coup de Collier"(Fig.1.) - which was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1857 - is so dramatic in subject matter as to appear somewhat loud and overstated. Osborne's work, on the other hand, throughout his career was far more gentle and sensitive - his subject matter depicts quiet scenes, almost exclusively. On closer inspection, however, several influences from Verlat do appear in Osborne's work - for example, his

drawing, method of paint application, and palette.

In his "Le Coup de Collier", Verlat's brushwork displays vigour, and there is a good range of fairly bright colours. He objected to the neglect of drawing for the sake of colour. Osborne followed this example, and was a careful draughtsman, whose paintings were carefully researched with detailed pencil studies. Verlat also promoted to his students the concept that,"It is a great gift for a painter to keep, in his finished work, the spontaneous sensations felt by the eye in front of Nature". Osborne was obviously an attentive student, who listened carefully to his teacher's advice - sensibly considering his experience invaluable.

In 1882, from a new Antwerp address, Osborne sent home paintings of Irish scenes.[8] This means that it is very likely that he went home at the beginning of Summer in 1882, and returned to Antwerp (to new lodgings) in the Autumn, as he enrolled for the 1882 - 1883 academic year.[12] His new address is recorded as 12, Keizerstraat.

It is interesting to note that Osborne took his unfinished Irish scenes back to Antwerp to complete - proving that he was still following the conventional mode of painting; that is, making careful studies in pencil and paint, and finishing the work in the studio.

It is in the work he sent to the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1883 that evidence of the Belgian influence on his painting appears - in the subject matter, etc. In 1883 he exhibited more than 9 Flemish pictures - they featured scenes of towns, canals and farmyards - from Bruges as well as Antwerp.[8] His work of this time is very precise in detail and handling; the tones are often dark, and the colours subdued. A painting which typifies

the Antwerp-finished works is "Beneath St. Jacques, Antwerp"(Fig.2.). It is a courtyard scene, and the attention to detail is very apparent. Osborne has treated each tile, brick and cobblestone with equal importance. We can see his love of genre scenes - the athmosphere is gentle and quiet. The sunlight is limited, though beautifully observed, coming through the doorway, and falling on the corner of the house, and the three figures are in shadow. The little girl is looking attentively at the old woman, likely to be her grandmother. On closer inspection, we see the delightful inclusion of a small kitten in the yard. To me, however, the most interesting figure in the painting is the little boy with the sweeping-brush. He is looking through the open doorway, which is in shadow. What is he looking at so intently, or is someone in the hallway talking to him ? Overall, the scene is homely and warm in athmosphere. It is a "comfortable" picture, and the religious statue watching over the courtyard emphasises the secure feeling one has when looking at the painting.

On the critical side, however, the palette is limited to beige, grey and green - although the touches of blue in the sky and in the little girl's dress do lift the monotony of the colour. When compared to other less-finished and later works, the figures in this painting are quite wooden. However, these factors do not take away from the overall athmospheric effect of the work.

Osborne's smaller studies from this time are far more spontaneous and freer in handling. It is as if he did not have the time to get "bogged down" in a large, thoroughly-finished canvas. His working life studies show how skilful he was at capturing a scene, character, and athmosphere. "Moderke Verhoft"(Fig.3.)

was inscribed verso with "A Study". It shows the spontaniety, confidence and freedom that Osborne had when working in this manner. The brushstrokes are strong and bold, the lighting vivid and effective.

Another example of this type of work is "A Market Stall"(Fig.4.). This picture is likely to have been a study, executed on the spot in Belgium, for a larger work - perhaps "In the Market Place of Bruges"(Fig.5.) - Which was exhibited in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1884.

In 1883 Osborne completed his final course at the Antwerp Academy and now, with all his formal training behind him, he set off on the somewhat inevitable trail to Brittany, in France. It was accepted that a working trip to France was an essential part of an artist's education. Osborne was a very serious student, and there was no way he was going to miss such a vital opportunity to paint in France.

At this time, while still away from Ireland, he was elected an Associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy, in 1883. (He became a full Member in 1886).

BRITTANY. 1883 - 1884.

Osborne spent a year in Brittany, working in three different villages - Quimperle, Pont Aven, and Dinan. Brittany had become an extremely popular destination for painters, offering several attractions. The area was very picturesque, the climate very mild, and the local people and their customs made ideal subjects for study. A more practical reason for this popularity was the fact that the artist could live very cheaply there. The very fact that more artists visited the area was another attraction - the gatherings of artists from different countries and Art Schools were very cosmopolitan. The artists knew they could learn from each other, new ideas and methods of painting.

A measure of the popularity of Pont Aven can be gauged from contemporary quotations, "Pont Aven is a favourite spot for artists, and a 'terra incognita' to the majority of travellers in Brittany", and again,"Pont Aven has one advantage over other places in Brittany; its inhabitants in their picturesque costumes (which remain unaltered) have learned that to sit as a model is a pleasant and lucrative profession - and they do this for a small fee without hesitation or 'mauvaise hente'. This is a point of great importance to the artist....."[17]

Henry Jones Thaddeus,[18] an Irish painter, who was in Brittany in 1881 - 1882, gave another description of the surroundings that Osborne launched into when he arrived in France:- "When in summer they arrive, laden with canvasses, knapsacks, and easels, local laws and mandates are made to conform to their wishes, and the village is given up to their sweet will. Comprising all nationalities and representing every school of painting, the cosmopolitan crowd devotes itself equally to the spoiling

of canvas and to a thorough enjoyment of open-air life...."

Around that time, no one except painters came to Pont Aven, and they regarded the place as their own private property. The village itself resembled a gigantic studio, with its picturesque streets full of painters at work whilst the villagers, from long practice, were excellent models, and posed everywhere and anywhere.

Brittany was, therefore, an obvious choice for a painter at this time and, just as he had chosen the Antwerp Academy, it was to Brittany that Osborne moved to pursue his fledgling career. He would have been familiar with the Breton scene from his start as an art student. Osborne's own teacher at the R.H.A. schools - Augustus Burke - was exhibiting such scenes in Dublin since the 1870's. Osborne must have seen and admired these works, and felt that he would benefit from painting on location in Brittany. Indeed, Augustus Burke probably encouraged him to do so.

Perhaps the greatest draw for Osborne was, however, the fact that Jules Bastien-Lepage[19] worked there. It is possible, even, that Osborne could have met him, as they were both in Concarneau in 1883.

Jules Bastien-Lepage was, according to Hartrick, the greatest influence on artists working in Brittany in the 1880's. Hartrick also wrote that, "In every country the most promising youths were frankly imitating his(Lepage's) work, with its ideals of exact representation of nature as seen out-of-doors, everything being painted on the spot in a grey light, in order that there might be as little change in the effect as possible when the artist was at work...."

Bastien-Lepage had great influence on the plein air school of painting - not only in Brittany itself, but the effects were carried to England by artists returning home there. Indeed, in 1882 and 1883 Stanhope Alexander Forbes (1857 - 1947) and Henry Herbert La Thangue (1859 - 1929), of the plein air school, were both painting at Cancale and Quimperle. They were undoubtedly influenced by the work of Bastien-Lepage at that time, and it is most likely that Osborne met them there.[22]

George Clausen[23](1852 - 1944), one of the most important members of the plein air school, wrote of Bastien-Lepage that, "his work ranks with the very best in modern art."

Despite this, the influence of Bastien-Lepage waned with the arrival of Impressionism. John Rewald[24] wrote of Lepage, "he cleverly and deceitfully debased the conquests of realism to the tastes of the day".

Even though Bastien-Lepage's influence did diminish in popularity, it had a lasting effect on Osborne's work - especially his sketches - for much of his career. This is typified in the directness of Osborne's preparatory sketches, for example, that of "Mrs Noel Guinness and her Daughter Margaret"(Fig.7.), completed in 1898.

Osborne missed Gaugin at Pont Aven by just two years - the Gaugin era there did not begin until 1886. He also missed meeting Van Gogh in Antwerp by four years. Even if he had been aware of this, Osborne probably would have felt that he had missed very little. His work and his tastes were, at that stage, conservative, and his admiration for modernity did not extend much beyond Whistler[20]. This admiration is supported by pencilled notes

Osborne made in a catalogue of the 1884 Winter Exhibition of the Institute of Painters in Oil Colours.[21] He also made pencil sketches of some of Whistler's work - including his "Miss Cicely Alexander"(Fig.28.), shown at the Art Loan Exhibition in Dublin in 1899.

Having spent a year in Brittany, Osborne's formative years as a student were finished, and he was embarking on his career as an artist. He left France and returned to the family home at Rathmines, in Dublin, in 1884. Using this as his base, he began to spend long periods in England.

THE ENGLAND YEARS.

Osborne's first trip to England was in the company of Nathaniel Hill - a fellow-student in Dublin and Antwerp. They worked at Walberswick, on the Suffolk coast. This suggests that their choice of location was influenced again by Augustus Burke, who had taught them during their student days in the Royal Hibernian Academy. Burke had spent time in that part of England, and had sent views of Walberswick to an exhibition in the R.H.A. in 1884. In that same year, Osborne exhibited views of the same district in the Dublin Sketching Club.

Osborne's life-style around this time was described as, "spending summer and autumn in small villages in England, usually in the company of other painters, and returning to Dublin in winter, when the cold drove him to work indoors." This description comes from Stephen Gwynn (1864 - 1950). Gwynn met Osborne in 1884, and became a lifelong friend.[25] He was a student at Brasenore College, Oxford, from 1882 to 1886, and later a schoolmaster at Bradfield, in Berkshire.

In October 1884, Osborne, Nathaniel Hill and another artist, Edward Stott (1855 - 1918), went on a painting trip to England. They stayed at North Littleton, near Evesham, and at other small villages in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Hampshire.

Edward Stott was born in Rochdale, in England, and attended the Manchester School of Art. He had studied under Carolus Duran, and later Alexandre Cabanel, at the Ecole des Beaux Artes, in Paris. He met Bastien-Lepage in 1880 and - while it is not recorded where he met Osborne - it seems very likely that Stott too was in Brittany in 1883. Stott came from a less-well-off background

than Osborne, and was often hard up for cash in his early years. Osborne often lent him money.[26] No doubt it was because of his struggle in his youth that Stott, on his death, bequeathed most of his estate to the R.H.A. to assist young deprived artists.

The influence of Bastien-Lepage is evident in the work of both Stott and Osborne at this time. At the same time, it is difficult to say to what extent the two painters influenced each other's work. There are strong similarities - for example, Osborne's "Feeding Chickens"(Fig.8), and Stott's "Feeding the Ducks"(Fig.9). Later on, however, their styles diverged as they developed separately. During all this period, Osborne was sending paintings regularly to the Walker Art Gallery, in Liverpool. His father had been exhibiting at this Gallery since 1873, in common with many other Irish artists. There seems to have been a traditional connection between the R.H.A and the Gallery - where there was a room allocated solely to the Academy exhibitors.

The first painting Osborne sent to the Walker Gallery was "The Tempting Bait" in 1882. This picture actually won for Osborne the Taylor Scholarship for his second time. Throughout these years, he usually sent his more impressive academic works for exhibit there - for example, "A Grey Morning in a Breton Farmyard"(Fig.11), and, "The Ferry"(Fig.12).[27] He continued to exhibit in the Gallery right up to his death, and, during his later years, he sent some of his formal portraits for show there. Examples of these were, "Mrs. Mulhall"(Fig.13) and,"mrs. Chadwyck Healy - her Daughter"(Fig.14).

Osborne was also a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy, where, in his early years, he sent genre scenes and landscapes. Later

on in his career he sent portraits - for example, the charming painting, Mrs. Noel Guinness and her Daughter"(Fig.15), and, "Sir Thomas Moffett"(Fig.16).

Many of the paintings Osborne sent to the Academy were reproduced in illustrated magazine supplements of the day (one of which was entitled "Cassel's Royal Academy Pictures").

In 1892, Osborne's pastel "Life in the Streets, Hard Times"(Fig.17) was purchased by the Academy. This was a great honour for the artist - the purchase was made under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest. This was a fund established under the Will of the sculptor, Sir Francis Chantrey, to purchase British Art for the nation.[28] Having one's work the subject of a Chantrey purchase was considered an Establishment achievement, and it indicates that Osborne was becoming generally recognised. His pastels were more popular in England than in Ireland, and some of his warmest admirers consider him to have been at his happiest in this medium.[29] This particular pastel is presently in the Tate Gallery, London.

As well as the Walker Gallery in Liverpool, Osborne regularly exhibited in the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists. Outside London, these were the only two galleries at which he exhibited - sending his less formal works to Birmingham. His connection with the Royal Society there probably stemmed from his meeting students from that city during his time in the Academy in Antwerp.

One of the places Osborne exhibited in London was the Institute of Painters in Oil Colours - starting in 1884. He actually joined the Institute in 1891, and remained a member until 1901. During this time he again sent less formal pieces for exhibition there

than to the Royal Academy - for example, "An Old Byeway"(Fig.18.).

In 1885, a group of Osborne's contemporaries in England got together and founded the New English Art Club. They felt it necessary to form this Club with a view to, "protest against the narrowness of the Royal Academy and to obtaining fuller recognition for the work of English artists who had studied in France"[30] A further reason was because "a fresh wave of foreign influence in the person of a number of students who had worked in Parisian schools.....most of them, to become known as the Newlyn School, had found their inspiration in the plein air painting of Bastien-Lepage."[31]

The "Newlyn" title was derived from the town of that name in Cornwall, where a community of contemporary naturalist painters had settled for a brief period.

Among the founding, and earliest, members of the New English Art Club were many of Osborne's friends, including George Clausen, H.H.La Thangue, Edward Stott, and Alexander Stanhope Forbes, together with many other fellow-students from the Antwerp Academy. It is interesting to note that, with the passage of time, control of the New English Art Club passed from the plein airists to the emerging English Impressionists. Should Osborne have lived longer, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that his connection with the Club would have had an on-going influence on his work.

Osborne's first exhibit in the New English Art Club was, in 1887, his "October by the Sea"(Fig.19.). The handling of this painting is the same as that of the plein air school, but Osborne did not follow their method to fruition. He reverted to making

detailed sketches on the spot, and then finished painting in his studio. He sent two paintings in 1888, but did not exhibit there in the succeeding two years. He resigned from the Club in 1891, but seems to have maintained a sporadic connection with it over the following few years - exhibiting again in 1893, and appearing again as a member in 1899. Towards the end of his life, he sent some of his best pictures for show, including "The Lustre Jug"(Fig.20.) and, "The Housebuilders"(Fig.21.).

The year 1892 was a watershed in Osborne's career. His way of life changed in that he now spent more time working in Ireland, and less travelling around the villages and hamlets of England. In his painting, too, we can see the effect - albeit subconsciously - of the contemporary movement of Impressionism. The Impressionists, rather than depicting Nature in its entirety, selected one element - light - and treated it as an independent and organic element of style. In Osborne's "Punch and Judy on the Sands, Hastings"(Fig.22.), we see all the freshness and spontaniety of a sketch, but in a finished painting. Thomas Bodkin wrote of this picture, "I know of no other which expresses better Osborne's remarkable power of rendering transient effects of light. It is - late afternoon."[29]

HOME TO IRELAND

While, in 1892, his family circumstances caused Osborne to return to Ireland, he still maintained strong links with his contemporaries in England, and with whom he had been active in the preceding eight years.

Osborne's brother, Charles, was, at this time, a clergyman in England, and his sister Violet had married W.F.P.Stockley. She emigrated to Canada with her husband, but within a year had died in childbirth there. Her baby daughter, also named Violet, was brought home to be reared by her grandparents in Dublin. At the same time, William Osborne's type of painting - sporting animals - was not as popular as before, because of changing social conditions in Ireland. Stephen Gwynn wrote,"..the landlord class who gave him commissions to paint their terriers and hounds and hunters were hard hit by the Land war of the eighties..."[25] All these family conditions meant that Walter Osborne found himself being heavily relied on to support his ageing parents and a small child. His moral conscience could not let him walk away from these responsiblities. Indeed, it was these very responsibilities that forced Osborne to turn to portraiture as a means of securing a steady income.

At the same time as maintaining his links with the art scene in England, Osborne became very involved in the corresponding activity in Ireland. He had been an Associate of the R.H.A. since 1883, and a full Member since 1886.[1] He exhibited at the Academy every year from 1877 until his death. From the early nineties he gave lessons in the Academy schools - and was considered an influential teacher. William J. Leech (1881 - 1968) said

of Osborne that, "he taught me everything I needed to know".[32] At this time, while Osborne lived in his family house at 5, Castlewood Avenue, Rathmines, he rented (from 1895) a large studio in the centre of Dublin - at 7, St. Stephens Green.

During his years in England, Osborne had kept his involvement with developements in art in Dublin. In 1884, he had become a member of the Dublin Sketching Club. This Club had been founded in 1874 for the purpose of "bringing together artists, amateurs and gentlemen interested in art, in friendly and social intercourse."[33] That same year, the Club staged an exhibition of paintings by Whistler, which was considered a very progressive step, and which was highly successful.[34]

In 1886, Osborne was a founder-member of the Dublin Art Club - which was similar to the New English Art Club, founded in London in the same year. In the first winter exhibition, in December 1886, of which Osborne was on the organising committee, several of his friends from Antwerp, Brittany, and English pleinairists, showed works. His involvement here suggests that Osborne played an active role in introducing to Dublin influences from European and English plein air painting.

Osborne's own work, the reputation of his teaching, and his enthusiastic participation in the art life of Dublin, are summed up by Thomas Bodkin, when he wrote, "Had he (Osborne) lived out the normal span of life, he could scarcely have failed to raise the general level of Irish taste, and might even, at last, have excited in Irish people an impulse to patronise living painters."[29]

In 1899, Osborne was a member of the committee which organised

an Art Loan Exhibition in Dublin that year. On show were eighty-eight paintings by "the best British and Continental artists". Osborne's own catalogues from this exhibition - given by his mother to the National Library of Ireland after his death in 1903 - are of keen interest, in that they contain sketches by Osborne himself, of some of the exhibits which obviously made an impression on him (Figs. 23-28). The sketches after Orchardson (Fig.27) and Whistler (Fig.28) are particularly interesting, giving, as they do, a firm indication of Osborne's shifting taste. This becomes clear when we realise that the exhibition had many European and English Realist paintings; and yet Osborne concentrated more on paintings of figures belonging to different traditions.

While Osborne did not confine his circle of friends solely to artists,[29] he did maintain contact with his friends from his Antwerp days - notably Nathaniel Hone (1831 - 1917) and Nathaniel Hill.[35] The former lived in Malahide, in north County Dublin, and Osborne visited him there - and worked increasingly in that part of Ireland. His "Sketch at Malahide"(Fig.29) was one of two very simple paintings of the beach and sea, requested by Mrs. Noel Guinness.

In summer, Osborne rented a cottage in Connemara, in the West of Ireland. His visits there produced many small paintings, which have a character all of their own. They seem to contain a spontaniety and charm which are not apparent in his Dublin street scenes of the same period. This may be a reflection of his state of mind, in that not only was he removed from the day-to-day concerns of his financial committments, but also, he was surrounded by the tranquility of a rural way of life

- to which he had become accustomed during his earlier years in England. A good example of this is his painting, "Galway Fair"(Fig.30). The change in his approach is perhaps reflected also in his signature (bottom left of the painting). He has abandoned the square signature which was the hallmark of the Bastien-Lepage English pleinairists, and now uses one based on his own , everyday, signature.

Being based in Dublin, Osborne naturally drew many sources for paintings from the city itself. For example, his "Near St. Patrick's Close, an Old Dublin Street"(Fig.31). This painting is an instance of the care which Osborne put into the composition of a picture, although the cold, wintry athmosphere of the scene is more successful in portraying the mood than is the figure of the boy playing the tin whistle in the foreground, which seems somewhat contrived. The evidence of this painting suggests that it was completed in the studio from studies made at the scene. This bears out the point regarding the enhanced spontaniety of his work in the West of Ireland, for the reasons stated previously, when compared with much of his work in Dublin itself.

One of Osborne's particularly good friends at this time was Walter Armstrong,[36] who had been appointed Director of the National Gallery in 1892. The two men visited Europe together in 1895, going to Paris and Luxembourg, and then to Madrid and Toledo, in Spain. In a letter to his cousin, Sarah Purser,[37] Osborne stated that he was not greatly impressed by the paintings on show at the Luxembourg Gallery of Modern Art, but that the Louvre in Paris was quite another matter. He expressed "enchantment" at the paintings there from the Old Masters.

The Spanish trip was at the behest of Armstrong, who was an

expert on painting from that country, and Osborne became interested in it also. The following year the two friends visited Holland and, while there, Osborne is recorded as having painted some canal scenes in Amsterdam.[36]

George Moore (1852 - 1933) was another friend of Osborne in Dublin at this time. Moore had an intimate knowledge of the Paris of Degas and Manet, and their work must have been the subject of conversations when the two men met in Moore's house in Ely Place, which was very near Osborne's studio in St. Stephens Green.[38]

Hugh Lane, too, - who was already moving towards establishing the Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin - was among Osborne's friends. Lane obtained some of Osborne's paintings for exhibition in the Gallery, and wrote to Sarah Purser that he regarded Osborne as, "...one of Ireland's few men of genius..."[39]

Osborne was very popular among all his friends and acquaintances. Indeed, anything written or spoken about him was a clear indication of this. These feelings were summarised in Bodkin's lines, "....he left a wide circle of personal friends to whom his charming personality had endeared him."[29]

In the same publication, Bodkin ascribed Osborne's popularity not only to his "generous temperament and sense of fun", but also to the fact that he was an Irish artist who, "with a great and growing reputation in England, elected to live and work in his own country." Bodkin is also of the opinion that Osborne refused a Knighthood in 1900 - offered in recognition of his services to art, and his distinction as a painter - because of his inherent modesty.

Osborne was at the height of his powers as a painter when, early in 1903, while out cycling, he was caught in heavy rain and contracted pneumonia. Within a few days he succumbed to the illness and died, on the 23rd. of April 1903 - just two months before his 44th. birthday. Undoubtedly on the threshold of increasingly fine achievements in art, his death was a terrible tradegy.

LANDSCAPE AND GENRE PAINTING

In his early years, Osborne's work reflected the influence of his father in his choice of subject. William Osborne was concerned mainly with painting animals - horses and dogs - or building a genre scene around the central figure of a dog. He had not a great feeling for colour, per se, - he was a craftsman who was more interested in producing a good likeness of his subject animals by the use of paint. Walter, on the other hand, was a colourist. He showed, even in his early work, a feeling for the tone and texture of paint. At the same time, the father's knowledge and understanding of his chosen subject matter was passed on to Walter, whose landscape and genre scenes - and sometimes even his portraits - included animals. The difference was that they rarely monopolised the whole picture, but at the same time were always realistic and convincing.

An example of Osborne's early work is "The Morning Meal"(Fig.32), exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1879. This rustic genre scene, with its children and animals - depicting a peasant boy, seated inside a farm building, feeding goats - is typical of Osborne's work of that period. Some five years later, in 1884, his painting "Feeding Chickens"(Fig.8) shows a later developement of a similar theme. This work combines a painterly technique with great care and attention to minute detail. His concern with detail can be seen from a letter Osborne wrote home on the 12th of October 1884 regarding this painting, "...The fowl are very troublesome, and I have made some sketches, but will have to do a lot more as they form rather an important part of the composition."

In 1880, as well as producing work which reflected his father's influence, Osborne turned his attention to landscapes. Among his first efforts in this regard was his "A Glade in the Phoenix Park"(Fig.33). This is the painting that won for him the Taylor Scholarship that year.[7] It shows a small boy fishing, but the landscape element is predominant. The composition shows strength in its geometric construction - the striking diagonal of trees slanted over water is balanced by the grove standing vertically on the bank. This solid structure remained evident in much of Osborne's work in succeeding years.

Osborne's predilection for using animals as the subject of his painting was probably reinforced during his period of study under Charles Verlat in the Antwerp Academy. Verlat himself used animals as subjects in many of his paintings of the period. It is interesting that, even though Osborne could not help but be influenced by Verlat at that time, his approach to the subject was substantially different to thay of his teacher. Verlat detracts from the realism of the scene by investing the animals depicted with a dramatic over-statement. His "Le Coup de Collier" (Fig.1) highlights the difference in approaches of the two artists. In contrast, Osborne's (slightly later) painting "The Sheepfold" (Fig.34) portrays a sense of tranquility which is not apparent in Verlat's work of the time.

Osborne's finished paintings and his sketches from his Antwerp days show tremendous differences in style. The paintings show a tight realism, reflecting a strong influence of Verlat, whereas his sketches portray a great freshness, and evince an immediate spontaniety. It was many years before these latter qualities found their expression in his finished pieces - evidence of

the lasting strength of Verlat's general influence.

As a direct example of the differences within Osborne's work, we can compare his sketch "A Market Stall"(Fig.4) with the finished painting "In the Market Place of Bruges"(Fig.5). The former is one of Osborne's best pictures from his Antwerp period. The most outstanding feature of this painting is the bright sunlight, which is so vivid that it lights up the entire canvas, making the picture very fresh and airy. The sunlight is actually filtering through the cover of a large tree, but where it breaks through it illuminates the vegetables on the stall as bright flashes of green. In contrast, the latter, finished, painting demonstrates Verlat's influence in the tight treatment of the subject matter. Verlat considered himself a realist, and it took Osborne and his contemporary students many years to shake off fully the effects of Verlat's teaching.

The distinction between formal and informal work can be found in many 19th. Century painters - Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796 - 1875) was a prime example of this.[40] Osborne's earlier work is easily categorised into the two styles - it is only in his later work that the division becomes less distinct.

Osborne's pictures from his time in Brittany do not differ greatly in style from those of his Antwerp days. They are comprised of informal sketches, and formal scenes - mainly rustic genre scenes, set in the open air. An example of his work from this period is his "Breton Girl by a River"(Fig.35). This was probably painted in 1883, the same year as "Apple Gathering, Quimperle" (Fig.36), as both paintings portray what seems to be the same young girl model. In the former picture, we can see that Osborne's

treatment of an open-air subject is still rather inhibited. The different surfaces - the brick walls, stone steps and wooden slatted roof - are built up with great care, using dabs of paint, as were his studies in Antwerp, and the bright patches of sunlight are vividly portrayed. In the latter painting, the same attention to, and treatment of, detail is evident, and with characteristic plein air tones - the grey-green palette and the rural subject matter, showing the influence of Bastien-Lepage.

However, Osborne did not take totally whole-heartedly to the plein-air method, as he did studies and completed paintings in the studio - as did his contemporaries, Clausen and Stott. This is borne out by Stott's writing,"my pictures are painted in the studio from the studies which I have made direct from nature."

In 1884, Osborne moved to England, and continued painting scenes with themes similar to those of his earlier days. One such piece is "The Poachers"(Fig.37). Another children and animal picture, it was remarked on by a critic at the R.H.A. exhibition in 1885, "This charmingly simple subject is formed of a few and simple elements. The effect of early morning, breezy and fresh, the quiet business-like look of the young poachers, the basket and rabbit lying on the ground, show how thoroughly Mr. Osborne studies from nature. Is not, however, the drawing of the left leg of the boy on the ground amiss, the artist having, perhaps, studied too close to the figure ?....." Once again we see the subdued greens of the palette - characteristic of much of his work in Brittany.

In his "October by the Sea"(Fig.19), painted at Walberswick,

(and the first painting Osborne exhibited at the New English Art Club), the familiar genre scene is evident - children, but at the seaside in this work. The painting suggests a certain lack of spontaniety inthat the careful arrangement of the figures shows evidence of a calculated composition, using preparatory sketches. The most interesting thing about this painting is that Osborne adopted an almost pointillist technique of dots of pure colour. Unlike the Impressionists, however, who used this colour against a white background, Osborne applied it with beige tones - of which he was very fond.

In his "Punch and Judy on the Sands, Hastings"(Fig.22), we see a very successful painting, but which has all the gaiety and spontaniety of a sketch. It is not the activity on the beach which is of major interest - rather is it the transient effects of light falling on the distant houses. The sky is blue, with faint lavender clouds. The corner house of the street is set at right angles to the pier. It is a warm pink, with weather-worn blue-green shutters and canopy. The house in the extreme distance is pale green. The woman nearest wears a rich, crimson, dress - behind which is a bright green seat. This use of complementary coulours heightens the overall effect of the painting.

Osborne's return to Dublin in 1892 provided him with fresh subject matter in and around the capital city. In his "Life in the Streets, Musicians"(Fig.38) he seems to show more interest in people as individuals than he did in his English rural paintings of just a few years previously. The combination of techniques in this painting is interesting. The painterly execution of the background, with its subtle build-up of tones, contrasts

with the vivid colours of the fish stall in the foreground.

In the same period as he depicted these street scenes, he turned to County Dublin for landscape motifs. An example of these is "The Thornbush"(Fig.39). He also travelled to the West of Ireland, and produced many paintings and sketches from there. One of These, "Rising Moon, Galway Harbour"(Fig.40), is particularly interesting as it is a twilight study, and gave Osborne the opportunity to explore the rich effects of darkening blue.

PORTRAITURE

From around 1889, Osborne took seriously to portrait painting - completing over 100 portraits in little more than ten years. His heart, however, was not in this work, and he openly confessed that he, "went to them with feelings of real distaste".[29] For a while, his landscape painting continued to flourish beside his essays in portraiture, although the time available for the former was reduced. It was economic necessity that forced Osborne to become involved in commissioned portraiture - he was supporting his ageing parents, and his young orphaned niece.

Osborne did still paint landscapes, but mainly when he was away on holidays. He must have felt, however, just as a greater master of both landscape and portraiture, Thomas Gainsborough, did when he showed his landscapes to the then Lord Lansdowne, and said, "People won't buy 'em, you know. I'm a landscape painter, and yet they come to me for portraits...."

Osborne's portraits fall into two categories - formal and informal. In the former category, Osborne painted portraits of local dignatories and clergymen. Many of these - particularly the formal portraits of men - are stiff and unimaginative. Throughout his career in this field, and interspersed among his full-scale formal works, we find smaller portraits. These too are often formal, but without the cliches that are apparent in the others. An example of this is Osborne's portrait of his friend, Walter Armstrong (Fig.41a). With its balance of the subject's head against the rectangular frame in the background, and its use of grey-greens, Osborne's painting is reminiscent of Whistler's less formal "Portrait of Thomas Carlyle"(Fig.41b).

Osborne was not a portrait painter, either by training or by inclination. When he did take to it as a metier, undoubtedly he must have drawn inspiration from others in the field.

Strong similarities are apparent in the portraits by Osborne and William Orchardson. Both were painting portraits of middle-class people around this time. It may be coincidental, but probably is not, as very similar compositions are used by both artists. Orchardson's "Portrait of Artist's Wife", and Osborne's "Portrait of Mrs, Birdwood", are cases in point.

In 1895, Osborne's portrait "Mrs. Andrew Jameson and her Daughter Violet"(Fig.42) has a contrived appearance, with its large amount of unnecessary furniture, and the somewhat stiff pose of the figures. While the composition is similar to that of Whistler's "At the Piano"[41], it lacks the delicacy and balance of the Whistler painting.

Within three years from then, Osborne's improved skill in this kind of picture became evident. One of his most successful mother-and-child portraits, "Mrs, Noel Guinness and her Daughter Margaret"(Fig.15), was completed in 1898. In this painting we see a more natural pose, with mother and daughter at ease. Only the essential furniture is detailed, with the rest barely indicated. This painting was adjudged worthy of a bronze medal at the Paris International Exhibition of 1900, and crowned Osborne as a portrait painter.

Among his commissioned portraits were a number of paintings of society ladies of the day. In each case, these are depicted in a manner which portrays their place in society - idle pose, a veritable froth of garments, and surrounded by the trappings

of their station in life.

Among Osborne's best portraits are his paintings of family and friends. Notable in these was the most successful "J.B.S.McIlwaine" (Fig.43). The combination of freedom of brushwork and the treatment of dappled light through the trees - a typical plein air setting - is very effective. This treatment of light through trees appears in much later work, such as, "In the Garden, Castlewood Avenue"(Fig.44).

Osborne's self-portrait, painted In 1894 (Fig.45), with its thin washes of colour, is effective and energetic. We can see the influence of John Singer Sargent (1856 - 1925) in the fluidity of his brushstrokes.

Osborne's popularity as a portrait painter grew in line with his development of the metier. Shortly before his death, A E wrote of him, "Dublin can't support more than one portrait painter - now it is Walter Osborne."[42]

LATER WORKS

In the closing years of his life, Osborne painted several brilliant groups. These swing between genre and portrait painting and are, in my opinion, most interesting - containing as they do, a combination of vibrant spontaniety and a preoccupation with the effects of transient light. A very charming example of this is "Tea in the Garden"(Fig.46). Painted in 1902, and although unfinished at his death the following year, this picture offers interesting evidence of the way in which Osborne was structuring his paintings at that time. His use of fragmented forms, in a bright and verdant scene, brings this painting very close to impressionism. More interesting still is the original study, with its even more fragmented forms - almost verging on abstraction.

Another fine example of this later work is "The Lustre Jug"(Fig.20). Osborne's preoccupation with lighting effects is again evident and, in this painting particularly, we see a variety of hues in both light and dark areas, and with a great richness of colour. This painting was completed in 1901, but the characteristics of his emerging painterly style had come to the fore in the earlier "Marsh's Library, Dublin"(Fig.47), painted in 1898.

A portrait by Osborne in these later years was "Master Aubrey Gwynn"(Fig.48). We see in this free-handled water colour how good Osborne was at painting children, and interpreting their characters. Combined with this skill is his concentration on only the essential elements of the painting, with only a suggestion of background details.

Around this time, Osborne did an increasing number of commissioned

portraits, which were prompted by his need to earn a living. These formrd the bulk of his later exhibits at the Royal Academy, and at the R.H.A.

Alongside his commissioned pieces, his portrait/genre groups flourished, and it is difficult to say whether he would have gone on to fulfil the promise which was emerging in that work, had he lived. My study of the man gives every indication that he would indeed have done so - I cannot see him being satisfied with a career of merely a fashionable portrait painter. This view is shared emphatically by Bodkin[29] in his writing,"But landscape painting was his earliest and his lasting affection, and in his landscapes there is much more than accomplishment. Had he obtained the encouragement and reward to which his talents in that branch of art entitled him, I fancy he would not now be known, at all, as a portrait painter. He is not yet known, either as a landscape painter or portrait painter, to the extent his work deserves." Again, he wrote,"There is no Irish painter who comes near rivalling his versatility, either in range of subject or in variety of technique."

SUMMARY

This paper is by no means an exhaustive study of the work of Walter Osborne. Rather is it an attempt to trace the development of his painting skill, from its earliest beginnings, and through the various phases of his relatively short life. The selection of illustrations herein was chosen to demonstrate this development, and to show how the many influences of his times had a bearing on his work - both directly on him from his teachers and his contemporaries, and indirectly from the general "wind of change" that was sweeping through the world of art during the closing decades of the 19th. Century.

Osborne was not an Impressionist - his style differed from theirs both in his way of constructing a painting, and in his evident attitude to his subject - but there is no doubt that he was beginning to be influenced by them.(Both Monet and Degas exhibited at the New English Art Club - the latter in 1893[31].) This influence is apparent in, for example, "The Lustre Jug"(Fig.20), with its striking luminosity of colour. It is important to note that the later works of plein air painters, such as Clausen and Stott, also came under the influence of the Impressionists.

Other factors were combining towards Osborne's developing painterliness - he seemed to be moving away from an emphasis on the underlying drawing, and towards a treatment of forms as related areas of paint and colour. Manet was one of the few modern French painters he praised when he visited Luxembourg in 1895.[37] A firm favourite of his was also Whistler - at the Dublin Art LOan Exhibition of 1899, he did a charming drawing after "Miss Cicely Alexander"(Fig.28). Whistler's influence

can be seen also in "Galway Fair"(Fig.30), with its more daring composition, and its increasing economy of detail.

I have tried to capture the essence of Osborne, as a person by looking at his family background and circumstances, and as an artist by examining the stages through which his art progressed to reach the plateau which he attained. The real tragedy of his death at the relatively early age of just 44 leaves us with the question of how much more his art would have advanced, had he lived for another twenty or thirty years. It is a tantalising prospect. While , of course, not every one of his paintings was "perfect", his style had progressed to the stage where he was considered by critics, and fellow-artists alike, to be a very good painter.

Apart from his portraiture, much of Osborne's work was in the style of plein air naturalism - the "Establishment" of the day. This style was subsequently eclipsed by waves of enthusiasm for each successive development in avant-garde art - much of which had its source in Paris. This continual changing and developing new concepts in art have been with us since man first discovered that he could use paint to depict nature. At the same time as proponents of new art forms emerge, existing practitioners in the field cannot help but be affected by the new ideas, and their work is influenced accordingly. Osborne, alas, by his premature death, missed out on the tremendous wave of change and excitement that was permeating the world of art at the turn of the century. The emerging monied middle-class, a product of the Industrial Revolution, had no tradition in respect of art, and eagerly embraced much of the new - and what was seen by them as "trendy" - concepts in the field. For this

reason, Osborne's work lost its appeal internationally and, while he always had a steady and faithful following in his home country, his work fell into a relative obscurity abroad.

Having delved into the essence of Osborne, and which gives a glimmer of the tragically unfulfilled potential of the man as a painter, I am convinced that his work merits far better attention, and that history will prove this hypothesis correct - justifying my faith - and the faith of his contemporaries - in the sheer quality of Osborne as a painter.

Fig. 1.

Le Coup de Collier

Charles Verlat (c 1857)

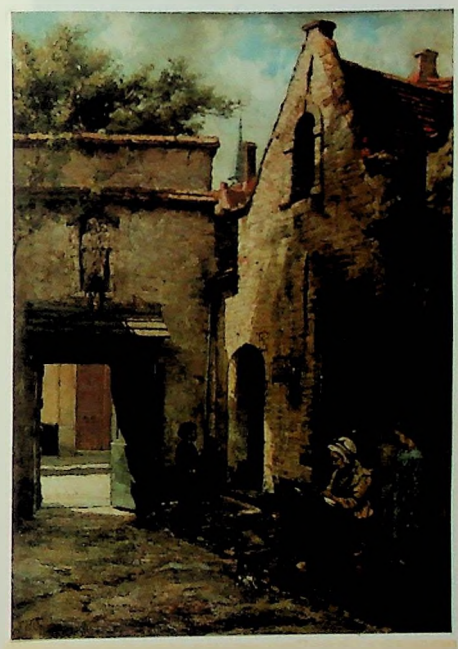

Fig. 2.

Beneath St. Jacques, Antwerp

1883

Fig. 3.

Moderke Verhoft

c 1882

Fig. 4.

A Market Stall

1882

Fig. 5.

In the Market Place of Bruges

1884

Fig. 6.

Pencil Sketch, Mrs Noel Guinness and her Daughter Margaret.
c 1898

Fig. 7.

Sketch, Mrs Noel Guinness and her Daughter Margaret.
c 1898

Fig. 8.

Feeding Chickens

1884/85

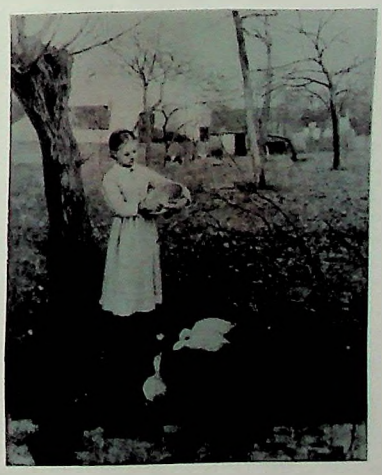

Fig. 9.

Feeding the Ducks

Edward Stott (1885)

Fig. 11.

A Grey Morning in a Breton Farmyard.

c.1883

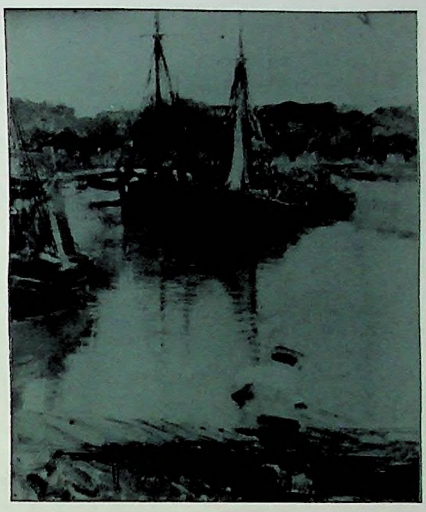

Fig. 12.

The Ferry

Sketch dated 1889/90. The whereabouts of the original painting is presently unknown.

Fig. 13.
Mrs. Mulhall
1895

Fig. 14.

Mrs Chadwyck Healy -
her Daughter.

1900

Fig. 15.

Mrs Noel Guinness and her
Daughter Margaret.

1898

Fig. 16.

Sir Thomas Moffett.

1896

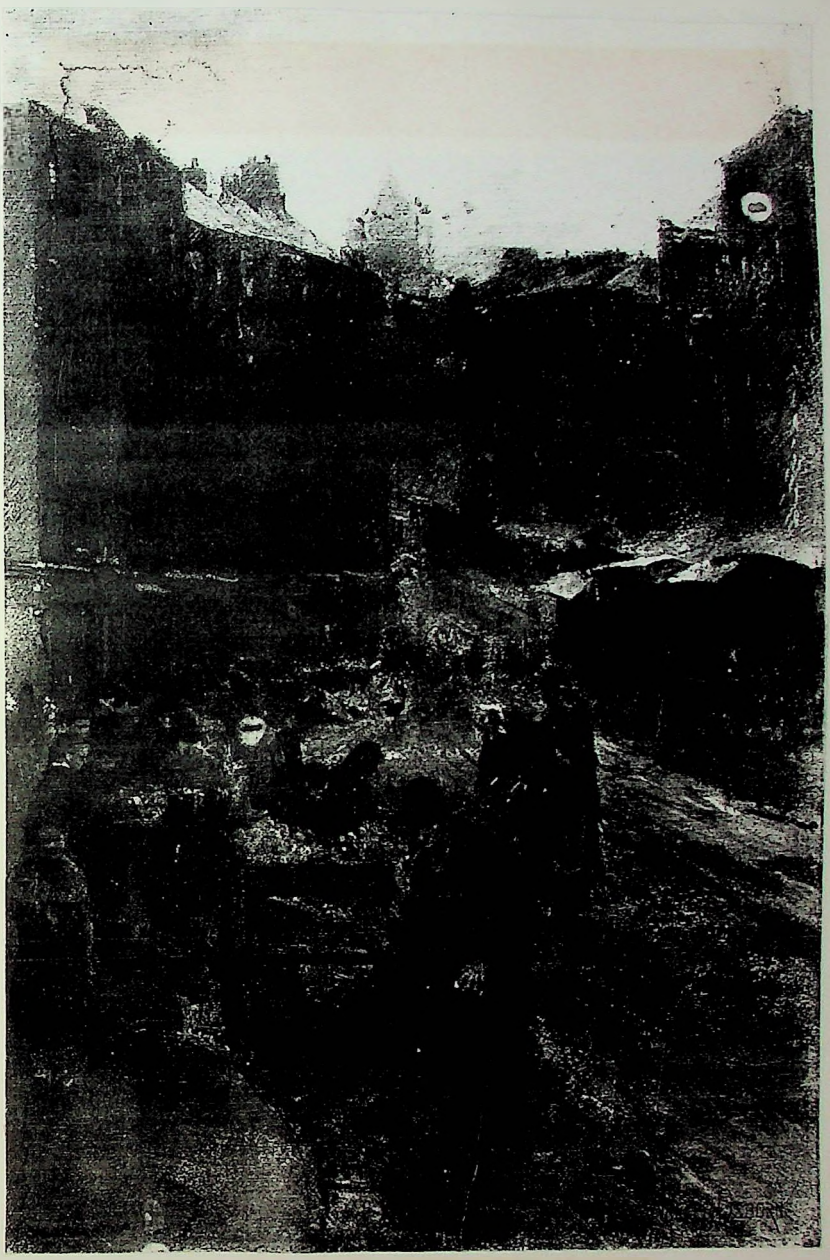

Fig. 17.

Life in the Streets -
Hard Times

1892

Fig. 19.

October by the Sea

1885

Fig. 20.

The Lustre Jug

1901

Fig. 21.

The Housebuilders

1902

Fig. 22.

Punch and Judy on the Sands,
Hastings

1891/92

there was one. In 1864 he became A.R.A.; in 1868 R.A., and in 1879, on the death of Sir Francis Grant, P.R.A. He was Knighted in in 1879, created a Baronet in 1886, and a Peer in 1896. When one of the ablest of his colleagues was asked what he thought of him he answered: "Leighton was born president of the Royal Academy!" and the phrase happily sums up his character and gifts.

37. A Bather.
Lent by E. Onslow Ford, Esq., R.A.

Fig. 23.

Pencil Sketch "A Bather" 1899

(Lord Leighton)

Fig. 24.

Pencil Sketch "The Gambler's Wife"

1899

(J.E.Millais)

Fig. 26.

Pencil Sketch

"L'Amour Vainquere" 1899

(J.F.Millet)

Fig. 25.

Pencil Sketch "Stella" 1899

(J.E.Millais)

ORCHARDSON, WILLIAM QUILLER, R.A.

LIVING BRITISH PAINTER.

58. Master Baby,
Lent by the Artist.

59. Portrait of Sir Walter Gilbey, Bart.
Lent by Sir Walter Gilbey Bart.

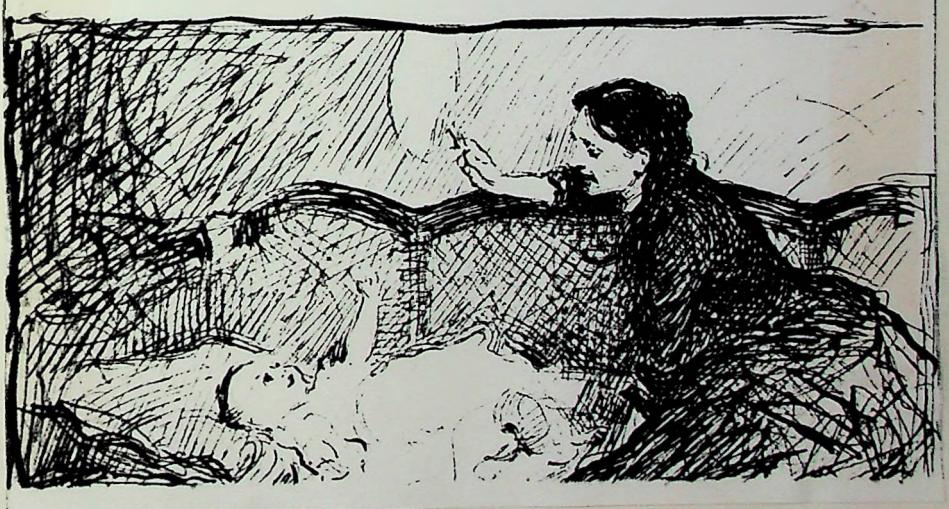

Fig. 27.

Pen and Ink Drawing
"Master Baby" W.Q.Orchardson
1899

Fig. 28.

Pencil Sketch
"Miss Cicely Alexander"
J.M.Whistler 1899

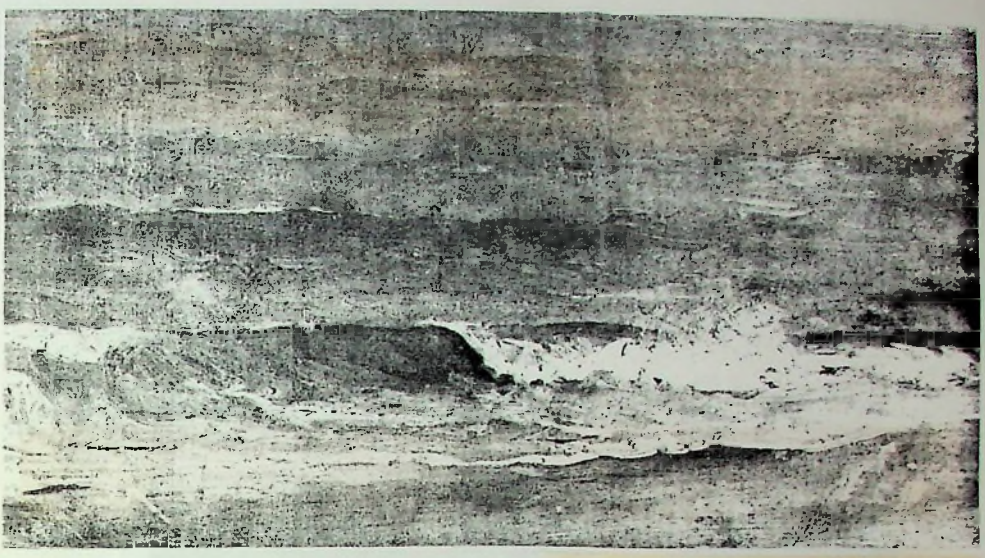

Fig. 29.

Sketch at Malahide

1898

Fig. 30.

Galway Fair

1893

Fig. 31.

Near St Patrick's Close,
an Old Dublin Street

1887

Fig. 32.

The Morning Meal

1879

Fig. 33.

A Glade in the Phoenix Park

1880

Fig. 34.

The Sheepfold

1885

Fig. 35.

Breton Girl by a River

c 1883

Fig. 36.

Apple Gathering, Quimperle

1883

Fig. 37.

The Poachers

1884/85

Fig. 38.

Life in the Streets,

Musicians

1893

Fig. 39.

The Thornbush

1893/94

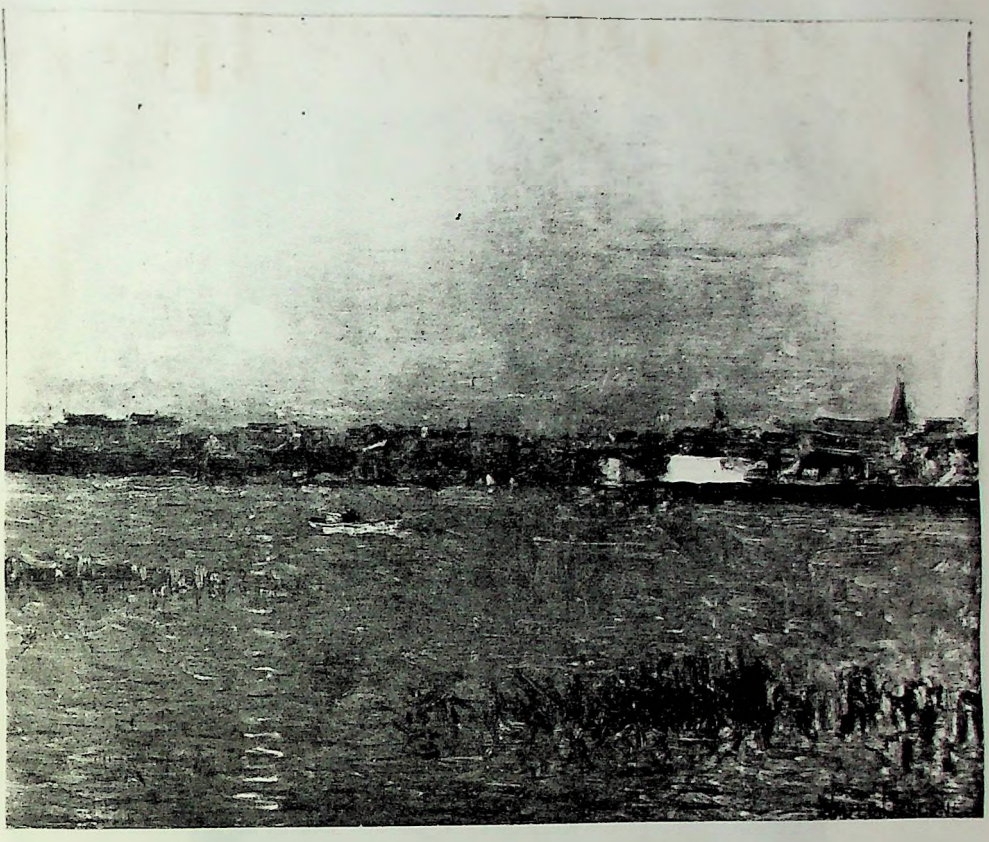

Fig. 40.

Rising Moon, Galway Harbour

c 1893

Fig. 41 (a)

Sir Walter Armstrong

Fig. 41 (b)

Portrait of Thomas Carlyle

(Whistler)

Fig. 42.

Mrs Andrew Jameson and her Daughter Violet

1895/96

Fig. 43.

J.B.S.McIlwaine

1892

Fig. 44.

In the Garden,

Castlewood Avenue

c 1901

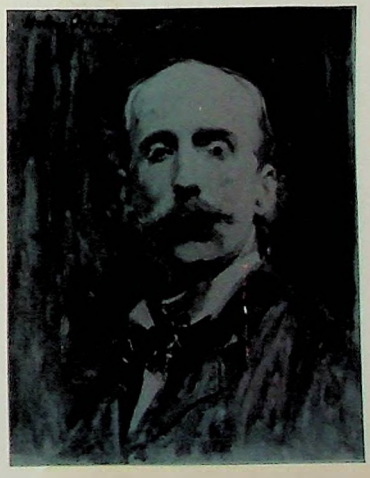

Fig. 45.

Self Portrait

1894

Fig. 46.

Tea in the Garden

1902

Fig. 47.

Marsh's Library, Dublin

1898

Fig. 48.

Master Aubrey Gwynne

1896

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1."A Dictionary of Irish Artists" W.G.Strickland (1913)
2. "Walter Osborne" Jeanne Sheehy (1974)
3. While there are no Royal Hibernian Academy records remaining of the period - they were destroyed during the hostilities of 1916 and 1922 - details of William Osborne's life and career are to be found in publications of his peers - W.G. Strickland (1913), Thomas Bodkin (1920) and Stephen Gwynne (1921).
4. Rev. J.C.Benson. "Rathmines School Roll 1858-1899" and "Rathmines School Magazine, September 1877".
5. The Osborne family relationship to Frederic Burton is referred to in a letter from Margaret Stokes to William Osborne (Preserved in the Purser Papers, National Library of Ireland)
6. "Rathmines School Magazine, September 1877", and the school's "The Year's Art" 1880 and 1881.
7. Taylor Competition Minute Book, R.D.S.
8. "The Irish Impressionists" Julian Campbell (1984)
9. "Academies of Art" Nikolaus Pevsner (1973)
10. "Charles Verlat" Victoire and Charles Verlat (1925)
11. "Irish Artists in France and Belgium, 1850-1914" Julian Campbell, Ph.D. Thesis, Dublin University 1980
12. Registration Books, Antwerp Academy.
13. "The Studio, 1 " Alick Ritchie (1893)
14. "Kloosterstraat" in Flemish, also called "Rue du Convent" in French. The house at number 49 no longer exists.
15. "Palette and Plough" Lennox Robinson (1948)
16. "Academie Royale d'Anvers, Rapports Annuels" 1881-1890 lists the nationalities as including many European countries, as well as American, Far East and Middle East.
17. Wrote Henry Blackburn in 1880
18. His real name was Henry Thaddeus Jones, but he reversed the order "for effect".
19. Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884)
20. James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903)
21. On Osborne's death, his mother presented to the National Library of Ireland a number of exhibition catalogues which he had bought, and annotated.
22. "Art Journal" 1893 - P.169 - La Thangue
"Studio" Volume 9 1896-1897 - P.163 - La Thangue
"Studio" Volume 23 1897-1898 - P.81 - Stanhope Forbes

NOTES TO THE TEXT (Continued)

23. Sir George Clausen, R.A.
24. "The History of Impressionism" John Rewald.
25. "Garden Wisdom" Stephen Gwynn (1921)
26. Mentioned in a letter written by Osborne to his parents. This letter later came into the possession of Violet Stockley, Osborne's niece.
27. The present whereabouts of the painting "The Ferry" (1889/90) are unknown. The picture was very well known in Osborne's day, and was much reproduced at that time. This painting was awarded a bronze medal at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893.
28. "Some Chantry Favourites" Exhibition, Royal Academy 1981.
29. "Four Irish Landscape Painters" Thomas Bodkin (1920)
30. "The Origin and First Two Years of the New English Art Club" W.J.Laidley (1907)
31. "Fifty Years of the New English Art Club" Alfred Thornton (1935)
32. "John Hughes" Alan Denson (1969)
33. Dublin Sketching Club, Exhibition Catalogues 1874-1885
34. "The Life of James McNeill Whistler" E.R. & J. Pennell (1911)
35. "Artists of the Newlyn School" Exhibition, Bristol 1979
36. "Sir Walter Armstrong" Denys Sutton, February 1982 edition of Apollo, papers 72-75
37. Sarah Purser (1848-1943). Correspondence from Osborne to Miss Purser are included in the Purser Papers.
38. "Salve" George Moore, 1912.
39. Letter 13/5/1903 from Sir Hugh Lane to Sarah Purser.
40. Handbook of the Royal Academy Exhibition (1893)
41. Now hanging in the Taft Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio.
42. "Hugh Lane's Life and Achievements" Lady Gregory (1921).

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