

Emer

**about a painting,
and its journey**

CONAN KENNEDY



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The Royal Hibernian Academy

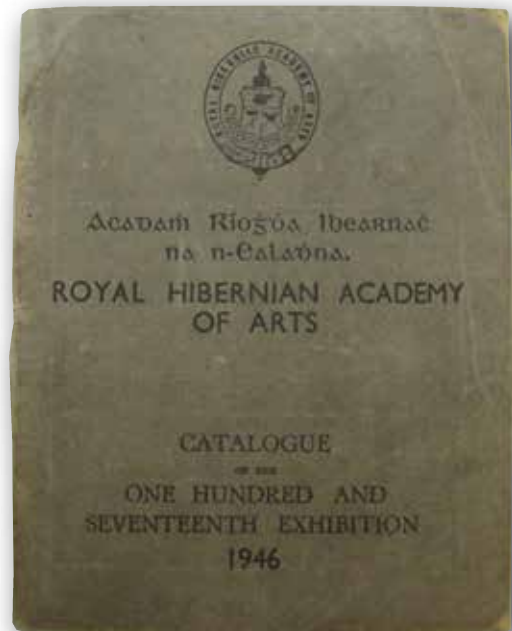
“We do hereby for us, our heirs and successors give and grant to the said Academicians that they shall and may hold Meetings of themselves for the better improvement and encouragement of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, Drawing, Engraving and other Arts...”

So reads an extract from the Royal Charter granted in 1821 by Queen Victoria to the then *Society of Artists in Ireland*. Landscape painter William Ashford was the first President, and, at time of writing here, twenty-two more distinguished artists have followed him. It is an august institution. In modern times the Academy is made up of 30 Members, 15 Senior Members, and 10 Associate Members. The disciplines of Architecture, Painting, Sculpture and Print (including Photography) are all represented by the Academy’s membership.

The second President was Francis Johnson, and in 1825 he endowed the Academy with a house and Exhibition Gallery in Dublin’s Lower Abbey Street. This was destroyed by fire during the Easter Rising of 1916, and the Academy was without a permanent premises for over twenty years. Then, in 1939, it acquired the house and garden of 15 Ely Place. In 1970 the construction/development company Gallagher Group offered to provide the RHA with a complete gallery on the site, and this finally opened to the public in 1985 for the 156th Annual Exhibition. That exhibition was the first the RHA could hold on their own premises in 69 years. In the interim the Annual Exhibitions were held either in the *Metropolitan School of Art* in Kildare Street or in the *National Gallery of Ireland* in Merrion Square.



Above is the original *Royal Hibernian Academy* house in Abbey Street, alongside that, the *National Library of Ireland* building in Kildare Street which, in earlier days, also housed Dublin's *College of Art*. Illustrated also are the *National Gallery of Ireland* (lower left) in Merrion Square and the present day gallery of the *RHA* in Ely Place. All of these buildings housed the annual exhibitions of the Academy in one year or another and, in 1946, The painting *EMER* was exhibited in the *National College of Art* (top right). The exhibition took place from the 15th April to the 11th May.



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THE ROYAL HIBERNIAN ACADEMY

In keeping with the wartime 'emergency' situation, the 1946 Exhibition Catalogue was an austere little booklet, supported by (facing page) commercial enterprises associated with the art world of the day.



The membership and associates of the Academy of the day features many names familiar and famous to our present times...and, such being the way of fame and distinction, many others now forgotten.



Betty Fletcher

Born on the 2nd October 1910, Mary Betty Silvester was a pupil at Orme Girls' School in Newcastle Under Lyme from 1921 to 1926. In 1926, alongside her schooling, she was enrolled as a part time student at Burslem School of Art, and the following year entered a full time three year course in the same college.

Burslem (right) was one of the Potteries area/Stoke-on-Trent art colleges strongly associated with the pottery industry, its staff and students involved heavily in ceramic art. Among Betty's fellow



students there around her time was the now famous ceramic artist Clarice Cliff who, in 1927, had gone on to study at London's Royal College of Art. Three years later, in 1930, Betty commenced her own course, 'Painting and Architecture' in that same college. Her 'home address' at that time was 49 West Brampton, Newcastle, Staffordshire, and she lodged with relatives in London at 13 Ladbrooke Gardens (these houses illustrated opposite).

Betty graduated from the Royal College of Art in London in 1933. She was awarded ARCA, Associate of the Royal College of Art, this being the formal qualification obtained by RCA fine art students until up to 1967. (In that year the College moved from diplomas to awarding its own post-graduate degrees.) The ARCA typically reflected three or four years' study in the College. In the blown up extract from the graduates' picture opposite Betty is the student fourth from left in back row.

BETTY FLETCHER



The students to be seen alongside Betty Fletcher in the photo above are:

Top row, L to R,

S.Pugh, N.Hill, A Smith,

M.Silvester, A.Hart

Bottom row, L to R,

L.Clements, L.G.Mathews,

A.B.Jupp, P.Castle, L.G.Yardley

The terraced house with the red door is that of the artist's family in Newcastle-Under-Lyme, and in London she lived in the house with the (right hand) black door.



Admission Book

Form to R.C.A.

BOARD OF EDUCATION,
ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART.

FORM OF STATEMENT ON ADMISSION TO THE COLLEGE.
(For Fee-paying Students.)

I desire to attend the Course for the Attainment of the College in Painting and undertake to conform to all the rules laid down for the discipline and conduct of the College. The particulars entered below are, to the best of my knowledge, correct.

Date Oct 28th 1930 Signature Mary Betty Silvester

PARTICULARS TO BE ENTERED BY THE STUDENT.

(1) Name in Full and Home Address	(1) <u>Mary Betty Silvester</u> <u>42 West Brompton</u> <u>Newcastle Staffs</u>
(2) Date of Birth	(2) <u>Oct 2nd 1910</u>
(3) (a) School of the College in which you wish to study.	(3) (a) <u>Painting</u>
(3) (b) If in School of Design, name the craft in which you desire to study, specifying whether for handiwork or manufacture.	(3) (b) _____
(4) Residence during term. (State whether residing (a) in lodgings, boarding houses, or flat; or (b) with parents, relatives, &c.)	(4) <u>13 Ladbrooke Gardens, W. 8.</u> <u>Residing with relative</u>
(5) Particulars as to Scholarship or Exhibition (if any) held from Local Education Authority or other body. (If none held, enter "None.") by Name of County Council or other body.	(5) <u>None</u>
(6) Annual value of Scholarship or Exhibition.	_____
(7) Number of prizes for which entitled.	_____

1929/30. REVISED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

Women students of painting signing the Attendance Book at the Royal College of Art in London.



BETTY FLETCHER

FLETCHER, Mrs Agnes E.		<i>Painter</i>
<i>Coolbanagher, Portlarlinton</i>		
1913 315	The late Hon. Dudley Francis Fortescue, M.P., D.L.	
326	Old Ireland's perplexity, what to do with Little Home Rule	15 15 0
1927 3	Rev. Dudley Fletcher, B.D.	
FLETCHER, Mrs Betty Silvester		<i>Painter</i>
<i>The Manse, Mountmelick, Leix</i>		
1945 92	Self Portrait	
1946 125	Emer	
FLETCHER, Blandford		<i>Painter</i>
<i>Esmonde, Old Park Road, Enfield, Middlesex</i>		
1884 306	The Haunted Bed Chamber	15 15 0
1885 334	A Kitchen Garden in November	21 0 0
1888 76	"Where flowers and perfume bless the turf! Where all is calm and still"	10 10 0
271	A Peasant Proprietor	15 15 0
1892 100	Evicted	250 0 0
1895 1	The Old Mythe Bridge	12 0 0
FLETCHER, George		<i>Painter</i>
<i>53 Pembroke Road, Dublin</i>		
1912 250	The Vale of the Annamoe, Luggela, Co. Wicklow	5 5 0

Betty Fletcher's name appears just twice, on left, in the full listings of RHA exhibitors over the years and, below, as it is in the actual 1946 Exhibition Catalogue. No price is shown as the painting had already been bought by Emer's parents as a gift to her.

18 OIL PAINTINGS		Price	19 OIL PAINTINGS		Price
112	G.H.Q. Staff of the Treaty I.R.A. Painted <i>Leo Warkon</i> , in 1922 (unfinished). R.H.A.	—	124	The Chapel Roundstone <i>Lenna Hamilton</i> , R.H.A.	100 0 0
	<small>(Paint from I.R.—Michael O'Flaherty (Director of Intelligence), Richard Mahony (Chief of Staff), General O'Donnovan (Adjutant-General), Eamon Finn (Director of Organisation), Roy O'Connell (Director of Engineering and O.C. Detach), Eoin O'Duffy (Deputy Chief of Staff), Brian Hannon (Director of Munitions), Sean McNeill (Quartermaster-General), including Finn left—J. J. O'Connell (Assistant Chief of Staff), Eamon Dolan (Director of Training), Thomas Dunne (Director of Chemicals), Liam Hennessey (Director of Postoffice), Pádraic Hession (Editor of "The O'Glick").</small>		125	Emer " " " " <i>Mrs. Betty Silvester</i> , <i>Fisher</i>	—
113	John Damien Bourke <i>Margaret Clarke</i> , R.H.A.	—	126	Farmyard—Winter <i>Olivia Heery</i>	10 10 0
114	A Young Tinker Woman <i>Louis Le Brocqey</i> , A.R.H.A.	45 0 0	127	View from Mrs. Carr's Ranch Tucson, Arizona of Santa Rita Mountains <i>Mildred Filsgaard</i>	30 0 0
115	Landscape <i>Jack Cassin</i>	12 12 0	128	Landscape <i>Jack Cassin</i>	9 9 0
116	Winter Sunshine—North Coast of Ireland <i>Cyril Walter Dixon</i>	30 0 0	129	Master Timothy Murphy <i>John F. Kelly</i>	—
117	The Young Seagull <i>Margaret Clarke</i> , R.H.A.	40 0 0	130	Fishing Inshore <i>Charles Lamb</i> , R.H.A.	48 0 0
118	The White Vase <i>Lady Glenavy</i> , R.H.A.	18 0 0	131	Farmyard at Strangford <i>Frank McKeown</i> , R.H.A.	52 10 0
119	Miss Violet Bourke <i>George Collie</i> , R.H.A.	—	132	Loughslinney Harbour <i>Patrick Leonard</i> , A.R.H.A.	70 0 0
120	Looking North through the Trees <i>H. H. C. Finch</i>	28 0 0	133	Co. Down Farmyard <i>Maryona Heery</i>	—
121	Shelter <i>Stas O'Brien</i>	12 12 0	134	The Little Herd <i>Maryona Heery</i>	—
122	The Angler <i>Christopher Campbell</i>	30 0 0	135	Jane (Lent by Miss June Tuke) <i>R. J. Hobbs</i>	—
123	The Yard Gate (Strand House, Limerick) <i>J. A. Hayes</i>	8 0 0	136	The late Philip St. George Monsergh <i>Ernest Hayes</i> , R.H.A.	—
			137	cease-work <i>Mildred Filsgaard</i> , A.R.H.A.	12 12 0
			138	Sea Piece <i>Lady Glenavy</i> , R.H.A.	12 0 0
			139	Saddling a Winner on Culary Bog <i>Jack B. Yeats</i> , R.H.A.	80 0 0

Betty Silvester had married the Rev W Fletcher, and lived in the Presbyterian Manse in Patrick Street in Mountmellick Co Offaly. Built in xxxx, the church closed in 1963, the congregation being combined with that in nearby Tullamore. The newspaper clipping below shows The Rev Fletcher and Betty receiving a presentation from Oliver J Flanagan TD in 1963. Rev Fletcher had served as minister in Mountmellick from 1938 up unto that year.



In later years, 1959, a newspaper clipping (*Irish Examiner* 10.11.1959) tells us the artist was running an art school in Tullamore. Apart from that, very little can be gleaned of her career, if any, in the world of painting.

OUTSIDE the major cities one does not hear much of endeavour in the arts, but in the town of Tullamore a lady who prefers to be known simply as Bean Uí Cinneide, is holding the flag aloft. An artist herself, she was responsible for opening an art school in Tullamore under the direction of Betty Fletcher, A.R.C.A. London, Wife of Mr.