



## *An American in Brittany*

10th - 12th December 2008

Open 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.

Reception 10th December, 6 - 8 p.m.

*Paintings may be purchased  
prior to the exhibition.*

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## Edgar Melville Ward 1839 - 1915

The main influx began in 1866 when a group of Americans assembled around the enigmatic Robert Wylie, one of the founders of the Pont-Aven school. He had arrived in Paris from Pennsylvania three years earlier. However, like many other visitors, he made his home in Pont-Aven, and became an important anchor for many of the school who tended to stay only for the summer months. Sargent was amongst the second wave of Americans, arriving in Brittany about 1874. He chose to work in the less picturesque town of Cancale, and made numerous sketches of women and children gathering shellfish in preparation for his major work *The Oyster Gatherers*, which he sent to the Paris Salon in 1878. The sketches are reminiscent of Eugène Feytaud's painting, which featured in our 2003 catalogue. The American Impressionist, Childe Hassam, painted an important series of Pont-Aven works in 1897.

Edgar Melville Ward arrived in 1875, about the same time as the Irish-American Thomas Hovenden who was one of Wylie's circle. Augustus Burke and Aloysius O'Kelly were also there at this time. Ward was born in Urbana, Ohio, where he had his formal education. This was followed by study at the National Academy of Design in New York. Just like his Irish contemporaries, he moved to Paris where he trained under Alexandre Cabanel at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He was the brother of the well known sculptor, John Quincy Adams Ward.

Ward was essentially a genre painter, and became well known for his depiction of people engaged in handcrafts. Our painting is one of the earliest in the series. Other

well known examples are *Breton Washwomen* (1876); *The Sabot Maker* (1878); *The Collar Shop* (1892) and *The Coppersmith* (1898), which is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. *A Brittany Interior* relates closely to Helen Mabel Trevor's *Morning Dream*, which we catalogued in 2005. In this provocative work, Ward depicts a young woman in fine traditional costume, which has suffered from the wear and tear of everyday use. She pauses from her work, and stares intensely into the distance, perhaps dreaming of a better life. The work is also reminiscent of Aloysius O'Kelly's *Breton Interior*, another Pont-Aven painting of the same date, which we presented in 2006. The detail in Ward's version is beautifully executed; he uses deft highlights to draw our attention to the cooking utensils, which hang beside the fireplace; and the crockery and candlesticks which sit on the mantelpiece. The background, which is in deep shadow, dramatises the costume of the girl. She is lit by a soft light, which divides the foreground and adds depth and interest to the painting.

### *A Brittany Interior*

1. Oil on canvas. 21½ x 18 inches

Signed by the artist and inscribed Brittany 1875

Verso: title inscribed on artist's label



Frank Crawford Penfold  
1849 - 1927

Another permanent resident amongst the Americans in Brittany was Frank Penfold. He became enamored with the way of life in Pont-Aven, and established an art school there as well as a home. He hailed from Lockport, New York, where he trained under his father who was a successful portrait painter. He was in France by 1879 and probably went directly to Pont-Aven. However, in 1884 he enrolled in the Academie Julian in Paris but it appears that he returned to Brittany at the end of the year. He travelled home regularly and occasionally taught at the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy.

His Breton works depict colourful religious processions; harvesting in the fields; and busy market scenes. Many feature small children, one example being a young girl picking flowers in woodland; another depicts a large family group outside a church after a christening. A further example shows a small girl being ferried across a river by her mother. Our painting has been described as a mother and child but it could equally well be a sister and brother.

The blue headdress, set against the crisp white of the girl's spectacular collar and the green of the meadow, creates an immediate impact in this sympathetically handled work. The costume identifies the girl as a native of Fouesnant, and can be compared to Paul Grégoire's painting of a laundress, which we catalogued in 2005. Famous for its cider festival, Fouesnant is on the south coast of Finistère, west of Concarneau, where Penfold painted in the latter part of his career.

*Sketch for a Larger Painting,  
Brittany*

2. Oil on canvas laid on board. 21 x 18 inches  
Signed by the artist and inscribed:  
Sketch for a larger painting



## William John Hennessy 1839 - 1917

Another artist in Brittany with American connections was William John Hennessy. He was born in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny on the 11th July 1839. His father fled his homeland following his involvement with the Young Ireland movement in 1848; he landed in Canada, and moved to New York soon afterwards where his wife and two sons joined him the following year. Unlike the rest of his Irish contemporaries, Hennessy received his training in New York, and although he established a sound career there, he moved to London in 1870. He was equally successful there, and could afford to spend the summer months in Normandy where he had a residence close to the port of Honfleur. A school of painting, based in Saint Siméon's Inn, was already well established there. Corot, Isabey and Huet were amongst the first painters of the group. Courbet, Jongkind and Monet were invited to join them by Boudin. As a native and well established painter, Boudin was looked upon as a father figure. He encouraged Monet to paint in the open air, an activity that led to the advent of Impressionism. Hennessy might have had this in mind when he painted *An Impressionist at Work: Scene in a Normandy Cider Orchard*, which he sent to the Royal Academy in 1881. Another important painting, *Gathering Apples, Normandy*, painted in 1884, was featured in our 2006 catalogue.

Due to his American training, Hennessy was not included in Julian Campbell's 'Irish Impressionists' catalogue of 1984, which concentrated on artists who went to study in France and Belgium. Hennessy had become almost forgotten in Ireland until the Ulster Museum purchased his monumental *Fête Day in a Cider Orchard, Normandy*. This acquisition, and its subsequent inclusion in Campbell's 'Onlookers in France' exhibition at the Crawford Gallery in Cork in 1993, was an important step in his rediscovery. The present work

is another significant discovery as it is Hennessy's first Breton painting to come to light.

Like many of his contemporaries, Hennessy was preoccupied with the study of local people as they went about their daily work. The theme of drawing water was one of the most popular. In this painting, the water is likely to be for the kitchen or for washing; it is carried in two wooden pails with the aid of a metal hoop, which prevents the pails from hitting against the legs. The hoop was also used to carry milk pails from the fields to the dairy.

Laundering clothes in a river or stream was another common theme. The wide flat stones, which span the water in this painting, would have been placed there for the laundry workers to work from. The waterfall at the back of the well kept the water fresh and oxygenated. Many wells in Brittany were regarded as holy places, and were often protected by elaborate stonework, such as that shown here.

The wild flowers on both sides of the sandy track are a feature of many of Hennessy's paintings. He was also known for his ability to paint a good sky, and the fading light of evening is another feature of this work. Its companion piece, *A Summer Evening* is dated 1886, and this work appears to be from the same period.

### *Breton Girl Returning from the Well*

3. Oil on canvas. 48 x 24 inches

Provenance: G. and C. Sadde, Dijon, France



Théophile Louis Deyrolle  
1844-1923

Fetching water from the well was a chore in late 19th century Brittany, which had to be repeated with regular monotony. The well was often remote from the house and usually downhill, which made the return journey even more strenuous. As we have seen from Hennessy's Breton Girl, this aspect of rural life was a favourite theme of the Breton school. The jar carried by the girl in Deyrolle's painting was made for the purpose. The wide handle across the top allowed two hands to be used in lifting the jar from the well. There is also a pouring handle with a spout on the opposite side. The manner in which the girl leans backwards against the weight of the jar, suggests that it is full and heavy. She pauses for a rest and absorbs the flecks of bright sunlight filtering through the trees.

Scenes such as this were Deyrolle's stock in trade. In a similar sketch, *La Porteuse d'Eau*, a young woman carries an identical jar on her head. This suggests that Deyrolle carefully planned his paintings and worked them from preparatory studies in the traditional manner. One such painting, which relates to the theme, is *Les Lavandières*. This is a laundry scene set in a village, which shows a group of women washing clothes in a stream. They are in conversation with another woman who has just filled her

jar from the well, which she supports on her knee. Her headdress, which is similar to that worn by the girl in our painting, suggests that she is from the coastal commune of Fouesnant. The well is contained within a small stone construction, above which is a small shrine, reminiscent to the one discussed in the painting by William John Hennessy.

This setting is a long way from Deyrolle's Parisian background. He arrived in Brittany in the company of Alfred Guillou, a native of Concarneau, in 1871. The following year, he married Guillou's younger sister, Suzanne, and gradually became immersed in the local fishing community. He worked in the oyster beds in the mornings and painted in the afternoons, exploring his adopted town and the outlying villages for subject matter.

*Breton Girl  
on a Sunlit Path*

4. Oil on canvas. 14 x 9 1/2 inches  
Signed by the artist



Fernand Le Goût-Gérard  
1854 - 1924

We have had a number of fine works by Le Goût-Gérard over the last few years, and also several paintings from the small fishing village of Volendam, located on the Zuider Zee, to the north of Amsterdam. We have previously mentioned some of the distinguished artists who worked there: Auguste Renoir, Walter Langley, Paul Signac, Max Liebermann, Théo van Rysselberghe, and the American painter, John Rettig who became one of the central figures of this little-known colony. The discovery of the present painting makes an interesting addition to the list.

Le Goût-Gérard must have felt very much at home in Volendam; the distinctive costume would have reminded him of Brittany where he painted many similar works depicting everyday life along a busy quayside. The boats moored along the wooden harbour wall are recognisable as belonging to the Dutch fishing fleet. They have just returned from sea with a catch for landing, some of which would have been sold directly to the local villagers. They are portrayed here as they purchase their provisions from

the stalls and barrows that line the quayside. In the foreground, a small group have gathered by the waterside to land another catch from a boat, which is just out of view.

A group of older men are engrossed in conversation, protected from the sun by their wide brimmed hats. Their dark sombre clothing is in stark contrast to the colourful costume of the women who wear their distinctive winged bonnets. A mother carries a child on her arm while centre stage is occupied by two young children; a device regularly employed by Le Goût-Gérard.

### *Volendam*

5. Oil on panel. 7 x 10½ inches

Signed by the artist and inscribed Volendam

Provenance:

Adolphe Legoupy, 5 Boulevard de la Madeleine, Paris



Edward Stott  
1859 - 1918

The flat expanse of this landscape suggests that it was painted close to Stott's home in Littleton, situated in the Vale of Evesham. The work is reminiscent of a number of paintings by Walter Osborne, who painted in the company of Stott in 1884 and 1885 in the small picturesque villages, which are scattered around this part of England. They were both attracted by the same type of subject matter, and the portrayal of children in rural settings was a common theme. In the preceding years, they had both come under the spell of Jules Bastien-Lepage while working in France.

The cattle grazing in the far distance, represented by small flecks of white paint, set the scale of the view, which is bordered by a line of trees on the horizon. Just in front of this, there is a final glimpse of the waterway as it snakes across the countryside. Immediately behind the boy, a family of ducks paddle about with their hatchlings. The young girl rests her arms on the gate as she listens to the boy's tune. The children are dressed in their best cloths; the boy's sun hat and the girl's bonnet give them an older appearance. Stott pays much attention to the girl's

costume, and the detail of the decoration on the border of her apron. He depicts the highlights and shadows of her dress with great care. The wildflowers, which grow in the foreground, are a feature of many of his works.

Stott was born in Rochdale, near Manchester. He studied in Paris under Cabanel and Carolus-Duran. Besides Bastien-Lepage and the French rural naturalists, Jean-François Millet had a strong influence on his work, painted in a *plein air* style comparable to that of George Clausen and Henry Herbert La Thangue. He had a particular working method and did many drawings, mostly in pastel, in preparation for his oils.

*Tin Whistle  
Player*

6. Oil on canvas. 15 x 18 inches  
Signed by the artist and dated 1884



Marie-Aimée Lucas-Robiquet  
1864 - 1959

Children are often the focal point of Marie-Aimée's paintings. She portrayed them engaged in activities such as sewing; spinning cotton; or tending a fire in an interior. The theme runs through her European work and her famous oriental paintings. *Jeune Brodeuse*, which we illustrated in our 2005 catalogue, is a typical example. In the current painting, she chose to portray the girl gathering flowers from the back, which suggests that this is a painting where the activity and setting are just as important as the girl who picks the flowers. The subdued colouring of the hedgerow in the background encourages the viewer to concentrate on the centre of the painting. The artist employs the same techniques in a closely related work, *Young Girl with Wildflowers* (Sotheby's, New York, 2003), which shows a small child sitting at the edge of a meadow picking flowers. Both works were probably painted in the same location; the similarities, including an identical hedgerow, are unmistakable. In the latter work, the meadow runs into a cornfield set on high ground, beyond which are moorland and a distant mountain range.

The wild meadow is awash with a kaleidoscope of colour. The predominant flower is the white umbellifer, although it is not possible to name the precise variety, and the tall yellow headed flower is probably of the same family. The other dominant varieties appear to be wild poppies, ragged robins, and a good display of knap weed, identifiable by its delicate mauve colouring.

*Gathering  
Meadow Flowers*

7. Oil on canvas. 22 x 15 inches  
Signed by the artist

Exhibited:  
Lyon, France, number 217?



William John Hennessy  
1839 - 1917

It is tempting to suggest that the theme of this painting is that of *Leda and the Swan*. However, the title of the painting, *A Summer Evening*, is clearly inscribed on the stretcher; the wildflowers in the foreground suggest summer, and the rising moon indicates evening time. The story is taken from Greek mythology. Leda was the daughter of Thestius, the Aetolian king; the wife of King Tyndareus of Sparta, and mother of Helen of Troy whose father was Zeus. The myth describes Leda's rescue of Zeus who, in the guise of a swan, was pursued by an eagle. It became a popular theme in Renaissance art and was the subject matter of a lost painting by Michelangelo. The theme has been reproduced through the centuries to the present day. However, even if Hennessy was inspired by the legend, his interpretation is far removed from the traditional version. It may be that the work was painted as a straightforward portrayal of an evening bather.

The lighting is very delicately handled; a gentle swathe of moonlight breaks through a gap in the trees and highlights

the foaming waterfall as it tumbles into the lake. The still water reflects the green bank on the left and the dark trees on the opposite side. The swan is reflected in the deep water of the near bank as it glides towards the bather. The wildflowers bring life to the greens of the foreground, framed by a bed of reeds on one side, and a bank of shrubbery on the other.

### *A Summer Evening*

8. Oil on canvas. 48 x 24 inches

Signed by the artist and dated 1886;

Verso: signed by the artist and inscribed 107 Piccadilly, London;

title inscribed on stretcher

Provenance:

G. and C. Sadde, Dijon, France



Augustus Nicholas Burke RHA  
1838 - 1891

Augustus Joseph Nicholas Burke was the sixth son of William Burke of Knocknagur, Galway. He showed an early interest in drawing and made many sketches of his local environment. His love of his native land, especially the people and the landscape of Connemara, had a lasting influence on his work. As he travelled far afield during his very productive lifetime, many of the environments he chose to paint had strong similarities to his native county. About 1875, Burke was one of the first Irish artists to go to Brittany where he painted with Aloysius O'Kelly. Between 1876 and 1878 he exhibited fifteen Breton scenes at the Royal Hibernian Academy. Apart from his Irish work, which includes his famous *Connemara Girl* (National Gallery of Ireland), he also worked in Holland and the Scottish highlands.

He was in England in the mid-1880s, painting on the Suffolk coast and staying in the fishing village of Walberswick, where a small artist colony had formed. Amongst them were his compatriots Nathaniel Hill and Walter Osborne. Philip Wilson Steer was there at this time; George Clausen and Walter Sickert followed shortly afterwards. He also painted along the south-west coast. These two paintings represent a northern and a southern view along the Cornish coastline. The view from Bude Harbour takes in the southern aspect of these sparsely populated wild shores. Just beyond the rocky outcrop in the foreground is a view of Widemouth Bay. Beyond this are Dizzard Point; Cambeak; and Fire Beacon Point. The distant headland of Tintagel is best known for its famous

castle, steeped in Arthurian legend, and immortalised in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the last volume of which was published shortly before Burke painted these works.

The view to the north is painted from Northcott Beach, about half way along the magnificent sands that stretch out from Bude Harbour. Beyond the foreground rocks is Duck Pool, which lies at the head of Duckpool Valley. Above this is an extensive view of the rugged cliffs, which stretch all the way to Hartland Point on the north-western tip of Devon. Lundy Island is only just visible beyond the headland. To the east of Hartland Point is Ilfracombe where Burke painted a number of fine works in 1882. One of the best of these, *Original Sketch, Ilfracombe*, which shows a crabber under full sail heading out from the harbour, was illustrated in our 1992 catalogue. Burke must have been reminded of the rugged coastline of the West of Ireland when he painted these works.

*Bude Harbour  
and Tintagel in Distance*

9. Oil on canvas board 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 14 inches  
Signed by the artist  
Verso: title inscribed by the artist  
Provenance: Mrs. Rutledge



## Herbert Parsons Weaver 1872 - 1945

Weaver is highly regarded for his representation of architectural subject matter, the majority of which he painted in watercolour. He travelled extensively to record these scenes and was particularly fond of Normandy and Brittany. Venice was another favourite destination, and he also painted the old streets of Dordrecht and other parts of Holland. He was born in Worcester where he was educated at the local grammar school prior to his entry into the local school of art. From there, he progressed to the Royal College of Art where he won gold and silver medals. He was a prolific exhibitor at the Cambrian Academy and the Royal Society of British Artists. He also sent his work to the Royal Academy in London, the Paris Salon, and numerous provincial venues. He became a member of both the Liverpool and Manchester Academies. He lived in London before moving to Shrewsbury in 1902 where he became Principal of the Shrewsbury School of Art. His daughter, Lydia, was also an exhibiting artist.

The ancient town of Lisieux is celebrated for its association with St. Thérèse. The modern Basilica, which carries her name, contrasts starkly with the 12th century Cathedral where St. Thérèse spent much of her childhood in prayer and meditation. Both buildings miraculously survived the bombardments of the second world war, which destroyed the greater part of the town. Lisieux was an important centre of commerce in mediaeval times, and an important ecclesiastical seat from the 6th century until it was suppressed after the revolution.

St. Thérèse was born into a very religious family in 1873. She entered the Carmelite order in 1888 where she spent much of her time writing on holiness, the core of which was based on a simple spirituality and a great love of nature. Her Basilica is second only to Lourdes as a place of pilgrimage. She died after a severe illness and much suffering at the age of twenty four.

Weaver's drawing depicts a narrow street of ancient buildings; baked in bright sunshine and contrasting shade. He pays particular attention to details such as the window boxes overflowing with flowers, and a birdcage suspended from a wall beside an upper window. In the street below, a woman sits in the shade engaged in needlework. Further along the narrow street, two women stand face to face as they engage in conversation.

### *Old Houses, Lisieux, Normandy*

11. Watercolour on paper. 12 x 6 1/2 inches  
Signed by the artist and dated 1926  
Verso: title inscribed on label;  
the artist's address at Hillside House, Lythe Hill,  
Shrewsbury



Stella G. Cuthbert  
19th - 20th century

Although Stella Cuthbert is not recorded as an exhibiting artist, she may have been amongst the many painters drawn to Pont-Aven by the reputation of the school. Her style suggests that she may have studied in one of the metropolitan academies in the early decades of the 20th century. Much of the attraction in this work is her simple approach to painting. Although the creperie is the subject matter of the painting, it is shown to the left, thereby allowing the church of St. Joseph to take centre stage. The magnificent spire, immortalised by hundreds of famous artists, gives the impression that this is a church built to a grand scale, and of an early date. However, it is relatively small and fairly modern, built in 1874.

The detail of the painting is interesting. The colourful shop sign above the creperie shows a waitress in local costume, carrying an inviting tray of beverages. The tradition of the Breton crepe traces back to the 15th century and owes its popularity to the abundance of locally grown buckwheat. Paintings of this type are very much like a snapshot; a moment frozen for all time. An old man pushes a bicycle past the buvette; a younger man walks towards the charcuterie where a horseless trap is parked with the harness lying on the ground; two other villagers make their way along the narrow streets; a small dog crosses to the far pavement where a barrel of sun-drenched flowers adorn a shop front.



*Pancake Shop, Brittany*

12. Oil on panel. 12 x 9 inches

Verso: title inscribed on artist's label