



## Chester Artists.

THE meeting of the Society on Tuesday, January 18, 1916, was of a most interesting nature. Alderman W. Vernon's fine collection of old Chester prints was on view in the Lecture Theatre, and the proceedings took the form more of an informal talk than of the usual lecture. Mr. F. Simpson, F.S.A., had previously arranged Alderman Vernon's prints, assisted by Mr. W. W. Tasker. For a part of the evening Lord Arthur Grosvenor, the Mayor (Alderman J. M. Frost) and officers of the Volunteer Regiment were present. Mr. Henry Taylor, F.S.A., took the chair, and said through the kindness of Alderman Vernon they were enabled to see a small selection of pictures from his larger collection. Mr. H. B. Dutton had also very kindly brought them a few drawings of Chester buildings by Chester artists, and they hoped that that little exhibition would draw forth some information respecting those Chester artists, and perhaps at a future time—when this dreadful war was over—it might be the nucleus of a larger exhibition of the works of Chester artists, and of Chester scenes. His predecessor as honorary secretary of that Society, Mr. Thomas Hughes, when he began to write "The Sheaf," suggested that "The Sheaf" might be the means of obtaining information as to Chester artists in the past, and he was more or less successful. He began with the names of John Musgrove, William Tasker,

and Thomas Bailey. Of the work of these three artists they had specimens that evening. They flourished in the period from 1808 to 1852. Then there was a miniature painter in Chester about 1815, A. R. Burt. He had rooms with a man named Hunter, an engraver, and, strange to say, also verger at the Cathedral. His rooms were near where Messrs. Potts, Potts and Gardner's offices were now, and he gave the name to Hunter Street and Hunter's Walk. Then there was another artist—he did not think they had anything of his work there—Paul J. Naftel. Musgrove they could claim as a native of Chester, and Bailey, too, was a native of the city. Tasker, though a Chester man, happened to be born in London. Then there was a family named Clowes, who were painters, and the last of them lived in Pepper Street; and also Batenham, the well-known etcher of Chester views. Then there was W. O. Harling, who studied under William Jones; both were Chester men. There was another name—perhaps it was one of the oldest names they had—Delacour. He painted the portrait of Orme, the organist and a great Freemason, 1777, which was now the property of the Cestrian Lodge. Delacour was an heraldic artist as well as a painter. Then they had George Cuitt, the well-known etcher, who flourished between 1779 and 1854. Also they had two schoolmasters who had done good work; they were Davidson, of the School of Art, and Sumner, who, he thought, was a drawing master at the King's School. Then there was the family of the Cranes, who were more or less connected with Chester. Mrs. Taylor had a portrait of her mother and a portrait of her aunt, which were painted by "T. C."—that was Thomas Crane. One was perfectly clear, "T. C., 1835," but

the initials on the other looked more like "F. C." They were painted at Whitchurch, where the ladies resided, and it appeared that Thomas Crane, when a young man living in Liverpool, went to Whitchurch probably to give lessons in drawing. He (Mr. Taylor) wrote to the late Mr. Walter Crane in 1905, who said: "In reply to your letter, the portraits are no doubt by my late father, Thomas Crane, of Chester, and sometime secretary of the Liverpool Academy, and student of the Royal Academy, London. He took the gold medal for a travelling scholarship. Some account of him appears in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He did many crayon portraits, and used to sign his drawings T. C. or F. C. I think, therefore, the one you say is signed F. C. must also be one of his. He had a brother of the name of William Crane, who worked in lithography at Chester, and some of the early portraits are reproduced in this way." Mr. Taylor mentioned that they had in that exhibition a lithographic portrait of Paganini by William Crane, and added that there was a school of lithographic printers in Chester about 1830 to 1840. They had another artist, a very retiring man. Some people used to think his judgment as a colourist was wrong, but Landseer said he was undoubtedly the greatest painter of animal life in existence—that was William Huggins, of The Groves. Many of them, no doubt, would remember him. His lions and lions' heads were very rare and very valuable at the present time. Coming down to more recent times, they could boast of as natives of Chester Randolph Caldecott, E. M. Wimperis, president of the Society of Water Colours, and Mr. Lee Hankey to-day; in addition to which they had had living in Chester artists like Miss Rayner and Alfred Rimmer, who did so much work in connection

with Dean Howson, and whose drawings and etchings were considered to be of value at the present day. Then there was Albert Ayling, who did some very good work. Among engravers there was John Dean, who had a shop in St. Peter's Churchyard. In more recent times there was William Monk, who was doing downright good work; he had etched some fine views of Chester, Oxford, London, and New York. His work brought good prices, and he (Mr. Taylor) believed would command higher prices in future. Then they must not forget they had two rising young sculptors who were regularly exhibiting at the Royal Academy—F. T. Haswell and James A. Stevenson. With regard to architects, they had had Harrison, Penson, Hodkinson, and the "Abbey Square School"—Mr. John Douglas and his partners, including young Rimmer, whose early death was a great loss to Chester—and, of course, the Lockwoods.

Mr. H. B. Dutton, who followed, said John Musgrove, who was alluded to by Mr. Thos. Hughes as "that erratic genius" and "the most wonderfully minute draughtsman I ever knew," was born in one of the cottages at the foot of St. Mary's Hill. His father, a pensioner, was serving in the Invalids' Corps stationed at Chester in the time of the wars. The first Lord Westminster shewed an interest in the lad and obtained for him a good position in the Herald's office in London, but owing to a love affair he became almost insane, lost his berth, and came back to his native city. In 1832, while employed by Mr. Trubshaw, the contractor for the Grosvenor Bridge, he made a large drawing of the bridge with the pen—he never used the brush in any of his drawings to save labour in the shadows. Mr. Hughes considered that was Musgrove's masterpiece, but the

artist did not receive for it more than the miserable pittance of five shillings per week. One of his best friends was the first Marquis of Westminster. Musgrove had for a long time been increasingly addicted to drink, and he became so emaciated that he was obliged to enter the workhouse, where he died in a consumption. Mr. Hughes mentioned as one of the gems of his work the "Interior of an Engraver's Shop," and said Musgrove always considered that his best work. The portrait of Musgrove exhibited that night was by William Roose; it was dated 1838, and was presented to the Archæological Society by Mr. A. Blayney. With regard to William Jones: he lived in Queen Street, and in the Free Library they had two pictures of Mr. Harry Brown's ancestors by this artist, and there were two or three pictures in the corridors at Eaton painted by him. Mr. Dutton next directed attention to the catalogue of the sale by auction in the old Exchange of the books, pictures, etc., of John Broster, who was the son, he supposed, of Peter or John Broster, who brought out Broster's *Walk Round the Walls* in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and published small Guides to Chester. This particular Broster went to Edinburgh, and subsequently to the Isle of Wight. He formed some very novel ideas of how to cure stammering, and became a very successful expert in giving advice to people who were afflicted with it. Broster lived in a house in Brook Street, now the stationmaster's residence.

Mr. Frank Simpson, F.S.A., gave a short description of some of the pictures lent by Alderman William Vernon. Mentioning a very interesting picture of St. John's, which shewed more of the houses than any he had seen before, he recalled what was said to be the true version of the coffin in the wall at St. John's. A

lady who lived in one of those houses when a girl, had explained in a letter to her niece that the coffin was not found at St. John's but came from Nantwich Church, brought from there by canal. He (Mr. Simpson) believed that version was correct. He had mentioned it to Canon Scott, who said there were various versions in connection with it. Mr. Simpson directed attention to a drawing of altars found in Chester in 1779, to a print of the old Cross Keys, which stood on the site of Chester House, Northgate Street, to an old plan of Eaton Hall, to a number of old views of the Cathedral, the Castle, Abbey Square, the east cloister of the Cathedral (shewing the dormitories above), the Wool Hall, where the Music Hall now is, to a plan of the monastery of St. Werburgh, and to a picture of old St. Thomas's Chapel, which stood on the site of the present Deanery; the last-named had been brought by Mr. D. B. Jones, who said it was an enlarged photograph of a water-colour painting in the Deanery, formerly in the possession, he believed, of the late Dean Cotton.

Among other drawings pointed out by Mr. Simpson was a plan of Chester, interesting from the fact that it described the old streets and lanes, including Monk's Lane, Parson's Lane, Trinity Lane, Crook Lane, and others. He also shewed a drawing of the Earl's sword in the British Museum.

Mr. Taylor mentioned that in all the indictments of the old Palatinate courts a man was charged with an offence, not against "the king, his crown and dignity," but against "the earl, his sword and dignity." The sword of which they saw the drawing was supposed to be the sword of Hugh Lupus.

Alderman Vernon and others were warmly thanked for having contributed to so interesting an evening.