

Sharon Slater's Secret Hi

From the bone idle, to the multi-lingual, Limerick's painters have had a stroke of genius

SHARON SLATER

Patrick O'Brien was born in Labasheeda, Co. Clare to a prosperous farming family. He was well educated and fluent in Greek and Latin and would later converse with Bishop of Limerick John Ryan (1784-1864) in these languages.

Bishop Ryan was the Bishop of Limerick for 36 years until the time of his death. During those years Ryan was responsible for the building of St John's Cathedral and is buried in front of the main altar in the cathedral.

By the age of 26, O'Brien was completely blind and like many blind people of his time took to music as his full time profession. He played the uilleann pipes (also known as Union Pipe), which are a traditional Irish pipe "píobáí uilleann" (literally, "pipes of the elbow"), from their method of inflation.

He moved to Limerick City where he attempted to make his name and although he would not become renowned on the professional circuit, he would become well known as a street performer. His usual spot was on the corner of Hartstonge Street and George Street (O'Connell Street).

He lived with his two daughters in the Englishtown area, in Pump Lane off Nicholas Street. One of his daughters is supposedly immortalised in the painting by Joseph Haverty in 1841. The original is held in the National Gallery of Ireland.

He slipped on ice in 1854 when he was 93 years old. During the following year, without being able to perform, he became destitute and one of his daughters, the Limerick Chronicle reported at the time of his death, 'had to leave employment to tend to him in his last illness. During that period, she was obliged to pledge most of her clothes to provide some comfort for her dying parent. Should the benevolence of any of our fellow citizens prompt them to assist her in releasing them from pawn, we shall be happy to aid their efforts

by receiving and forwarding their subscriptions.'

He was buried in Kilquane, Parteen, Co. Clare in December 1855.

Timothy Collopy, a painter, was born in Limerick. He began his working life as a baker's apprentice, and after his talent for art was discovered by Father Walsh, an Augustinian, he was sent to Rome to study art. His fare and board was raised by subscription from the

wealthy Roman Catholic merchants in Limerick.

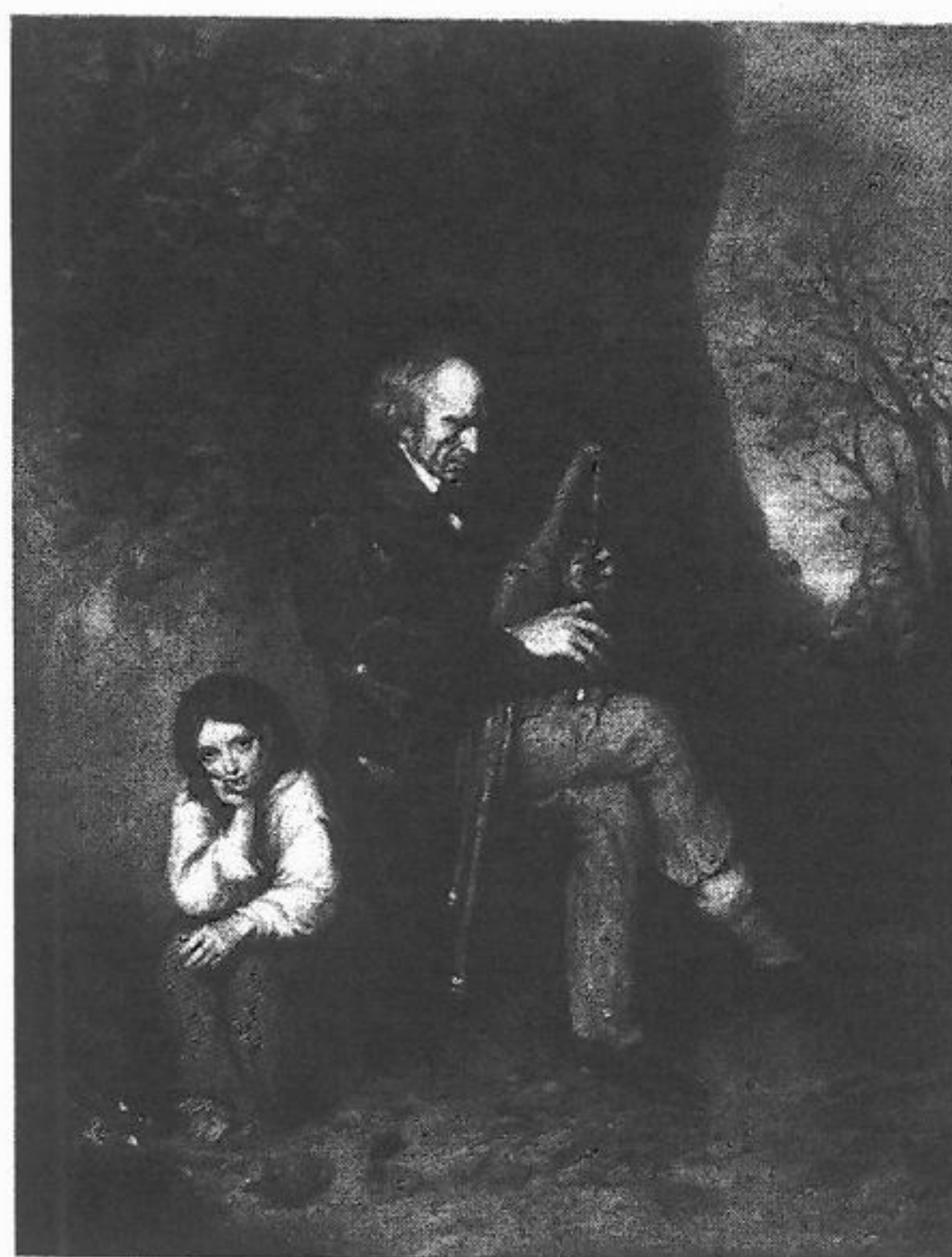
While in Rome, he studied with Hugh Hamilton and Henry Tresham. While in Naples, he painted Dorothea Maunsell (Limerick Author) and later gave her drawing lessons.

On his return to Limerick, he painted altarpieces in the original Augustinian Church in Creagh Lane and St. John's Roman Catholic Chapel. The painting of the

"Ascension" was originally given to the Augustinian Church and moved with the church to O'Connell Street and now hangs opposite the shop entrance within the church.

The painting of the "Deposition from the Cross" in St. John's Chapel was moved to St. John's Cathedral, which replaced the chapel.

He was also known for painting historical and reli-



Joseph Patrick Haverty's *The Blind Piper* 1841 National Gallery of Ireland, features Limerick piper Patrick O'Brien

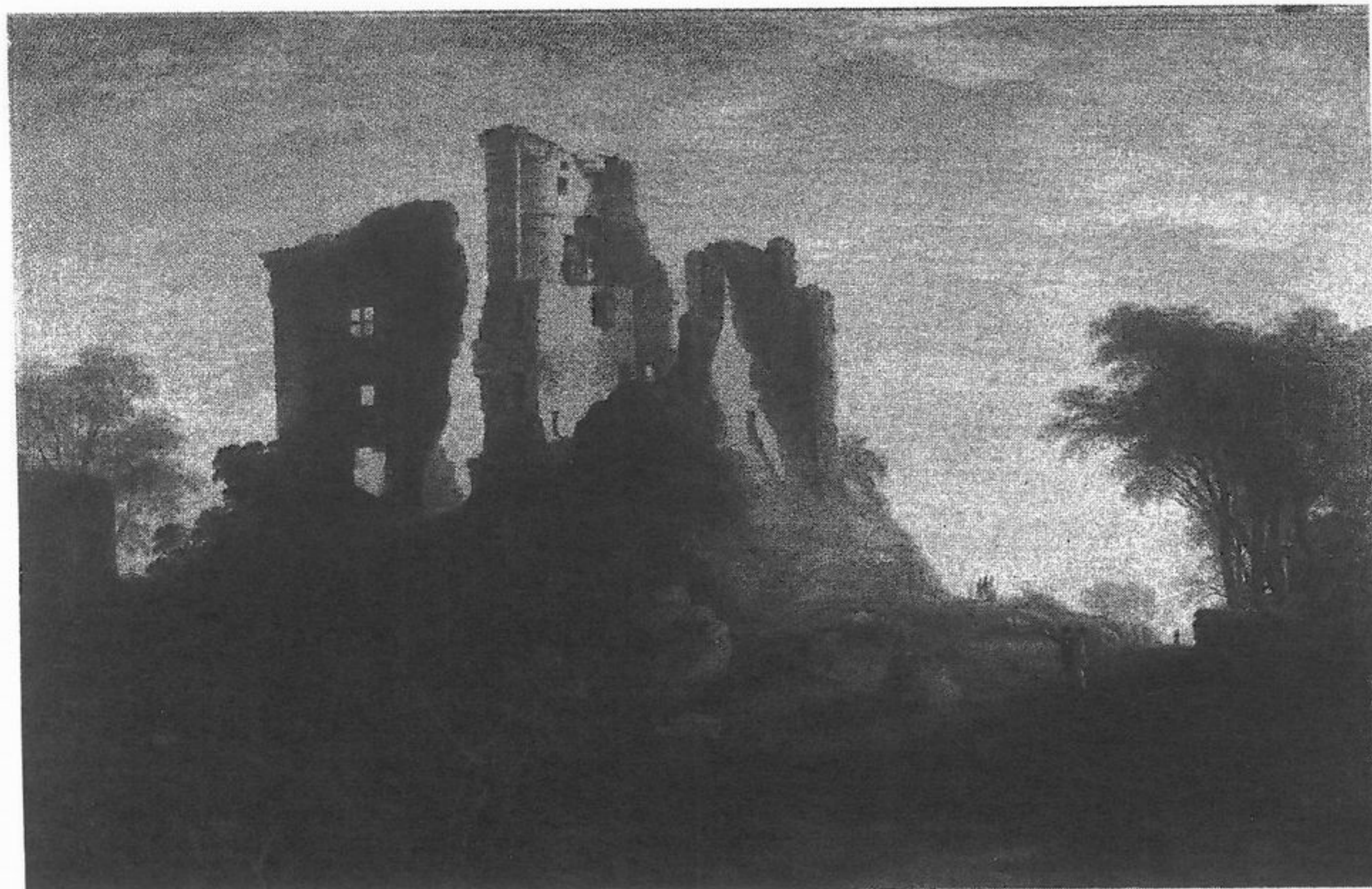


Timothy Collopy's painting of the "Ascension" now hangs opposite the shop entrance within the Augustinian Church on O'Connell Street

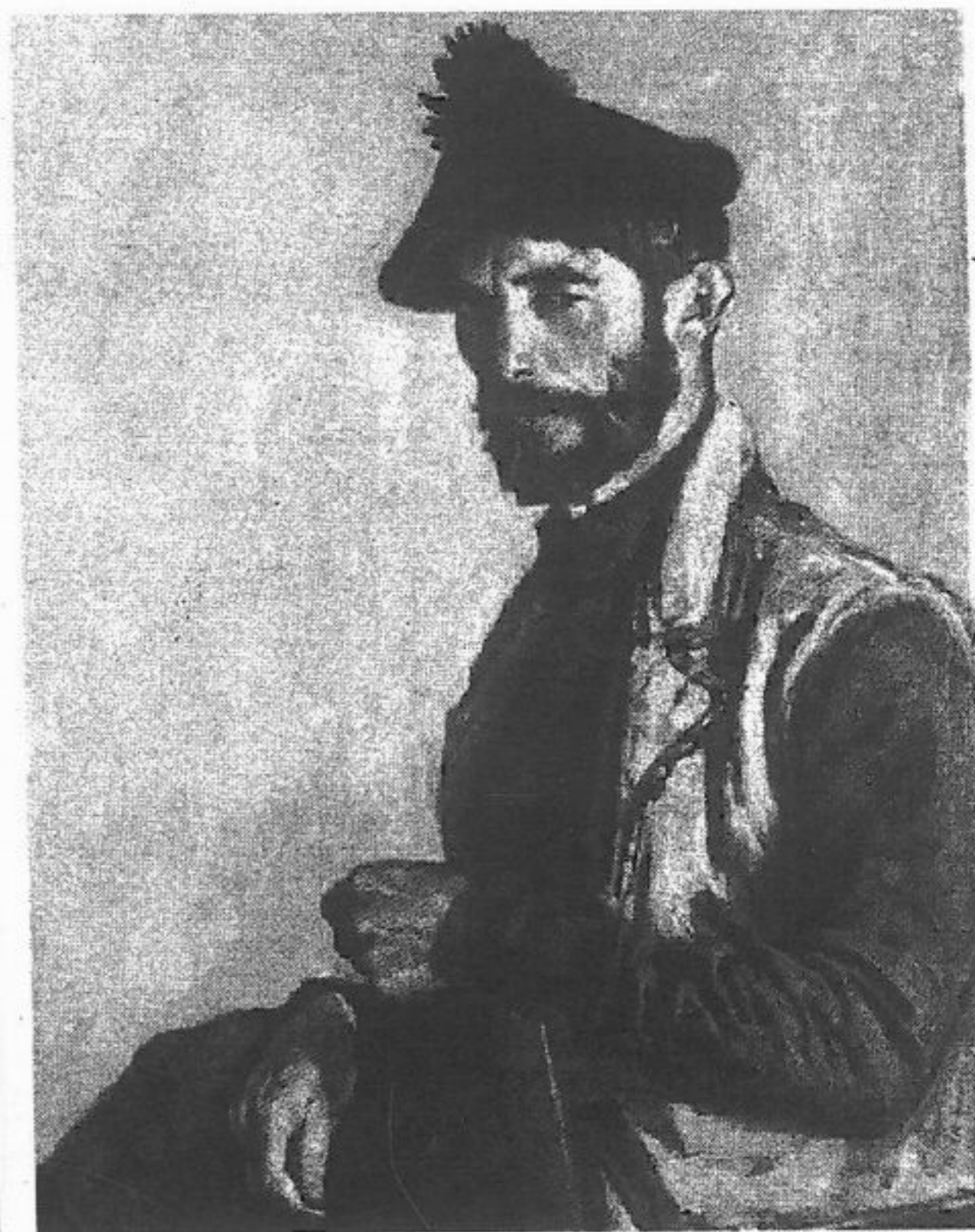


Douglas Alexander was born in 1871 in Bell-vue, North Circular Road, Limerick. From a prominent Quaker family, *Reflections*, Connemara, pictured is one of his best known works.

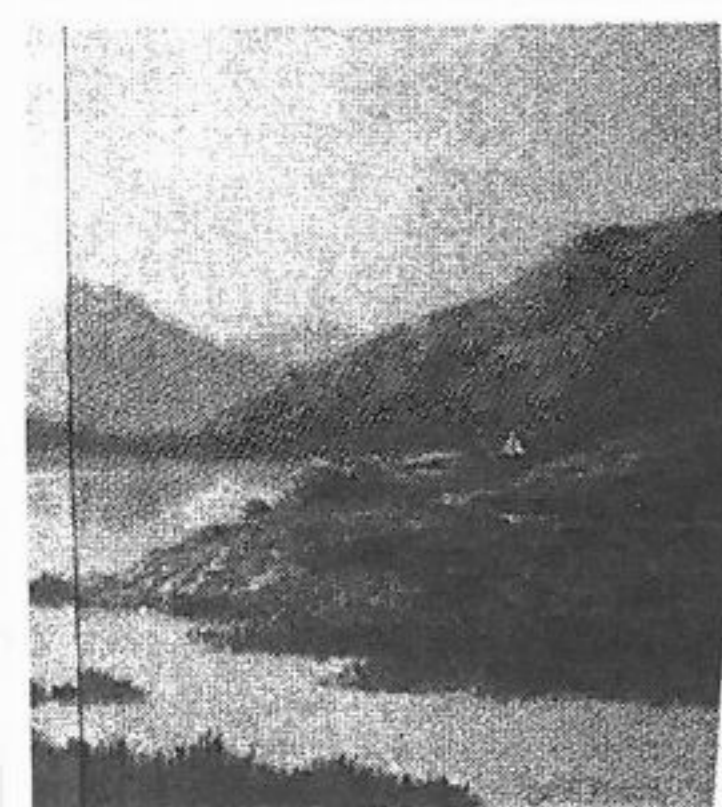
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Jeremiah Hodges Mulcahy, whose untitled depiction of Carrigogunnell Castle (main pic) sold for €2,500 at Christie's Auction House.



John (Sean) Keating, a portrait and figure painter, was born in Limerick on 28 September 1889. This was a self-portrait.



William Palmer - a miniature self-portrait of William Palmer, which contains strands of his hair on the reverse, is held in the Limerick Museum collection.

varnished numerous pictures throughout the house. He was referred to by Lord Morley's sister as 'a little painter who is in the house cleaning pictures'. He was remembered at Saltram by a room called the Collopy Room. He also cleaned pictures in the collection of the Marquis of Bute in London.

On the 16 September 1804, Timothy created his Last Will and Testament, in which he bequeath his estate to his son George Collopy, born 1795, in Limerick.

Timothy passed away on the 4 May 1811. His Will was proved on 5 August 1811, Henry Campbell and Henry Tresham, who was schooled in Rome with Timothy, testified that the handwriting in the Will was indeed Timothy Collopy's. His paintings, drawings, prints and books were auctioned by the world renowned Christie's of London on the 20-21 December 1811.

OTHER FAMOUS LIMERICK PAINTERS INCLUDE:

WILLIAM Palmer was born in Limerick on the 18 November 1763 the son of a Protestant linen-draper. He exhibited a talent for painting from a young age and by 18, he was studying in the Dublin Society School and had won a medal for his figure drawing. He was best known as a portrait painter. He died aged only 26 years in Bruff, Co. Limerick on the 29 July 1790. He is buried in his family plot in St. John's Churchyard, John's Square. A miniature self-portrait of William Palmer, which contains strands of his hair on the reverse, is held in the Limerick Museum collection.

Jeremiah Hodges Mulcahy was born in Limerick on 12 September 1804, he was best known as a landscape

painter. He was living in Lock Quay and working as a Portrait Painter when his wife Mary passed away in 1837.

In January 1842, he opened a School of Painting at 19 Catherine Street, Limerick, where he provided art classes for the gentry. He was an exhibitor in the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1843 to 1878. In the 1860s he moved to Dublin where he lived out his years and died at his residence, 11 Avondale Terrace, Harold's Cross, on 25th December, 1889, and was buried in Limerick. Five illustrations from drawings by Jeremiah Mulcahy are in Samuel Carter Hall and Anna Maire Hall's book "Ireland, its Scenery and Character" published in 1841. One of his paintings sold in 2006 in Christies Auction rooms, London for £43,200.

St. George Hare the son of a dentist was born in Limerick 5 July 1857. He initially trained in Limerick under Nicholas A. Brophy from 1872. In 1875, he was awarded a scholarship to the National Art Training School, South Kensington (later the Royal College of Art), London. He specialised in portrait and nude painting. He died in 1933 in London. He exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy, RHA, Royal Institute of painters in water-colour, Royal Institute of oil painters, Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham and the Walker Gallery, Liverpool to name but a few. His work is included in the collections of the National Gallery of Ireland, RHA Collection, City Gallery of Art, Limerick, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the National Gallery of Victoria Melbourne. His paintings have fetched thousands at auction. Many of his paintings are part of the English National Trust Collection.

Douglas Alexander was born in 1871 in Bell-vue, North Circular Road, Limerick. The son of Samuel Alexander, of prominent Limerick Quaker family. As a youth Douglas trained as apprentice to a wholesale merchant to J&G Boyd's. Alexander is most famous for oil and watercolour images of the West of Ireland, particularly Connemara. However, he did branch out

into portraits of people of note such as Michael Collins. Despite the prominence of his family in Limerick, Alexander died in poverty in 1945 in Dublin. His paintings usually reach hundreds at auction though Reflections, Connemara sold for €5,500.

John (Sean) Keating, a portrait and figure painter, was born in Limerick on 28 September 1889. His father, Joseph Keating, was a bookkeeper at a bakery company. John, who had three brothers and three sisters, was educated at St Munchin's College but was not a good attender, spending hours playing truant on the city's docks. 'I was always drawing and scribbling... At the age of sixteen I had proved myself incapable of doing anything else. I was a dreamer and idler. My mother decided to send me to the 'Technical School in Limerick for drawing'.

Keating was commissioned by the Electricity Supply Board in 1926 to execute a series of pictures illustrating the development of the hydro-electric scheme on the river Shannon. He lived with the workmen on the building site at Ardnacrusha. The series encompassed a group of drawings and paintings, twenty-six in all, showing the progress of the work until completion in 1929.

St George Hare, whose work is included in the collections of the National Gallery of Ireland, and are part of the English National Trust Collection.

gious icons. By 1777, he had moved to Dublin where he exhibited his portrait works at 112 Grafton St. Dublin in 1780. A few years later, he moved to London where he exhibited in 1786 and 1788.

In October and November 1795 Timothy Collopy worked as a picture restorer at the country home of John Parker, the 1st Earl of Morley house at Saltram House, Plymouth, England. While here, he cleaned and

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Sharon Slater is a respected historian, whose popular blog, www.limerickslife.com is an expert compendium of local historical quirks, facts, and stories.