



# Friends of York Art Gallery

## e-Bulletin no. 2

June 2020

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## Editorial

In this, the second FYAG e-Bulletin, we have brought together another varied selection of contributions. We begin with a Q&A piece kindly contributed by the York-born artist Jake Attree, which gives a fascinating impression of the artist in action. Those wishing to investigate some of Jake's current work might like to look at his collaboration with the poet Michael Symmons Roberts, via [this link](#). The Q&A is followed, appositely, by an article by a Friend on a work of Jake's in their possession, a painting depicting York Art Gallery. Two contributors, Barbara Hazeldine and Anne Hall, write about how works of art they have come to via various routes have inspired them. Then another Friend writes about an artwork in their possession, in this case by the Royal Academician Barbara Rae. And, having begun the Bulletin with a Q&A by a living York artist, it seemed an attractive idea to round it off with an article in which Anne McLean investigates the work of a little-known nineteenth-century York artist, John Bell.

I would like to remind readers that we welcome submissions to the e-Bulletin from Friends. We are open to suggestions: pieces on the arts in York or works in the York Art Gallery are welcome, but we are also interested, as evidenced by this issue, in Friends' accounts of works of art that they have found particularly interesting or inspiring. And (again as evidenced in this issue) we are aiming to present pieces that provide an illustration, together with a commentary, of paintings, original prints, sculpture, or studio pots privately owned by Friends who might like to share their appreciation of the artworks in their possession. We are happy to preserve the anonymity of the owners, for security reasons, should they so wish: please contact

[newsletter@friendsofyorkartgallery.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@friendsofyorkartgallery.co.uk)

In the last *e-Bulletin* I examined some of the ways in which galleries are meeting the lockdown challenge by putting parts of their collections online. This trend is continuing, and I expect most Friends will have explored the

web, taking in both the websites of larger collections and those of smaller ones – there is a lot to be seen.

Searching the web also reveals a number of rather unexpected stories about art and art galleries under lockdown. Anybody contemplating writing the script for a horror film might turn to report in the *Telegraph* of 16 April 2020 ('Museum guards are patrolling empty galleries – inside an "eerie" lockdown shift'), which, *inter alia*, cites the experience of an employee at the Walker Gallery in Liverpool who, working at night, finds the effects of lights outside the Walker disturbing as they flicker into the gallery. Apparently the locks of hair on eighteenth-century nudes seem to toss and Roman gods appear to walk about! The article also details sightings of ghosts in nuns' habits at the Royal Academy of Arts. More prosaically, Sarah Lamarr, a part-time teacher with a four-year-old daughter, whose flat overlooks a bus stop at Turnham Green, West London, decided to improve the view from her window and turn the stop into a pop-up children's art gallery. According to a report of Reuters, 28 May ('Bus-stop gallery lifts spirits in lockdown London') this enterprise proved successful, and cheered up the locals. Meanwhile in Wolverhampton, Ed Isaacs, a local artist with a studio in the city's Newhampton Arts Centre, decided to pass the first fifty days of lockdown by producing sketches of localities within the city on a daily basis and then posting them on social media. The local council got wind of this, and invited Mr Isaacs and other local artists to submit paintings and sketches for an online exhibition, which would then be hung as a conventional exhibition when venues opened after lockdown (*Wolverhampton Express & Star*, 15 May 2020 'One a day: Wolverhampton artist's 50 sketches inspired by lockdown').

The date of reopening of UK galleries remains uncertain. 4 July has been suggested as a possible date for some galleries and museums for reopening, although everything is contingent on the government's perception about how well Covid-19 is being controlled, and one suspects universal reopening will not come until much later, maybe not until Spring 2021. And, even then, there are strong indications that visiting a gallery will not be the same experience as previously. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has put forward its guidelines for 'Museums and the End of Lockdown: Ensuring the Safety of the Public and Staff'. These

recommendations, in addition to the rather fundamental one of not admitting anyone with Covid-19 symptoms, include:

- Defining a maximum number of people to be admitted to the museum or gallery in question
- Defining a maximum number of people to be admitted into each exhibition room, while ensuring a distance of 1.5 metres between visitors
- Determining the average duration of a visit so that time slots can be allocated
- This to work in conjunction with a booking system, operating online, by telephone, or by email
- Consideration of longer opening hours
- Consideration of restricting time periods of opening times to certain groups, e.g. over 65s
- Publicising all these measures, if possible, on the institution's website

Early reports of continental re-openings suggest that something like these measures are being employed in practice. Thus the Museum Barberini at Potsdam, south-west of Berlin, has introduced a 'comprehensive catalogue of protective hygiene measures', which include a limited number of visitors at any one time, compulsory online bookings, a defined pathway marked on the floor to lead visitors through the exhibitions, a maximum stay of two hours, making audio guides unavailable, and using security guards to warn people not to go too near the paintings or each other. Another German gallery is, in addition, requiring visitors to wear face masks (*Guardian*, 5 May 2020, 'Germany reopens museums, galleries, and gardens with social distancing rules'). So we know what we may have to look forward to when lockdown lifts. But here is a link, from the *Guardian* of 27 May ('Galleries in Europe open doors as lockdown lifts') that is rather more encouraging:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/may/27/galleries-europe-open-doors-lockdown-lifts-in-pictures>

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June 2020

## Q & A: A New Series Where Practising Artists Answer Questions About Their Practice

### 2.

**Jake Attree, a painter based in West Yorkshire, discusses his work.**



**Jake Attree (c 1998) *A Study of Dean Clough from North Bridge (Blue)***

**Oil on panel**

**Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Accessed from [www.artuk.org](http://www.artuk.org), May 11 2020**

*Can you describe your artistic practice?*

I begin with lots of drawing, primarily in ink or graphite, and mostly from life in a sketchbook. Then, if a subject engages my attention, I will make larger drawings, the paper pinned to a drawing board. I also draw from the work of the painters I particularly admire; Pieter Bruegel the Elder is an artist I have drawn from a lot (in both senses of the word) for a long time now and continue to do so. I do also use photographic sources, always

bearing in mind the painter Walter Sickert's dictum that photography is rather like alcohol in that it is fine to use it so long as one is not completely dependent upon it.



Some of the drawings stand by themselves, some will lead on to oil paintings, my primary medium.

Others may become oil pastels, a medium I have worked with a great deal for a considerable number of years now.

[Left: Jake Attree (2020) *The Derwent at Malton*, oil pastel, by permission of the artist]

Some of the imagery might remain completely figurative, some become more abstract; whichever, they are both completely reliant on some empirical experience.

I feel the artist must be completely dependent on their sources and, at the same time, completely independent of them. My ambition is to make an image, be it an oil painting, oil pastel or drawing, that is completely independent of me, that has a life of its own, having new and previously unseen harmonies and logic. I have never yet managed to do that and probably never will, so I continue to try and, to quote from Samuel Beckett, to 'fail better'.

*What started you off as an artist?*

After my mother's death, my sister and I were going through her effects; somehow a book my paternal grandmother had given to my sister was amongst them. As my sister leafed nostalgically through the book, it soon became evident that, as a small boy, I had drawn on every available blank space (my indulgent sister forgave me). A few pages in, I found I had

made drawings of a recurring and disturbing dream I had been having. I was perhaps four at the time, so from my earliest years I was drawing things that had a deep emotional effect on me.

Also, when I was very young, my father would take me to the locks at Naburn, about four miles south of York; at the time this still had a working water mill. Or we would climb up onto York's Baile Hill, which I remember having a large rookery in the trees covering the earthwork. Later, when I was about fourteen, the discovery through reproduction of the work of John Constable and Pieter Bruegel struck me with such force that I determined painting would be what I would do with my life. The water mill and locks at Naburn became my *Haywain*, and the experience of standing on Baile Hill with my father looking across York became my *Gloomy Day* from Bruegel's *Seasons* series.

*Who or what are your influences?*

As mentioned above, Constable and Bruegel have been a big influence on my work. Paul Cézanne has been a seminal influence, both formally and also as an example of how an artist should live their life. 'The man must remain obscure' he remarked, implying the work is what mattered, not who made it or any incidental facts about them.

If I think of all the painters who have influenced me, what they all have in common is a deeply felt formal restraint. While they are too numerous to mention them all, they include Gwen John, Giorgio Morandi, Paul Klee, Therese Oulton, Agnes Martin, and Brice Marden. David Bomberg, Frank Auerbach, and Leon Kossoff have been very influential too, but I find in my seventieth year that the earlier formative influences reassert themselves. I was also fortunate in having supportive teachers and tutors throughout my artistic education, to whom I am very grateful.

*How would you describe your recent work?*

Like many other artists, I return again and again to the same subjects, not because one feels comfortable with them but because previous attempts seem wholly inadequate or compromised, or both, and one is hoping to make the definitive version, which will of course never happen, so one continues, *ad infinitum*.

I am currently working on six transcriptions in oil pastel after Bruegel the Elder, having just completed thirteen oil pastels that will be used as illustrations to a collaboration with the poet, Michael Symmons Roberts. Michael's twelve stanzas and my oil pastels were inspired directly or indirectly by Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary* in the [Kunsthistorisches Museum](#) in Vienna. The limited-edition publication will be published by *Fine Press Poetry* shortly.

*What would you say is the main challenge in your making?*

Trying to make something that looks completely authentic, that has integrity and a certain kind of rawness. The challenges are not so much technical, having after all been doing this since I was about fourteen. Having said that, one is always aware that any ability one may have acquired over the years must be used to try and say something original; technique for its own sake is futile.

*How has this recent period of lockdown affected your work?*



Much less than I felt it might. I can't get into my studio at Dean Clough in Halifax as I live in Saltaire and don't drive. I was going in by bus as usual



at the beginning but that seemed reckless, to say the least! So I have been working at home in oil pastel as using oil paint in the way I do at the studio would be more than a little difficult.

I see very few people when I am in the studio, so not seeing people now is not that big an issue for me. I simply get on with the task at hand, finding this takes me away from myself, which I think is what makes us truly happy.

*Do you have a website where our members can find out more about your practice?*

My website is under reconstruction; when it is up and running it will be [www.jakeattree.co.uk](http://www.jakeattree.co.uk). Meanwhile, examples of my work are available at [https://www.messums.com/artists/view/965/Jake%20 Attree](https://www.messums.com/artists/view/965/Jake%20Attree). There is also a YouTube video on me in York entitled 'Jake Attree: Artist in the City'. A four-minute excerpt is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAGkq2fQ5Nk>.

© Jake Attree and Judith Glover, May 2020

## York Art Gallery by Jake Attree



Jake Attree, *York Art Gallery*, reproduced with the permission of the artist

My first impression of Jake's painting of York Art Gallery was the unusual perspective. Where on earth had he positioned himself to capture this view? It looked as if he had been perched on a cherry picker looking straight down onto Exhibition Square with William Etty and the Gallery directly behind. Sometime later Jake confided in me that he had been squatting awkwardly, confined in the higher recesses of the Theatre Royal, rather like a pigeon.

I had been immediately attracted by the thought of viewing this work as a long term admirer of Jake's work and especially his lovely enigmatic oil pastels of York Minster. In an exhibition of the views of York in Minster Library some years before, Jake's roofline views had stood out with their soft rusts and greys, their space for imagination, and their take on a much loved cathedral. And then, with this work, there was the added attraction of the subject. For a Friend of York Art Gallery, the combination of an admired artist and the source of much pleasure, education, and

entertainment was compelling. So, when I heard that this work was for sale, I made arrangements to view it.

Although Jake had again used oil pastel, here was a transformation of palette from the more usual red-brown hues to an altogether lighter, soft green and stone which offered up a new side to his work. Was he branching out in a novel direction? It certainly seemed so at first, but then, on closer inspection, I could see how Jake had employed the same technique of darker cross-hatching on a neutral background, as if scratching the surface to produce that familiar shadowy effect. Perhaps even more with this colour combination the workings were exposed and benefitted from close and prolonged study. I knew then that this was a painting I should like to become more familiar with, a painting that satisfied on a number of levels, emotional, topographical, and aesthetic. It has not disappointed.

### **A Friend of York Art Gallery**

June 2020

*Barbara Hazeldine has been a member of the Friends for over fifteen years. She studied for the M.A in History of Art at York from 2012 to 2014. Her dissertation topic was based on the Representation of Newcastle upon Tyne in the nineteenth century. Here she gives a personal account of how she came to study art history. She expands on the theme of how the context of art is all important, and the joys of visiting art works in the place of commissioning. She concludes with recollections of some memorable FYAG trips.*

### Art in Context: A Personal View

A painting which had a great influence on me is an altarpiece in the National Gallery in London, [\*The Assumption of the Virgin\*](#) by Francesco Botticini, known as the *Palmieri Altarpiece*.

This painting was key in setting me on the journey of studying the history of art. The autumn of 1996 was a bad time for me. My mother died very suddenly at the end of August, aged 72. One week we were all on holiday together staying in a cottage on Holy Island. On the Sunday she was playing tennis on the beach, a week later she collapsed back at home in South Shields with a pulmonary embolism.

For the following twelve months I felt as though I was in a tunnel. I was fortunate in that the University of Leeds Extra Mural Department was about to start an accredited course at the local secondary school introducing art history. I enrolled, even though, with a degree in Maths, I had never written an essay before. As part of the course we had a group visit to the National Gallery. It was on this visit I first encountered the *Palmieri Altarpiece*. At the time it was placed high on the wall at the top of the long flight of steps from the ground floor entrance of the Sainsbury Wing. Climbing those steps, you could feel you had joined those walking up towards the Heaven depicted in the work. That was when I realised how important the context of a painting was, whether in a gallery, where the architecture is important, or in the setting for which a work was commissioned. Both aid the process of helping you to gain some understanding of the true nature of the work.

This painting depicts heaven and earth united, with heaven in a dome shaped vault and ranks of angels, saints and Old Testament figures in neatly arranged circles. The Virgin has ascended after death, her empty tomb is shown below. The painting once adorned the funerary chapel of humanist Matteo Palmieri in the now demolished church of San Pier

Maggiore in Florence. Palmieri, an apothecary in the city, wrote histories, biographies, and poetry, and the image may be based on one of his poems. He and his wife are shown as donors in the foreground which also includes a view of the Tuscan landscape, including farms, said to belong to his family.

In 2015-2016 the painting was the focus of a small exhibition at the National Gallery entitled 'Visions of Paradise: Botticini's Palmieri Altarpiece'. This included a [digital reconstruction](#) of the church where it once stood, based on drawings and fragments which remain in houses in the area. It was very interesting to see the glorious detail in this large painting by viewing it 'up close' in the exhibition, but I felt something was lost from the experience of my first view

Over the years I have pursued my interest in the History of Art, culminating in, when I retired, enrolling for the M.A at the University of York, an experience I thoroughly enjoyed. I still enjoy, most of all, places where the artwork remains in situ, in the place for which it was commissioned. Unlike the Palmieri, many altarpieces remain in their original churches and chapels. A more renowned *Assumption of the Virgin*, this time by Titian, can be viewed in its original position behind the high altar in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice. The modern viewer can experience the rays of light coming through the windows of the apse, supplementing the radiant light of Heaven in the upper part of the work, as was surely intended by Titian. On the northern fringes of Venice, away from the crowds, is another favourite of mine, the church of Madonna dell'Orto. This houses glorious works by Tintoretto. It was his local church and is where he is buried.

It is not necessary to travel abroad to view art in situ of course. Over the years FYAG have arranged many such visits. One notable excursion to Cumbria, focused on the exceptional church of St Mary's, Wreay. It was designed by the local landowner Sarah Losh and built between 1840 and 1842, It is a highly original design, and full of elaborate ornament and carving symbolising death and rebirth, with a recurring motif of pinecones. A replica of the Bewcastle Cross stands in the churchyard there, but our day ended with a visit to the original, standing in countryside north of Hadrian's Wall. Even though it was April, the weather was closing in with snow on the wind, emphasising the remoteness and bleakness of the location, and the remarkable fact the Cross is still standing there after 1300 years.

In more clement weather, trips to Sussex have included memorable locations such as Charleston where much of the original decoration remains. One of my favourites was to Petworth House, where Turner was a frequent visitor. Four scenes commissioned by Lord Egremont remain in the wall carvings in the Carved Room there. Two of these can be compared with the actual view they depict, seen from the windows of the room out into Petworth Park.

In these exceptional times I have enjoyed revisiting these places in images, books and online, but am looking forward to the time when such visits are, we all hope, possible again.

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*Anne Hall, a former Chair of the Friends, writes about a painting she has loved since childhood, experienced again, during the current lockdown, as a jigsaw*

### The Crivelli Jigsaw



Jigsaw box lid, photographed by Anne Hall

During lockdown, when we are unable to go out for our usual occupations of cinema, concerts etc., a lot of us have got out our jigsaw puzzles. I have just done a favourite 1000 piece of [Carlo Crivelli's Annunciation](#). I first saw this painting as a child, when my Mum used to take us up to London at half-term to visit the National Gallery, the Royal Academy, and the top floor of Harrods, where there was a small zoo, amongst other things.

Strangely, I was transfixed by this huge painting, with its sharp architectural perspective leading up to a small golden circle in the sky, whence a bright dart leads through a neat gilded hole in the ornate building which occupies nearly half the canvas, to land on the head of the Virgin, a beautiful 15th-century damsel kneeling with a book at her prie dieu. Only one person in the background seems to have noticed this extraordinary event, and is looking up at the shaft of light with shaded eyes.

Meanwhile the foreground is filled with the Archangel Gabriel, gloriously arrayed, infinitely handsome, with a hairstyle to die for, kneeling outside the Virgin's home, totally impeded in his mission by a pushy little Bishop, who is thrusting at him a model of the local city for him to admire.

The humour of this situation must have appealed to me as a child, as it still does, but the gravitas of the Archangel brings one back to the point: the Annunciation. Gabriel holds a lily in his hand, and Mary is already crowned with a halo as a dove approaches her down the shaft of light. The background is full of incident; people converse, a little child peeps round a corner, a Persian carpet billows over a ledge, pigeons abound (what's new!), there is a finch in its cage, beside a magnificent peacock, the symbol of eternal life and of the Resurrection.

Carlo Crivelli (c.1430-1495) was born in Venice, the son of a little known painter, and settled in Ascoli Piceno in the Marches of central Italy. This was an important painting for the city as, on 25th March 1482, the Feast of the Annunciation, the city learned that Pope Sixtus IV had granted its citizens limited rights of self-government. This enabled them to repair their many buildings damaged by the spasmodic warfare among rival states, and explains why the Bishop, in the form of their patron Saint Emidius, is so keen to show Gabriel a model of their plan. The news of the Papal Bull probably first arrived by carrier pigeon, as in the middle distance of the painting an elegant man is standing on a bridge reading a letter, which has been brought by a rather scruffy-looking fellow who has a pigeon cage beside him.

When the painting was completed, it was carried in procession to the Church of the Annunciation and placed over the altar, where it remained until the early 1800s when it turned up in Milan. Later it was sold on, and in 1864 it was given to the National Gallery by the politician Henry Labouchere, Baron Taunton. In very poor condition it was subject to various repairs in which it was removed from its panel and settled onto several layers of canvas, where it darkened under dirt and its yellowing varnish, until 1990, when a comprehensive restoration took place and revealed the work in something like its pristine glory.

Nevertheless, its previous rather golden hue was enough to enthrall me as a child, and the post-restoration image, transferred to a jigsaw puzzle, remains a joy to do.



*Dr Barbara Rae, CBE, RA, RSA, RE, is a Scottish artist respected internationally as a gifted colourist. She travels widely and off the beaten track to places where she finds mood, pattern, and dramatic light. She has been described by art critics as a 'supreme recorder of time passing'. Most recently she has explored the vast ice floes and islands of the Arctic's Northwest Passage, around Baffin Island and Hudson's Bay, a three-year exploration that resulted in a universally praised exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy in 2018 during Edinburgh International Art Festival, before moving to Orkney and London. Here one of the Friends describes one of Rae's works in her possession. Friends might also like to note that in 1969 Rae presented her second solo exhibition at the then young University of York.*

### Urban Ruin, Barbara Rae RA



Barbara Rae, *Urban Ruin*, reproduced with the permission of the artist

Barbara Rae's work radiates a vitality and energy that arrest the viewer, and her rich and radiant colours delight the eye. But I find that these paintings also challenge us to think beyond her distillation of landscape, and to reflect more deeply on our ever-evolving world and its inhabitants. Beneath her near-abstract style lie not only long sessions with her sketchbook in many remote and challenging parts of the world but also her interest in, and interaction with, those who live in these distant regions.

We will find Rae's bold paintings in our public art galleries and at the Royal Academy's annual Summer Exhibition, but what remains out of sight on these occasions is the treasure trove of her smaller jewel-like paintings,

some just the size of a postcard. Our illustration is such an example, a mere twelve inches square. It depicts a trashed and graffitied building in a near-abandoned village in the mountains of Andalusia. Such scenes occur from time to time in her work, revealing human stories of loss and dispersal. For me, this little picture suggests that perhaps failing resources and income have forced a family to abandon its home, allowing it to fall victim to destructive forces. It is left to the exploring artist to discover and revitalise such a scene, granting it a canvas existence that prolongs its survival and even allows us to find beauty in dereliction.

### **A Friend of York Art Gallery**

June 2020

*Anne McLean, our Website and Online Communications Officer, writes about a little-known York artist, whose activities helped lead to the foundation of York Art Gallery*

### John Bell, Artist of York (1823-1881)



*York From Scarborough Railway Bridge, John Bell*

Photo credit: York Museums Trust

John Bell was an obscure York artist who, for a brief time, played a significant role in the cultural life of his home city. He helped organise the Yorkshire Fine Arts and Industrial Exhibition, which was held in the summer of 1866 in a temporary building in the grounds of Bootham Hospital. The success of the exhibition – it attracted 338,000 visitors and made a profit of £2,200 – led to the establishment of the permanent exhibition hall in Exhibition Square, which now houses York Art Gallery.

The 1866 exhibition building contained two galleries dedicated to the Fine Arts, allowing space for nine hundred pictures to be displayed. As a member of the Fine Arts Committee, John Bell was involved in the arrangement of the pictures, providing assistance to the Secretary, William Wallace Hargrove, who was the proprietor of the York Herald.

Hargrove owned the three paintings in the exhibition that were painted by Bell himself. These were a view of Capri and two local landscapes, [York from Scarborough Bridge](#) and [York from Skeldergate Ferry](#), which passed to York Art Gallery from Hargrove's estate in 1919. Bell also designed the exhibition prize medal, which is a superb example of medallion art and an outstanding celebration of civic pride. Figures from classical mythology and York's historical past highlight its antiquity and status as the capital of Yorkshire, the centre of arts, science, learning and justice. There are vignettes of the artist William Etty and the sculptor John Flaxman, both natives of York, of whom the City was particularly proud.



Yorkshire Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition prize medal designed by J. Bell, 1866.

Photo credit: P.McLean

A brief account of Bell's life can be found in the manuscript 'Dictionary of York Artists' by John Ward Knowles (1838-1931). According to Knowles, Bell was born in 1823 and died in 1881. These dates differ from those given on the ART UK website (accessed on 20 May 2020) of 1793 and 1861, but are supported by evidence from parish records, newspaper reports, and other sources. Furthermore, the artist is unlikely to have died in 1861, because the painting *York from Scarborough Railway Bridge* includes an image of Lendal Bridge, which did not open until 1863.

John Bell was born in Walmgate, York, in 1823 to Thomas Bell, a joiner, and his wife Mary, née Hazelwood. He was baptised on 26 November 1823 at Saint Margaret's Church, Walmgate. Parish records show that he had six younger siblings, including a sister, Ann. He was educated at Hope Street School, Walmgate, and for a while worked as an apprentice in his father's trade, but a talent for drawing was spotted and he enrolled at the newly founded York School of Design. Initially, he thrived there and won prizes for his artwork, but he does not appear to have completed the course. As Knowles put it, 'being of a frolicsome disposition he unfortunately carried his pranks too far, and was suspended'. We will never know what the pranks were, but this anecdote provides a tantalising glimpse into the young man's character.

After leaving the York School of Design, Bell took lessons from the local artist and scenery painter, Thomas Edward Newnum, before moving to London to pursue a career as a professional artist. In London he produced pencil sketches and copies for printmakers, before turning to oil painting and making enough money to travel to Italy to practice landscape painting. He returned via Paris, where he was hired by an English firm to sketch objects at the Paris Industrial Exhibition. This was strictly against the rules and amounted to industrial espionage, so he appears to have done it surreptitiously. After returning to York, he set up a studio in College Yard and worked closely with the principal of York School of Art (as the York School of Design had been renamed) until a 'misunderstanding' between the two men resulted in a move to premises in Hull Road. Once again, we have the impression of a characterful individual.

After the 1866 exhibition Bell painted a 'large and fine' landscape of Newstead Abbey, but his attempts to master a technique referred to as 'transparent painting' were unsuccessful (if you know what this technique entailed, do please get in touch). The reaction to a transparent painting he produced for the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1869 must have been disappointing. Knowles described it as a failure because 'it was too much crowded with work and he did not understand the use of Transparent colours sufficiently to obtain brilliance'. Two ceilings painted by Bell in a newly built mansion were similarly dismissed on the grounds of poor artistic technique. Perhaps it was due to a downturn in his career that he moved to Scarborough, where he became well known as a local

landscape artist and is recorded there in the census of 1871. The Scarborough Gazette mentioned that some of his best paintings could be seen at the gallery of Mr Edward Fadon in Huntriss Row. In 1875 another newspaper reported that some of Bell's 'well-known' paintings of Scarborough were being exhibited in Leeds, and the following year a Fine Arts auction, also in Leeds, included some of his Italian landscapes.

On 6 May 1881, a death notice appeared in the York Herald stating that John Bell, son of Thomas Bell, had died in Edinburgh on 1 May. He was fifty-seven years old. The death, from tuberculosis and bronchitis, was registered by his sister, Ann. The certificate has the correct names of his parents, including the maiden name of his mother, and lists his occupation as landscape painter. It appears reasonably certain that this is the same John Bell who once played an active role in York artistic circles and contributed to York's cultural history through his role on the organising committee of the 1866 Yorkshire Fine Arts and Industrial Exhibition.

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