



Henry Lamb RA (1883-1960)

PEOPLE AND PORTRAITS

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Henry Lamb was an Australian-born British painter who is most well-known for his portrait of the eminent writer and biographer Lytton Strachey, which now belongs to the Tate. He was the son of a mathematician, Horace Lamb, and was brought up in Manchester where, after encouragement from his parents, he read Medicine at the Medical School of Owen's College. Later abandoning his degree, he moved to London where he studied painting under William Orpen and Augustus John at the Chelsea School of Art. He was taught by Jacques-Emile Blanche in Paris in 1907 and again in 1911, spending two summers in Brittany where he painted his haunting and arguably most moving image, *Death of a Peasant*, 1911. Lamb's early work was influenced by Gauguin and his paintings were included in the second post-Impressionist exhibition held at the Grafton Galleries, London in 1913.



The outbreak of the First World War prompted Lamb to resume his medical studies and he became a Battalion Medical Officer with the Fifth Enniskillen Fusiliers, before being invalided home. During WWII he was appointed an official War Artist from 1940-45. Shortly before the war, in 1938, he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the then Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Standing tall, top-hat in one hand and umbrella in the other, the sketch for the oil commemorates the moment before which Chamberlain left England, on his way to negotiations in the pursuit of peace with Hitler in Germany. In August 1928 Lamb married his second wife, the novelist Lady Pansy Pakenham. The couple moved to Coombe Bissett in Wiltshire to raise a family. Their house 'Brookside' was to be Lamb's home until his death in 1960.



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Saturday 26 May – Sunday 8 July 2018

The Studio Estate of Henry Lamb is represented by Messums Wiltshire.

MESSUMS WILTSHIRE

Henry Lamb - *The Artist at Home*

Felicia Palmer née Lamb

Henry Lamb RA is now best remembered for his ground-breaking pictures from before and after the First World War, and for his connections with bohemian circles between 1904 and 1914. By the time I, the last survivor of his three children was born in 1933, his work had settled into a less exciting pattern of portraiture and genre scenes. Examples are all over the world; from the National Museum of New Zealand (which has a version of the extraordinary Death of a Peasant) to boardrooms and college Senior Common Rooms in this country and the walls of many private collectors.

All this enormous volume of work was underpinned by observant and highly skilled drawings, and I am so glad that these are being celebrated in this exhibition. Along with Prince Charles, I would like to think that the importance of drawing is being reassessed, especially by modern art teachers.

My memories of my father are mixed up with his work. Every morning, after breakfast in the cold dining room in our damp house in Coombe Bissett, he went down the passage which was lined with drawings by Henry Moore; we children never looked at them, but they were a great financial legacy for my mother. His studio was a barn-like addition to the house, high ceilinged with a huge north window. It did, however, have a coke stove, so

he did not always have to wear the fingerless mittens which he took to when his arthritis was severe. Canvases – work in progress and blanks ready for work – were stacked all round. Drawings and preparatory studies for pictures were on tables or in sketchbooks. Palettes were on low tables; tubes of oil paint in open boxes, brushes soaking in jam jars.

There he worked until lunchtime, often altering paintings which the sitter had hoped were almost finished but found at the next meeting had still many hours to go. After lunch, having drunk a cup of carefully drip-filtered coffee with my mother as she did The Times crossword in pencil and rubbed it out and handed it over for him to try, and eaten one chocolate from his Charbonnel & Walker box, he went back to the studio before a walk – a ‘brisk’ as he called it - around the village. After tea, he came back down to clean his brushes, and often did a bit more work. Sometimes he took an afternoon off and went for a longer expedition, on occasion taking one of us with him to explore the Downs. With any luck, if we had walked well, we might get a visit to the pub at Bishopstone, at that time a homely place where the landlady would serve us tea with bread, butter and delicious home-made jam.

In the evenings we huddled round an open fire in the drawing room while he played the piano – not altogether an unmixed pleasure as we could not talk and had to listen while he attacked an unruly phrase of music over and over again. I can never hear the Mozart A major sonata with its Turkish rondo without recalling those evenings.

In an echo of my mother's idea of a well-run home; the running being done by someone else, she hoped, we ate all our meals in the dining room round the big table memorably portrayed in the painting from my father's time in Poole called The Tea Party. Here there was a single bar electric fire, only turned on as the meal was served. Here we sat, while some unhappy skivvy brought in meals of varying quality (these were the days of both food and fuel rationing). We soon



cottoned onto whether my father was in a good or bad mood. If good, he talked, giving wonderful descriptions of people he had met, or ideas about art and books and music in which everybody, however young, had their opinions respected. If bad, it was a nervy silence, sometimes interrupted when he could bear my table manners no longer and got up with a roar to chastise me. Fortunately I sat with my back to the door and usually managed to escape before he caught me. There was a memorable moment when one of those skivvies, bringing in a pudding, dropped it on the floor. My father leapt up, saying ‘we mustn’t waste this!’ and as we children recoiled in horror, scraped it up and spooned it onto our plates. After that, the recipe (apples with cake topping) was known as ‘Floor Pudding’.

My father was often away, working on commissions in either the

studio he rented in Kensington, or occasionally staying in the remote country houses where he was working on portraits of a family. When he came back he was always full of fascinating stories of what he had done (the country house visits often being a stressful experience). Nobody could be a better companion, but he was volatile and we were never quite sure of him. I can remember so well in the days before 1940 when I still had a nanny, being turned with my sister out into the garden ‘to play’ while she sat cosily in the kitchen with the cook of the time. It was a freezing day and when we went to the kitchen door and said, ‘could we come in’ the nanny answered, ‘young blood needs no fires!’ and slammed the door in our faces. Weeping with cold, we wandered round the garden behind the studio and my father heard us, brought us in and stood us on his stove. We were lucky on this occasion but if



we annoyed him then heaven help us. He was highly strung at best, often unwell, in his fifties and not very attuned to children and his tongue-lashings were as unforgettable as his great affection and charm.

He was not nostalgic and never reminisced about the golden days of his bohemian youth. When we got older and were curious about all those pre-1914 characters, he had either forgotten them or dismissed them in cutting terms. Of his first marriage, to the legendary Euphemia, he just said ‘the marriage was the end of the affair’ though her son married the daughter of his great friend Darsie Japp and he wrote an affectionate letter about her on her death.

With new people, he was like a nervous cat. My mother said he had ‘no second gear’ meaning he couldn’t get on with people on a superficial level. It was either great warmth or great cold. He had automatic contempt for what he called ‘art boys’ – critics, dealers and even people who were just interested – until he got to know them and even like them. He was the same with new sitters, starting by saying how their conversation was as dismal as their appearance, but growing to appreciate their characters and enjoy their personalities. As for the dedicated spinsters who taught us at the Godolphin School in Salisbury, recalled when younger staff had gone off for war service – he had few good words for them. Neither he nor my mother had seen the point of us going to school; their efforts at home-schooling were patchy and they took as little notice of reports as they did of our earnest entreaties for the right outfits.

Old friends, like the Japps, the Johns, the Cecils, the Partridges, were welcome, but not if they called at the wrong time and without warning. Even the Behrends, who had been generous and loyal patrons for many years, made the mistake once of calling when he was listening to the St Matthew Passion on the radio – a rare treat in those pre-recording days. He hid behind the sofa and my mother had to tell them he was out. He had been close

and generous to Stanley Spencer when the younger man was an ignorant and impoverished student, but was worn out by his egotistical importuning. Stanley’s brother Gilbert, though, was always welcome.

It is impossible to pin down my father’s mercurial character, just as impossible as Lytton Strachey or Ottoline Morrell or Virginia Woolf or Rupert Brooke found it to be when they wrote about him in their voluminous letters. He flashed in and out of so many



lives, leaving a lasting impression which nobody could capture in words. His young sitters in the last years of his life and the friends of us children as we grew up were as enchanted as the socialites he met in the 1920s. As an old man, his bitter tongue was usually silent as he battled with infirmity.

My lasting memories, though, are of somebody always at work. Every day, he worked. Even on motoring holidays through France, he always had a sketchbook. These sketches, of corners of town and landscapes, of babies, of old people gossiping, as well as the numerous studies before he started a portrait, are among his greatest legacy. He lived, he loved, but work was his passion.

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PEOPLE AND PORTRAITS

The aim of this exhibition is not to re-evaluate Lamb’s oeuvre from any radical new position, but instead to shift our attention onto his many pencil drawings and watercolour sketches, often produced in preparation for some of his best-known canvases. In doing so, we refocus the critical lens on his subjects: their lives, loves and deaths as well as their immortalisation in pencil, pen and paint. The artistic and literary world of early twentieth-century Britain was famously intertwined and incestuous, yet previously unknown personal accounts and records continue to bring fresh insight into this period. When researching Lamb’s extensive inventory of sketches and drawings – a veritable nexus of faces – impossible and nebulous connections between individuals and groups rise to the surface, be they familial, romantic, academic or business in origin and as vital then as the twenty-first century phenomenon of social media is today.

The intention here is to illustrate the network of London’s liberal elite, especially before and between the two World Wars. The wars changed everything for Lamb, as they did for most: outlook, priorities and importantly, for our present purposes, subjects. Before 1914 Lamb was a reluctant associate of several metropolitan art collectives, including the Bloomsbury Group, a term which came to denote a group both reviled and revered in British art circles from 1910 to circa 1940.

Lamb knew and was known to Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Augustus and his sister Dorelia John, Lytton Strachey and family, Lady Ottoline Morrell and painter Duncan Grant to name but a few. He could abide hardly any of them. On the fringes of Mancunian bohemia Lamb was to meet his first wife, the wild and untameable Nina Forrester, known to all as Euphemia. Lamb ‘rechristened’ her such after the Mantegna painting *Saint Euphemia* (1454). She was an artist’s model and ‘general nymph’, said by economist John Maynard Keynes to have had ‘more sex than the rest of us put together’. She posed for Sir Jacob Epstein and Ambrose McEvoy and was once a lover of the infamous occultist and Satanist Aleister Crowley. She and Lamb parted ways only shortly after their marriage in 1906 and Lamb was to remarry in 1928.

Henry Lamb: People & Portraits presents the sketches, drawings, watercolours and preparatory paintings of some of Lamb’s most impressive portraits. Through the acuity of his observation, witnessed in these preliminary works, this introduction will re-examine the personalities active at the cultural and governmental heart of Edwardian England, whilst around them was wrought a general disintegration of class and gender division, engendered by the nearing depravity of war.

Laura Grace Simpkins
Assistant Curator

I NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

First the Chancellor of the Exchequer and then a reforming Minister for Health in successive Conservative governments, Neville Chamberlain succeeded Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1937 to his resignation in 1940, followed swiftly by his untimely death, the very same year.

Lamb's reputation for portraiture grew during the course of the 1930s, culminating with the portrait of the Prime Minister, commissioned in 1938 by the Friends of Birmingham. Preparatory drawings for the three-quarter length portrait started at Downing Street during 1939, after which Lamb took a small pencil study (in this exhibition) with him, home to Coombe Bissett. To aid Lamb's long-distance attempts he was gifted several photographs of Chamberlain by the British Government, taken moments before the politician departed England on 15 September 1939 for his 'peace talks' with Germany. Yet before Lamb could work on the commission further in Wiltshire, war was declared on 3 September 1939. Meetings with Hitler had clearly proved a failure, although on his initial return Chamberlain had declared the Munich Agreement 'peace in our time'. Behind closed doors he ordered the acceleration of rearmament. It is conjected that Chamberlain knew Britain was unprepared for war and thus temporised in the face of growing enemy aggression until the eleventh hour.

The preparatory drawing for this commission, as well as the painting it foreshadows, can be said to exist within the gap between optimism and pessimism, between hope and fatalistic resignation. Lamb's drawing occurs on the critical point of both Chamberlain's biography and the history of the United Kingdom, at a time when the future really could have gone either way. The painting, by contrast, was completed after war had been declared, after talks had failed and when hope was lost.

Lamb has fabricated the background of both the drawing and the painting, choosing the classical trope of an ostentatious marble column as a theatrical backdrop to the right. The ancient origins of this pillar

are somewhat fitting, casting Chamberlain as the pillar of the establishment – an evocation made more poignant considering his fortitude in the advancement of terminal illness. Lamb's depiction of the Prime Minister highlights how out of his own time Chamberlain appears, to one critic looking quite out of his depth: 'an entrenched Edwardian straying too far into the twentieth-century'. The triple-breasted coat, top hat, leather gloves and walking stick in Lamb's drawing are features which augment this 'Edwardian' hypothesis and they are also vastly out of proportion to Chamberlain's small head – a costume which totally engulfs him. In a way this prophesies Chamberlain's unfortunate future, which neither Lamb with his artistic intuition nor Chamberlain with his political proficiency could have ever foreseen.



Neville Chamberlain, c.1939
Reproduced with kind permission of the
National Portrait Gallery, London.



1
Neville Chamberlain
(sketch for a painting)
1939
Pencil on Paper
13 x 10 inches

II T E LAWRENCE

Thomas Edward Lawrence was a British archaeologist renowned for his role as a Liaison Officer during the Sinai and Palestine Campaign, as well as the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. The breadth and variety of his activities and associations, compounded with his ability to describe them vividly and entrancingly in writing, earned him international fame as ‘Lawrence of Arabia’ – a title used for the 1962 film based on his life.

Of Lamb’s many house guests throughout his life there were his confidante and ex-Slade painter Dora Carrington, George Kennedy, Boris Anrep, Dorelia John and imperatively, of course, Lawrence. Alongside his virtuoso draughtsmanship, Lamb was a talented musician and Lawrence greatly enjoyed Lamb’s piano recitals. In fact, the distinguished art critic Roger Fry – who incidentally Lamb intently disliked – ‘enjoyed Henry’s painting no more than Henry liked his and always thought that Henry should have been a pianist’.

Lawrence’s youthful and instantly recognisable features are cleverly realised by Lamb’s use of precise, economic strokes. Lamb’s technical prowess can be seen to triangulate the often-binary relationship between sitter and painter, extending an invitation of communication outwards to the modern-day viewer. The intimate, cropped style and soft, muted rendition of Lawrence is no different. Under Lamb’s pencil he emerges a sympathetically domesticated subject, seeming like a friend or relative, rather than a famous face drawn more than a century ago.

Lawrence was often the object of artistic interest; he was painted by Augustus John and sculpted by Eric Kennington. His most famous book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, an autobiographic account of his participation in the Arab Revolt, had a privately printed subscribers’ edition published in 1926. This run comprised a total of 125 illustrations commissioned from an impressive list of British and American artists including John Singer Sargent, Paul Nash, John and Lamb. Lamb’s involvement included a pencil drawing of Brigadier-General Guy Dawnay, who assisted with the 1926 edition of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

At the age of forty-six, just two months after leaving military service, Lawrence was fatally injured in a motorcycle accident, swerving to avoid two boys on bicycles. He lost control of the bike and was thrown over the handlebars. He died six days later on 19 May 1935.



III THE TENNIS GIRL

Eileen Bennett was a young Wimbledon star whose portrait Lamb began in the autumn of 1926 and completed fortunately before her poor father lost everything he owned in the stock market crash of the following year. Bennett won six Grand Slam doubles titles from 1927-1931. She was ranked in the world top ten in 1928, 1929, 1931 and 1932, reaching a career high of World No. 3 in 1931. Although most of her success was in women's doubles or mixed doubles, Bennett reached the singles final of the 1928 French Championships and the 1931 US Championships.

The painting of *The Tennis Girl* (titled after Henry's pet name for her) was studied for and started in the model's family sitting room. Bennett was nineteen. The following year she was to win the first of her many Grand Slam titles. The painting, shown at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1928, was formally named *Portrait of Miss Eileen Bennett*; it then disappeared into a private collection.

The full-length sketch of Bennett, tennis racket poised ready in her playing hand, is remarkable not only for its subject matter but for its curious artistic interpretation. Bennett is credited with popularising an above-the-knee form of divided skirt for competitive tennis and though years before this reputation for pioneering style manifested, tennis and fashion are of equal importance in the drawing. In Lamb's rendition Bennett wears an on-the-knee A-line white tennis dress with a statement collar. This sketch, linear and more illustrative than the style we ordinarily credit Lamb with would not look at all amiss as a fashion plate on the pages of 1920s Vogue. This image is thus an important document for pre-empting our modern take on trends and trend-setters, popularly known now as 'influencers'.



With her short, box-fringed bob – a hairstyle which revolutionary young women were rather politically sporting – there is something of the androgynous flapper to Bennett, comparable to F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jordan Baker, who was, rather fittingly, a fictional professional golfer. Lamb's portrayal of this talented women is empowering, emboldening and encouraging. Bennett, with all her youth, all her 'innocence and charm' as one critic wrote, is treated as a professional and as an equal. In his monograph *Henry Lamb: The Artist and his Friends* Keith Clements observes, 'It looks too, as if he responded momentarily to the spirit of an age – at least to a perhaps frivolous aspect of the Twenties'. Lamb would have decidedly rejected any notion of an affinity with Art Deco, but this decorative drawing does indicate a brief brush with a mode closer to illustration and graphic design.



3
Eileen Bennett
'The Tennis Girl'
c. 1926
Pencil on Paper
19 x 12 inches

IV SIR DAN GODFREY

After (or perhaps even equal to) painting, music was Lamb’s greatest passion. He was an accomplished pianist and habitually hummed Mozart as he worked, at least according to his sitters’ anecdotes. Peter Davies in his chapter on Henry Lamb in *Art in Poole & Dorset* records that Lamb habitually listened to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and in 1924 he painted a large canvas of the ensemble performing. Later on, during 1936, a portrait of Sir Dan Godfrey, the conductor of the orchestra for many years, was commissioned from Lamb by a fund organised by Lady Hedlam Morley whose supporters included Kenneth Clark and Vaughan Williams. The portrait was to be presented at the close of the Music Festival 1936 at the Bournemouth Pavilion in recognition of the musician’s great work.

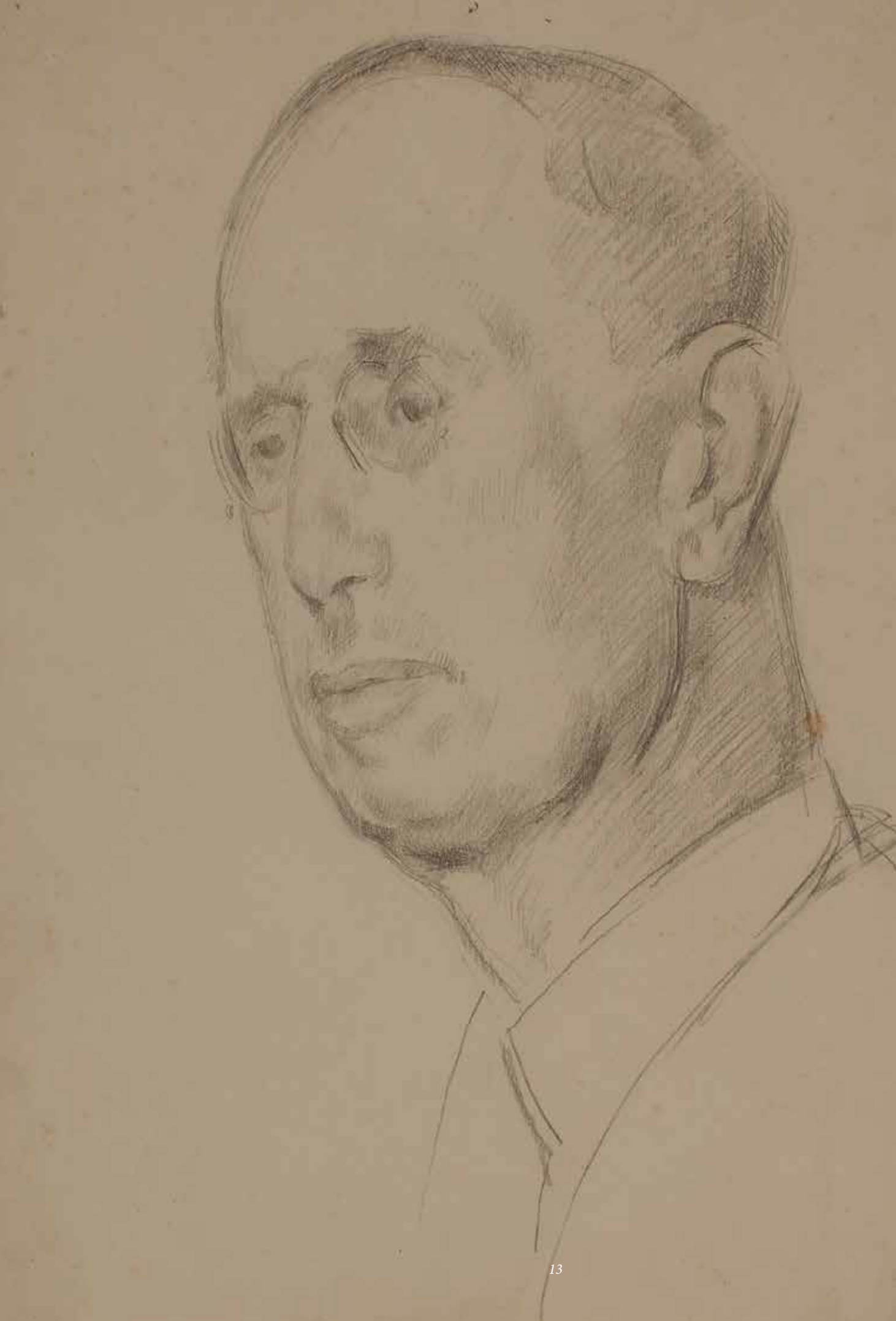
The painting depicts a three-quarter length portrait of Godfrey, suited and booted smartly in concert dress, holding his conductor’s baton. The orchestra totals six and a half players: with the half’s face cut off in the closed, dramatic crop determined by the impressive composition. They have just finished playing and their instruments range from violins and cellos to a piccolo. The arrangement of these figures on the canvas is rather daring, some even half-covered by the energetic, almost abstract, lime-green background in a manner which calls to mind the mid-century expressiveness of Steven Spurrier and Walter Sickert.

The study of Godfrey’s visage was undertaken from life at Lamb’s studio at Coombe Bissett where he came to sit several times. Lamb may have then ‘transposed’ the portrait of Godfrey onto a stock motif of a conductor’s jacket and tie. The treatment of Godfrey’s features is soft here, with its patches of elegant, sweeping lengths of pencil delineating the conductor’s hairline and the shadow on his neck.



Sir Dan Godfrey, 1936
Reproduced with kind permission of the
Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth.

Despite some positive comments in the press when it was shown at the Royal Academy, Godfrey did not like the finished painting. Norman Silvester, the curator at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery, where the painting was to hang, stated ‘I do not like it and no one whom I have met has liked it’. The image was also caricatured in *Punch* magazine with the caption, ‘Muscular development of the neck induced by the continual acknowledgement of applause’. This sardonic reference was to the odd positioning of Godfrey’s neck, resulting in its looking twisted. Yet a local newspaper source argued that if Lamb himself liked the work, that should be good enough for everyone: ‘On the other hand, the fact that a Royal Academician who inspected the painting this week said he was quite pleased with it is a reminder that lay criticism of a work of art is subject to a certain obvious limitation’.



*Sir Dan Godfrey
(sketch for a
painting)
1936
14 x 9 inches*

V MOLLIE COURTAULD

Mollie Montgomerie married into one of the United Kingdom's most celebrated families, historically famed for their donations used for the building of schools, hospitals and even domestic housing. The family are the founders of the internationally renowned Courtauld Institute of Art, today part of the University of London.

She met Augustine (August) Courtauld on the Cambridge spring ball circuit. He was a yachtsman and British Arctic explorer. For a year from 1930 he was the solo meteorologist of the winter observation post, Icecap Station in Greenland. This achievement delayed their wedding, which finally took place in 1931. Mollie fulfilled her duty as the textbook wife of an explorer: they spent their honeymoon camel trekking in remote Sudan, holidayed together in boats off Norway and Scotland and trepidatiously climbed Greenland's highest mountains. The couple raised six children together. After Augustine died of multiple sclerosis in 1959, Mollie married the Conservative Home Secretary Rab Butler, whose wife, August's cousin, Sydney Courtauld, had died in 1954. Butler went on to become Foreign Secretary and was tipped to be the next Prime Minister. In 1988, after Butler's death six years earlier, Mollie wrote *August and Rab*, a captivating memoir describing her unusually full and adventurous life concerning family, travel and politics.

Lamb's pencil drawing is not dated, but it is possible to assume it was a study for a later commission. The gentle turn of Mollie's neck is mirrored in both the preparatory painting and sketch for *Mollie Courtauld and Children* — triple portraits with two young children from her first marriage. Her elegant, dreamy looking side profile is typical of Lamb's handling of beautiful 'upper class' women. His depictions of famous young socialites, including his great friend and society hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell and artistic muse Edie McNeill, show them fashionably immortalised, evocative of an era and (poignantly) as the bright young things at the beginning of the century. These stunning women in their pearl earrings, with tightly-curled hair and ruby red lips add glitter to Lamb's oeuvre as he captures the heady lifestyle of a socialite at this time.



5
Mollie Courtauld
 Pencil on Paper
 14 x 10 inches

VI JOAN PERNEL STRACHEY

Lamb was commissioned to paint Joan Pernel Strachey in 1926. Her brother was the novelist and critic, Lytton Strachey – the subject of the most famous Lamb painting hanging in the Tate. Theirs was a very well-connected family. A friend of her mother’s, Millicent Garret Fawcett, co-founded Newnham College, Cambridge in 1871. Strachey herself studied Modern Medieval Languages there in 1895. She then lectured at Royal Holloway before returning to her alma mater in 1905. She became principal of the college twenty-two years later, in 1927. Strachey was great friends with Virginia Woolf who stayed at Newnham in 1928. Woolf’s talk to Newnham Arts Society is said to be the basis for one of her most famous pieces of writing: *A Room of One’s Own*.

It is plausible that this commission would have come to Lamb through Strachey’s brother Lytton or perhaps Lamb’s eldest sister Helen, who was an academic at the college. At the time of painting Strachey was herself a don of the college, before becoming principal the following year. The sitting for the sketch took place in Lamb’s studio, where the ‘angelic Pernel came...every morning’. ‘I find her quite fascinating’ wrote Henry in his letters. According to Clements, ‘Miss Pernel Strachey [the portrait] is a delightful, lively, even gently witty, portrait, a happy fusion of Henry’s previous, precise style with the looser, more vigourous, approach of his mature years’.

Lamb’s treatment of his subject is immediately scholarly, yet to superficially categorise it as solely this would be to underappreciate the subtle complexities of the work. In the pencil drawing, to the uninformed viewer, Strachey’s dress appears traditionally academic, alluding to the black, ornate robes of a fellow’s gown. Indeed, most academics in Lamb’s oeuvre have been depicted wearing a sombre, academic gown, those such as *Ernest Alfred Benians*, 1944 and *Sir David Emrys Evans*, 1953 for example.

In the painting however, Lamb treats her dress contrary to the expectations set up by his preparatory drawing. Instead of conventional black he uses a wild mustard colour with a dappled orange pattern.

This change in colour is perhaps a judgement on the part of Lamb on women academics (and the need to treat them differently), or, most likely, something different altogether: a comment on the uniqueness and unpredictability of the Strachey siblings perhaps. It transpires that Lamb has depicted Strachey in her ‘coat of many colours’ (which she was famous for) rather than an academic gown. When aware of this fact we are able to notice all of the details of this iconic piece of outerwear in the initial drawing.

Comparing Strachey’s portrait to that of her brother’s, there are some convincing similarities, namely the choice of colour palette, composition and elongated stylisation of both figures and their surroundings. Clement writes, ‘The painting also shows a sensitive appreciation of the sitter and perhaps some incidental charm comes from the family resemblance – how like Lytton she looks. Though the large ‘Lytton’ is the more remarkable, original image, ‘Pernel’ is technically the superior painting’.



Joan Pernel Strachey, 1926
Reproduced with kind permission of the Principal
and Fellows of Newnham College, Cambridge.



6
Joan Pernel Strachey
(sketch for a painting)
1926
Pencil on Paper
11 ½ x 9 inches

VII WOMEN ACADEMICS

Lamb was remarkably well-connected in academic circles, his father had been a professor of Mathematics at Manchester and his eldest sister, Helen was a don at Newnham College, Cambridge. Helen may have been involved in the commissioning of this oil of five fellows of St Hugh’s College, Oxford in the Mordan Library, marking the college’s Jubilee year. The study for *Group Portrait*, (1936) shows from left to right Evelyn Procter, History Tutor; Edith Wardale, English Language Tutor and Honorary Fellow; Elizabeth Francis, French Tutor; Barbara Gwyer, Principal; and Cecilia Ady, History Tutor and Research Fellow. A preparatory sketch of Elizabeth Francis, the French Tutor at the centre of the composition can be viewed in the exhibition.

Founded by Elizabeth Wordsworth in 1886 and originally for women only, St Hugh’s was one of the last of Oxford’s single sex colleges, opening its doors to men in its centenary year, 1986. Women in Oxbridge were still a rarity at the point of this painting: the first women’s colleges were founded not long ago towards the end of the nineteenth-century and women became full members of the University in 1920. For some reason, perhaps even unbeknownst to him, Lamb found himself painting many pioneering women, including female politicians such as *Lady Megan Lloyd George* as well as academics *Alice Havergal Skillicorn*, (Principal of Homerton College) and Joan Pernel Strachey.

The study for the *Group Portrait*, (1936) is particularly striking for its use of colour and dynamic pyramidal composition. The large bookshelf, blackboard, papers and paperweight are props which each contribute to setting the stage for this archetypal library. A ladder has been added into the final oil painting where it isn’t in the watercolour sketch. The element of theatre is only emphasised by the emerald green curtain to the right-hand side.

Today it seems thought-worthy that these five women are portrayed together as a group. Such a format is still quite rare in Oxbridge colleges, whereby important male academics, usually masters or dons, are often depicted on their own canvases. The convention of a group for female scholars perhaps indicates

the inferior status and generally lower funds of and donations to women’s colleges at the time. Artistic likenesses of women in historically male Oxbridge colleges are still rather few in number. In 2017, St Peter’s, Oxford (one of many institutions beginning to address this issue), commissioned two paintings and three photographs of women associated with the college, in order to redress the gender balance on the walls of the dining room.



Group Portrait, 1936
Reproduced with kind permission of the Principal and Fellows of St Hugh’s College, Oxford.



7
Sketch for Group Portrait
(St Hugh’s College, Oxford)
c.1936
Watercolour on Paper
13¾ x 17 inches

VIII PEOPLE AT WAR

At the outbreak of the First World War Lamb returned to his previously deserted medical studies, qualifying at Guy’s Hospital, London. From 1916 he served as a Medical Officer in Macedonia, Palestine, (winning a Military Cross there) and France, where he was gassed at the very end of the war. During his time on the frontline Lamb made countless sketches as an unofficial war artist.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Lamb was selected by the War Office as an official War Artist. The celebrated art historian Kenneth Clark – a great friend of Lamb’s – was, ostensibly, instrumental to the appointment. This employment was, of course, quite different to Lamb’s previous experience of war, where he had been stationed in hospitals on the front line. The second time around, aged fifty-seven, he remained in Britain for the duration and made portraits of servicemen and women from life. According to Clements in his biography of Lamb, ‘Portraiture was Henry’s main work as an official war artist and, between 1940 and ’42 he made more than one hundred drawings and paintings of servicemen’. The world of difference between his WWI and WWII experiences meant that Lamb felt detached from his observations and in a sense, in 1940, ‘he was something of a voyeur’. However with retrospect we might consider these Homefront observations to be something of a unique perspective.

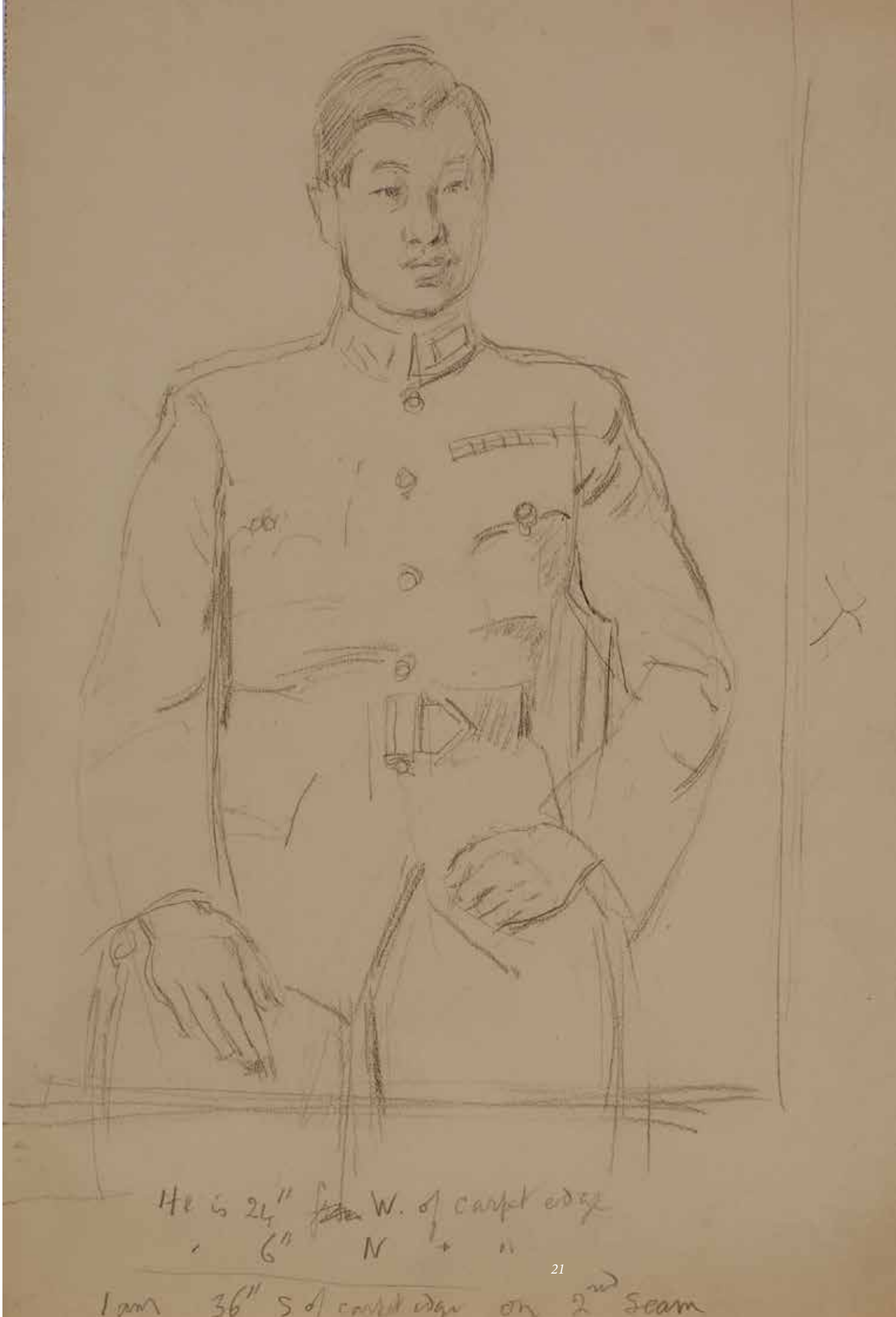
At the end of October 1940, Lamb was invited to apply for a full-time appointment as a portrait painter with the War Office, to succeed the late Reginald Eves. In 1941 he began work on portraits of airmen stationed near at the Old Sarum military base in Wiltshire. Myriad paintings remain from this period and most – including the vivid green rendition of *Frederick Edward Whittaker CB, OBE* and an image of Polish *General Bronislaw Regulski CB* painted in 1941 – are now in the Imperial War Museum. What is striking to the modern viewer, aside from the sheer volume of portraits, is the diversity of the sitters. Too frequently

women and those from other countries and cultures are overlooked in our histories of European warfare and are seldom immortalised in pencil sketches let alone oil paintings. This facet of Lamb’s oeuvre is a key discovery and merits subsequent academic research.

Pencil sketches and watercolours of some of the most varied portraits include *Chief Controller Leslie Violet Lucy Whateley, CBE* complete with beautiful mauve hyacinths, *Commanding Officer of the Royal Indian Army Service Corps Major Mahomed Akbar Khan* and *Colonel Tang Paohuang*. The sketch for the oil painting of Chinese Colonel Tang Paohuang (1941) is particularly endearing, with his peaceful and patient expression. Paohuang’s countenance is possibly representative of Lamb’s approach to documenting WWII – attempting to stress the humanity and individuality of those involved.



Colonel Tang Paohuang, 1941
Reproduced with kind permission of the
Imperial War Museum, London.



8
*Colonel Tang
Paohuang*
1941
Pencil on Paper
12 x 8½ inches

IX THE BEHREND FAMILY

Husband and wife Mary and Louis Behrend spent most of their lives helping young artists. The couple are known as the patrons of Stanley Spencer's murals on the interior of Burghclere Memorial Chapel in Berkshire. Davies in 'Henry Lamb in Poole 1922-1928' describes how Spencer met George Behrend at Lamb's Hill Street house during 1923. Facilitated by such a serendipitous meeting, Spencer was commissioned by this generous patron of Lamb's to paint the large and now legendary murals in memory of Mary Behrend's brother, who had died in 1919 after an illness contracted during the war. The Behrends bought the site for the chapel near their home in Hampshire, instructing their architect, Lionel Pearson, to construct the building exactly in the way Spencer envisaged it. The artist was to have complete freedom with his subject matter.

Although the story of Burghclere is well-documented, it must be mentioned that Lamb is rarely given the proper credit for his role in the initial stages of the scheme. According to Fiona MacCarthy in *Stanley Spencer: An English Vision*, Spencer was, 'for once', both gracious and grateful for this generous and demanding project. His response of 'What ho, Giotto!' – a self-comparison with the legendary painter of the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua perhaps further underlines the high esteem in which he was held and indeed held himself.

After patronising the chapel of Spencer, the Behrends perhaps felt as though they ought to do something else for Lamb. In 1926 they commissioned from him a family portrait, with their two children, Juley and George. The little boy would have been four and the sister another year older or so. Lamb made several sketches of each of the family separately and at least two prep studies exist for the group. Lamb's attention to music here is imperative, with the Mozart book on the music stand, the grand piano in the background and the violin presented in its case. Louis Behrend, with one child on his knee and the other peering over at the book in his lap, is portrayed as the father he wants to be, active in their children's intellectual and artistic development.



The Behrend Family, 1927
Reproduced with kind permission of the Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove.

Over a decade earlier, in 1912, Lamb had undertaken a portrait of Mary. Mary had 'rather fallen for Henry; he was flattered too'. They played sonatas together, him at the piano and her on the violin, though sadly not well enough for Lamb's high standards. There is some indication of Lamb's sly humour in the handling of Mary in the family portrait, her book is closed and she stares distractedly outwards. 'Does she not gaze wistfully at the artist as she must have done in 1912?' Clements asks. With its lovely handling of character, composition, colour and scale, *The Behrend Family* remains among the most entrancing of Lamb's group portraits.



9
The Behrend Family
1927
Watercolour on Paper
10 x 8½ inches

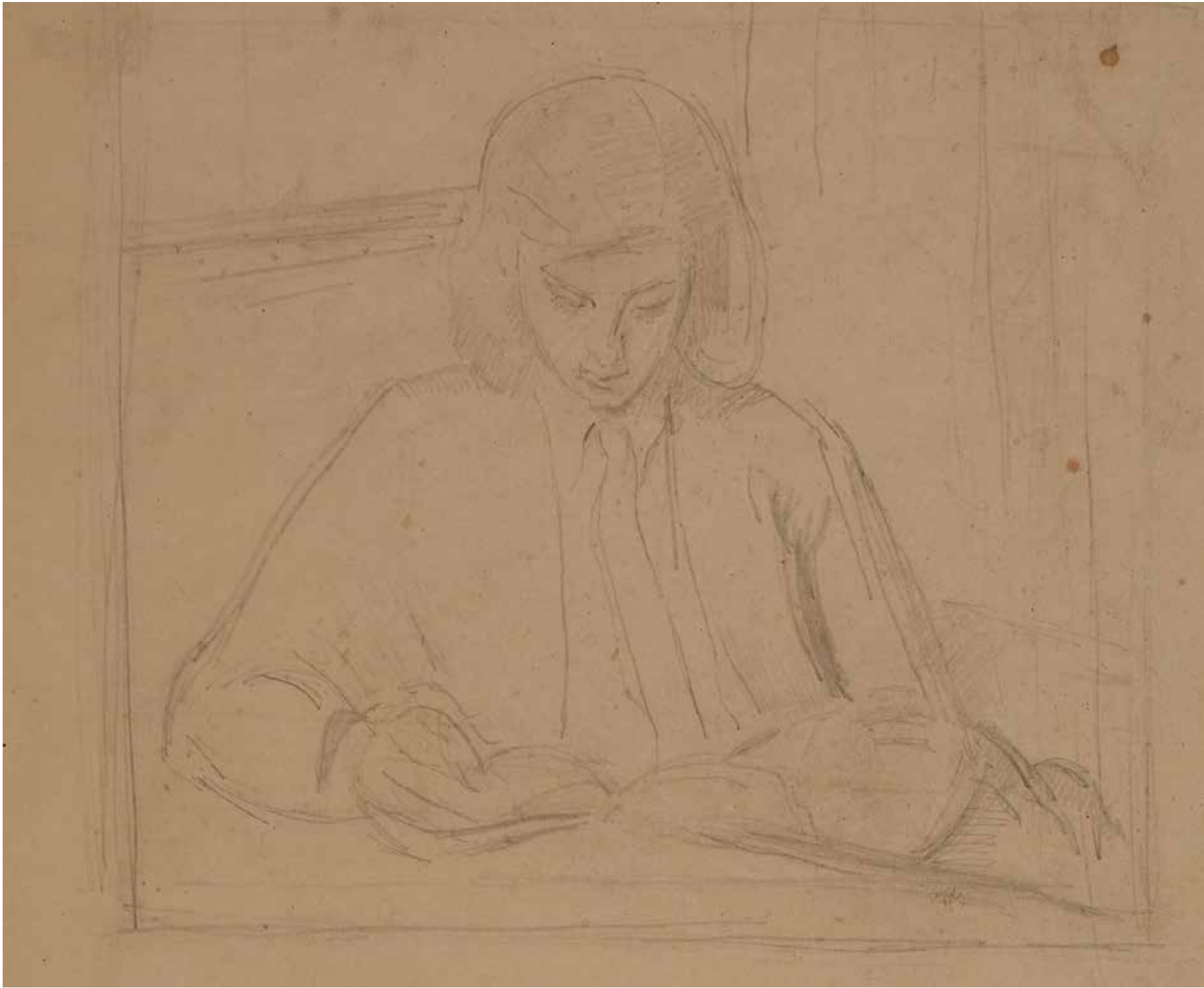
X THE LAMB FAMILY

In 1928, Lamb and his new wife, Lady Pansy Pakenham, moved to Coombe Bissett in Wiltshire. Henry was forty-six. He “threw himself into family life with the same sort of energy and enthusiasm that he brought to everything else he did”, observed the novelist and brother-in-law Anthony Powell. Lamb’s ‘throwing himself into family life’ signifies a reversal of his priorities, in polar opposition to his previous, tumultuous marriage with unconventional Euphemia in smog-filled London. The period of Lamb in Wiltshire signifies a complete break with his younger self, in favour of a wholesome, family-orientated life in the idyllic countryside.

During the 1930s Lamb’s most available sitter was his wife, Pansy. She adored reading, but rarely appears to have been allowed to indulge in her passion while posing. ‘She was a continuous study, augmented first by a daughter, then another, and later, at the end of the decade, a son’. Indeed, the drawings and paintings of Lamb’s immediate family, as well as his own countless self-portraits, dominate his private sketchbooks and journals. Numerous paintings of his wife and children, those such as *The Yellow Jumper* 1931 and *Henrietta Reading* 1949 suggest that his repetitive sketches are indicative of a search for an artistic perfection to be found in composition. With a painting like *The Artist’s Wife, Lady Pansy Pakenham and Their Baby Daughter* (1932) we could possibly interpret a real sense of celebration of life with the return to age-old visual symbols such as cherubic children and breast-feeding mothers. Lamb’s fascination with death, understandably prevalent in his early war works, is arguably superseded by this renewed interest in enduring life – a more hopeful tone to his later oeuvre.

Among his visitors to Brookside at Coombe Bissett there were Bryan and Diana Guinness née Mitford, Lord David Cecil, Cecil Beaton, (who was a neighbour at Broad Chalke and the subject of a famous portrait), along with Kenneth Clark, L P Hartley and John Betjeman, who on one visit wrote the following verse detailing the idealised and harmonious living arrangements of the painter and his family:

*Oh, the calm of Coombe Bissett is tranquil and deep
Where Ebble flows soft in her downland asleep
And beauty to me came a pushing a pram
In the shape of the sweet Pansy, Felicia Lamb.*



10
Sketch for Henrietta Reading
c.1949
Pencil on Paper
10 x 9 inches



Henry Lamb RA (1883-1960)

PEOPLE AND PORTRAITS

The Studio Estate of Henry Lamb is represented by Messums Wiltshire.

MESSUMS WILTSHIRE



11 Breton Woman's Head
Pencil on Paper
13 x 8 inches



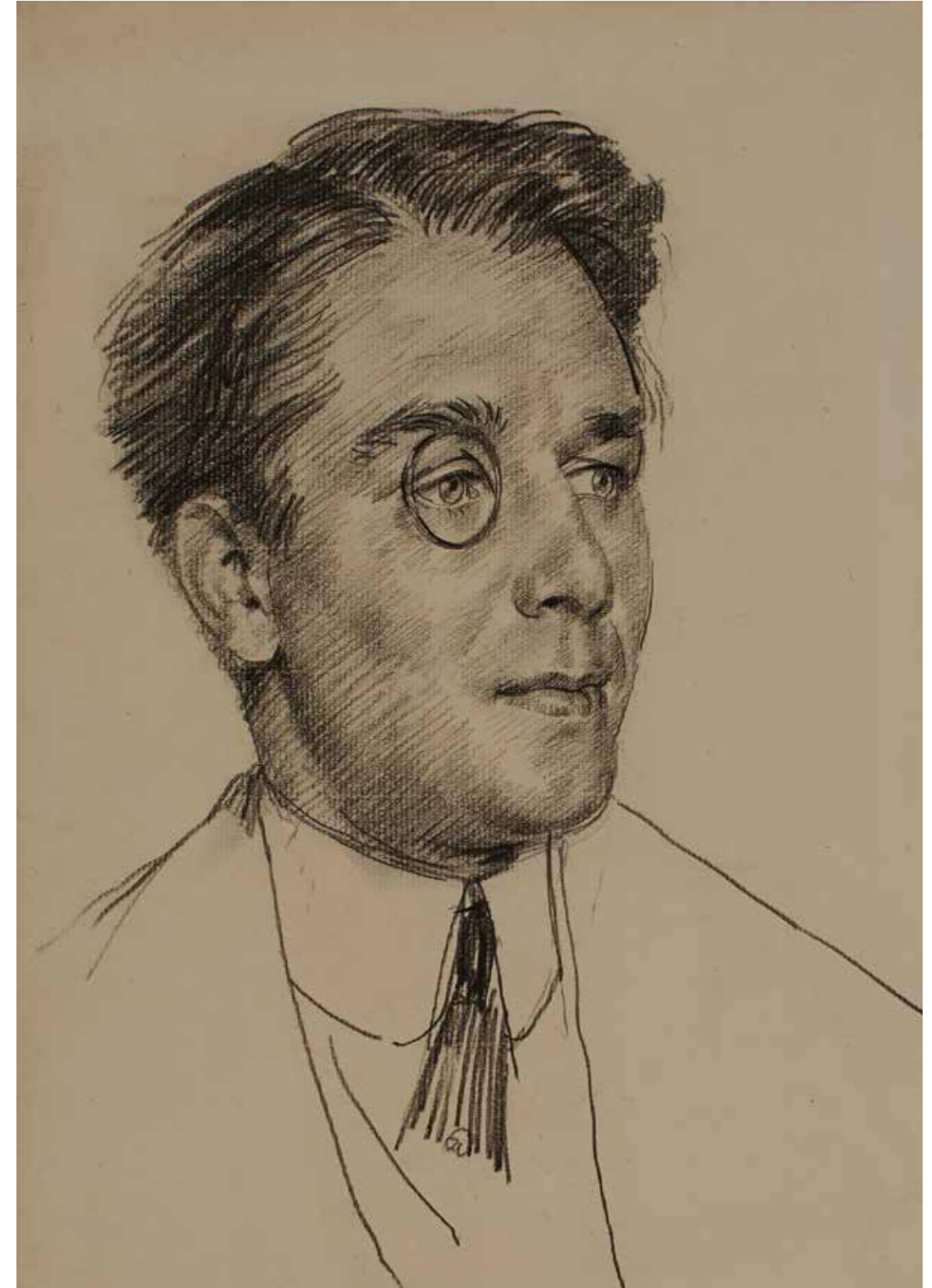
12 Portrait of Breton Woman in Clogs
Pencil and Conte on Paper
17 x 11 inches



13 Two Men Walking Wearing Top Hats
Pencil on Tinted Paper
9 x 6 inches



14 Mrs Hogg
Pencil on Paper
12 x 9¼ inches



15 Man Wearing a Monocle
Black Pencil on paper
12 x 9½ inches



16 Mrs Becholer (Helen Anrep Green)
Pencil on Paper
10 x 7 inches



17 Mr A Phillips
1904
Colour Chalk on Paper
13 x 11 inches



20 Mary Behrend
c.1912
Pencil on Paper
12½ x 9½ inches



21 Edgar McWilliam
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



18 Portrait of a Lady
1906
Pencil on Paper
12 x 9½ inches



19 Sketch of Breton Boy and Girl
Pencil on Paper
7½ x 5½ inches



22 Edgar McWilliam
Pen on Paper
8 x 5 inches



23 A R Middleton Todd RA
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



24 Portrait of a Man
Pencil on Paper
9 x 8 inches



25 Portrait of a Woman
Pencil on Paper
18 x 12 inches



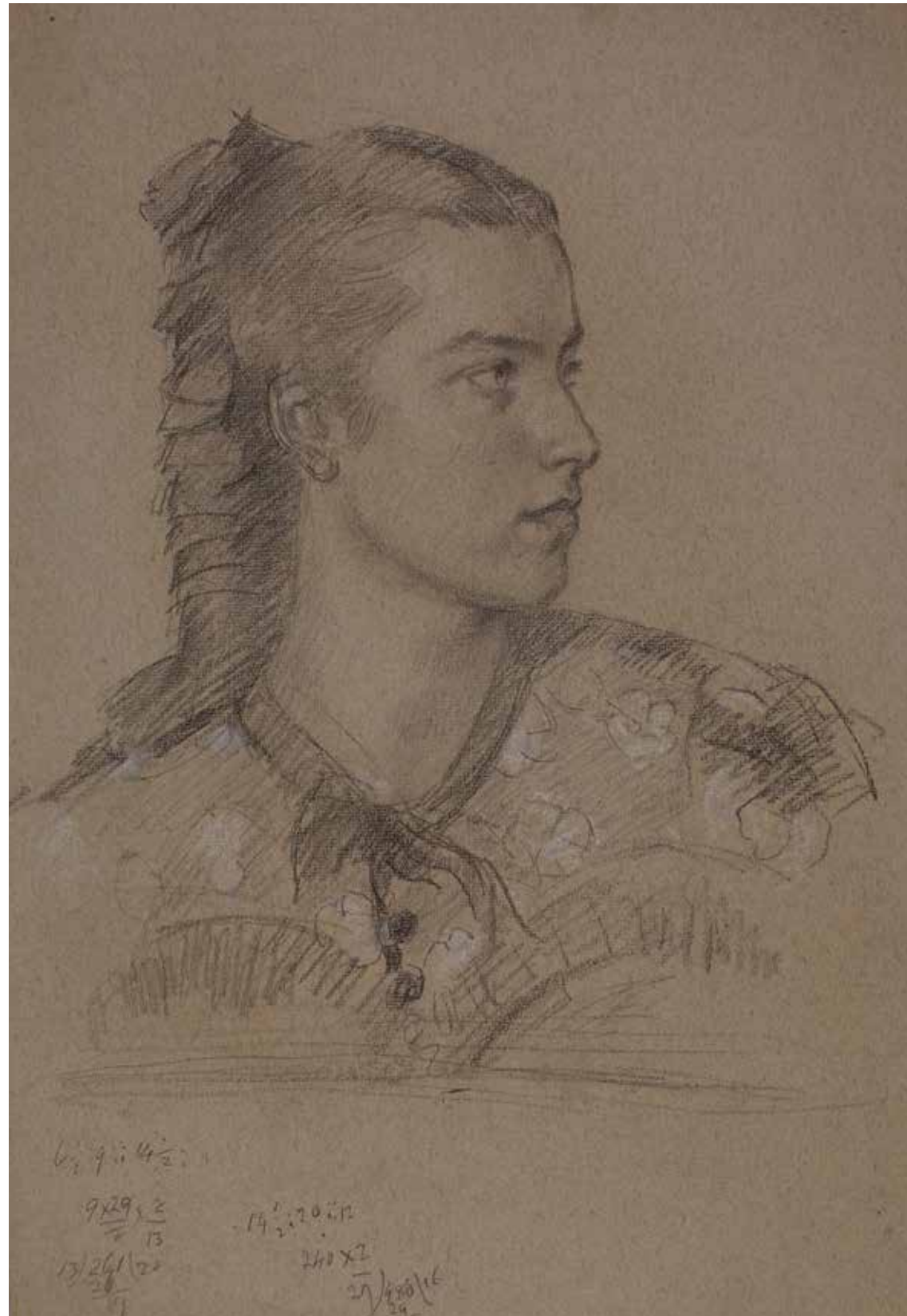
26 Portrait of a Young Boy
Pencil on Paper
12 x 9 inches



27 Edie McNeill
1931
Pencil on Paper
12 x 8½ inches



28 Nude Drawn in Paris, Pre-WWI
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



29 Portrait of a Lady
Pencil and Chalk on Paper
16 x 12 inches



30 Woman in a Hat
Pencil on Paper
19½ x 12 inches



31 Girl Wearing a Shawl
Pencil on Paper
10 x 7 inches



32 Portrait of Lady
1925
Pencil on Paper
13½ x 10½ inches



33 Sir Francis Jones (sketch for a painting)
1920
Pencil on Paper
12 x 10 inches



36 Portrait of a Woman
Pencil on Paper
19 x 12 inches



37 Portrait of Lady in a Hat
Pencil on Paper
19 x 14 inches



34 Major General W P H Hill, CB
c.1940
Pencil on Paper
13 x 9½ inches



35 Christine Longford, (mother-in-law)
Pencil on Paper
12 x 8 inches



38 Diana Mitford
Pencil on Paper
18 x 10 inches



39 Mrs Hugo Pitman Reine
Pencil on Paper
11 x 8 inches



40 Portrait of Woman Academic
Pencil on Paper
17 x 13 inches



41 Mrs Jameison 'The Edinburgh Lady'
(sketch for a painting) 1908-9
Pencil on Paper
8 x 4½ inches



42 Portrait of Male Academic
Pencil on Paper
19 x 12 inches



43 Portrait of Male Academic
1926
Pencil on Paper
14 x 12 inches



44 Man with Glasses and a Beard
1929
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



45 Francis John Lys, Provost of Worcester College, Oxford
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



46 Portrait of a Don
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



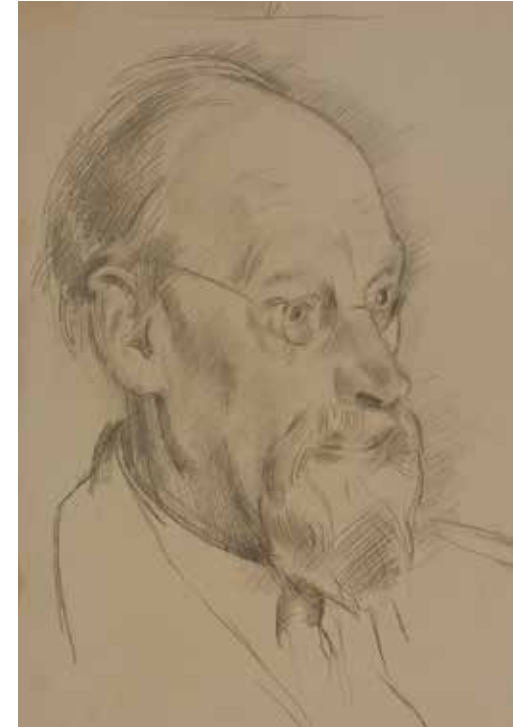
47 Elizabeth Francis, French Tutor
(sketch for Group Portrait, St Hugh's College)
1936
Pencil on Paper
14 x 9½ inches



48 Portrait of Professor Hewer
Pencil on Paper
14 x 11 inches



49 Professor Dankins
Pencil on Paper
12 x 9 inches



52 Man with Beard and Spectacles
Pencil on Paper
13 x 9½ inches



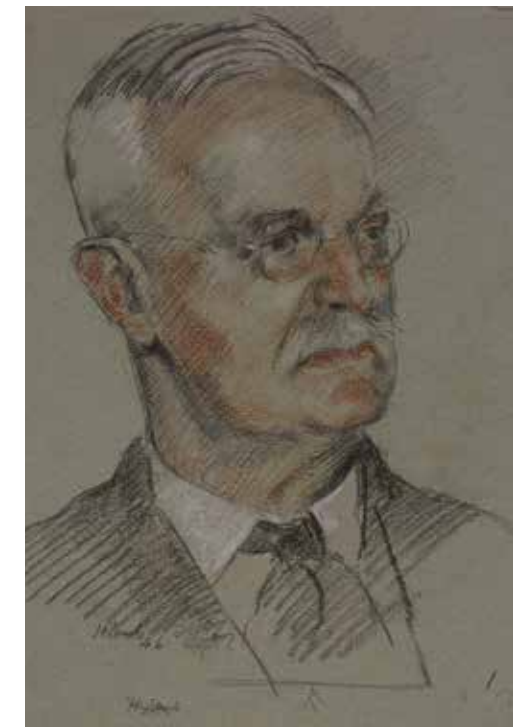
53 Portrait of a Man
1933
Pencil on Paper
11½ x 8½ inches



50 Professor Emrys Evans (sketch for a painting)
1953
Pencil on Paper
14 x 9½ inches



51 Robert Ranulph Marett
1935
Watercolour on Paper
10¾ x 8½ inches



54 Man Wearing Spectacles
Pencil and Pen on Paper
11½ x 8½ inches



55 Village Scene, possibly Coombe Bissett
Watercolour on Paper
5 x 7 inches



56 Study of Men in RAF Uniforms
Watercolour on Paper
5 x 7 inches



57 Bikers
Watercolour on Paper
6½ x 5 inches



58 Lieutenant General Le Chevalier Van Strydonck de Burkel, c.1940
Pencil on Paper
19 x 12 inches



59 Senior Controller Christian Helen Fraser-Tytler CBE
c.1943
Pencil on Paper
10 x 8 inches



60 General Bronislaw Regulski CB
1941
Watercolour on Paper
14½ x 9½ inches



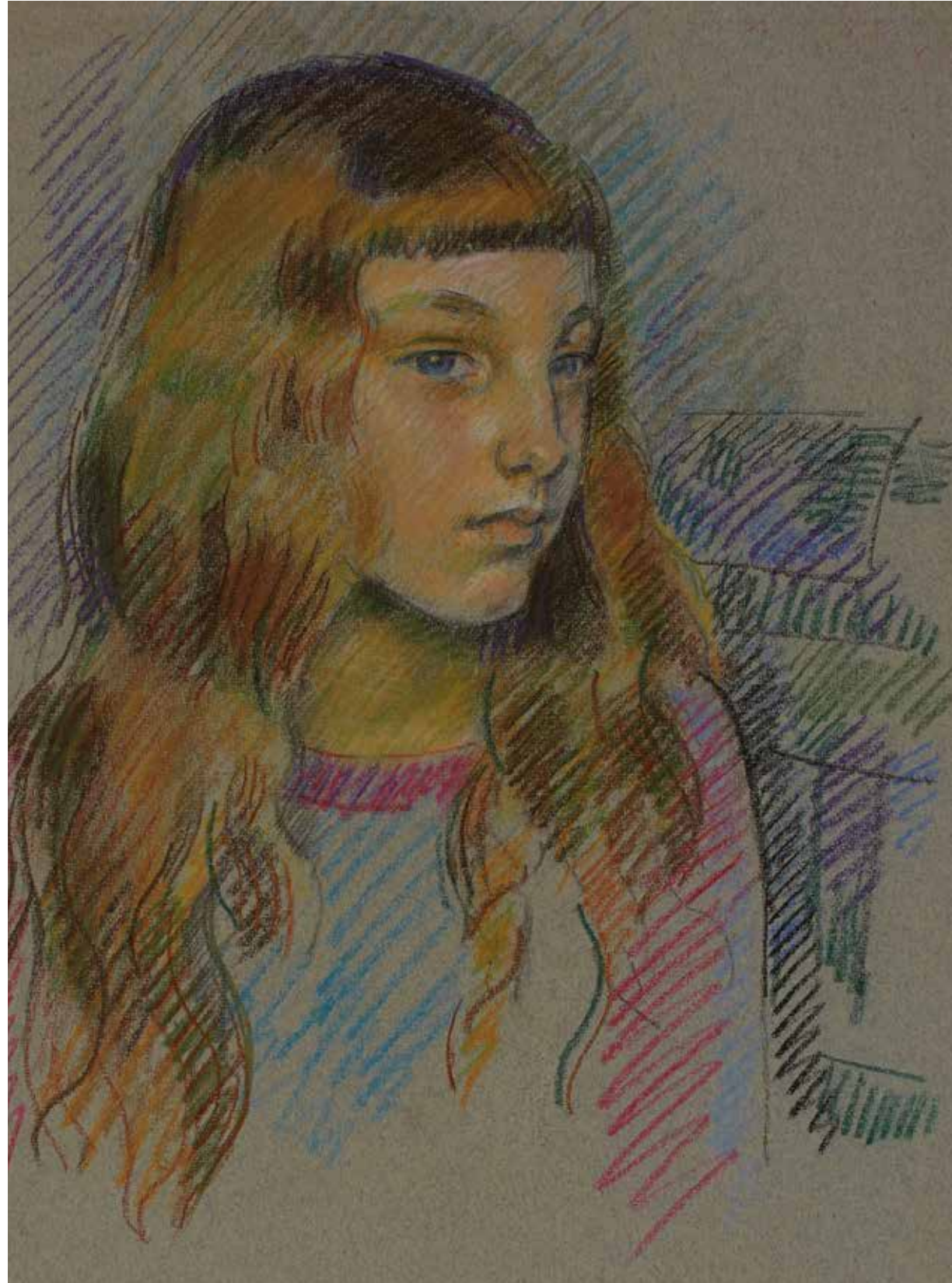
62 Major General Robert Frederick Edward Whittaker
c.1942
Colour Pencil and Watercolour on Paper
19 x 12 inches



61 Portrait of Woman in Military Cap
Colour Pencil on Paper
9 x 12 inches



63 Portrait of a Young Man
Conte and Pencil on Paper
17 x 12 inches



64 Henrietta
Colour Chalk on Paper
16 x 12½ inches



65 Pansy
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



66 Girl Carrying a Posy
Colour Pencil on Paper
14 x 8 inches



67 Family Portrait
Gouache on Paper
11.½ x 12½ inches



68 Molly Courtauld and Children (preparatory painting)
Gouache on Paper
19 x 12 inches



69 Pansy
Pencil on Paper
6¾ x 5 inches



70 Molly Courtauld and Children
(preparatory sketch)
Pencil on Paper
15 x 12 inches



71 Self Portrait Wearing Hat, Glasses and Bow Tie
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



72 Pansy Reading
Pen on Paper
9½ x 10 inches



73 Sketch of Child in High Chair
Pencil on Paper
8 x 5 inches



76 Valentine
Pencil on Paper
10 x 8 inches



77 Pansy
Pencil on Paper
14 x 11 inches



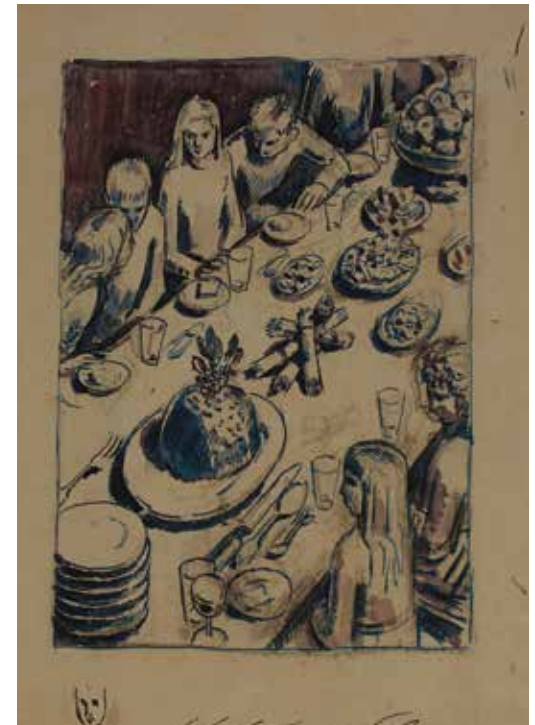
74 Valentine
Pencil on Paper
5 x 7 inches



75 Felicia
Pencil on Paper
10 x 8 inches



78 Portrait of Nanny
1930
Pencil on Paper
10½ x 9½ inches



79 Christmas Feast (sketch for a card)
Pen and Watercolour
14 x 8 inches



80 Portrait of Young Man
Black Pencil on Paper
12 x 9 inches



81 Poole Neighbour at the Tea Table
Pencil on Paper
13½ x 9 inches



82 Sketch for Elliott Family Portrait
c.1935
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



83 Sketch for Elliott Family Portrait
c.1935
Pencil on Paper
14 x 10 inches



84 A Rugby Match (sketch for a painting)
Pencil on Paper
9 x 14 inches



85 Man Reading a Newspaper

Pencil on Paper

8½ x 5½ inches



86 Two Men Talking

Pencil on Paper

7 x 4½ inches



87 Two Ladies Talking on the Road

Pencil on Paper

8½ x 5½ inches



88 Group of Women

c.1949

Watercolour on Paper

12 x 11 inches

I am particularly grateful to the descendants of Henry Lamb for entrusting these works to our care and I hope you will enjoy the insight and pleasures that these previously unseen works bring forth.

As a second generation family business, we continue a specialist expertise that started in our formative years, working for the long term with both artists and with their estates. It takes a commitment on both sides that recognises the merit of growing the tree rather than picking the fruit.

Messums Wiltshire, which is now once more reunited with its progenitor Messums London, is a remarkable company of experience and expertise that is united by a zest to explore and to learn. It has been a particular pleasure to see the involvement of our team at this formative stage with the Estate of Henry Lamb and to watch how it has burgeoned into a cause to which we are all allied.

I would like to thank in particular our curators Catherine Milner and Laura Grace Simpkins, cataloguer Min Grainzevelles, picture restorer Lorraine Bryant, framers Peter and Julia Ashby, the install team led by Hannah Davies and all of those at both Messums Wiltshire and Messums London who have contributed to this show.

Johnny Messum



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