

**THE KITSONS AND THE ARTS:
A LEEDING FAMILY IN SICILY AND THE WEST RIDING**

**BY
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The Kitsons and the Arts: a Leeding family in Sicily and the West Riding

Abstract

Fashionable though it has become to bewail the demise of Gradgrinds in the 19th Century economy, the creation of a civilised urban style of life in industrial Britain was an equally remarkable achievement. In Leeds, the Kitsons were one of the families capable, by the turn of the century, of supplying educated entrepreneurs for the professions and cultural activities as well as local business.

The architectural practice of F.W. Bedford and S.D. Kitson was notable for the domestic work and decorative design of the partners, who won commissions for a variety of significant public buildings as well as the commercial and licenced victualling work that became mainstays after the Great War. Sydney Kitson, then convalescing with T.B., became sparked with an interest in the life and works of John Sell Cotman. He researched and amassed a vast study collection of his drawings and watercolours which culminated in the publication of what is still the definitive biography of the artist just before his own death in 1937.

Robert Kitson, like his friend Cecil Hunt, became an artist, learning the craft of watercolour painting on sketching tours with Sir Alfred East and Sir Frank Brangwyn. He regularly exhibited his work at the R.B.A. and had one-man exhibitions at the *Fine Art Society* and the *Redfern Gallery*. He was, from 1900, an active member of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, in which Ina Kitson Clark, the wife of the Kitson locomotive company's managing director, played a leading role for half a century with Ethel Mallinson. The involvement of ladies like these, including Beatrice Kitson who become the first female Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1942-3, in the social and cultural activities of the city was extensive as well as pioneering and if need be, formidable.

After his father's death R.H. Kitson made his home in Sicily where he designed and built a spacious villa with spectacular views of Mount Etna from its many terraces. Brangwyn designed the entire dining room and some other furniture, which was only part of the wide variety of work he undertook for Kitson between 1903 and 1916. This included oil paintings and watercolours, presentation jewellery and caskets, and the Verge for the new University of Leeds. But the decorative commission of the mosaics for the *Life of St. Aidan* was one of the supreme artistic achievements of the era in Britain.

Although Taormina remained his base, Robert Kitson travelled widely, sketching all the time. In Leeds he, Sydney and Edwin Kitson Clark were co-opted members of the Art Gallery and Museum sub-committees. They did much to realise the policy of

establishing a collection with a historic series of British watercolours and Robert regularly lent and presented contemporary prints and drawings. In his own work, as in his collecting, he was appreciative of what was new in the more traditional developments in art. But, although he came to admire the work of Sickert, John Nash and J.D. Innes, he did not follow Sir Michael Sadler and Frank Rutter in their enthusiasm for expressionist art and what is termed Modernism. All of them united in encouraging the discussion and display of arts and crafts as well as the formation of the Leeds Arts Collection Fund for the public gallery.

Through their own architectural and artistic creativity, their scholarship and patronage of other artists, their substantial presentations to the collections of the City Art Gallery, and their active support for local organisations, this generation of Kitsons demonstrated a resourceful and single-minded devotion to the city, to the development of whose economy they acknowledged their position. They were enthusiastic cultural entrepreneurs.

Following the main text, there is a series of Appendices cataloguing the works of the *Bedford and Kitson* practice until about 1922, and a summary of the content of R.H.K.'s *Sketchbooks* and S.D.K.'s *Cotmania Journals*. Although not attempting a *catalogue raisonné*, the illustrations of the architectural practice, the Brangwyn commissions, creating *Casa Cuseni*, and the art of Robert Kitson, are intended to provide the only extensive visual record of a corpus of work that has remained largely unattended for almost half a century since Robert Kitsons's death in 1947 and that of Sydney Kitson a decade earlier.

Acknowledgements

The gardens of *Casa Cuseni* caught my attention when I photographed the front gate on my first visit to Taormina in 1979. McCoy's *Apollo* article and Fiona MacCarthy's book on C.R.Ashbee in 1981 alerted me to Sir Frank Brangwyn's work at the villa as well as his letters to Robert Kitson. But a storm-struck visit to Daphne Phelps that November illuminated the significance of her uncle himself as the designer/engineer of the house and gardens. Returning to measure the building in 1982 with Arthur Bell, R.W.A., who recalled Sir Alfred East and the Gotch family from his youth in Kettering, we were given the first glimpse of the scope and scale of Kitson's legacy of sketchbooks and watercolours, an artistic autobiography, which I have subsequently returned to catalogue, photograph and date almost every subsequent spring. I owe a debt of gratitude to Daphne Phelps as do all who have enjoyed her hospitality over the 46 years she has devoted to the maintenance of *Casa Cuseni* and its terraced gardens, recounting the tales of its experiences, and displaying the fine furniture and other treasures. As the *ingenera* to whom I am grateful for the survey of the gardens, Claudio Vecchio, said 'it is a veritable *Casa Museo*'.

Correspondence from Sydney Kitson and the Concise Catalogue of Leeds City Art Gallery revealed the extent of both Sydney and Robert's quest for the works of John Sell Cotman and the wide range of works they had bequeathed and presented over the first half of this century. Christopher Gilbert, Terry Friedman, Alex Robertson and Corinne Miller have been of great help in locating and arranging for me to refer to the letter files and other material at the City Art Gallery and Temple Newsam and it was a pleasure to work with them on the production of *Cotmania and Mr. Kitson* for the 1992-3 exhibition. Elisabeth and Barbara Kitson did much to make material on their father's work and their own collection available to us, but even they remembered relatively few of the wide range of buildings designed by their father and his partner Francis Bedford. Alan Crawford asked after the works of their practice and Derek Linstrum, who also took on the supervision of this thesis, acted as my first *cicerone*, supplementing what I had already found in the volumes of *The Builder* and obituaries at the R.I.B.A. in the days when research was welcomed there. The ledgers and other account books of the practice, that the senior partner of *Kitson and Partners* Roger Shaw kindly made available with his observations, enabled me to establish its entirety, playing the same role as Robert Kitson's sketchbooks in documenting his art.

Much of the latter, with furniture and other objects owned by the Hawthorn Kitsons, has descended to members of the Phelps family and I am most grateful for their help in making so much available for me to record and photograph. The papers, photographs and pictures that came from Beatrice Kitson and their mother and uncle

were those in the possession of Jack Phelps, Bridget Shirley and of the next generation Christopher and Philip Morgan-Smith and Martin Shirley. I was lucky to have an interview with the late Cynthia Morgan-Smith in her last months, even if it was augmented by a mynah bird. There is a little more for me to see in the possession of other members of the family but that has had to wait.

Although I have so far eschewed any attempt to research the political and industrial activities of the first Lord Airedale and *Kitson and Co.Ltd.*, I have read as much as I could find, published and unpublished, primarily the work of Edwin and George Kitson Clark, R.J. Morris, G. Talbot Griffiths, Susan Lasdun and E.F. Clark. The latter has helpfully discussed several aspects of family history with me and his aunt Mary Chitty (née Kitson Clark) provided me with useful information about her parents which has been enormously augmented by the many family papers she has deposited at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

There, as in the West Yorkshire Archives, the staff have been most obliging as they have at the Brotherton Library and the Leeds local history library. Mary Forster and Rosemary Stephens guided me into the archives of the University of Leeds and introduced me to Mary Davison, then secretary of the Little Owl, whose archive provides a fascinating vignette of the thinking ladies of Leeds, a counterpart to the Leeds Fine Arts Club to whose Hon. Secretary I am grateful for arrangements to see the minute books since 1900, and the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education. Tom Steele kindly answered questions on the Leeds Arts Club, as did Sibylle Cole and the late Bill Oliver on the L.F.A.C.

For information as well as access to the interior of several significant buildings I am grateful to Ralph Smithson and Kay Hartley of Shireoak Road, the Tommasi family at Gledhow Hall, and the staff responsible for the residential homes at *The Old Gardens, Gledhow Grange* and *Gledhow Manor*. Arthur Hopwood and Frank Casperson showed me the information they had collected on Meanwood and *Meanwoodside*. And the Rev. Fr. Alan Taylor, the Revd. A.C. Fitzpatrick and the Prior of the Carmelites have kindly provided information and allowed me to photograph St Aidan's Church, Mill Hill Chapel and Hazelwood Castle.

At times there has seemed to be no end to the primary material and collections with which the Kitsons were associated. During an H.B. Brabazon exhibition Chris Beetles mentioned the work of Cecil Hunt, Robert's artist friend from Cambridge days, and kindly introduced me to his daughter-in-law Betty Hunt to whom I am grateful for access to Hunt's sketch and scrap books as well as the collection of watercolours by himself and his contemporaries and Brangwyn's design for the memorial window at Manaton. Peyton Skipwith, of *the Fine Arts Society*, Shiela Anne DuBarry, then of the *Building Centre*, and John Holder and Philip Athill, of *Abbott and Holder*, have been

particularly helpful in helping me to record relevant designs by Brangwyn and watercolours by Robert Kitson over the years.

In the quest for Brangwyn and Cotman's work as well as that of R.H. Kitson, I took the opportunity provided by exhibitions at the William Morris Gallery at Walthamstow, the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, the Castle Museum, Norwich, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Royal Academy, about which Andrew Wilton made some perceptive observations. The curator of the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath kindly arranged for me to record the watercolour bought from Kitson's Indian show which was presented by the widow of Percy Jacomb-Hood, which with the few others in British public collections was on file in the Witt Library at the Courtauld Institute. Catharine Dinn was of similarly help during the Tuke exhibition in Falmouth where the transcripts of records indicated his portrait patronage by Sir James Kitson. Michael Halls, then archivist at King's College, Cambridge, discussed some aspects of C.R. Ashbee's journals, for access to which I am grateful to Felicity Ashbee. And Donna Kurtz was equally helpful when I asked to see items in the Beazley Archive at the Ashmolean. Lord Perry kindly took me to the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords, after I had been to see Brangwyn's murals in Swansea Town Hall. It intrigued us both to find his father as the last entry in *Volume 12* of Sydney Kitson's *Cotmania Journals*, having been introduced by Walter's godfather, Dr. Robert Laing, who was a friend and neighbour of Robert Kitson in Taormina.

The re-opening of the *Arentshuis* in Bruges provided a wonderful chance to see the wide variety of his work that Brangwyn had himself presented to the city of his birth as well as discussion with its curator Domenic Marechal, one of the primary authorities on the artist, and the unrolling of the cartoons for St. Aidan's with the help of the Prior of Zevenkerken. And a conference visit to the Antipodes provided the opportunity for the inspection of the many Brangwyns at the National Galleries of Art at Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide as well as the Arts Centre at Mildura, where I was invited to lecture surrounded by its unique collection of Brangwyn's paintings and drawings presented by J.D. Elliott, several of them associated with Kitson's commissions. More were to be found at Wellington and Dunedin in New Zealand, in the latter case in the company of two of Kitson's own watercolours bought and presented by Esmond de Beer whose parents were business contemporaries of the Theomin family from Bristol who commissioned Sir Ernest George to design their house *Olveston*.

Many individuals have kindly answered letters of enquiry or shown me pictures and other objects of relevance: Hugh Harrison showed me his Brangwyn collection as well as **further** information on his ancestor Sir Thomas Devitt, one of the artist's most important patrons. Anthony Powell put me in touch with Alan Pryce Jones, one of the friends of Robert Pratt Barlow who knew Taormina and met Robert Kitson there

in the 1930s. And he introduced me to both Kitson's portraitist Charles Baskerville, then in his 90s, and Anthony Mattei, a Maltese Marchese who had an illuminating view of Taormina between the wars. John Röhl helped me to sort out some conflicting accounts of Wilhem von Gloeden's forbears and their chequered career in the Second Reich. Henry Scrope took me round Brandsby Hall and Sir Marcus Worsley kindly showed me the Cotman watercolours that remain at Hovingham with those by Francis Towne which his father collected sometime after the sale that provided Sydney Kitson with his windfall.

In Sicily I enjoyed my stay in the *pensione* run by the Signorine Calabrò in Ashbee's *Villa San Giorgio* and the arrangements kindly made by Professore Dionysio Triscari, Sr. Fiumara, Signora Turchetti, and Mario Pino for me to see and photograph their collections of watercolours by Robert Kitson and by Nino Siligato to see even more of these with the works of other artists give to his father Don Carlo. Memories of Kitson and especially of family members who worked for him have been given to me by Francesco Bucalo, the Ragusa family and Maria Nigrì's **nephew**. Ciccio Rigono described his days as a young man learning to paint with Flora Fernald and Robert Kitson. Professori Giarizzo and Guiseppe Dato of the University of Catania helped in different ways and Antonietta Falanga showed me where D.H. Lawrence had stayed.

But I also wish to acknowledge other forms of support that has made this research possible. The Social Sciences' Faculty and Sociology Research Funds of the Open University have provided a series of small grants which assisted my foreign travel and the costs of photographing so many unrecorded pictures, drawings and buildings. These were augmented by a further small grant towards travel from the Paul Mellon Centre for the Study of British Art. At the Open University, the Oxford Architectural History Seminar and the Association for the Study of Modern Italy, I have benefitted from the opportunity of discussing papers on Brangwyn, *Casa Cuseni* and the Kitsons. I owe a great deal to the two secretaries who have seen so many drafts on the research through to a presentable conclusion, Molly Freeman and Pauline Turner; to the staff of the Ashmolean Museum where the colour photocopying was done and to John Hunt and George Arnison, who did much of the early and certainly the best reproduction of old negatives and the prints from them. To my wife Stella Herklots, I am indebted for the difficult task of listing and charting the plants currently growing at *Casa Cuseni*. She also mounted the material in the illustrative volume and helped me with the proof-reading. With Daphne Phelps, Arthur Bell and Derek Linstrum, they have watched it all grow and encouraged me to carry it through. I hope they find it worthy of their efforts on my, as well as the Kitsons' behalf.

Contents of Chapters in Volume 1

		Page
Chapter 1	Introducing the main themes and topics	1
1.1	'Victorian values' and art history	1
1.2	Leeds entrepreneurs and patronage of the arts	3
1.3	Industrial nemesis and gentrification	5
1.4	Civic pride and municipal art institutions	6
1.5	Collecting contemporary art-innovation with a traditional mould	7
1.6	The English penchant for watercolours and architectural subjects	8
1.7	The Social and cultural milieu of Robert Kitson in <i>fin-de-siecle</i> London and abroad	10
1.8	<i>Cotmania</i> , the world of watercolours and Sydney Kitson	12
1.9	Leeds and Sicily; art and culture	13
Chapter 2	Leeds: its political, industrial and cultural development in the nineteenth century	14
2.1	The development of Leeds and its industrial economy	14
2.2	The political and social institutions of nineteenth century Leeds	16
2.3	The 'New Era' in Leeds political and cultural action	18
2.4	Leeds as a social and cultural stage	26
Chapter 3	The Kitsons of Leeds	28
3.1	James I Kitson and the foundation of the Kitsons' position in Leeds	28
3.2	Frederick and James II Kitson (1st Lord Airdale)	33
3.3	James II's siblings, Emily and Arthur Kitson	38
3.4	The Clarks and the second family of James I	38
3.5	John Hawthorn Kitson and his family	40
3.6	The Kitsons as examples of the Leeds elite	44
Chapter 4	The architectural practice of <i>Bedford and Kitson</i>	46
4.1	The formation of the partners	46
4.2	Prominent features of the practice: the sources of information	51
4.3	The development of Bedford's domestic designs	52
4.4	Domestic designs of the <i>Bedford and Kitson</i> practice	56

	Page
4.5	The commercial work of the practice 61
4.6	The public commissions of the practice 64
4.7	The decorative domestic and ecclesiastical work of the practice 66
4.8	The office of the practice and Sydney Kitson's later work for the R.I.B.A. 68
4.9	A concise assessment of the <i>Bedford and Kitson</i> practice 72
Chapter 5	Frank Brangwyn and R.H. Kitson: artistic friendship fulfilled by fruitful patronage 74
5.1	C.A. Hunt, R.H. Kitson and Frank Brangwyn in the London Art world of the '90s 74
5.2	Kitson, East, Brangwyn and the Venetian exhibitions 80
5.3	The verge for the new University of Leeds and the christening caskets for Kitson's godchildren 81
5.4	The furniture and decorative designs for <i>Casa Cuseni</i> 84
5.5	The impact of Sicily on Brangwyn's art 89
5.6	Brangwyn's mosaics for the apse and chancel of St. Aidan's Church, Leeds 91
5.7	The final years of friendship and a last commission 96
Chapter 6	English arts and crafts in Sicily at the beginning of the twentieth century: the design of <i>Casa Cuseni</i> and its gardens by R.H. Kitson 103
6.1	Taormina - the 'new winter resort' and its settlement by expatriates 103
6.2	The design of <i>Casa Cuseni</i> and its construction 108
6.3	Arts and Crafts and the <i>Genius Loci</i> 113
6.4	The gardens of <i>Casa Cuseni</i> 117
6.5	C.R. Ashbee and the Guild of Handicraft in Taormina 124
6.6	R.H. Kitson and the Arts and Crafts Movement 128
Chapter 7	The Art of R.H. Kitson 131
7.1	Serious artistry and artistic accomplishments 131
7.2	Robert Kitson's formation as an artist 136
7.3	Landscape and architecture as subject matter 139
7.4	Travelling artists in watercolours 145
7.5	Robert Kitson's <i>Sketchbooks</i> 148
7.6	Kitson's use of small water-colour cards 150

	Page	
7.7	Kitson's paintings in watercolours of France, Spain, North Africa and the Orient	151
7.8	Kitson's images of Italy and Sicily	156
7.9	Robert Kitson's unbroken ties with England and English Art	158
7.10	Robert Kitson in the context of British contemporary art	159
Chapter 8	The world of art in Leeds and the development of Leeds City Art Gallery to the First World War	162
8.1	Civic pride and private patronage: the foundation of the City Art Gallery's collection	162
8.2	Exhibitions, loans and the Lady Patronesses	165
8.3	Local art clubs in Leeds and the City Art Gallery	170
8.4	The Arts and Crafts Exhibitions: a case of co-operation	176
8.5	New ideas and forms of art and the impact of Sir Michael Sadler and Frank Rutter on their appreciation in Leeds	179
8.6	Conclusion	191
Chapter 9	The post-war development of Leeds City Art Gallery and the Kitson's role in it	193
9.1	An introduction to institutions, individuals and the collection of works of art	193
9.2	A collection policy for the development of Leeds City Art Gallery	198
9.3	The direction of the City Art Gallery by Kaines Smith to implement the policy	201
9.4	Contemporary British watercolours, prints and drawings at Leeds	203
9.5	A short-lived transformation	206
9.6	A change in policy and its systematic implementation	208
9.7	Hendy's apparent success in placing matters on a sound structural and financial basis for development	212
9.8	Conclusion - The Kitsons' role in the general development of the City Art Gallery between the wars	215
Chapter 10	'Cotmania' - Sydney and Robert Kitson's quest for the life and works of John Sell Cotman	217
10.1	The form and intensity of <i>Cotmania</i> in the Kitsons	217
10.2	The appeal of John Sell Cotman's work to the Kitsons	221
10.3	Sydney and Robert Kitson and Cotman	223

	Page
10.4	Contacting the descendants of Cotman's family and patrons 226
10.5	Dealing with the Dealers 229
10.6	The close network of connoisseurs and the wide range of English watercolour owners and collectors 235
10.7	Scholars, museum men and British public collections of drawings and watercolours 243
10.8	Sydney Kitson's aesthetic approach to Cotman's work and the reception of <i>The life of John Sell Cotman</i> 248
Chapter 11	Ina Kitson Clark and the Leeds Fine Arts Club between the Wars 254
11.1	The Kitson Clarks' art for the Great War 254
11.2	The organisation of the Club between the Wars 256
11.3	A critical assessment of the Club members' exhibited work 258
11.4	The Club's plateau of achievement 261
11.5	The call for change from the City's art officials 263
11.6	Conclusion: accomplished and serious artists from a select social circle 267
Chapter 12	'All good things come to an end' 269
12.1	<i>Kitson and Co. Ltd.</i> in receivership and the death of E.K.C. 269
12.2	The distribution of S.D.K.'s bequest. 270
12.3	R.H.K.'s final efforts to enhance the holdings of Leeds City Art Galleries and his wartime exile in England. 272
12.4	Beatrice Kitson's war and retirement from Leeds. 276
12.5	Robert Kitson's return to peace in Taormina. 278
12.6	Civic pride, personal confidence, cultural achievement and the Kitsons' place in the arts of their time. 282

Contents of Volume 2

A Footnotes per Chapter: each numbered from No.1 onwards	Page
Chapter one	1
Chapter two	4
Chapter three	7
Chapter four	12
Chapter five	25
Chapter six	42
Chapter seven	62
Chapter eight	84
Chapter nine	106
Chapter ten	120
Chapter eleven	146
Chapter twelve	151

B Appendices

	Page
Appendix 1 Works of the <i>Bedford and Kitson, Kitson and Partners</i> architectural practice.	160
Appendix 2 Botanical and some common names of plants in the gardens of <i>Casa Cuseni</i> c.1992-1993 listed and plotted by Stella Herklots with plan.	190
Appendix 3 The <i>sketchbooks</i> of R.H. Kitson, 1903-1947.	193
Appendix 4 The social life of Taormina between the two world wars and its relationship to Robert Kitson's way of life.	215
Appendix 5 An oil painting thought to have been mislaid in the summer of 1985, and reputed to be by Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), formerly in the collection of R.H. Kitson.	232
Appendix 6 <i>Cotmania</i> : the sources.	237

C Bibliography and sources

Bibliography of published works.	242
Unpublished references and source summary.	280

List of Genealogies, tables and a large plan in certain places in the text

		Page
Genealogy 3.1	The first family of James I Kitson (less descendants of Lord Airdale and Emily Playfair).	Vol.1 29
Genealogy 3.2	The second family of James I Kitson (plus descendants of Lord Airdale and Emily Playfair).	Vol.1 30
Table 7.1	Watercolours exhibited by R.H. Kitson in one-man and some other special exhibitions.	Vol.1 133
Table 7.2	Prices placed on Robert Kitson's watercolours exhibited at various galleries, 1925–1946.	Vol.2 73
Table 10.1	S.D. Kitson's Catalogue of his Cotman Collection according to their provenance and medium.	Vol.1 218
Table 10.2	S.D. Kitson's Catalogue of his Cotman Collection by year of acquisition and medium of work (column percentages).	Vol.1 219
Table 10.3	S.D. Kitson's Catalogue of his Cotman Collection by year of acquisition and medium of work (row percentages).	Vol.1 220
Plan 2.1	Plan of the gardens of <i>Casa Cuseni</i> with positions of many of the plants listed by Stella Herklots in 1992-1993.	App.2, flap of Vol.2

List of all figures: past and present photographs, plans, elevations, and works of art in Volume three

Page

- 1 1.1 *R.S. Hichens Esq.*, (1964-1950), author of *The Green Carnation* (1894) and *The Garden of Allah* (1904), by Max Beerbohm (1896).
- 1.2 R.H. Kitson, (1873-1945) in carnival costume at *Casa Cuseni* c.1920. (C.C.)
- 2 2.1 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds in 1993, with some of its chapels and churches and the University site now filled by the Parkinson Building.
- 2.2 Leeds General Infirmary (1862-1868) by Sir George Gilbert Scott; administration block and wards in 1992.
- 3 2.3 Plan of *Kirkstall Abbey Guest House* by F.W. Bedford, *The Builder* (1896) Jan.4.
- 2.3a Leeds Town Hall (1853-1858) by Cuthbert Brodrick, in 1993.
- 4 2.4 St Paul's House (1878) by Thomas Ambler.
- 2.5 City Square, Leeds in 1993, with *The Black Prince* (unveiled 1903) by Sir Thomas Brock and Mill Hill (Unitarian) Chapel (1848) by H. Bowman and J.S. Crowther.
- 5 2.6 *Park Row, Leeds* (1882) by Atkinson Grimshaw with, from the left, the Philosophical Hall and Museum (1820) by R.D. Chantrell, St. Anne's (R.C.) Church (1838) by J. Child, and at the right the Royal Assurance Co. (1860) by Alfred Waterhouse, and Beckett's Bank (1863-1867) by Sir George G. Scott (L.C.A.G). (All now demolished.)
- 2.7 St. Michael's Church, Headingley (1884-1867) by John Loughborough Pearson; NE crossing with chancel screen made by Skidmore's and organ case presented by members of the Tetley family, in 1992.
- 6 3.1 Aerial View of the *Airedale Foundry*: Clark, E.K., (1937).
- 3.2 James I Kitson (1807-1885): Clark, E.K., (1937).
- 3.3 'The Donkey picture': the younger children of James I Kitson's first marriage; Emily, John and Mary holding Arthur. (c.1850) Anon.
- 7 3.4 The *Lion* (1838) in steam at the Science Museum's Wiltshire site in its 150th year.
- 3.5 The last of *Kitsons of Leeds*, Hunslet, in 1986.
- 8 3.6 *Beechwood*, Roundhay in 1993; home of successive Luptons concluding with Dr. Elinor G. Lupton, Lady Mayoress 1942-1943 and a Little Owl.
- 3.7 Elmet Hall, Roundhay (1865) by *Dobson and Chorley*; final home of James I Kitson and his second family; The south front in 1993.

- 9 3.8 Blenheim Terrace, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds in 1993; site of several Kitson homes as well as the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education until the 1980s.
- 3.9 Elmet Hall (with Tower) from the SW with *Roundhay Lodge* in 1919 (Sale prospectus).
- 10 3.10 Elmet Hall; west tower oriel in 1993.
- 3.11 The Kitson arms and motto, *Palmam Qui Meruit Ferat*, in 1987.
- 11 3.12 Elmet Hall; laundry and service wing in 1993.
- 3.13 Elmet Hall; the overgrown rockery in 1993.
- 12 3.14 Plan of Elmet Hall estate in 1919 (Sale Prospectus).
- 3.15 Elizabeth (née Hutchinson) (1832-1913) and James I Kitson, c.1880 (C. M.-S.).
- 3.16 Plan of Elmet Hall ground floor in 1919 (Sale Prospectus).
- 13 3.17 *Spring Bank*, Headingley Lane, home of the first family of James II Kitson, and later of C.F. Tetley, father-in-law of S.D.K.
- 3.18 Gledhow Hall (1767) by John Carr, home of Sir James Kitson Bart. from 1885-1911.
- 14 3.19 *South Elevation of the University of Leeds* (ex-Yorkshire College of Science) (1877-1908) by Alfred and Paul Waterhouse, showing the Tower, Clothworkers' Court, Great Hall and Edward Baines Building (University of Leeds).
- 15 3.20 E. Caldwell Spruce (fl. 1887-1915), sculptor and modeller for Burmantofts, in 1911 at work on the posthumous bust of the first Lord Airedale, 1st Lord Mayor of Leeds 1896-1897: Payne, (199-).
- 3.21 The Kitson graves in the churchyard of St John's, Roundhay, including the crosses of James I Kitson and his 2 wives and the wall monument to Lord Airedale by S.D.K., (1911).
- 16 3.22 Apprentices of the Airedale Foundry c. 1889 with Edwin Kitson Clark seated at left and Archibald Kenrick (C.M.-S.).
- 3.23 Young Kitsons walking with friends at Goatland (1889) Aug., including Beatrice, Robert, Sydney, Eva, Annette, Ethel and Frederick J.K. (C.M.-S.).
- 3.24 The engagement of Eva Kitson to the Revd. Arthur Swayne (1897) May. (C.M.-S.).
- 17 3.25 Jessie Kitson (née Ellershaw) (1843-1922). (C.M.-S.).
- 3.26 John Hawthorn Kitson (1843 -1899) dressed for Alpine climbing. (C.M.-S.).

- 18 3.27 Elmet Hall from the Rockery, c.1890. (C.M.-S.).
 3.28 Elmet Hall, the rock garden and glass houses, c.1890. (C.M.-S.).
- 19 3.29 The Hawthorn Kitson children, Ethel, Beatrice and Robert, c. 1880.
 (C.M.-S.).
 3.30 R H Kitson posed in Latin costume, c. 1885. (C.M.-S.).
 3.31 R.H. Kitson when at Shrewsbury, c.1891.
- 20 3.32 Elmet Hall in snow c. 1890. (C.M.-S.).
 3.33 R.H. Kitson on leaving Cambridge, c.1895.
 3.34 The Hawthorn Kitsons at Elmet Hall for the Leeds Musical Festival,
 1898, probably with either Ellershaw relatives or Mrs. Elizabeth Kitson
 and her two daughters.
- 21 3.35 Leeds Mechanics' Institute (1865) by Cuthbert Brodrick, now the Civic
 Theatre, in 1993.
 3.36 Official emblems of the Little Owl, Leeds, founded 1879 and still active
 in 1993, including fine-box and order-bell. (The Hon. Secretary, Little
 Owl).
- 22 3.37 Halliwick School Reunion, 1895; the Elmet Team, with Annette,
 Beatrice and Ethel Kitson and other cricketers. (C. M-S.).
 3.38 Jessie Beatrice Kitson (1876-1965) c.1897 (C.M-S.).
- 23 4.1 Rousdon, near Lyme Regis, Devon (1874-1873), laundry and south
 (garden) front by *George and Vaughan*, in 1991.
 4.2 Rousdon, near Lyme Regis, Devon (1874-1873), plan of ground floor:
 Franklin, J. (1981) p.187.
- 24 4.3 Rousdon, Near Lyme Regis, Devon (1874-1873), *Alma Mater* Schools
 and master's house (1876) in 1991.
 4.4 Rousdon, Near Lyme Regis, Devon (1874-1873), Rectory (now Hotel)
 presumed to be by *George and Vaughan*, in 1991.
- 25 4.5 Rousdon, Near Lyme Regis, Devon (1874-1873), gazebo (1874) :
 Grainger, H.J. (1985) p.630 fig.36.
 4.6 Plan of Batsford Park (1887-1893), ground floor by *George and Vaughan* :
 Franklin, J. (1981) p.180.
- 26 4.7 Perspective of *Littlecroft*, Hampshire (1884), entrance front by *George
 and Peto: The Architect* (1884) Nov. 1, p.281.
 4.8 Drawing of *Redroofs*, Streatham Common, (1888), front door, by T Raffles
 Davison: *The British Architect* (1891) Nov. 20, p.378.
- 27 4.9 *Ryecroft*, Streatham Common (c.1888), entrance front by Sir Ernest
 George : Grainger, H.J. (1985) p.790 fig. 248.

- 28 4.10 *Sydney Decimus Kitson* by J.E. Ballard, c. 1893.
- 4.11 S.D.K. and H.M. Fletcher sketching the church of S. Zeno, Verona in 1896 : Bagenal, H. (ed) (1957).
- 29 4.12 Elevation of the front for Chiswick School of Art by Norman Shaw, in a letter to Lethaby : Greeves, T.A. (1975) fig.33.
- 4.13 Perspective of *The Priory*, Bedford Park by E J May : Greeves, T.A. (1975) fig. 54.
- 30 4.14 *Third Design for semi-detached villa, Bedford Park* by Norman Shaw: Saint, A. (1976) p.205 fig. 152, and Bolsterli, M.J. (1977) fig. 14. (ex *Building News*, drawn by Maurice Adams).
- 31 4.15 *Bishop's Hostel, Trinity College* by S.D.K.: *Sketchbook* (1843) March 7.
- 4.16 *Hampton Court Palace* by S.D.K.: *Sketchbook* (1893) March 17.
- 32 4.17 *The Houses of Parliament from Lambeth Palace* by S.D.K.: *Sketchbook* (1893) March 28.
- 4.18 *House in the Cloisters, Windsor: Door and Section of architrave* by S.D.K. *Sketchbook* (1894) Jan. 18.
- 33 4.19 *Ordnance Survey Map of Leeds* (revised 1906), showing *B and K* houses in Shireoak and North Hill Roads and Headingley residences mentioned in several chapters.
- 34 4.20 *Arncliffe, Shireoak Road, Headingley (1802-1894)* by F.W. Bedford: *The Architect* (1894) p.57.
- 35 4.21 *Arncliffe*, north side with gazebo in 1992.
- 4.22 *Arncliffe*, entrance front in 1992.
- 36 4.23 *Arncliffe*, south gable and chimney in 1992.
- 4.24 *Arncliffe*, coach house and laundry in 1992.
- 37 4.25 *Arncliffe*, kitchen and service wing in 1992.
- 4.26 *Arncliffe*, hall screen door to service wing in 1992.
- 38 4.27 *Arncliffe*, hall mantelpiece and panelling in 1992.
- 4.28 *Arncliffe*, hall windowseats in 1992.
- 39 4.29 *Arncliffe*, dining room door-hinge and louvre in 1992.
- 4.30 *Arncliffe*, dining room lock and latch in 1992.
- 40 4.31 *Arncliffe*, dining room (c.1894): (Photo by A.A. Pearson at *K and P*).
- 4.32 *Arncliffe*, dining room mantelpiece (detail) in 1992.
- 41 4.33 *Arncliffe*, drawing room ceiling plasterwork by George Bankart, pupil of Gimson, in 1992.
- 4.34 *Arncliffe*, Hall frieze plasterwork by George Bankart.

- 42 4.35 *Arncliffe*, gazebo door in 1992.
 4.36 *Arncliffe*, gazebo window with troubadour, in 1992.
- 43 4.37 The Bearpit (1840) with *The Old Gardens*, Cardigan Road, Headingley Hill, in 1991.
 4.38 *The Old Gardens*, window latch, in 1991.
- 44 4.39 Perspective of east end and plan of *The Old Gardens* by F.W.B.: *The Builder* (1904) Vol. 87. Oct 17.
- 45 4.40 *The Old Gardens* (1892-1894) entrance fronts in 1991.
 4.41 *The Old Gardens* (1892-1894) N.E.view in 1991.
- 46 4.42 Nos 3 and 5 North Hill Road in 1991, presumed to be by *B and K*.
 4.43 *Dalguire*, Harrogate (1897) by *B and K*; entrance front in 1992.
- 47 4.44 Nos. 2 and 3 Shireoak Road, Headingley (1894) by F.W.B., north fronts in 1992.
 4.45 No.3 Shireoak Road, bay window, quoins and cornice with balustrade in 1992.
- 48 4.46 No. 2 Shireoak Road, main (side) entrance in 1992.
 4.47 No.2 Shireoak Road, hall panelling and staircase in 1992.
- 49 4.48 Plan of *Arncliffe*: *The Architect* (1894) July 25, p.57.
 4.49 Plan of Nos 2 and 3 Shireoak Road: *The Builder* (1894) Vol. 72, pp. 148-149.
- 50 4.50 First design for elevations of *Brahan*, Perth (1895) by F.W.B.: *The Builder* (1899) Vol. 76, Feb. 11, before p.145.
- 51 4.51 Plan of first design for *Brahan*: *The Builder* (1899) Vol. 76, Feb. 11, p.145.
 4.52 Plan of second design for *Brahan*: *The Builder* (1904) Vol. 86, May 14, p.524.
- 52 4.53 Perspective of Second design for *Brahan*(1898) by F.W.B: *The Builder* (1904) Vol. 86, May 14, ff p. 524.
- 53 4.53a *Brahan*, the entrance court c.1900: *The Studio* (1901) after p.32.
 4.53b *Brahan*, billiard-room fireplace with carving of *Day and Night* by Hayes of Edinburgh: *The Studio* (1901) after p.32.
- 54 4.54 Plan of *Dalguire*, Harrogate: *The Builder* (1904) Vol. 86, June 4, p. 609.
 4.55 Plan of *High Garth*, Headingley, by *B and K*: *The Builder* (1903) Vol. 85, Aug. 29, p. 228.
- 55 4.56 *Weetwood (now Oxley) Croft*, Leeds (1896-1898) by *B and K*, from the SW, (Photo at *K and P*).
 4.57 *Braddae Brae*, Port Erin, Isle of Man (1902): *The Builder* (1903) Vol. 85, Aug. 29, p. 228.

- 56 4.58 *Ordnance Survey Map of Leeds* (revised 1906), showing *B and K* developments in Chapel Allerton and some of the Kitson residences in 'Little Switzerland'.
- 57 4.59 *Allerton Park*, surviving entrance lodge beside the *B and K* development, in 1992.
- 4.60 *Webton Court*, Allerton Park Road (1903) by *B and K*, in 1992.
- 58 4.61 Plans of St. Aidan's Vicarage, by *B and K: The Builder* (1902) Vol. 82, March 8, before p. 240.
- 59 4.62 St Aidan's Vicarage, off Roundhay Road, Leeds (1900), Main door hood and dedication stone in 1986: *The Builder* (1902) Vol. 82, March 8, p.240.
- 4.63 St Aidan's Vicarage, off Roundhay Road, Leeds (1990); garden fronts in 1986.
- 60 4.64 St Aidan's Vicarage, inglenook in c.1900 (Photo at *K and P*).
- 4.65 St Aidan's Vicarage, bookshelves in parish room in 1986.
- 61 4.66 Plans and Perspective of All Hallows' Vicarage, Hyde Park, Leeds by *B and K: The Builder* (1904) Vol. 86, May 14, before p. 525.
- 62 4.67 All Hallows' Vicarage (1904), garden fronts in 1993.
- 4.68 All Hallows' Vicarage (1904), staircase in 1993.
- 63 4.69 *Hillside*, Gledhow Valley, Leeds (1901-c.1904); garden front with replica of *Putto with a dolphin* by Andrea Verrochio: *Country Life* (1913).
- 4.70 Plan of *Hillside*, as altered by S.D.K., *Country Life* (1913).
- 64 4.71 *Hillside*, garden front in 1993.
- 4.72 *Hillside*, main door to Gledhow Lane in 1992.
- 65 4.73 *Hillside*, garden terrace to loggia: *Country Life* (1913).
- 4.74 *Hillside*, hall/study, with cast of S. Lorenzo, by Donatello: *Country Life* (1913).
- 66 4.75 *Hillside*, gallery (drawing room) with embroidered panel by S.D.K's mother, two replicas of classical bronzes, and *Paestum* by David Roberts: *Country Life* (1913).
- 4.76 *Hillside*, dining room with caste of tondo by Michelangelo: *Country Life* (1913).
- 67 4.77 *The Red House*, Gledhow Lane, Chapel Allerton (1903-1904), entrance front from the west by *B and K*, in 1991.
- 4.78 *The Red House*, entrance portico in 1991.
- 68 4.79 *The Red House*, Plans of ground and first floors: *The Architectural Review* (1904) Vol. 15, July-Dec, p. 216.

- 69 4.80 *The Red House*, hall (atrium), (Photo at *K and P*).
- 4.81 *The Red House*, hall gallery and staircase in 1991.
- 70 4.82 *The Red House*, main staircase in 1991.
- 4.83 *The Red House*, landing and hall gallery to bedroom suites in 1991.
- 71 4.84 *The Red House*, hall doorcase in 1991.
- 4.85 *The Red House*, dining room buffet in 1991.
- 72 4.86 *The Red House*, drawing room mantelpiece in 1991.
- 4.87 *The Red House*, dining room mantelpiece in 1991.
- 73 4.88 *The Red House*, hall ceiling glazing by George Walton of Glasgow, in 1991.
- 4.89 *The Red House*, porch window by George Walton, in 1991.
- 74 4.90 *The Red House*, staircase window by George Walton, in 1991.
- 4.91 *The Red House*, nursery mantelpiece relief, in 1991.
- 75 4.92 *The Red House*, corridor radiator in use in 1991.
- 4.93 *The Red House*, bathroom, with turquoise tiling in 1991.
- 76 4.94 *The Red House*, fenestration and guttering of service wing on east front in 1991.
- 4.95 *The Red House*, cornice and fenestration of east front in 1991.
- 77 4.96 *The Red House*, stables block in 1991.
- 4.97 *The Red House*, horsebox in stables in 1991.
- 78 4.98 Carr Manor, Meanwood, Leeds (1881-1883) south front by E.S. Prior, terrace by *B and K*, in 1992.
- 4.99 Carr Manor, service court (1900) by *B and K*, in 1992.
- 79 4.100 Carr Manor, south terrace in 1992.
- 4.101 Replica of *Putto with a dolphin* by Andrea Verrochio (? from *Hillside* garden).
- 80 4.102 *Redcourt*, The Esplanade, Scarborough (1899-1902), by *B and K*: *The Builder* (1904) Vol. 86, March 5, next to p. 297.
- 81 4.103 *Redcourt*, loggia: *The Builder* (1904) Vol., 86, March 5.
- 82 4.104 Plan of *Redcourt*: *The Builder* (1904) Vol. 86, March 5.
- 83 4.105 *Redhill*, Shireoak Road, Headingley (1901); Garden front by *B and K* in 1991.
- 4.106 *Redhill*, inglenook with plasterwork by George Bankart.
- 84 4.107 *Redhill*, entrance front in 1991.
- 4.108 *High Garth*, North Hill Road, Headingley (1902) by *B and K*, south front in 1991.

- 85 4.109 *High Garth* from the SW : *The Builder* (1903) Vol.85, Aug. 29, p.228.
- 4.110 *Lincombe*, 7 North Hill Road, Headingley (1899) by *B and K*, south front (Photo at *K and P*).
- 86 4.111 *Headingley*, Cobham, Surrey (1904–1905), garden front by F.W.B : *The Architectural Review* (1905) Vol.18, pp.84.
- 87 4.112 Plan of *Headingley ground floor*: *The Architectural Review* (1905) Vol.18, pp.87.
- 88 4.113 Market Square, Thirsk, North Yorkshire with the Yorkshire (now Midland) Bank (1898–1900) by *B and K*.
- 4.114 The Yorkshire Bank, Thirsk, armorial panel and gables.
- 89 4.115 The Yorkshire Banks in Hunslet and Thirsk, plans of ground floors : *The Builder* (1901) Vol. 80, March 30, p.320.
- 4.116 The Yorkshire Banks in Hunslet and Thirsk, street fronts. (Photos as 4.115).
- 90 4.117 The Yorkshire Bank (possibly Morley, 1900), exterior by *B and K*. (Photo and *K and P*).
- 4.118 The Yorkshire Bank (possibly Morley, 1900), banking hall. (Photo at *K and P*).
- 91 4.119 Perspective of *Business Premises, High Street, Doncaster* (Exhib. R.A. 1912) by Charles Gascoyne : *The Builder* (1912) Vol. 102, May 29, p.604.
- 4.120 Lloyd's Bank, Doncaster (1912), street front by S.D.K. : (Photo by Pickard). *The Architect*.
- 92 4.121 Lloyd's Bank, Doncaster, (1912), banking hall : (Photo by Pickard). *The Architect*.
- 4.122 Lloyd's Bank, Keighley (1911–1914) banking hall by S.D.K. : (Photo by Pickard). *The Architect*.
- 93 4.123 Lloyd's Bank, Keighley, street front : (Photo by Pickard). *The Architect*.
- 4.124 Thornton and Co., India Rubber Manufacturers, Briggate, Leeds (1909 extended as here 1910) by .S.D.K. (Photo by Chas. Pickard at *K and P*).
- 94 4.125 *The Queen's Arms*, Harrogate Road, Chapeltown (1926–1927) by S.D.K., in 1991.
- 4.126 Woodland Lane, Chapel Allerton, with Parish Hall louvre cupola at right, in 1991.

- 95 4.127 Parish Hall, Chapel Allerton (1913), public entrance by S.D.K., in 1991.
 4.128 *Foxhill*, Weetwood, Leeds (1862 extended 1913–1915) by George Corson then S.D.K., garden fronts in 1992 with extension to left (now a school).
- 96 4.129 *Foxhill*, entrance front with extension to right in 1992.
 4.130 *Foxhill*, Corson's garden bay with S.D.K.'s dormers in 1992.
- 97 4.131 Ripon Spa Hydro Hotel (1906), garden front by S.D.K. in 1992.
 4.132 Ripon Spa Hydro Hotel (1906), main entrance with ex-stables/garage in 1992.
- 98 4.133 Police Station, Free Library and Fire Station, Dewsbury Road, Hunslet, Leeds (1901–1903) by *B and K*, Police Station (now Probation Office) and Fire Station (now library) in 1994.
 4.134 Police Station, Free Library and Fire Station, Dewsbury Road, Hunslet, Leeds (1901–1903) by *B and K*, Free Library entrance in 1994.
- 99 4.135 Leeds School of Art (1901–1903), street front showing studio north-lights by *B and K*, in 1993.
 4.136 Leeds School of Art (1901–1903), main entrance with panel by Prof. Gerald Moira in Rust's vitreous mosaic, in 1993.
- 100 4.137 Plans and section of Leeds School of Art : *The Architectural Review* (1904) Vol.15, May, pp. 164–170.
- 101 4.138 Leeds School of Art, entrance hall : *The Architectural Review* (1904) Vol.15, May, pp. 164–170.
- 102 4.139 Leeds Public Dispensary, North Street, Leeds (1902–1904), North Street front by *B and K* in 1992.
 4.140 Leeds Public Dispensary, North Street, Leeds (1902–1904), board rooms and staff quarters, facing up North Street in 1992.
- 103 4.141 Plans of Leeds Public Dispensary, *The Architectural Review* (1904) Vol.15, Dec., p.276.
- 104 4.142 Leeds Public Dispensary, south side as revealed by the Leeds City motorway intersection etc., in 1992.
 4.143 Leeds Public Dispensary, outpatients' entrance with *Hygiea*.
- 105 4.144 King Edward Memorial Ward, Leeds General Infirmary (1915/1921) by *Kitson, Parish and Ledgard*, in 1991.
 4.145 St. Wilfrid's Church, Harehills, (designed 1906 but not built until 1927–1932 largely following this design), nave and west window by S.D.K., modified by James Parish, in 1993.

- 106 4.146 St. John the Baptist, Adel, near Leeds (12th century), south side with Norman porch, in 1993.
- 4.147 St John the Baptist, Adel, Norman Font with cover (1921) by S.D.K., in 1993.
- 107 4.148 Dumbleton Hall, near Evesham, Worcs. (1903–1905), four stone cottages (termed *The Palaces* by Eyres-Monsell) (1903) by *B and K*, in 1994.
- 4.149 Dumbleton Hall, near Evesham, Worcs. (1903–1905), the Dairy (1904) by *B and K*, in 1994.
- 108 4.150 Dumbleton Hall, near Evesham, Worcs., North Lodge (1903–1905) by *B and K*, in 1994.
- 4.151 Dumbleton Hall, near Evesham, Worcs., East Gate (1903–1905) by *B and K*, in 1994.
- 109 4.152 Dumbleton Hall (1830) by G.S. Repton, Long Gallery (restored? by *B and K* (1903). (Photo at K and P).
- 4.153 Scarcroft Grange, Wetherby Road, near Leeds (1903–1905), garden front altered by *B and K* and subsequently raised, in 1993.
- 4.154 Scarcroft Grange, Wetherby Road, near Leeds (1903–1905), plan of ground floor : *The Builder* (1912) Dec. 20, p.742.
- 110 4.155 Wydale House (1905), near Pickering, Yorkshire, extended by S.D.K. : *The Builder* (1908) Vol.95, Oct 31, p.
- 111 4.156 Hazelwood Castle, Tadcaster, North Yorkshire (1909–1910), perspective by Charles Gascoyne (L.C.A.G.).
- 4.157 Hazelwood Castle, Tadcaster, North Yorkshire (1909–1910), Great Hall/Saloon by John Carr, restored by S.D.K. and subsequently repaired, in 1993.
- 112 4.158 Hazelwood Castle, Tadcaster, North Yorkshire (1909–1910), Great Hall/ Saloon, original window revealed and restored by S.D.K., in 1993.
- 4.159 Hazelwood Castle, Tadcaster, North Yorkshire (1909–1910), Hall doorcase.
- 113 4.160 Gledhow Hall, Leeds (1911), library by S.D.K. with bust of James I Kitson. (Photo by Thos. Lewis at *K and P*).
- 4.161 Gledhow Hall, Leeds (1911), library doorcase with Kitson arms by S.D.K. : *The Builder* (1913) Jan.10.
- 114 4.162 Gledhow Hall, Leeds (1912), inner hall colonnade by S.D.K., in 1992.
- 4.163 Gledhow Hall, Leeds (1912), outer hall remodelled by S.D.K., fireplace and mouldings by ? John Carr, in 1992.

- 115 4.164 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), interior altered and decorated by S.D.K., drawing room doorcase.
- 4.165 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), entrance hall.
- 4.166 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), first floor landing.
- 116 4.167 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), dining room plasterwork (detail).
- 4.168 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), dining room with buffet.
- 4.169 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), library.
- 117 4.170 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), drawing room.
- 4.171 No.3 Cadogan Square, London (1910), fireplace and overmantle.
- 118 4.172 Elevations for the Elementary School, Harrogate, Yorks. Second premiated design by Messrs. C. Gascoyne and G. Nott A.R.I.B.A. : *The Builder* (1913) Vol. 105, after p. 198.
- 119 4.173 Plan of *Llysbach*, Harlech, Wales (1911), ground floor by S.D.K. (from original linen-print at *Llysbach*).
- 120 4.174 Elevations of south and east fronts of *Llysbach* by S.D.K. (lent by P. Fairfax-Rawlings).
- 121 4.175 *Llysbach*, Harlech, house from N.W., in 1988.
- 4.176 *Llysbach*, Harlech, fenestration on east side, in 1988.
- 122 4.177 *Llysbach*, Harlech, living room fireplace with embroidered panel probably by Mrs. Elizabeth Kitson, in 1989. (Photo by P. Fairfax-Rawlings).
- 4.178 *Llysbach*, Harlech, main (south) door in 1988 (Photo by P. Fairfax-Rawlings).
- 123 4.179 *Llysbach*, Harlech, view of Harlech Castle from the living room.
- 4.180 *Llysbach*, Harlech, north front, verandah, in 1988.
- 124 4.181 *Harlech Castle* (1912) by Charles Gascoyne (Misses E and B Kitson now Cecil Higgins Museum).
- 4.182 *Sydney Decimus Kitson* (1912) by Charles Gascoyne (Miss B. Kitson).
- 125 4.183 Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, memorial window to Mrs James I Kitson (Anne Newton) (1865) by *Morris and Co.*, lower lights of the *Magdalen and Dorcas*.
- 4.184 Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, east window erected in memory of Lord Airedale (1911–1912) under the supervision of S.D.K. Top right light shows Minister Wicksteed and Lord Airedale in robes.

- 126 4.185 Lawnswood Cemetery, Otley Road, Leeds. Monument to Mrs. C. F. Tetley (1925) and later also to C.F.T. and Winnie Tetley, the wife of S.D.K. who designed it.
- 4.186 Headingley War Memorial (1921) by S.D.K.
- 127 4.187 War Memorial, St Peter's, Dewsbury Road, Hunslet (1922) by S.D.K. with the Police Station, Library and Fire Station (1901–1903) by *B and K*, in 1994.
- 4.188 Lloyd's Bank Chambers, Vicar Lane, designed for the offices of *Kitson and Partners* within the creation of the Headrow, designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield in 1924–1936.
- 128 4.189 The R.I.B.A. annual dinner by Fred May : *The Architect's Journal* (1933) 8 March : including S.D.K.; 3 Presidents Unwin, Scott and Rendel; Secretaries MacAlister and Spragg; Nat. Gallery Trustee and Royal Fine Arts Commissioner Lee; P.R.A. Llewellyn; R.I.B.A. Council members and other speakers include Rothenstein and Malim, the Headmaster of Haileybury.
- 4.190 S.D.K. at the opening of the R.I.B.A.'s new HQ, in Portland Place, in 1934 with the past and new Directors of the National Gallery, Sir Augustus Daniel, and (Sir) Kenneth Clark and their wives.
- 129 5.1 Corner of Ryder and Duke Street, St. James's in 1992, the block in which C.A. Hunt's apartment and the Carfax Gallery were situated.
- 5.2 *Some Persons of 'The Nineties' little imagining, despite their Proper Pride and Ornamental Aspect, how much they will interest Mr. Holbrook Jackson and Mr. Osbert Burdett* by Max Beerbohm, (1925) *Observations* (including Sickert, Wilde, Yeats, Conder, Rothenstein, Beerbohm and Beardsley).
- 130 5.3 *Cecil Arthur Hunt*. Drawing, 1908, by George Lambert A.R.A. (1873-1930). (Mrs M. Hunt).
- 5.4 *Phyllis Clara Hunt* (née Lucas). Relief by Stirling Lee (1856-1916) (Mrs M. Hunt).
- 131 5.5 *Sir Frank Brangwyn, R.A.* Etching by Joseph Simpson (1879-1959)
- 5.6 *The Cider Press*. Oil by F.B. bt. 1902 by Sir Alfred East, R.A. (Sparrow, W.S., 1905, Plate 8).
- 132 5.7 *Leeks*. Oil by F.B. bt. 1903 by R.H.K; L.C.A.G. 18.3/45. (Sparrow, W.S., 1910).
- 5.8 *The Rajah's Birthday*. Oil by F.B. bt. 1908 by R.H.K. L.C.A.G. NI 1945 (Sparrow, W.S., 1910)

- 133 5.9 *Off Clovelly*. Oil by F.B. c.1887. Sold at an International Exhibition, Melbourne, Victoria, and recently presented to the Dunedin Club, New Zealand.
- 5.10 *The Buccaneers*. Oil by F.B. 1893, based on sketches in Spain, 1891. Exhib: Paris Salon 1893 bt M. Pacquement, (Sparrow, W.S. 1910), now at Washington University Gallery, St. Louis.
- 134 5.11 *Dancing*. Mural by F.B. 1895 for *La Maison de l'Art Nouveau*, Paris. (Furst, H. 1924, p.48)
- 5.12 *Salone, Villa Igiea*, Palermo, designed by Ernesto Basile, 1899-1901, with murals of *The Seasons* by Ettore De Maria Bergler in 1919.
- 135 5.13 Decorations and furniture designed by F.B. for the Music and Bedrooms of (Sir) Edmund and Lady Davis (Holme, C. (ed) 1901 pp.48, 51): Frieze.
- 5.14 Chairs, cabinet/table and electric lamp in silver.
- 5.15 Settee/daybed.
- 136 5.16 Etchings by C.A. Hunt and Sir Alfred East given to Don Carlo Siligato (Nino Siligato).
- 5.17 *Mallord House*, The Vale, Chelsea. Plans and perspective by Knott, R. (1911) *The Building News*, No. 2955, p.274.
- 137 5.18 *Excavators (Navvies at work)*. Pastel Sketch for mural frieze by F.B.
- 5.19 *The Blacksmiths*. Oil by F.B. for Venetian Biennale, 1905: L.C.A.G SW 9/06
- 5.20 *The Spirit of the Age*: with bookplate for R.H.K. by F.B. (Sparrow, W.S. 1905).
- 138 5.21 *Steelworkers (The Rolling Mill)*. Oil by F.B. for Venice, 1905: L.C.A.G. SW8/06. Below is *Lottie of Paradise Walk* by Sir William Orpen, R.A., 1905: L.C.A.G. SW122/25.
- 5.22 *The Spinners*. Oil by F.B. for Sam Wilson to complete the frieze at Leeds City Art Gallery SW11/06.
- 139 5.23 *Chimneypiece* by Alfred Gilbert, R.A.C. 1914 for *Rutland Lodge*, Potternewton, L.C.A.G. SW209/25, with *Portrait of Sam Wilson*: Oil by Mark Senior, 1906: L.C.A.G. SW1 45/25.
- 5.24 *A Venetian Funeral*. Oil by F.B. L.C.A.G 228/06, as currently hung between bronzes by Alfred Gilbert R.A. with the Wilson Collection.
- 140 5.25 *Salute through the rigging*. Etching by F.B.; Grand Prix at Milan 1906, Venice 1907.
- 5.26 *The Bridge of Sighs*. Drawing by F.B. for etching of 1909 for which R.H.K.sent F.B. photographs. (Sparrow, W.S. 1910).

- 141 5.27 Design and front head of the *Verge* with enamelled Arms by F.B., 1911, for R.H.K. to present to the University of Leeds.
- 5.28 *Bookplate for Madeline Wells* by F.B., c.1919, (*Arentshuis* 0.2/124.111.)
- 5.29 *The Verge* supported by the Head Porter.
- 142 5.30 The side of the 'capital' knop of the *Verge* with the arms of the City of Leeds, drawn for F.B. by E.K. Clark.
- 5.31 The dedication in the *Verge* composed by E.K. Clark and designed by F.B.
- 143 5.32 *Christening Casket* for Cynthia Phelps, designed by F.B. for R.H.K. c.1911. Female luteplayer.
- 5.33 Male serenade in oil by F.B.
- 5.34 *The Fruits of Industry*. Tempera, 1901, by F.B., rejected by the Skinners' Co. and ultimately bt. by R.D. Elliott and bequeathed to Mildura Arts Centre, Victoria. (Sparrow, W.S. 1910)
- 144 5.35 *Folio Cabinet* made by J. S. Henry to design by F.B., 1905. and *Piazza Duomo*, Watercolour by R.H.K. (*Casa Cuseni*)
- 5.36 *Enamelled Ashtrays* by F.B., one with Arms of Leeds, possibly an experiment for the *Verge*? (*Casa Cuseni*).
- 145 5.37 Design for a large table by F.B. c.1905
- 5.38 *A lady (Mrs Jessie Kitson?) seated at the dining table* by R.H.K. (1907) *Sketchbook No.3 (Casa Cuseni)*
- 146 5.39 *Dining Room table* (with loose-leaf) made by Don Gaetano Ragusa to design by F.B. 1907, and *Sideboard* probably designed by R.H.K. after one by F.B. (*Casa Cuseni*)
- 5.40 Dining Room chairs made by Ragusa to design by F.B. c.1907 (*Casa Cuseni*).
- 147 5.41 Don Gaetano Ragusa, *Maggiolinista*, with his family in Taormina c.1907, with Beppino at left and Giovanni centre front (R.H.K. Photo).
- 5.42 The Dining Room, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1907, before the frieze had been painted. (R.H.K. Photo).
- 5.43 The Dining Room, *Casa Cuseni*, C. 1975. (*Casa Vogue*).
- 148 5.44 *Sideboard design* by R.H.K. (c.1905-1906) *Sketchbook 79*.
- 5.45 *Handle designs*, c.1990, by F.B. for Davis's furniture, tucked into *Sketchbook No. 79*. (*Casa Cuseni*)
- 149 5.46 *Day Bed design* by F.B. with notes on cushions etc. by R.H.K. c.1906, tucked into *Sketchbook No.79 (Casa Cuseni)*

- 5.47 *Working drawing for settee/daybed*, c.1900, by F.B. for (Sir) Edmund Davis, subsequently made in cherrywood, with designs for catches and finger plate: see Plate 54. Tucked into *Sketchbook No.79. (Casa Cuseni)*.
- 150 5.48 *Designs for bed ends* by R.H.K (c.1905-1906) *Sketchbook No.79*.
- 5.49 *Designs for armchairs* by R.H.K. (1907) *Sketchbook No.3*.
- 151 5.50 *Design for chimneypiece and panelling* by F.B, (Holme, C. (ed), 1901, Supplement).
- 5.51 *Design for chimneypiece and panelling at Temple Lodge* by F.B. C.1900.
- 152 5.52 Dining Room fireplace and frieze by F.B. with ornamental landscape by Sir Alfred East, 1913, *Casa Cuseni*.
- 5.53 Dining Room *Frieze* in Tempera by F. B., 1910, *Casa Cuseni* .
- 153 5.54 *Designs for Salone and Dining Room fireplaces* by R.H.K (c.1905-1906) *Sketchbook No.79*.
- 5.55 *Designs for doors* by R.H.K. (c.1905-1906) *Sketchbook No.79*
- 154 5.56 *Ephebe with basket* by F.B, 1900, for (Sir) Edmund Davis's frieze (Furst, 1924).
- 5.57 *Ephebe with basket*. Drawing by F.B. (Mildura A.C.)
- 155 5.58 *The Thames* with youthful fruit bearers. Drawing by F.B. (Sparrow, W.S, 1905, P.152).
- 5.59 *A river procession to Westminster in 1453*, Skinners' Co. Hall mural by F.B., 1911. (Sparrow, W.S, 1910)
- 156 5.60 *Rochester* Watercolour by Sir Alfred East, c.1910. (*Casa Cuseni*).
- 5.61 *St. Eyoul, Provins*. Watercolour by F.B. c.1910. Repaired after being shot at in World War II. (*Casa Cuseni*).
- 157 5.62 Baroque table, reliquary and candlesticks, with a *Blessed Monk* in Florentine ceramic (School of Foggini) and *Provins* by F.B., in the *Salone, Casa Cuseni* (c.1911) (Photo by R.H.K.)
- 5.63 *The Salotto, Casa Cuseni* with watercolours by Sir Alfred East and C.A. Hunt. (Photo c.1930 *Casa Cuseni*)
- 158 5.64 *Salone, Casa Cuseni* with settee by F.B. and doorcases with mouldings, in 1992. (looking south east)..
- 5.65 *Salone* fireplace designed by R.H.K. with Baroque *pagliotto* over it and items from R.H.K.'s collection on table, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1992.
- 159 5.66 Venetian *cassettoni* with Persian ceramics collected by R.H.K. (*Casa Cuseni*).
- 5.67 Southern Italian *cassettoni* once at *Stonegates* (B.S.).

- 160 5.68 *The Immacolata, Messina*. Watercolour by F.B., 1910 *Fine Art Society* Exhibition, bt. F.J. Fulford.
 5.69 Etching by F.B., 1910 *F.A.S.* Exhibition.
- 161 5.70 The entrance hall of *Casa Cuseni* with *Life among the ruins* by F.B., in 1992.
 5.71 *Life among the ruins*. Watercolour by F.B., 1910. (Sparrow, W.S. 1910).
- 162 5.72 *Sketch of Ruined Convent, Messina* by R.H.K. (1911) *Sketchbook No12 (Casa Cuseni)*.
 5.73 *Ruined Convent, Messina*. Watercolour by R.H.K. (c.1911). (*Casa Cuseni*)
- 163 5.74 *The Carmine, Taormina*. Etching by F.B., 1910.
 5.75 *The Headless Christ*. Etching by F.B., 1910. *F.A.S.* Exhibition.
- 164 5.76 Gaetana Buccini and Marta di Corra, Drawing by R.H.K. (1904) *Sketchbook No.4 (Casa Cuseni)*
 5.77 *Design for a poster*. Lithograph by F.B. (1914) based on sketch of same subjects as No.5.76, (Mildura).
- 165 5.78 Clayton Halls, 1906 by *Bedford and Kitson*, in 1986 (demolished c.1990).
 5.79 *Westwerk* of St. Aidan's Roundhay Road, Leeds by *Johnson and Crawford-Hick*, 1891-1894, in 1986.
- 166 5.80 Baptistery, St. Aidan's, 1901-1903, in 1988.
 5.81 Font cover made by Silas Paul to a design of S.D.Kitson, 1914.
- 167 5.82 St. Aidan's interior looking east in 1988.
 5.83 *The life of St. Aidan*. Rust's vitreous mosaic designed by F.B., as lit in 1988.
- 168 5.84 *The life of St. Aidan* first design by F.B. c.1908, (*Arentshuis* Inv.0.955.1)
 5.85 *The life of St. Aidan*. Tempera cartoon by F.B. c.1910-1916, (Mildura).
- 169 5.86 *St. Aidan feeding the poor*. Mosaic designed by F.B.
 5.87 Detail of leftside with bulldog. Cartoon by F.B. c.1908-1916 (*Zevenkerken*).
- 170 5.88 *The landing of St. Aidan* with cripple in foreground. Mosaic.
 5.89 *Cripple* in scene of St. Aidan feeding the poor. Drawing by F.B. c.1908-1910 (Sparrow, W.S., 1910)
- 171 5.90 Detail from *St. Aidan preaching* with Old Franklin. Mosaic.
 5.91 Early *design* for 5.90 by F.B. (now *Arentshuis* Inv.0.915.II).

- 172 5.92 Detail of *later design* for 5.90 with Old Franklin (now *Arentshuis* 9.931.II).
- 5.93 Detail of *Death of St. Aidan*. Draperies and water jar. Cartoon by F.B. (Zevenkerken).
- 173 5.94 *Man with water bottle*, pastel design by F.B. c.1908-1914.
- 5.95 Detail of man with water bottle linking 2 scenes from the *Life of St. Aidan*. Mosaic.
- 174 5.96 *The Death of St. Aidan*. Design, 1913, by F.B. (*Arentshuis* Inv.0.949.II)
- 5.97 *The Death of St. Aidan*. Mosaic.
- 175 5.98 Detail of *Cartoon with tree and coastline* by F.B., (Zevenkerken).
- 5.99 *The Beguinage, Bruges*. Woodcut, 1919, by F.B. (*Arentshuis*, Inv.02/58.III.)
- 176 5.100 The left side of the 'Sea Wall', Choir, St. Aidan's. Mosaic.
- 5.101 Sketch (Design ?) for the 'Sea Wall' by R.H.K. (1913) *Sketchbook No.15*.
- 177 5.102 Frank Brangwyn's signature in mosaic stars, the 'Sea Wall', St. Aidan's.
- 5.103 *Acolytes* on the 'Sea Wall' showing tesserae of Rust's Vitreous Mosaic.
- 178 5.104 Design from the dado of the apse St. Aidan's, by F.B., c.1914-1916.
- 5.105 Dado in Rust's vitreous tiles, St. Aidan's, in 1986.
- 179 5.106 '*Frank Brangwyn taking a few minutes well-earned rest*' by Max Beerbohm (1925) *Observations*.
- 5.107 The Brangwyn Hall, Swansea Town Hall, opened in 1934 by the Duke of Kent, in 1980.
- 180 5.108 The Chapter House, St Andrie, Zevenkerken, with the *Stations of the Cross*, 1934, by F.B., in 1987.
- 5.109 *The Card Players*. Oil by F.B. C. 1910, now in the National Gallery, Victoria (Sparrow, W.S. 1910).
- 181 5.110 *Stephen Hudson* (Sydney Schiff) by F.B. (1925) *Observations*.
- 5.111 *Walter Sickert and other august elders* (Tonks, MacColl, Furse and Steer) by Max Beerbohm (1916, 1919) *Enoch Soames*.
- 182 5.112 *Design for memorial window to Esmond Moore Hunt* by F.B. c.1927 (Mrs M. Hunt).
- 5.113 Memorial window made by Silvester Sparrow to the design of F.B. c.1929, St. Winifred's, Manaton, Devon.
- 183 6.1 Mt. Etna from the Graeco-Roman theatre, Taormina, in 1993.

- 6.2 Taormina from the *Villa Fiorenza* (ex-Morgan) to the *Hotel San Domenico* (at left) from the terrace of the *Villa Comunale* (ex-Cacciola-Trevelyan).
- 184 6.3 Perspective drawing of the *Villa Igiea*, Palermo by Ernesto Basile. See also 5.12 and 6.18. (Pirrone, G., 1976, p.123).
- 185 6.4 *Let Justice be done: Mr Clement Shorter (to Mr Alexander Nelson Hood): 'And so you're the Duke of Bronte! Now do, like a good fellow, go and pull a wire or two at Court, and get Lottie and Em and Annie made Duchesses in retrospect!'* by Max Beerbohm (1925) *Observations*.
- 6.5 *Castello Maniace*, founded 1173 as a convent and granted with *Bronte* to Nelson in 1799 by the Bourbons.
- 186 6.6 *Badia Vecchia* (14th Cent.), Monte Tauro and the ancient walls of Taormina before *Casa Cuseni* was built outside them (from an early 20th century postcard).
- 6.7 *Hotel San Domenico*, as restored after the air-raid in July 1943 when it was Kesselring's H.Q., in 1991.
- 187 6.8 Miss Mabel Hill, Christmas 1917, in Red Cross uniform. A photograph placed in the mortuary chapel, Taormina.
- 6.9 Miss Florence Trevelyan Trevelyan and her cousin Miss Louise Percival at work in Taormina in 1882.
- 188 6.10 *Ahmed* and *Young Arab* (Tunisian) No.2528, c. 189-1900, Albumen prints by W. von Gloeden in the collection of R.H.K. (C.C.).
- 6.11 Pencil sketch of a youth draped 'al von Gloeden' in R.H.K. (c.1908-1909) *Sketchbook No.71* (C.C.).
- 189 6.12 *Addio a Napoli*; signed print of 1913 and *Sicilian ephebe*, print from photographs by W. von Gloeden in R.H.K.'s collection (C.C.).
- 6.13 Don Carlo Siligato and R.H.K. on the bedroom balcony of *Casa Cuseni*, c.1907, in Kitson's frame; *Commemorative Medal* struck by the Italian government and presented to R.H.K. for his help in relief work after the Earthquake of 28 Dec. 1908.
- 190 6.14 Ethel Kitson laying the foundation stone of *Casa Cuseni* in 1905, in the presence of the Siligatos and R.H.K. (Nino Siligato).
- 6.15 *Cuseni* from the Rocca, c. 1932, with the *Hotel Internazionale*, the Carmine, S. Francesco di Paolo and the roofs of the *Villa Rosa* and *Casa Cuseni*, the latter showing the studio north-light.
- 191 6.16 Early morning view from *Casa Cuseni* across the bay to Naxos, in 1984.

- 6.17 Mid-day view over Taormina from *Casa Cuseni* with the garden of the adjacent villa, Badia Vecchia, *Pal. Ciampoli* (1412), *Duomo* and *Hotel San Domenico*, in 1986.
- 192 6.18 Plan of the *Villa Igiea*, Palermo 1899–1900, by Ernesto Basile. See also 5.12 and 6.3. *Saloni*, lower left; Ballroom, centre.
- 193 6.19 Plans, elevations and sections of *Casa Cuseni*, measured by the author and Arthur Bell in 1982.
- 194 6.20 *Salone* door and niche in the *loggia*, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1981.
- 6.21 *Salotto* door with main door to right, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1986.
- 195 6.22 Main door of *Casa Cuseni* in 1985. See also 4.174.
- 6.23 Doorbell with Kitson's monogram, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1986.
- 196 6.24 Plan of *Casa Cuseni* by R.H.K. projecting staircase around a square well: *SketchBook No.79*.
- 6.25 Final design of staircase by R.H.K., *Casa Cuseni*; *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 197 6.26 Plan of *Casa Cuseni* by R.H.K. as built except for modifications projected in the kitchen and scullery tucked into *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 6.27 Second flight of vaulted staircase, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1992.
- 198 6.28 Domestic staff, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1908 before the upper garden was laid out Maria Nigrà at right.
- 6.29 Houseboy in livery, *Casa Cuseni*, before 1914.
- 6.30 Don Carlo Siligato with some of the first antique furniture, ceramics and sculpture *Casa Cuseni*, c.1907. (R.H.K. photos).
- 199 6.31 Project for front elevation *Casa Cuseni*; R.H.K.: *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 6.32 Final design for elevation with main door and staircase, *Casa Cuseni*; R.H.K.: *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 200 6.33 and 6.34 Two projects for front *loggia* using an arcade on piers, *Casa Cuseni*; R.H.K.: *Sketch book No.79*.
- 201 6.35 and 6.36 Two more projects for front *loggia* using columns with entablature supported on brackets, *Casa Cuseni*; R.H.K.: *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 202 6.37 Project for rear *loggia* and bedroom corridor, *Casa Cuseni*; R.H.K.: *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 6.38 Sketch of plan-table and project for pergola, *Casa Cuseni*; R.H.K.: *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 203 6.39 Don Antonino Siligato, the *Capo-Maestro* building *Casa Cuseni*.
- 6.40 Working out details during the building, 1906–7.
- 6.41 *Muratore* in the garden of *Casa Cuseni* (R.H.K. photos).

- 204 6.42 Rear of the *Hotel Bristol* (now *Villa Carlotta*), Taormina, in 1992. The brick-levelled roughstone courses and relieving arches over every aperture are clearly visible.
- 6.43 The rear arcade and bedroom corridor of *Casa Cuseni* in 1992. The brick relieving arches are apparent in both the original work and the scullery and emergency staircase added in the 1950s.
- 205 6.44 All the water for the building came from the Cuseni fountain below S. Francesco di Paolo.
- 6.45 and 6.46 The women carried off the soil while the men cleared the site and excavated its stones for building (R.H.K. photos).
- 206 6.47 Erecting the centering for one of the arches under the supervision of Don Nino Siligato.
- 6.48 The stone lintels were dressed on the site, which was cut into the almond and olive terraces.
- 6.49 *Casa Cuseni* at the first lift of wall construction. Beyond is the *Villa Strazzeri* (R.H.K. photos).
- 207 6.50 Erecting the jambs of one of the *salone* doors c.1906.
- 6.51 The front of *Casa Cuseni*. Note the relieving arches with lintels in position, the I beams over the *loggia*, the coursing layers and pudlocks, and the first application of stucco below the cornice.
- 6.52 The arcading of the rear *loggia*, built entirely in brick (R.H.K photos).
- 208 6.53 Slaking lime for the mortar and stucco of *Casa Cuseni*, c.1906.
- 6.54 Insulating the first floor with larva between the r.s.js. c.1906.
- 6.55 Topping out celebration at *Casa Cuseni* (R.H.K. photos).
- 6.56
- 209 6.57 Applying the stucco decoration to the *piscina* seat, c.1913 or later.
- 6.58 Hanging festal lanterns on the terrace of *Casa Cuseni*, pre 1914 (R.H.K. photos).
- 210 6.59 Kitson's bedroom balcony, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1992.
- 6.60 Kitson's design for the balcony console; *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 211 6.61 Mt. Etna from the front terrace of *Casa Cuseni*, c.1932.
- 6.62 Front of *Casa Cuseni*, c.1932 The cistern underlies the terrace.
- 212 6.63 Kitson's design for *loggia* pavement; *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 6.64 Marble pavement of *loggia*, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1992.
- 213 6.65 Monte Tauro and Taormina from Castel Mola in 1978. *Casa Cuseni* stands below the cross of the *Madonna della Rocca*.

- 6.66 Two picturesque photographs of urchins posed at the fountain, c.1885–1890, in *Piazza Duomo*, Taormina: Albumen prints by W. von Gloeden, in R.H.K.'s collection (C.C.).
- 214 6.67 The *Corso* in the upper town with the *Torre dell'Orologio* (reconstructed 1679, Taormina, in 1978.
- 6.68 *Palazzo Corvaia* (early 15th Cent.) and S. Caterina, Taormina, in 1978.
- 215 6.69 *Duomo* (13–17th Cent.) and fountain of 1635, Taormina, in 1978. See also illustrations to Chap.7.
- 6.70 S. Giuseppe (late 17th Cent) at the *point de vue*, Taormina, in 1985.
- 216 6.71 A bay of the Mauro-Venetian *Hotel Internazionale* (now *Excelsiore*), built in stages from c.1905, Taormina. in 1978.
- 6.72 The overgrown gardens of *La Guardiola* in 1992, designed by H. Inigo Triggs for his wife's sister, Mabel Hill.
- 217 6.73 Garden gate to the *Villa Falconara*, Taormina, in 1992.
- 6.74 Roofs and descending pergola of the *Villa Falconara* built c.1904, with the *Coast Beyond* in 1992.
- 218 6.75 Anglican Church of St. George, Taormina, designed in 1922 by H.I. Triggs, in 1992.
- 6.76 Non-catholic cemetery entrance and mortuary chapel, Taormina, in 1987, designed by H.I. Triggs.
- 219 6.77 Cascade and terraces, *Villa Collodi*, Pescia (Triggs, H.I., 1906, pl.28).
- 6.78 Plan of Cascade, *Palazzo Colonna*, Rome (Triggs, H.I., 1906, p.78).
- 220 6.79 Plan and Section of the small Casino, *Palazzo Farnese*, Caprarola (Triggs, H.I., 1906, p.30).
- 6.80 Wall fountain, *Palazzo Doria*, Genoa (Triggs, H.I., 1906, p.55).
- 221 6.81 Gateway to the private garden, *Villa Borghese*, Rome (Triggs, H.I., 1906, pl.105).
- 6.82 Front wall and gateway, *Villa Aldobrandini*, Frascati, (Triggs, H.I., 1906, pl.105).
- 222 6.83 The entrance court, *Villa Carlotta*, Cadenabbia (Triggs, H.I., 1906, pl.30).
- 6.84 Grotto and *vasca*, *Villa Imperiale*, Sampierdarena. (Triggs, H.I., 1906, pl.21).
- 223 6.85 Florence Trevelyan Cacciola-Trevelyan Commemorative bust placed in her mausoleum c.1907.
- 6.86 The honourable lives and terrible deaths of F.T.T.'s dogs. *Villa Comunale*, Taormina, in 1990.
- 224 6.87 *The Beehives*, Taormina, built 1899, in 1978.
- 6.88 'Antique' stone circle. *The Beehives*, Taormina, in 1992.

- 225 6.89 Plan of the gardens of *Casa Cuseni* in 1982, by Ing. Claudio Vecchio, a student of Prof. Go. Dato of the Department of Urbanistics, University of Catania.
- 226 6.90 Section of the gardens of *Casa Cuseni* in 1982 by Ing. C. Vecchio. Note the four main front terraces, of which the upper pair incorporated the *pozzo nero* and two cisterns for collecting storm water. The platform for the house divides the garden, with the upper terraces containing the fountain court and swimming pool. The higher levels in which Kitson laid out the Peace Avenue after 1938 and another area, which have been alienated and built-on, are excluded.
- 227 6.91 The front terraces from the roof of *Casa Cuseni*, in 1984. The manhole to the cistern is at top right.
- 6.92 The opposite view of *Casa Cuseni* from below with the front gateway rebuilt c.1931 after the construction of the road, in 1985.
- 6.93 Project for front terrace steps, tribune and pergola by R.H.K.; *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 6.94 'Baroque' projects for front terrace steps etc. by R.H.K.; *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 229 6.95 Project for the south side of the front steps and pergola, *Casa Cuseni*; by R.H.K.: *Sketch Book No.79*, with the stairway as built.
- 6.96 Front steps and fountain, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1932.
- 230 6.97 Designs for the face in the front steps fountain (?) by R.H.K.; (1915) *Sketch Book No.20*.
- 6.98 Projects for the front steps and fountain basin, *Casa Cuseni*, by R.H.K.; *Sketch Book No.79*.
- 231 6.99 Fountain-head, front steps, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1986.
- 6.100 Front steps landing for access to Pergola, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1985.
- 232 6.101 View south from *Casa Cuseni* with terrace entrance from front steps in 1981.
- 233 6.103 Building the retaining wall below the terrace of *Casa Cuseni*. c.1907.
- 6.104 Constructing the machicolated tribune, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1907.
- 6.105 The stonework of the front steps, terraces and tribune ramps c.1907. (R.H.K. photos).
- 234 6.106 Design for the layout of the lower garden by R.H.K.; *Sketch Book No.79*. compare with 9.89.
- 6.107 Design for lower garden corner by R.H.K. (1912) *Sketch Book No.13*, with elements to left destroyed by road building c.1930.

- 235 6.108 Designs for the front walls of *Casa Cuseni* by R.H.K. in back of (1903) *Sketch Book No. 1*.
- 6.109 Project (?) for front gateway of *Casa Cuseni* by R.H.K. in C.A Hunt (1923) *Sketch Book*.
- 236 6.110 Lower garden threshold c.1912 (?) destroyed by roadbuilding c.1930. See left end of 9.107.
- 6.111 Building the new gateway, *Casa Cuseni*, 1931.
- 237 6.112 Design for new gateway, *Casa Cuseni*, by R.H.K. (1931) *Sketch Book No.58*.
- 6.113 New gateway, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1932 (from a set of photos taken for R.H.K. and given to several members of his family including S.D.K.).
- 238 6.114 *My first gate*. Watercolour by R.H.K. (C. M-S.).
- 6.115 *Young goatherd* (on the old road outside *Casa Cuseni*), watercolour by R.H.K. (C.C.).
- 239 6.116 Women raising the water for *Casa Cuseni*, c.1906.
- 6.117 Watering the fruit trees, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1907.
- 6.118 The lower partæand tribune from the front terrace, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1908 (R.H.K. photos).
- 240 6.119 Path to the lower garden and ramp to the front steps, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1985.
- 6.120 Citrus trees and flower beds in the lower partee, in 1993.
- 241 6.121 Designs for self-caricature by R.H.K. (1913) *Sketch Book No.80*.
- 6.122 Caricature on cistern outlet below tribune, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1985, referred to as R.H.K's 'Mayan period'.
- 242 6.123 Designs for the flooring of the new entrance court and the tribune by R.H.K. (1927) *Sketch Book No.50*.
- 6.124 *Ciottolato* of the tribune, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1991.
- 243 6.125 Stuccoed strapwork etc. on the retaining walls of the *pozzo nero*, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1932 but could be earlier.
- 6.126 Profile caricatures of R.H.K. and 'U sordo' Bucalo over ramp to front steps, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1983. (Stucco grape design in *Sketch Book No.38*, 1922.
- 244 6.127 *Casa Cuseni* from the *pozzo nero* with the pergola, c.1932.
- 6.128 *The pergola*, *Casa Cuseni*. Watercolour by R.H.K. (C.M-S).
- 245 6.129 Designs for stuccoed seats by R.H.K. (1914–15) *Sketch Book, No.8*.
- 6.130 Stuccoed seating in the pergola, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1985.
- 246 6.131 Project for entrance fountain, or for 6.110, by R.H.K. (c.1908–9) *Sketch Book No.78*.

- 6.132 Sketch in another garden or project for entrance fountain or upper fountain court by R.H.K. (1910) *Sketch Book No.6*.
- 247 6.133 Design for entrance fountain by R.H.K. (1915) *Sketch Book No.20*.
- 6.134 Entrance fountain, *Casa Cuseni* c.1932.
- 248 6.135 Sketch (?) of Baroque gateway etc. by R.H.K. (1915) *Sketch Book, No.21*.
- 6.136 Sketch-plan of garden at Maiori, near Amalfi, by R.H.K. (1923) *Sketch Book, No.23*.
- 249 6.137 Rococo stuccoed seat, fountain head and gatepier, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1985.
- 6.138 *Ciottolato*, entrance court, *Casa Cuseni*, 1985, see also 6.123.
- 250 6.139 Sketch of (design for?) stuccoed retaining wall and obelisks beside main door to *Casa Cuseni* by R.H.K. (1915) *Sketch Book No.19*.
- 6.140 Upper parterre and obelisks with Wisteria, *Casa Cuseni* in 1990.
- 251 6.141 Mt. Etna from the upper parterre, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1930.
- 6.142 Sundial fountain, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1930.
- 252 6.143 Sundial with Tunisian tiles, in 1993.
- 6.144 Tiles on the roof of *Palais de l'Orient*, Tunis, in 1989.
- 253 6.145 Steps leading to the swimming pool, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1990.
- 6.146 Stuccoed seat behind the swimming pool, in 1993. See also 6.57.
- 254 6.147 Design for *piscina* piers by R.H.K. (1918–19) *Sketch Book No.28*.
- 6.148 *Piscina* reflecting Mt. Etna, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1932.
- 255 6.149 R.H.K. with a young friend on the beach below Taormina and 6.150 in the *Ciottolato* in the 1930s.
- 6.151 R.H.K. with his Tunisian chauffeur Ahmed, c.1928.
- 6.152 Don Carlo with Ina K. Clark, Nance Plaum (?) and Kids (R.H.K. photo).
- 256 6.153 *Ciottolato* pavement of the University of Catania, 1730, by G.B. Vaccarini (1702–1768), in 1977.
- 6.154 *Ciottolato, Corte della fontana, Casa Cuseni*, in 1986.
- 257 6.155 Design plan for *Ciottolato* and plant beds by R.H.K. (1910) *Sketch Book, No.7*.
- 6.156 Projects for *Ciottolato* with obelisks by R.H.K. (1913) *Sketch Book, No.15*.
- 258 6.157 Projects for *Ciottolato* with pergola and belvedere by R.H.K. (1911) *Sketch Book No.11*.
- 6.158 Sketch of a piazza (or project for *Ciottolato*?) by R.H.K. (1910) *Sketch Book, No.6*.

- 259 6.159 Projects for *Ciottolato* by R.H.K. (1911) *Sketch Book No.11*.
6.160 *Immacolata* in niche; sketch or project for *Ciottolato*? R.H.K. (1910)
Sketch Book No.7.
- 260 6.161 Project for *Ciottolato* with dolphin sculpture in watercolour by R.H.K.
(1910) *Sketch Book, No.7*. See 6.157 and 6.158.
6.162 Sketches of *la Corte della Fontana, Don Carlo* and the *Carminie* in
watercolour by R.H.K. (1914–15) *Sketch Book No.18*.
- 261 6.163 One of the two nymphs in niches at the ends of the *vasca* in 1984.
6.164 *La Corte della Fontana, Casa Cuseni*, in 1984.
- 262 6.165 Niche in Tunisian tiles, *la Corte della Fontana* in 1984.
6.166 Tiled panel of *Palais de l'Orient*, Tunis in 1989. Several are identical to
ones in the lower part of 6.165.
- 263 6.167 Laying the cobbles in the *Ciottolato, Casa Cuseni*.
6.168 Gardener (Pasquale Falanga?) in the *Ciottolato, Casa Cuseni*.
6.169 R.H.K. in Moroccan costume in *la Corte della Fontana*.
- 264 6.170 Planting below the pergola, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1908 (R.H.K. photo).
6.171 Similar planting on the opposite side of the tribune, in 1985.
- 265 6.172 Plan of *Villa San Giorgio* by C.R. Ashbee (A.R., 1913).
6.173 View to Capo S. Alessio from *Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981.
- 266 6.174 Foundation stone, *Villa San Giorgio*, 23 April 1908, in 1987.
- 267 6.175 Plans of *Villa San Giorgio* by C.R. Ashbee (A.R. 1913).
- 268 6.176 *Piano Nobile, Palazzo del Duca di S. Stefano*, (14-15th Cent.),
Taormina, in 1991.
6.177 Staircase to minstrels' gallery and first floor, *Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981.
- 269 6.178 Front porch, *Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981, with inlaid larva detailing.
6.179 Garden front of *Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981, with bays to each of the
rooms, a pergola over the bedroom terrace and a rose window modelled
on the *duomo* of Savoca.
- 270 6.180 Entrance hall and staircase, *Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981, with motifs in
marble and larva.
6.181 *Salone, Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981.
- 271 6.182 Overmantel, *Salone, Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981. The coats of arms
seem to have been added by the Shaw-Helliars.
6.183 English grate, *Salone, Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981. Not designed by C.R.
Ashbee.
- 272 6.184 Minstrels' gallery panel *Villa San Giorgio* in 1981, by the *Guild of
Handicraft*, Chipping Campden.

- 6.185 Dining Room fireplace with relief of *San Giorgio* in 1981, by the *Guild of Handicraft*, Chipping Campden.
- 273 6.186a Col. Shaw-Hellier watering his garden, from a print by W. von Gloeden, c.1909–10 (Pohlmann, U., 1987, p.77).
- 6.186b Robert Kitson, probably with his mother and her companion at the fountain in *Piazza Duomo*, Taormina, c.1907–9.
- 274 6.187 *The Silent and Good Woman* and *lavabo* on the staircase, *Villa San Giorgio*, in 1981.
- 6.188 Celtic cross erected on the grave of Col. T.B. Shaw-Hellier (d.1910) non-catholic cemetery, Taormina, in 1987.
- 275 6.189 Project for *Salone* fireplace by R.H.K. (1905–6) *Sketch Book, No.79*.
- 6.190 *Salone, Casa Cuseni*, c.1907, with furniture and ceramics seen on arrival in 6.30 and two watercolours by Sir Alfred East.
- 276 6.191 Persian *Lion rug*, *Salone, Casa Cuseni*, in 1993, also shown on arrival c.1908 in a photo by R.H.K.
- 6.192 Venetian *cassettone* with Persian ceramics, reliquary and Sicilian jar, *Salone, Casa Cuseni* in 1992.
- 277 7.1 'Master Robert's Rubbish'. Aumbry front from R.H.K.'s collection at *Stonegates* etc. (C.M-S.).
- 7.2 Collection of Old Leeds Ware, once at Elmet Hall (C.M-S.).
- 278 7.3 *Dolomites, Cristallo*. Watercolour by C.A. Hunt C1923,
101/2 x 143/8 ins. (B.S.)
- 7.4 *Two Castles on the Tiber*. Watercolour by C.A. Hunt given to R.H.K., 1928, 10 1/4 x 14 ins. (C.C.).
- 279 7.5 Banana grove. Pencil by R.H.K. (1924) *Sketchbook No.47*.
- 7.6 Compositions of Fez. Pencil by R.H.K. (1928) *Sketchbook No. 52*. See 7.7 and 7.8.
- 280 7.7 Shored up street in Fez. Pencil by R.H.K. (1928) *Sketchbook No. 52*.
- 7.8 *Street in Fez*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1928, 15 1/2 x 11 7/8 ins. (B.S.)
- 281 7.9 Composition for *Il Sindaco di Taormina che annuncia la presa di Trieste* by R.H.K. (1918) *Sketchbook No.27*.
- 7.10 Sketch for *The Mayor announcing the taking of Trieste to the people of Taormina*. (L.C.A.G. 565/24). Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1918, 11 3/4 x 15 3/4 ins (Prof. D. Triscari).
- 282 7.11 *Street market, Cairo* (in fact Kairouan). Watercolour by R.H.K. bt. by E. de Beer. (Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, NZ).
- 283 7.12 Sir Alfred East R.A. painting *Château Gaillard*, 47 x 59 ins. (Northampton Art Gallery). Photo given to R.H.K. (C.C.).

- 7.13 East's entry in *The Elmet Book*, 17-19 July 1905 (B.S.).
- 284 7.14 *River Landscape* (France ?). Watercolour by Sir Alfred East, 21 3/8 x 27 1/4 ins., in R.H.K.'s collection (C.C.).
- 7.15 *Rouen, '03*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1903, 11 x 15 1/4 ins., prior to the time he spent with Brangwyn. (B.S.).
- 285 7.16 *Easter Procession at S. Francesco di Paulo, Cuseni*. Watercolour by Sir Frank Brangwyn R.A. in ~~J.B.K.~~'s collection, 16 1/2 x 21 3/8 ins. (C.M.S.)
- 7.17 *The Bridge of Alcantara, Sicily*. Watercolour by F.B. (Sparrow, W.S., 1910).
- 286 7.18 *Head of a mourner*. Design for St. Aidan's by F.B., c.1908-1914. (Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, N.Z.).
- 7.19 *Mass in S. Caterina, Taormina*. Monochrome wash and pencil by F.B. (Sparrow, W.S. 1910).
- 287 7.20 *Woman in a cloak*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1909) *Sketchbook No.4*.
- 7.21 *Crippled piper*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1909) *Sketchbook No.4*.
- 288 7.22 *Avignon, 1917*. Etching by F.B. sketched in 1913. (Gaunt, W., 1926, No. 241).
- 7.23 *The tree in my Brangwyn watercolour of 1913 - Sept.29.'35*. Red chalk by R.H.K. (1935) *Sketchbook No.65*.
- 289 7.24 *Avignon, 1913, with Brangwyn*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.25 *Avignon '35*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 290 7.26 *Ruined convent, Messina*. Pencil (?) by R.H.K. (1909-1910). *Sketchbook No.5*.
- 7.27 *Earthquake refugees, near Messina*. Pencil (?) by R.H.K. (1909-1910). *Sketchbook No.5*.
- 291 7.28 *Immacolata Di Marmor, Messina*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1910, 14 x 19 1/2 ins. (P.M-S). See F.B. 5.68, 5.69.
- 7.29 *North side of Kidlington Church*. Monochrome wash and pencil by R.H.K., c.1934-1935, 12 1/2 x 15 7/8 ins. (J.M.P.) See also 7.88.
- 292 7.30 *The Rialto, Venice*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1933, 12 3/8 x 16 1/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.31 *Gondola jetty, Venice*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1933. 12 3/8 x 16 1/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 293 7.32 *Kirkstall Abbey*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.33 *Dartmoor, '29*. (Lee Moor chalktips). Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1929, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.). An industrial subject first suggested to C.A. Hunt by F.B. c.1910.

- 294 7.34 *Bolton Castle*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1929) *Sketchbook No. 55*.
 7.35 The view over Meanwood, Leeds. Pencil by R.H.K. (1933) *Sketchbook No. 84*.
- 295 7.36 Young Arab peeping. Pencil by R.H.K. (1922) *Sketchbook No.38*.
 7.37 *Mahmoud and Saim*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1924) *Sketchbook No. 45*.
- 296 7.38 The steamer and the railway made Sicily accessible. Ethel Mallinson's watercoloured calendar of episodes in her visit with J.B.K. in 1913. (B.S.).
 7.39 *The Fountain and the Carmine, Taormina*. Watercolour by Ethel Mallinson, c.1913, 13 1/2 x 15 1/2 ins. (C.M-S.).
- 297 7.40 Don Carlo, Ethel Mallinson and J.B.K., *Casa Cuseni*, 1913. (R.H.K. photo.).
 7.41 R.H.K. in Red Cross uniform, *Casa Cuseni*, c.1918.
 7.42 R.H.K. convalescing after his operation, with Maria and Turiddu, *Casa Cuseni*, 1930.
- 298 7.43 *Derelict coach*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 14 5/8 x 19 3/8 ins. (C.C.).
 7.44 *The Dye Shop, Kairouan*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 13 1/2 x 16 1/4 ins. (Nino Siligato).
- 299 7.45 Nile Boats, Luxor. Red chalk by R.H.K. (1937) *Sketchbook No.65*.
 7.46 *Nile Boats, Luxor*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1937. 18 1/2 x 19 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 300 7.47 *Stonehenge*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1937, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.)
 A subject Constable had painted in equally dramatic weather.
 7.48 *Bolley's Lodge, Boreham, 1915*. Watercolour by R.H.K. 12 1/2 x 16 3/8 ins., and *Farm (at Meanwood?)*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 13 1/2 x 16 1/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 301 7.49 *A Walk on a Windy Day, an album of Nonsense Drawings by Edward Lear, 2 June and 26 Dec. 1860*, from R.H.K.'s collection, 8 1/2 x 11 3/4 ins. (Christie's, 1985, p.18).
- 302 7.50 *Bassae, 18 March 1849*. Ink and watercolour by Edward Lear, 13 x 20 ins., from Misses Kitsons' collection (now at Cecil Higgins A.G.).
 7.51 *Mosque in Bokhara, Turkestan*. Watercolour by H.B. Brabazon, 8 1/4 x 11 3/4 ins. (Weil, A., 1986, No.51).
- 303 7.52 *S. Nicolò, Randazzo*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 19 x 18 ins., from C.A. Hunt's collection (Mrs. E. Hunt).
 7.53 *Christmas bonfire, Piazza Duomo, Taormina*. Watercolour by R.H.K. (M. Pino).

- 7.54 *Market, Touggourt, Algeria*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1934–1937, 5 1/4 X 7 1/4 ins. Note reliance on plain white paper for highlights unlike 7.52 and 7.53. (J.M.P.).
- 304 7.55 Sicilian tailors. Pencil by R.H.K. (1932) *Sketchbook No.59*.
- 7.56 Men in a bar. Pencil by R.H.K. (1932) *Sketchbook No.60*.
- 305 7.57 The Magi, Epiphany procession. Pencil by R.H.K. (c.1909–1910) *Sketchbook No. 4*. R.H.K. and F.B. were sketching together.
- 7.58 Cattle market, Sicily. Pencil by R.H.K. (1933) *Sketchbook No. 84*.
- 306 7.59 *Arab portrait of me "very like"*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1912) *Sketchbook No.14*.
- 7.60 Colour notes and shading for *The Negro's Café, Kairouan*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1924) *Sketchbook No.45*.
- 307 7.61 *The Negro's Café, Kairouan, 1924*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 19 x 20 ins. (B.S.). See 7.60.
- 7.62 Detail of 7.61 showing teapots, oil lamp and servery.
- 308 7.63 View from the *Phoenicia Hotel* to Msida, Malta. Pencil by R.H.K. (1932) *Sketchbook No.59*.
- 7.64 Five compositions of Fez. Pencil by R.H.K. (1928) *Sketchbook No.52*.
- 309 7.65 *Castrogiovanni and After Randazzo. 16 May '34*. Red chalk by R.H.K. (1934) *Sketchbook No. 63*.
- 7.66 Three impressions of the Rhine near Ehrenbreitstein. Pencil by R.H.K. (1929) *Sketchbook No.55*.
- 310 7.67 Colour notes for *Festal Barge, Luxor*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1936) *Sketchbook No.65*.
- 7.68 *Festal Barge, Luxor*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1936, 19 x 20 ins. (C.C.).
- 311 7.69 *The Corso from the Fountain, Taormina*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 10 3/8 x 9 1/4 ins. (C.C.)
- 7.70 *S. Giorgo Maggiore, Venice*. Two watercolour sketches by R.H.K. (1912) *Sketchbook No.13*.
- 312 7.71 R.H.K. sketching in Taormina, c.1905–10. (Photo at C.C.).
- 7.72 *Portrait of R.H.K., 1932*. Oil on board by Charles Baskerville. The sitter is dressed in his leather motoring coat. (C.C.).
- 313 7.73 R.H.K.'s sketching board, studio easel and the chair upon which he placed his day's work for critical appraisal, *Casa Cuseni*, in 1982.
- 7.74 *Cosenza – Hotel Moderno*. Photograph Album of a tour with the Hunts from Rome to Taormina, Oct. 5th – 12th, 1925, and 4 days in the interior of Sicily (Nino Siligato).

- 314 7.75 *C.A. Hunt at Cuseni. May '33.* Pencil by R.H.K. (1938) *Sketchbook No.61.* Seated on the *salone* settee.
- 7.76 *Nôtre Dame Le Grand, Poitiers.* Watercolour by R.H.K. c.1914, 15 7/8 x 18 7/8 ins. (J.M.P.).
- 315 7.77 and 7.78. *Amalfi.* Two watercolour cards by R.H.K. in different lights and atmospheric conditions, 1925, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 316 7.79 and 7.80 *Santa Chiara, Assisi.* Two watercolour cards by R.H.K. at different times of day, 1917, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 317 7.81 *Amalfi.* Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1925, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.). See also 7.77 – 7.78.
- 7.82 *Whitstable, 1930.* Watercolour by Philip Wilson Steer. One of at least four similar pictures in R.H.K.'s collection (C.C.).
- 318 7.83 *S. Agostino, Taormina, at night.* Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1936, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.84 *Castle on the Walls.* Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1928, 13 1/2 x 16 3/8 ins. The ruined castle at Fez, exhibit No.39 at the *Leicester Galleries*, July 1948. (B.S.).
- 319 7.85 *Montreuil.* Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1931, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.86 *S. Benizet Bridge, Avignon.* Watercolour by R.H.K., 1913, 16 x 20 ins. (C.C.).
- 320 7.87a *Mentone, Dec.10. '35.* Red chalk by R.H.K. (1935) *Sketchbook No.66.*
- 7.87b *Mentone.* Monochrome wash and pencil by R.H.K., 1935, 12 3/8 x 15 5/8 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.88 *Nicosia, Sicily.* Monochrome wash and pencil by R.H.K., c.1938, 12 3/8 x 16 1/2 ins. (P.M-S.).
- 321 7.89 *Mentone.* Watercolour card of the church steps by R.H.K., related to sketch in 1913 but more probably painted in 1935, 7 1/4 x 5 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.90 *Mentone.* Watercolour of the church steps by R.H.K., 16 5/8 x 12 3/8 ins. (See 7.89); and *Church Interior (Avignon Cathedral ?).* Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1935, 12 1/2 x 17 ins. (C.C.).
- 322 7.91 *Toledo, Spain.* Watercolour by R.H.K., related to sketch in 1912, 15 7/8 x 18 7/8 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.92 *Piedad, Segovia.* Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1912, 15 7/8 x 18 7/8 ins. (D.M.B.).
- 323 7.93 *Sultan Selim Mosque, Constantinople.* Watercolour by R.H.K., 1926, 18 x 19 1/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.94 *The Land Walls and Turkish Cemetery, Constantinople.* Watercolour by R.H.K., c. 1926, 9 5/8 x 10 1/4 ins. (C.C.).

- 324 7.95 *The Gulf of Corinth over Patras*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1926, 9 x 11 1/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.96 *The oil Market, Meknes*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 22 1/2 x 19 1/4 ins. Exhibited at R.B.A. Liverpool, 1922. (C.C.).
- 325 7.97 *The Bourras family house, Kairouan*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 19 1/4 x 21 1/4 ins. R.H.K.'s apartment was on the first floor. (C.C.).
- 7.98 *My House, Kairouan, 1924*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 19 1/2 x 19 3/4 ins. (B.S.). Another R.H.K. residence.
- 326 7.99 *To build an Arab arch*. Pencil sketch on endpaper by R.H.K. (1914) *Sketchbook No.12*.
- 7.100 Plan and elevation of house, probably designed by R.H.K. for the Boulevard Sadiki, Kairouan, but demolished before 1989 (1927) *Sketchbook No.85*.
- 327 7.101 *Tiled gateway, Fez*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1922, 18 1/2 x 19 1/4 ins. (C.C.)
- 7.102 *Women washing in Nefta Oasis, Tunisia*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1921. (C.C.).
- 328 7.103 *El Djem, Tunisia*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., c.1911, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins. (C.C.). S.D.K. presented a watercolour of this subject to Trinity College, Cambridge, 1926.
- 7.104 *Bullfight in the Roman Amphitheatre, Arles*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1921. (C.C.).
- 329 7.105 *Men seated in a mosque, Kairouan*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 11 1/4 x 15 3/5 ins. (P.M-S.).
- 7.106 *Arab School, Rabat, Morocco*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 20 x 19 ins. (P.M-S.).
- 330 7.107 *Inside a suq, Kairouan*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1920, 16 1/2 x 13 1/4 ins. (J.M.P.).
- 7.108 *Loading buses, Mogador, Morocco*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1928. (Nino Siligato).
- 331 7.109 North African robe of untarnishable 'silver' thread, worn by R.H.K. as a Carnival costume. (C.C.).
- 7.110 18th Century Venetian waistcoat and frock-coat, from R.H.K.'s collection (C.C.). See also gifts to L.C.A.G. in Chapters 8 and 9.
- 332 7.111 Colour notes for *The Sphinx*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1929) *Sketchbook No.73*.
- 7.112 *Restoring the Sphinx, Giza*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1929, (ex Col. of Dott. Turchetti, Palermo).

- 333 7.113 *The Esplanade, Luxor*. Outline composition by R.H.K. (1932).
Sketchbook No.59.
- 7.114 *The Esplanade, Luxor*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1932, 51/4 x 71/4 ins. Colour scheme and massing of forms (C.C.).
- 334 7.115 and 7.116 *The Esplanade, Luxor*. Watercolours by R.H.K. c.1932, 19 x 193/4 ins. (C.C.). Showing additions/subtractions of a mast and a figure on each side to improve the composition and impression of activity or depth.
- 335 7.117 *Cotton's Residence, Trivandrum, S. India*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1924, 131/2 x 163/8 ins. (J.M.P.)
- 7.118 *The Yellow Cart, Madura*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1924, (P.M-S.).
- 336 7.119 *The Green Tank, Madura, 1924*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 187/8 x 197/8 ins. (J.M.P.).
- 7.120 *Elephants at Udaipur*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1924–1925) *Sketchbook No.83*. (C.M-S.).
- 337 7.121 *The Red Fort, Jodhpur, '25*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 51/4 x 71/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.122 *Steps to the Ganges, Benares*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1925, 163/8 x 135/8 ins. (D.M.B.).
- 338 7.123 Compositions with colour notes for 7.124. Pencil by R.H.K. (1927).
Sketchbook No. 51.
- 7.124 *Doge's Palace from the Riva, Venice*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1927, 51/4 x 71/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 339 7.125 *Venetian palace*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1927, 155/8 x 181/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.126 *Rialto Traghetto at night*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1929–1930, 127/8 x 161/2 ins. (P.M-S.).
- 340 7.127 *Siena*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c. 1934–1935, 107/8 x 143/4 ins. (B.S.).
- 7.128 *San Gimignano*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1934-1935, 51/4 x 71/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 341 7.129 *Fountain, Piazza Del Popolo, Rome*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1925, 51/4 x 71/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.130 *Genzano from Nemi, 28 Sep. 1925*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 123/8 x 161/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 342 7.131 *Mt. Etna* in different seasons. Two watercolours by R.H.K., 10 x 101/2 ins; 9 x 111/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.132 *Capo S. Alessio, Sicily*. Watercolour by R.H.K., (C.C.).

- 343 7.133 Compositions for marionette theatre, Taormina. Pencil by R.H.K. (1927) *Sketchbook No.73*.
- 7.134 Fighting Paladins. Pencil by R.H.K. (1927). *Sketchbook No.73*.
- 344 7.135 *The Battle* Marionette theatre, Taormina. Watercolour by R.H.K., 10 x 20 ins. exhibited at the R.B.A., Autumn 1929. (J.M.P.)
- 7.136 Detail of musicians and audience of 7.135.
- 345 7.137 *Sicilian hilltown*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 123/8 x 163/4 ins. (Nino Siligato).
- 7.138 *Castel Mola*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 1930s, 51/4 x 71/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 346 7.139 *Good Friday Procession, Randazzo*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c. 1920s, 71/2 x 51/4. (C.C.).
- 7.140 *The Black Apse, Randazzo*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1923, 221/2 x 191/8 ins. (P.M-S.).
- 347 7.141 Sketch for 7.142. Pencil by R.H.K. (1915) *Sketchbook No.19*.
- 7.142 *The Cathedral Narthex, Syracuse*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1915 19 x 16 ins. (C.C.).
- 348 7.143 *Mufarbi, Sicily*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c. 1938, 11 x 151/2 ins. Pratt Barlow's farmstead near Taormina. (C.C.).
- 7.144 *La Corte della Fontana, Casa Cuseni*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 19 x 193/4 ins., (C.C.).
- 349 7.145 *Still Life in the Studio*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1930, 187/8 x 20 ins. (C.C.). The artist was probably using this bedroom during his post-operative convalescence. See 7.42.
- 7.146 *Two Still Lives*. Watercolours by R.H.K., c.1930s; *Cineraria and Stocks*, 18 x 17 ins. (P. M-S.); *Dahlias and yellow Roses*, 18 x 171/2 ins. (P.M-S.). Both painted on the table in the *Salone*.
- 350 7.147 *Filey 3, Yorkshire*. Watercolour by R.H.K., c.1921–1922, 51/4 x 71/4 ins.(P.M-S.).
- 7.148 *Aberford Barn, Dorset*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1929, 18 x 191/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 351 7.149 *Wymondham, July 19, 1927*. Pencil by R.H.K., *Sketchbook No. 51*.
- 7.150 *Wymondham, Norfolk*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1927, 131/2 x 161/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 352 7.151 *Winter countryside near Tenby, Pembrokeshire*. Watercolours by R.H.K. on writing paper, c.1943. (C.C.)
- 7.152 *St. Paul's after the Blitz*. Watercolour by R.H.K., 1941, 111/4 x 151/4 ins. (B.S.).

- 353 7.153 *Front Gate, Casa Cuseni, Sep. 25, '46*. Red chalk by R.H.K. (1946) *Sketchbook No.70*.
- 7.154 *After the Bombardment, Taormina*. Pencil by R.H.K. (1946) *Sketchbook No.72*.
- 354 7.155 *After the Bombardment, 1946*. Watercolour card by R.H.K., 71/4 x 51/4 ins. (C.C.).
- 7.156 *After the Bombardment, 1946*. Watercolour by R.H.K. 161/4 x 131/2 ins. (C.C.).
- 355 7.157 *Mt. Etna, from the north*. Watercolour and gouache by C.A. Hunt, 101/4 x 133/4 ins., in R.H.K's collection. (C.C.).
- 7.158 *Mt. Etna from Casa Cuseni*. Watercolour by E.M. Mallinson in *Stonegates and Elmet*. (C.M-S.).
- 356 8.1 Memorial Garden in the Headrow, replacing Park Street in 1932, revealing the Leeds City Art Gallery at right. W.H. Thorp's refronted Oxford Place Methodist Chapel (1896–1903) at left, Town Hall, G. Corson's Municipal Offices (1876–84). See also 2.3a.
- 8.2 The new Medical School, Thoresby Place, 1894 by W.H. Thorp in 1991.
- 357 8.3 Plans of Leeds City Art Gallery by W.H. Thorp, 1888 (White, A., 1988, p.6). See 8.4 for interior views.
- 358 8.4 Interior of the City Art Gallery; *Illustrated London News* (1888) 27 Oct. Clockwise from top left: Queen's Room (Gal. B.), Central Court, Vestibule and Staircase, arcade in Central Court, North Room (Gal. J.).
- 359 8.5 City Art Gallery Staircase from the Statuary Gallery, 1891 (Photo: Godfrey Bingley).
- 360 8.6 Tower Works, Globe Road, Leeds. Chimney based on Giotto's *campanile* for Florence Cathedral, 1899, by William Bakewell for Col. W.T. Harding, in 1994.
- 8.7 *Circe*. Bronze by Alfred Drury, bt. 1895; L.C.A.G.69/1895; originally in the Queen's Room then Park Square, in 1991.
- 361 8.8 *The Return of Persephone*. Oil by Lord Leighton. Exhibited R.A. 1891, bt. and presented by Sir James Kitson; L.C.A.G. 1/1891.
- 8.9 *Her Most High, Noble and Puissant Grace*. Oil by P.H. Calderon. Exhibited R.A. 1866, bt. and presented by Sir James Kitson, 1903; L.C.A.G. 201/03.
- 362 8.10 *Scotland for Ever*. Oil by Lady Butler, 1881. Foundation presentation by Col. W.T. Harding; L.C.A.G. 2/1888.
- 8.11 *The Temptation of Sir Percival*. Oil by Arthur Hacker. Exhibited R.A. 1894, bt. L.C.A.G. 13/1895.

- 363 8.12 *Mermaids' Rock*. Oil by E.M. Hale. Exhibited R.A. 1894, bt. L.C.A.G. 40/1895.
- 8.13 *The Shadow of Death*. Oil by William Holman Hunt, 1873. Bequest of C.G. Oates, 1903, owner of *Meanwoodside* before the Kitson Clarks; L.C.A.G.196/03.
- 364 8.14 *The Bathers*. Oil by H.S. Tuke. Exhibited N.E.A.C. 1889, bt. L.C.A.G. 5/1890 (Cooper, E., 1987, p.11).
- 365 8.15 Leeds Fine Arts Club (1888, 1897, 1899, 1900). *Conversazione* programmes for opening the annual exhibitions.
- 8.16 Edwin Kitson Clark and Georgina Bidder with members of the Kitson family and friends, c.1896–7, Gledhow Hall, Leeds. (An engagement photo?).
- 366 8.17 *Meanwood Women's Institute*, founded by Ina Kitson Clark and fitted with a small stage for her religious dramas, now the Meanwoodside Visitor Centre, in 1993. Note the base of Captain Oates's memorial; See 8.30.
- 8.18 Gallery Column from Mill Hill Chapel, re-erected at *Meanwoodside* c.1847 by the Oates family when the Unitarian chapel was rebuilt. It now commemorates the Kitson Clarks' bequest of the house and grounds to the City in 1952.
- 367 8.19 *Lord Airedale*. Marble bust by E. Caldwell Spruce, 1907, as the 1st Lord Mayor of Leeds; L.C.A.G. 104/1907. In the vestibule of the Civic Hall in 1994.
- 8.20 *Phil May* by Max Beerbohm (1896) No.3.
- 368 8.21 *Breaking up the Hannibal*. Etching by Sir Frank Brangwyn, R.,A. (Sparrow, W.S., 1905, Pl. 7.; Gaunt, W., 1926, No.36), dated 1904. It seems an earlier etching of *H.M.S. Hannibal* was presented by R.H.K.; L.A.C.G. 352/1893, unless this should read 1903?
- 8.22 *Refugees from the Messina earthquake*. Pen and ink by F.B. in *The Elmet Book* on his visit in 1909.
- 369 8.23 J.B.K. and S.L. Mallinson sketching and collecting pots in Bruges, 1909. Watercoloured Calendar by E.M. Mallinson (1910) (B.S.).
- 8.24 *Rapallo, 1914*. Watercolour card by Ethel Mallinson, 7 1/4 x 5 1/4 ins., in R.H.K's collection (C.C.).
- 370 8.25 Boys and girls playing at the children's Holiday Home organised by J.B.K. and E.M.M. each summer. Pen and ink by Ethel Mallinson, c.1905 (B.S.)

- 8.26 *Mt. Etna and Naxos from Taormina*. Watercolour entry by Carlo Siligato in *The Elmet Book* on his visit 22 July-2 August, 1913.
- 371 8.27a The Royal Commission of 1910, initially only requesting the loan of *The Return of Persephone*. (L.C.A.G.).
- 8.27b George Birkett's copy of the catalogue of the *Arts and Crafts Exhibition, November, 1900* (L.C.A.G.)
- 372 8.28 *The Visitor's Book, Hill-side, Gledhow, 1901*. Tooled leather front cover. (Barbara Kitson).
- 8.29 *The Elmet Book*, begun at Christmas, 1905, is very similar with a tooled leather design of daffodils (B.S.).
- 373 8.30 A page from Beatrice Kitson's (1906–1916) *Scrapbook*. Devoted to the heroes of Captain Scott's last polar Expedition and the *Memorial* to Captain Oates devised by E.K. Clark and erected at the entrance to *Meanwoodside* in 1913. There were 97 subscribers, including many of the Clarks, Fords, Luptons, Kitsons and Wilsons, as well as schoolchildren and officers of local army corps.
- 374 8.31 *Portrait of Alfred Orage*. Lithograph by Frederick William Jackson, c.1920, bt. 1921; L.C.A.G. 395/21.
- 8.32 *Isabella Ford*. Photograph in the *Photograph Album* of The Little Owl, member 1887-92.
- 375 8.33 *Portrait of Sir Michael Sadler*. Oil by Mark Gertler, presented to University of Leeds by Dr. T.E. Harvey, 1953. (U. of Leeds Cat. P.1, 1953).
- 8.34 *Portrait of Herbert Read*. Pencil by Jacob Kramer, 1914. (Read, B. and Thistlewood D., eds, 1993, p.27).
- 376 8.35 *Frank Rutter at a meeting of the Leeds Studio Club*. Caricature by Kester (Dodgson) from *The Yorkshire Post* (White, A., 1988, p.4)
- 8.36 *The Old and the Young Self (Royal School of Art, South Kensington); Old Self 'Take off you hat, Sir! — and leave the room!'*. Caricature of Sir William Rothenstein by Max Beerbohm (1925) *Observations*.
- 377 8.37 *Chauvigny, 1911*. Oil by Roger Fry, presented by Sir Michael Sadler to the University of Leeds in 1923, (U. of Leeds Cat. P.8; 1923).
- 8.38 *Ladle Slag, Old Hill 2, 1919*. Ink and Watercolour by Edward Wadsworth, presented by Sir Michael Sadler to the University of Leeds in 1923 (U. of Leeds Cat. P.34, 1923).
- 378 8.39 *Leeds, 1905*. Etching of St. Mary's, Quarry Hill, by Muirhead Bone whose work was exhibited by Leeds Arts Club in 1909 (D.M.B.).

- 8.40 *University Buildings*. Ink and crayon by Charles Ginner, C.1916, probably presented by Sir Michael Sadler to the University of Leeds in 1923 (U. of Leeds Cat. P.3, 1960, 1923).
- 379 8.41 *The Reader*. Bronze by Ivan Mestrovic. Presented by the model, Dorothy Una McGrigor Phillips (Ratcliffe) in 1959; L.A.C.G. 21.2/59. (Leeds City Art Gallery, n.d., Pl. 66 and 67 below).
- 8.42 *Portrait of Jacob Kramer*. Bronze by Jacob Epstein, c.1921. Presented by the sculptor at the time of the exhibition of *Genesis* in 1931; L.C.A.G. 19/31. See also Chapter 9.
- 380 8.43 *The Day of Atonement, 1919*. Oil by Jacob Kramer. Presented by Leeds Jewish Community in 1920 on the occasion of his exhibition; L.C.A.G. 276/20.
- 8.44 *The Canal*. Design for the decoration of Leeds Town Hall by Paul Nash, 1920. Presented by Michael Sadler in 1944; L.C.A.G. 3.5/44.
- 381 8.45 *Christ and the Money Changers*. Wood engraving by Eric Gill (1919) *Riches*, Ditchling, St. Dominic's Press. (Collins, J., 1992, p.93).
- 8.46 *Model of Christ* for Leeds University War Memorial, Caen stone by Eric Gill, 1922. Sadler would have seen this as well as 8.45.
- 8.47 *Christ Driving out the Money Changers from the Temple*, Leeds University War Memorial. Portland stone by Eric Gill, 1922–1923.
- 382 9.1 *Temple Newsam House*. Detail from an engraving by Jan Kip, 1699; L.C.A.G. 26/37. Used for the *Leeds Arts Calendar's* title page, this image provided a model for S.D.K.'s restoration of the lettered balustrade and the clearance of outbuildings.
- 383 9.2 *Headingley Castle*, c.1840, the house of F.H. Fulford, in 1990.
- 9.3 *Stonegates*, Meanwood, the house of J.B. Kitson and summer residence of R.H.K., 1922-1945. Apparently a short, stone-fronted terrace with its bare brick back directly on the main road and an Italian stone pine in its eastward garden. Just below, to the south, is the site of Meanwood Housing Estate, acquired by Leeds City Council in 1919 from Sir Hickman Bacon.
- 384 9.4 Measurements of a Venetian table with a Sicilian Jasper top, bought in Rome for the L.A.C.F. to present to the L.C.A.G., by R.H. Kitson (1920) *Sketchbook No. 34*.

- 9.5 L.A.C.F. acquisitions (*First Annual Report*, 1913, pl.2) showing *Classical Landscape* by Richard Wilson (1714–1782) and *Still Life* by Giuseppe Recco (1634–1695), both oils presented by Henry Barran (L.A.C.G. 251/13 and 269/12); *Italian carved canopy and bracket*, c.1740, presented by R.H.K.; 18th Century bronze *Siamese Buddha* presented by A.J. Sanders; and a reproduction of a *commode* designed for Louis XV's cabinet of Medals (Photo at C.C.).
- 385 9.6 *Part of the Ghaut at Hurdwar*. Watercolour by J.M.W. Turner, c.1835, bought 1925; L.C.A.G. 594/25. R.H.K. visited Benares in 1924-25 and then exhibited his own watercolours at the *F.A.S.*
- 9.7 *Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds 1860*. Watercolour by George Arthur Fripp, presented by Sir Edward (later Lord) Brotherton in 1926; L.C.A.G. 669/260.
- 386 9.8 *Landscape*. Watercolour by Sir George Clausen, probably bought by R.H.K. in 1923 when similar works bought by L.C.A.G. 474 and 475/23 (C.M-S.).
- 9.9 *European Cathedral City(?)*. Watercolour by Hercules Brabazon Brabazon, 6 1/2 x 9 3/4 ins., from R.H.K.'s collection (B.S.).
- 387 9.10 *A Little Child, 1888*. Oil by Sir George Clausen, bequeathed by Sam Wilson in 1918; L.C.A.G. SW 28/25.
- 9.11 *Reading by lamplight*. Oil by Sir George Clausen, bequeathed by Sam Wilson's son, Stanley, in 1940; L.C.A.G. 17.3/40.
- 388 9.12 *The Dance Club, 1923*. Oil by William Roberts, presented by the Contemporary Art Society in 1928; L.C.A.G. 828/28 (Compton, C., ed., 1987, No. 109).
- 9.13 *Lake Albano and Castel Gandolfo*. Watercolour by J.R. Cozens, presented by R.H.K., H.M. Hepworth, N. and A. Lupton in 1928; L.C.A.G. B46/28.
- 389 9.14 *Genesis, 1931*. Scrovezza Marble by Jacob Epstein, exhibited at L.C.A.G. in 1931, then owned by A.C. Bossom, M.P. and now by Granada Television (Compton, C., ed., 1987, No.99).
- 390 9.15 *Josephine*. Oil by R.O. Dunlop, bought by R.H.K. from the *Redfern Gallery* in 1931 (B.S.).
- 9.16 *Welsh Mountains*. Watercolour by J.D. Innes, 10 x 14 1/4 ins., bought by R.H.K. from the *Redfern Gallery*, 24 June 3 1939 (C.C.).
- 391 9.17 *Shady Trees*. Watercolour by Harry Becker, 7 3/4 x 6 ins., from R.H.K.'s collection (C.M-S.).

- 9.18 *Dutch Bull*. Watercolour by Harry Becker, 12 5/8 x 18 1/4 ins., probably bought c. 1930 - 1933 by R.H.K. (C.M-S.).
- 392 9.19 *East Anglian Landscape*. Watercolour by Harry Becker, 10 1/2 x 14 3/8 ins., from R.H.K.'s collection, (C.M-S.).
- 9.20 *The Mill Stream*. Watercolour by John Nash, 23 5/8 x 18 3/4 ins., in R.H.K.'s collection (C.C.).
- 393 9.21 *Leeds Bridge, 1880*. Oil by J. Atkinson Grimshaw, presented by Mrs. Macaskie in 1927; L.C.A.G. 756/27. Dr Rothenstein's *bête noire* when the likes of 9.12 or 9.23 were on offer.
- 9.22 *The Vale of Dedham, 1814*. Oil by John Constable, bought from *Tooth's* in 1934; L.C.A.G. 10/34.
- 394 9.23 *Portrait of Sir John Beckett Bart*. Oil by Sir Thomas Lawrence, presented by Sir Hickman Bacon in 1934; L.C.A.G. 4/34.
- 9.24 *Tréboul Church, Brittany, 1930*. Oil by Christopher Wood, bought from *Lefevre Gallery* in 1935; L.C.A.G. 9.1/35.
- 395 9.25 *The Jewish Theatre, 1913*. Black Chalk by David Bomberg, presented by Sydney Schiff in 1935; L.C.A.G. 14/35. See also Chapter 5.
- 396 9.26 *Wharfedale farm and shepherd, 1928*. Watercolour by Ethel Mallinson in the collection of J.B.K; one of many similar subjects by the artist. (C. M-S).
- 9.27 *Courtyard in Morocco*. Watercolour by R.H.K., presented by the architect, H.S. Chorley, in 1937; L.C.A.G. 18.1/37. (Boswell and Miller, 1992, p.8).
- 397 9.28 *The New Bedford, 1916/17*. Oil by Walter Richard Sickert, bought in 1937; L.C.A.G. 32/37.
- 398 9.29 *Juliet and the Nurse*. Oil by W.R. Sickert, 1935-6, presented by the L.C.A.F. in 1937; L.C.A.G. 40/37.
- 9.30 *Interior with two figures*. Oil originally attributed to W.R. Sickert but now to Nan Hudson (and possibly W.R.S.) by the author; see Appendix 4. From the collection of R.H.K. and mislaid by one of his heirs c. 1985.
- 399 9.31 The Long Gallery at Temple Newsam as laid out after the purchase of much of its original furniture and the loan of Lord Halifax's heirloom paintings. (*Leeds Arts Calendar Vol. 11.*, No. 38, 1957).
- 400 10.1 Sydney Decimus Kitson, M.A., F.R.I.B.A., F.S.A. (1871-1937), in the mid 1930s. (Barbara Kitson).
- 10.2 Enamelled plaque bearing the arms of S.D.K. (Barbara Kitson).
- 401 10.3 *Thornbury House, Kidlington, Oxon*. Home of S.D.K. 1926-1937. 'Queen Anne in front and Mary-Anne behind'.

- 10.4 *Cotmania*. Some of the journals and research apparatus of S.D.K. in the study-collection of Leeds City Art Gallery.
- 402 10.5 *Felmingham Church, Norfolk from the north-west, 1817*. Pencil by J.S. Cotman, 9 x 7 1/4 ins. Exhib. Norwich Art Circle, 1889, No.79; bt. by R.H.K. from *Walker's Gal.* (1992) No.113 ex Bulwer Col. (B.S.).
- 10.6 *West Front of Croyland Abbey, Lines*. Pencil by J.S. Cotman 1804, 153/8 x 113/4 ins, bt. by R.H.K. from *Brown and Phillips* in 1926. (B.S.).
- 403 10.7 *Falaise, 26.9.26*. Pencil sketch by S.D.K. (1926) *Sketchbook of France* (R.I.B.A. No.40), showing J.S. Cotman's subject from the road up on the north-west.
- 404 10.8 *Coal-Shaft at Coalbrookdale (also called Brick Kilns)*. Pencil and watercolour wash by J.S. Cotman, c.1801-2, presented by Sir Michael Sadler in 1923: L.C.A.G. 500/23.
- 10.9 *Tan-Y-Bwlch Bridge with Mt. Manod, 15 Oct. 1927*. Pencil by S.D.K. (1927) *Sketchbook* (Barbara Kitson). Site of J.S. Cotman's work identified in North Wales by S.D.K.
- 10.10 *R.H. Kitson's collection at Stonegates (28.3.27)*. Pencil by S.D.K. (1927) *Cotmania Vol.1*. 2 of 3 pages listing R.H.K's Cotmans. (L.C.A.G.).
- 10.11 *Blenheim Bridge, 21.9.28*. Pencil by S.D.K. (1928) *England Sketchbook* (RIBA No.44.).
- 406 10.12 *Classical Landscape*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, c.1835, 8 1/2 x 6 1/4 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from Bowden in 1926 (B.S.). Ex Derwent Wood Col. from his maternal grandfather J.H. Maw, exhibited at the Tate Gallery, 1922, No.105.
- 10.13 *The Turnip Stealers*. Pencil and watercolour wash by J.S. Cotman, 10 3/4 x 8 1/2 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from Palser in 1924 (B.S.). Approved by S.D.K. but not by Paul Oppé.
- 407 10.14 *South Burlingham Church, Norfolk, the tower from the north*. Pencil on yellow paper by J.S. Cotman, pre 1809, 10 x 8 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from *Walker's Gal.* (1926), ex Bulwer Col. (P.M-S.).
- 10.15 *Chedrove Church, Norfolk, from the S.E.* Pencil by J.S. Cotman, c.1813, 85/8 x 10 1/4 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from *Walker's Gal.* (1926), ex Bulwer Col. (P.M-S.).
- 10.16 *Gateway of the Ferry House, Norwich*. Pencil by J.S. Cotman, 9 x 11 3/4 ins., ex Bulwer Col., in R.H.K's. Col. (P.M-S.).

- 408 10.17 *Castle Chapel, Caen*. Pencil and sepia wash by J.S. Cotman, 133/4 x 103/4 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from *Paterson's*, c.1927, probably ex. Angell/Porter Col. (P.M-S.).
- 10.18 *Pont de l'arche, Normandy*. Pencil by J.S. Cotman, c.1818, 91/2 x 125/8 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from Ryman, Oxford, 1926 (P.M-S.). See Rajnai, M. and Allthorpe-Guy, M. (1975) pp.75-6 and pl.34, No.32, for the whole composition.
- 409 10.19 *Vatierville Church, Normandy, 1818/22*. Pencil and Sepia wash by J.S. Cotman, bt. by R.H.K. from *Paterson's*, c.1927, ex Angell/Porter Col. Presented 1945 to L.C.A.G. 18.12/45. See fig.10.40.
- 410 10.20 *Cawston Church, Norfolk, from the S.E., 1818*. Pencil and sepia wash by J.S. Cotman, 7 x 9 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from *Walker's Gal.* (1926) ex. Bulwer Col. (B.S.).
- 10.21 *East End, Upton Church, Norfolk*. Pencil and ink wash by J.S. Cotman, 101/4 x 73/4, bt. by R.H.K. from *Walker's Gal.* (1926) No.26, ex Bulwer Col. (J.M.P.).
- 411 10.22 *Man reading in front of a ruin*. Pencil and watercolour by J.S. Cotman 103/4 x 93/4 ins., in R.H.K.'s col. (C.C.) see fig.10.40.
- 10.23 *Scene in Normandy*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, 11 x 16 ins., bt. by R.H.K. from *Walker's Gal.* No.133 (C.C.).
- 412 10.24 *The Harvest Field - a Pastoral*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, Exhibited 1810 Norwich, bt. by S.D.K. from the Misses Bulwer, November 1930; L.C.A.G. 1.6/39.
- 413 10.25 Brandsby Hall, North Yorkshire, south and west fronts in 1992, built by Francis Cholmeley c.1745.
- 10.26 Stables, Brandsby Hall, in 1992, probably designed by Thomas Atkinson (d.1798), assistant to John Carr of York.
- 414 10.27 Mrs Teresa Cholmeley, sister of Sir Henry Englefield, patrons of J.S. Cotman, from a portrait at Brandsby Hall (H. Scrope).
- 10.28 Francis Cholmeley Jnr., J.S. Cotman's friend and recipient of 10.29, from a portrait at Brandsby Hall (H.Scrope).
- 415 10.29 *Byland Abbey, Yorkshire*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, c.1809, probably given to Francis Cholmeley Jnr. as a wedding present, August 1809, bt. by R.J. Colman, 1938, and bequeathed to Norwich Castle Museum, 1946 (233.217.947).
- 10.30 *Greta Bridge, Yorkshire, 1810*. Watercolour by J.S.Cotman, ex Reeve and Theobald Cols. bequeathed by R.J. Colman to Norwich Castle Museum, 1946 (159.217.947).

- 416 10.31 *A Thames Boat*. Pencil by J.S. Cotman, c.1823. S.D.K.'s last acquisition, in May 1937; L.C.A.G.
- 10.32 *The Font at New Shoreham Church, 14 June, 1817*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman with the sleeping artist, W.H.S. Scott (1783–1850), sketched during the former's delay by a gale in crossing to Normandy, bt. by S.D.K. from *Spencer*, Nov. 1928; L.C.A.G. 9.616/49.
- 417 10.33 *Boy at Marbles (Henry Cotman)*. Oil by J.S. Cotman, 1808. (Rajnai, M., ed., 1982, p.147. No.114).
- 418 10.34 *Windmills on Yarmouth Dunes*. Black chalk, water and bodycolour by J.S. Cotman 73/8 x 111/2 ins. One of several drawings of this subject acquired by S.D.K., presented by the Misses Kitson to Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, 1993.
- 10.35 *Ruined Fort? 1823*. Pencil by J.S. Cotman, 11 x 81/4 ins., bearing the *Cotman King's College* stamp and Drawing Copy No.2080, 1837. From R.H.K.'s Col. (P.M–S.).
- 419 10.36 *A Norfolk Plough* by J.S. Cotman. A. pencil sketch for B. the red chalk and pencil drawing traced onto the soft ground for C. the etching of Plate 43 in the *Liber Studiorum*. A. bt. by S.D.K. from Herbert Orfeur, June 1928; B. bt. from *Paterson's Gal.*, Feb. 1927, ex Angell/Porter Col. (Boswell and Miller, 1992, p.49).
- 420 10.37 *Fields near Brandsby in 1992*. Corinne Miller reported the recent discovery of a drawing for 10.38 inscribed 'near Brandsby'.
- 10.38 *The Ploughed Field*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, c.1807, bt. from *Palser in 1923*; L.C.A.G. 508/23.
- 421 10.39 *On the River Yare*. Oil by J.S. Cotman, c.1806–10, bt. at Christie's, 13 July 1934, at S.D.K.'s advice; L.C.A.G. 9/34. (Boswell and Miller, 1992, pp.32 and 47, No.20.).
- 422 10.40 *Near Brandsby, 16 July 1805*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, bt. from Bowden, ex Christie's, 11 Dec. 1933, bequeathed by S.D.K. to the Ashmolean Museum (Boswell and Miller, 1992, pp.27 and 44, No.12).
- 423 10.41a Norman Lupton's telegram to S.D.K., 20 July 1922, re. 10.44.
- 10.41b Lupton's caricature of Meatyard's victory over Percy Turner at the Heseltine Sale, 1934.
- 10.42 *Brignall Banks on the Greta, Yorkshire*. Pencil by J.S. Cotman, 1805, bt. by S.D.K. from H. Orfeur, 1928, and given to N. Lupton, then bequeathed with 10.43; L.C.A.G. 5.48/52.
- 424 10.43 *Brignall Banks on the Greta, Yorkshire*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, 1805, from N. and A. Lupton Col., bequeathed in 1952; L.C.A.G. 47/52.

- 10.44 *Barnard Castle from Toller Hill*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, exhib. R.A. 1806, bt. by S.D.K. from Meatyard, ex Sotheby's, 20 July 1932, ex Worsley Col.; L.C.A.G. 20.10/38.
- 425 10.45 *Hell Cauldron (on the Greta)*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, 1806, bt. by Ernest Cook from Gooden and Fox, ex Christie's, 12 June 1936, bequeathed to the N.A.C.F and presented in 1955; L.C.A.G. 16.2/55.
- 10.46 *View from Rydal Park*. Watercolour by Francis Towne, c.1786, from the collection of N. and A. Lupton presented in 1952; L.C.A.G. 13.203/53.
- 426 10.47 *Domfront, looking to the S.E.* Pencil and monochrome wash by J.S. Cotman, bt. by Martin Hardie, 10 April 1933, at Sotheby's, ex W. Gurney, sold by Colnaghi, 1961, to Paul Mellon (Baskett, J. and Snelgrove, D., 1972, p.87 and Pl.123.).
- 10.48 *Blakeney Church and Wiveton Hall, Norfolk, 1818*. Pencil and sepia wash by J.S. Cotman, bt. by S.D.K. from *Squire's Gal.* in 1936, ex Bulwer Col.; L.C.A.G. 9.650/49.
- 427 10.49 *Knight on Horseback*. Watercolour with gum arabic by J.S. Cotman, given by the artist to Hannah Maw, mother of Derwent Wood, bt. by S.D.K. from *Agnew's* and presented by the Misses Kitson to Cecil Higgins A.G. 1973 (Rajnai, M., ed., 1982, p.136 No.104).
- 10.50 *The Doorway to the Abbot's Hall, Rievaulx Abbey, 1803*. Pencil and monochrome wash by J.S. Cotman, bt. by L.G. Duke from B. Milling and exchanged for a Crome with S.D.K., May 1937, presented by the Misses Kitson to Cecil Higgins A.G. in 1973 (Boswell and Miller, 1992, p.44, No.11).
- 428 10.51 *Doorway of the Refectory, Rievaulx Abbey, 1803*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, bt. from Christie's, 28 Nov. 1928, and won by Paul Oppé in a toss-up with S.D.K. (Rajnai, M., ed., 1982, pp.47 and 48, No.14).
- 429 10.52 *House End - a Ruin*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, selected by C.F. Bell for presentation to the Ashmolean Museum by Sir Michael Sadler in memory of his wife in 1931.
- 10.53 *The Refectory of Walsingham Priory*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman selected by S.D.K., like 10.52, for presentation through the N.A.C.F. by Sir Michael Sadler in 1931; L.C.A.G. 8.8/31.
- 430 10.54 *St Benet's Abbey, Norfolk, 1831*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, bt. from *Boswell*, 1904, by R.J. Colman, bequeathed, 1946, to Norwich Castle Museum; No.211. 217. 947.

- 10.55 *Mousehold Heath, Norwich*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, c.1810, bt. by R.J. Colman from P.M. Turner, 1926, ex *Palser Gal.*, bequeathed, 1946, to N.C.M. No. 145. 217.947.
- 431 10.56 *Portrait of John Sell Cotman, 1830*. Watercolour by Horace Beevor Love (1800–1838), exhib. Norwich, 1830, British Museum (Reeve Col.), (Rajnai, M. and Allthorpe-Guyton, M., 1975, frontis).
- 10.57 *Entrance to Costessey Park near Norwich*. Pencil and grey wash by J.S. Cotman, c.1806, bt. from Herbert Orfeur by *Agnew's*, bt. in 1946 and bequeathed by N. and A. Lupton, 1952; L.C.A.G.). 5.50/52.
- 432 10.58 *A view of the Ouse, Humber and Trent from Welton, Yorkshire*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, c.1805, bt. with 10.59 by S.D.K. from *Walker's Gal.*, after Smyth sale, Heath Hall, Wakefield, 24 July 1935; L.C.A.G. 29.12/38.
- 10.59 *Kirkthorpe, Yorkshire, 1804*. Watercolour by J.S. Cotman, acquired with 10.58; L.C.A.G. 29.11/38.
- 10.60 *Horses Drinking, 1806*. Pencil and monochrome wash by J.S. Cotman, bt. by James Reeve, 1862, and by British Museum, 1902 (Kitson, S.D.K., 1937, p.91. Pl.41).
- 433 11.1 Edwin Kitson Clark (1866–1943), at left, commissioned 1891, 3rd Volunteer Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment, under canvas (L.C.A.G.)
- 11.2 Col. and Mrs. Kitson Clark between the wars, probably at a jubilee of Meanwood W.I. (A. Hopwood ex Mary Chitty).
- 434 11.3 Drawing Room, *Meanwoodside*, during the Kitson Clark's residence. The overmantle and lunettes decorated with I.K.C.'s *Travels of Odysseus* etc. (A. Hopwood ex Mary Chitty).
- 11.4 The Staircase Hall, *Meanwoodside*, with a copy of the bronze *Faun* from Pompeii (demolished c.1956).
- 435 11.5 *Smoky Leeds*. Ink monochrome by Margery K. Snowdon in *The Elmet Book* (1913) 24 April – 7 May (B.S.).
- 11.6 *Prisoner: 'Please, my Lud, were you a model to the young?'* Watercoloured Calendar, 1921, by Ethel Mallinson (B.S.).
- 11.7 J.B.K. with E.M.M. sketching in Wharfedale, from Ethel Mallinson's Watercoloured Calendar, 1931, (B.S.)
*'We all can do better than we have done,
and not a whit the worse;
It never was loving that emptied the heart,
or giving that emptied the purse'.*

- 436 11.8 *Reaping in the Yorkshire Dales, 1928.* Watercolour by Ethel Mallinson, from J.B.K.'s collection (C.M-S.).
- 11.9 *A Lane in the Yorkshire Dales, 1928.* Watercolour by Ethel Mallinson, from J.B.K.'s collection (C.M-S.).
- 437 11.10 *Studio at Stonegates.* Unfinished watercolour by R.H. Kitson, 20 x 19 ins., in one of the garden-front bays with the wooden *Pietà* (presented to L.C.A.G. in 1945 ?) (P.M-S.).
- 11.11 *Our Stable Yard, Kairouan.* Watercolour by R.H. Kitson, 17 7/8 x 20 ins., at L.F.A.C. Annual Exhibition, 1938 (P.M-S).
- 438 11.12 Sketching picnic over Meanwood. Watercoloured Calendar, 1934, by Ethel Mallinson (B.S.) J.B.K., R.H.K. and E.M.M. taking a break.
- 11.13 an L.F.A.C. sketching trip in the Yorkshire Dales. Watercoloured Calendar, 1938, by Ethel Mallinson.
- 'I never meet trouble half-way,
nor fret about things of the past.
If misfortune should come my way,
I am happy because it can't last.'*
- 439 11.14 Sir Michael Sadler, with Senor Pedro Penzol and Ina Kitson Clark, admiring her screen at the opening of the L.F.A.C. Annual Exhibition, 9th Nov. 1936 (L.F.A.C. Minute Book 2).
- 11.15 Misses Beatrice Kitson and Elinor Lupton, as Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Leeds, 1942-43, in the *Photograph Album* of the Little Owl (Hon.Sec.).
- 440 11.16 Ernest J. Musgrave, Director of Leeds City Art Gallery and Temple Newsam House, 1946 -1957, and I.K.C.'s successor as President of the L.F.A.C. (*Leeds Arts Calendar, Vol. 2, No.38, p.2.*).
- 11.17 Selection Committee for the Yorkshire Artists' Exhibition, 1949. Upper centre, Jacob Kramer, and to the right W.T. (Bill) Oliver, art critic of the *Yorkshire Post* and a later President of the L.F.A.C., and E.E.Pullée, Principal of Leeds College of Art (White, A., 1988, p.21, pl.37).
- 441 12.1 Model of the proposed new Central Library, Art gallery and Museum, designed by J.C. Procter (L.C.A.G. Sub-Committee, 1937-8, frontispiece).
- 12.2 Print Room and Art Library of Leeds City Art Gallery, opened in 1959 with storage and display cabinets designed by Procter for the Lupton Collection at *Hyde Crook* (White, A., 1988, p.17, Pl.28).
- 442 12.3 *Boy wearing a helmet.* Black chalk by Federigo Barocci (c. 1535-1612), bequeathed by S.D.K.; L.C.A.G. 29.25/38.

- 12.4 *Madonna and Child*. 16th Century Italian terracotta presented by R.H.K. to L.C.A.G. in 1945 (*Leeds Arts Calendar Vol. 11. No. 38, 1957, Cover Ill.*).
- 443 12.5 Waterloo Place and Piccadilly, London. Violet pencil by R.H.K. (1945-7) *Sketchbook No. 72 (C.C.)*.
- 12.6 *Piccadilly Circus at night*. Watercolour Card, 5 1/4 x 7 1/4 ins., c. 1945-6 (C.C.).
- 444 12.7 *The Cathedral of Nôtre Dame, Paris, 1907*, Watercolour by Philip Wilson Steer, 9 7/8 x 14 3/4 ins., from the collection of Mrs. Eva Swayne, presented by the Misses Kitson to Cecil Higgins Art Gallery in 1993.
- 12.8 *Ilkley, Yorkshire*. Watercolour by Thomas Girtin, c.1801, bequeathed by N. and A. Lupton in 1952; L.C.A.G. 5.113/52.
- 445 12.9 *J.B.K. leaving Elmet Hall with flowers, 1919*. Watercolour Calendar by Ethel Mallinson (B.S.).

If you can fill the unforgiving minute

with sixty seconds' worth of distance run

Your's is the Earth and everything that's in it

and - what is more - you'll be a man, my son.

Rudyard Kipling.

- 12.10 *J.B.K. electioneering*. Watercoloured Calendar by Ethel Mallinson, 1919 (B.S.).
- 12.11 *Election Bill* of J.B.K. for Leeds Municipal Election 1920 (B.S.).
- 446 12.12 *Procession to Civic Service in Leeds Parish Church, 22th Nov. 1942* (*J.B.K.'s Album, 1942-3, at B.S.*)
- 12.13 *Lady Louis Mountbatten with the Lord and Lady Mayoress at a TOC H meeting in Leeds, 24th June 1943*.
- 12.14 *Honorary Degree Ceremony, Leeds University, 24th Oct. 1944, with Brangwyn's Verge* carried by the President of the Students' Union.
- 447 12.15 *Conferring the Hon. LL. D. on J.B.K., 1944*. Watercoloured Calendar by Ethel Mallinson (B.S.).
- 12.16 *Portrait of Miss J.B.Kitson, J.P.* by A.R. Middleton Todd, A.R.A., presented to J.B.K. in 18th March 1944. (Civic Hall, Leeds).
- 448 12.17 *1939. The Black-out*. Watercoloured calendar by Ethel Mallinson, showing R.H.K. helping J.B.K. (B.S.). '*Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.*'
- 12.18 *J.B.K. keeping up to date in retirement*. Watercolour by Ethel Mallinson, c.later 1940's (B.S.).

- 449 12.19 *Casa Cuseni* from an aerial photograph, c.1944. (C.C.).
 12.20 Robert Hawthorn Kitson at *Casa Cuseni* in the 1930's.
- 450 12.21 Two sketches from *Casa Cuseni* of Mount Etna, and the bay of Naxos.
 Red chalk by R.H.K. (1946) *Sketchbook No. 84*. (C.M-S.).
 12.22 Front terrace of *Casa Cuseni*. Red chalk by R.H.K. (1946) *Sketchbook No. 70*. (C.C.).
- 451 12.23 R.H.K.'s funeral cortege. Those identified include: the Duca di
 a Bronte's butler, Maria's brother, R.H.K.'s neighbours Vincenzo and
 b Nuncio, Don Carlo Siligato, Maria Nigrì, 'Turiddù' Rassa, Robert Pratt
 c Barlow, the British Consul's deputy, Mr. Trehella of *Villa S. Andrea*,
 d Bunerì, Cacciola the chemist, Signorina Liciadelli a teacher, and 'U
 Sordo' Bucalo. (Daphne Phelps).
- 452 12.24 R.H.K.'s gravestone, crowned by a relief of *The Nativity*, in the non-
 catholic cemetery of Taormina in 1987.
 12.25 Daphne Phelps in the *Salone, Casa Cuseni* (C.C.).
- 453 12.26 *Studio di Pittura Carlo Siligato*, via Teatro Greco, Taormina, in 1992.
 12.27 *Portrait of Don Carlo Siligato*. Bronze relief in profile on his gravestone
 at Taormina, in 1987.
- 454 12.28 Lord Airedale's study at Gledhow Hall, showing Carr's fireplace and
 frieze enriched and engulfed before the clearance of the room in 1912 by
 S.D.K. to create an outer-hall. See also Ills. 4.162 and 4.163. (Lasdun,
 S., 1981, frontispiece, ex *Photograph Album* of Hon. Emily Kitson in the
 West Yorkshire Archives).
- 12.29 Robert Kitson's *salotto* at *Casa Cuseni*, during the residence of his
 niece, in 1992.

The Kitsons and the Arts: a Leeding family in Sicily and the West Riding

Chapter 1 Introducing the main themes and topics

1.1 'Victorian values' and art history

Every era is probably as subject to historical revisionism as it is to the promulgation of purportedly new ideas. Our own is no exception. Two currently influential examples in both art and general history are by no means new but have assumed significance in the political context of a nostalgic and highly selective appeal to 'Victorian values'. The first incorporates an assumption of collectivism in the specific condemnation of 'Modernism' and has become the stock-in-trade of party-political debate for a decade. The second seeks the decline of belligerent British expansionism in a loss of entrepreneurial spirit and the dead hand of gentlemanly education and cultural pursuits.¹

Both have an easy task because neither thesis is new and both therefore have an alternative corpus of critical opinion already to espouse. 'A beastly building by Bolshy foreigners' was how some critics greeted Mendelsohn and Chermayeff's Bexhill Pavilion in the 1930s, whilst the facades of the Leeds Headrow redevelopment (1926–1936) were the work of that exponent of the English Renaissance, Sir Reginald Blomfield.² But the pavilion was actually commissioned by Earl de la Warr to grace the front of the seaside resort developed on his ancestral land.³ And it was Leeds City Corporation who commissioned its competition assessor to provide his own plan for the major realignment of the commercial centre of the city between the Victorian Town Hall and its new city architect's subsequent colossal housing scheme on Quarry Hill (1935–1941).⁴

The notion that Britain lost its way by adopting gentlemanly pursuits and aristocratic institutions is as old as the nineteenth century itself. Cobden and Bright had fulminated against the Corn Laws as the protection of privilege to the disadvantage of industrial development and the urban economy with a concept of 'middle-class Marxism' as liberal *laissez-faire* that has been revived in recent decades.⁵ But it was precisely these social classes who founded the new proprietary colleges and public schools, staffed the empire and the armed services with officers, and based their fortunes on the manufacture and export of iron and steel, locomotives and textiles, and ultimately foreign mining and ranching, with which these occupational developments were associated. The social institutions, buildings etc. are a measure of that economic success as well as of the values of the successful.

One can see the generation that followed the entrepreneurial Gradgrinds as essentially innovative through reaction to their fathers. But theoretically and logically this poses a problem. It is common knowledge in social anthropology that parents and children tend to be opposed, not least because the latter will succeed and threaten to supplant the former, but that grandparents and grandchildren have bonds of affection and indulgence.⁶ The idea that Edwardian libertines should take after Regency bucks in reaction to their moralistic Victorian parents is therefore rather attractive. But it is an essential cyclical and structurally static or equilibrating mode of analysis. And it is not usually how cultural historians argue. They are usually concerned with explaining change and innovation, often in quite radical terms. Viewed this way there are always 'children of the sun',⁷ the innovators of the '20s being children of the Edwardians whose generation of the '90s were responding to the mid-Victorians etc. And in any case the youth of one era became the older generation of the next. The idea is as problematic as the periodization of history itself but it is of course very much how people have perceived themselves and others since this way of viewing the past became general.⁸

Rather more useful, because they are more flexible and associated with a potentially much wider range of social, economic and cultural institutions and phenomena, are attempts at explanation which explore their interconnection. Setting aside any grand theory of social and cultural change, one may focus on the sorts of issues that arise in this thesis e.g. the emergence of a new class of entrepreneurial patrons and collectors of art; the cultural interests and professional occupations of their sons and daughters, and grandchildren; their association with and instrumental role in developing municipal rather than personal or private cultural institutions although they also fostered the latter; the combination of new wealth with new technology and economic and political developments that created opportunities for the cultural exploration of and settlement in the continent of Europe, especially the Mediterranean, and through imperial expansion a wider overseas world — the adoption of 'abroad'⁹; and within this sometimes fantastic, orientalist world, the opportunity for libertarian escape and acceptance in socially and sexually unconventional settlements often idealised in aesthetic, intellectual and/or communitarian ways.¹⁰

It is with these sorts of analysis that one may connect more specific art-historical accounts and observations that form the main subject matter of this thesis e.g. the change in the sorts of work presented to public art galleries; the conscious development of art collections; the English penchant for watercolours and the interweaving of professional and amateur artists, male and female, with connoisseurs' collecting and exhibiting, to which Andrew Wilton has drawn attention;¹¹ the pattern of innovation and development that was occurring within the supposedly traditional

artistic styles and media before the dominance of the Modern Movement, which is probably most considered with reference to architecture and sculpture but much less in the field of painting, prints and drawing;¹² and the formation and development, or eclipse, of various cultural institutions, practical fine arts associations, educational clubs, classes and discussion groups, types of exhibition and gallery or museum display, and the association, or lack of it, between the provinces, London and 'abroad'.

In much of what follows in subsequent chapters the dominant themes will take a narrative form focussing specifically on Leeds, the history and development of some of its cultural institutions, and the role of specific members of the Kitson family in these namely Robert H. Kitson, Sydney D. Kitson and Ina Kitson Clark. But although a Leeding family, its members were widely connected outside the city and, through their education, political and cultural affiliations and occupations, with metropolitan events and people. They both designed and produced their own works of art and architecture and commissioned them from other artists. And they formed scholarly and aesthetically selected art collections that have had both national and local significance. For such reasons these members of the Kitson family do not simply exemplify a more general phenomenon but are figures of some artistic significance themselves.

Although subsequent chapters will provide a more detailed account of the Kitson's contributions to the arts and the context in which they were made, it is appropriate to summarize them both as a preview and as a synthesis.

1.2 Leeds entrepreneurs and patronage of the arts

Although Leeds was one of the northern city trend setters in the design of its Infirmary by Gilbert Scott, and in the immensity of its town hall by the Yorkshire architect Cuthbert Brodrick, great seaports like Bristol and Liverpool had established models of municipal splendour one or two generations earlier.¹³ In cultural institutions and municipal patronage Leeds was rather a late-comer. But when it came, artistic patronage developed by similar stages in a shorter period. Early in the century Benjamin Gott and his wife, of Armley, had encouraged the exhibition of works of art, had commissioned their own portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence and supported a cousin, Joseph Gott, in his successful career as a sculptor.¹⁴ A room at Harewood was provided for Girtin by Edward Lascelles.¹⁵ And Walter Fawkes of nearby Farnley Hall had been one of J.M.W. Turner's closest friends and patrons.¹⁶ But this level of involvement had not been maintained, although it is interesting to note that at the end of the century Sir James Kitson commissioned Lawrence's stylistic counterpart, John Singer Sargent, to paint his portrait¹⁷ and owned Turner's watercolour of his residence Gledhow Hall, painted in 1816 presumably during or following one of the artist's Farnley sojourns.¹⁸

Leeds had a plentiful dissenting bourgeoisie whose opinions dominated cultural developments in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Attempts to open the Zoological and Botanic Gardens to the general public virtually foundered on the question of Sunday ticket selling as well as the potential exposure of gentlemen's families to the '*Oi Polloi*'.¹⁹ And it took some years before full use was made of Sir John Barron's benevolent coup in securing Roundhay Park for the city's public in 1871–2 but it was sufficiently far out to become a focus of genteel suburban settlement.²⁰ James I Kitson had already bought the part of the estate that included Roundhay Church and School and built his large house above them. One of Barran's sons commissioned Kitson's youngest son to remodel his own house and garden and fit out several temperance coffee houses.²¹

Although the City Art Gallery was only built in 1888, its founding collection largely consisted of those didactic and uplifting moralising paintings that warranted substantial descriptive labels. Imperial heroism, early Christian and chivalrous valour, Tory historical sentiment, and the warnings of classical mythology were displayed to attain these ends.²² Sir James Kitson's donation of the President of the Royal Academy, Lord Leighton's *Return of Persephone* after it had been the 'picture of the year', in 1891, exemplifies this well. But by then different aesthetic ideas were also in vogue and Colonel T. Walter Harding, the proprietor of Tower Works, city councillor and godfather of both the city art gallery and the laying-out of City Square from 1889–1903, seems to have considered that 'Beauty' was its own reward and had its own beneficial effect on the public. Although Brock's *Black Prince* and the four historical worthies had some association with Leeds' past, Alfred Drury's torch-bearing Nymphs are more indicative of 'the new sculpture' aesthetic.²³

When one also takes into account the collection later bequeathed to the City Art Gallery by a subsequent proprietor of the Gott's firm, Sam Wilson, which was formed with the advice of Mark Senior, and included works by Brangwyn, Clausen and Alfred Gilbert, i.e. New English Art Club as well as New Sculpture artists, as well as that of H.M. Hepworth, one can see that the industrial patrons of the arts in Leeds, although few in number, were significant men of business and not necessarily cast in a particular mode of taste and subject matter.²⁴ They were men of their own artistic time in England and not necessarily at variance with the new ideas supposedly understood as a reaction to them. It is therefore apparent that the industrialists were not all Gradgrinds totally immersed in the maximisation of profits reinvested in their businesses. Nor of course had they always been so in England, witness the Gotts. Nor were they elsewhere in Europe or America. The myopic monocultural assumptions of some crude applications of classical economic theories have seldom been realised anywhere for long. Conspicuous consumption or enlightened edification have the tendency to take hold!

1.3 Industrial nemesis and gentrification

Even more ill-founded is the notion that something has gone terribly wrong, or is very unusual, if the sons — daughters are usually ignored — have not followed their fathers into their businesses and put their skills and capital into their maintenance and development. If one can learn anything from economic history it is the degree of change involved in entrepreneurial activity. Put crudely in this context, it was those of the family who stayed with *Kitsons of Leeds* who suffered from its decline and the loss of their capital, not those who left to work in other firms, professional occupations, or the maintenance of a country estate. Kitsons did not suffer from the small number of sons who entered the works but the early deaths of one of the most inventive as well as two who had failed to become effective managers in two generations. An organization can support a few 'nepots' but not the prospect of supporting whole generations of them, and it is easy to understand why few of them could have borne the overbearing behaviour of the first Lord Airedale, a typical captain of industry who had taken to the boss-politics of the Liberal Party.²⁵

If economic growth has a multiplying effect, what one would expect is just that expansion of the service sector of the economy on which the arts and the professions thrive. One look at the sorts of commission that sustained the Bedford and Kitson architectural practice reveals its success in obtaining, and dependence on, domestic residential work from industrial proprietors, a certain amount of ecclesiastical work from the congregations and parishes their relatives attended, and the development of municipal cultural and social services, as well as commercial work on shops, offices, banks and public houses. The increasing numbers in subsequent generations who were in other occupations benefitted from and supplied the new markets for the greater range of occupations made possible by that basic economic development. Hereditary occupational castes are far more typical of the liberal professions than of industrial entrepreneurship, and of military occupations typically espoused by the aristocracy. Any firm would have sunk under the dead weight of such sons filling all the positions thereby not available to others with more obvious applied talents, whether belonging to the family or new entrants from elsewhere.

While it is probably true to say that Sydney Kitson got a lot more satisfaction out of the remodelling and decorative work he did for Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles at Goldsborough than he did from the bread-and-butter design work maintaining Tetley's public houses for his father and brother-in-law, or Midland and Lloyds Branch Banks in Yorkshire, one is not aware of any obvious disdain for his forbears nor the source of their wealth and position. Still less does this seem to be the case of the Kitsons in general, whose pride in their locomotive-building ancestry seems to have survived the demise of the firm itself by one or even two generations.²⁶

1.4 Civic pride and municipal art institutions

Such is the extent to which local consciousness, civic pride and municipal initiative in Britain has been ridiculed, administratively displaced and legislatively abolished in the last twenty years or so, that it is difficult to recall the mentality in which the situation was potentially very different. As will be outlined in greater detail in the next chapter, Leeds was considerably later than some other great Liberal cities, like Birmingham, in taking local initiative and the municipal way of tackling the great urban questions of public health, housing and education. Even Roundhay Park was acquired for the city before the Council had established a public library and art gallery. For half a century after the reform of local government in 1834, the predominant whig and liberal councillors sought to keep the public rate down and leave the big problems to private initiatives. Even when it was founded the City Art Gallery was substantially financed from public subscriptions to Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Fund of 1887.²⁷

By the time Leeds had an art gallery, taste and trends in artistic work and ideas had of course changed since the great mid-Victorian collections of other earlier city galleries like Manchester. Although it had its share of improving, narrative paintings, by the end of the century the gallery was regularly used for the annual exhibition of the Yorkshire Artists, and those locally active in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, which included Alfred Orage who, with Holbrook Jackson, founded the Leeds Arts Club, Sydney and R.H. Kitson and their cousin's wife, Ina Kitson Clark, an active member of the Leeds Fine Arts Club.²⁸ But the curator's main activity was directed towards the travelling exhibitions of work by Royal Academicians that toured several big cities after the summer exhibition closed in London, and obtaining cases with loan displays from the V and A, Mr Gladstone and the Prince of Wales's foreign tour.²⁹

It is not too easy to establish how people perceived the potential role of the City Art Gallery. For a few years it was immensely popular but the attendances dropped substantially. Some magnates, like Sir James Kitson, gave a major contemporary academic history painting. Another, Sam Wilson, was so taken with the decorative work of Frank Brangwyn that he bought the murals painted for the new British pavilion at the Venetian Exhibition of 1905 and had them augmented to form the frieze of a new gallery added to the City Art Gallery.³⁰ Connoisseurs of the arts were coopted onto the Art Gallery and Museum's subcommittees of the City Library Committee. Some of these, like Fulford and Saunders, were major collectors of snuff bottles and *objets virtues* or fine furniture or Leeds ware and other pottery, whose specialised collections were ultimately destined for the City Art Gallery and Museum. Others, like Sydney and Robert Kitson, played a more major role in developing the gallery's own collecting policy. With Sir Michael Sadler, and the new curator Frank

Rutter, who were enthusiasts for contemporary French and other impressionist and post-impressionist work, they formed the Leeds Art Collections Fund. Sydney Kitson was then, 1910–12, at the height of his career as a practising architect, president of the Yorkshire Society of Architects and *ex officio* on the Board of the R.I.B.A. Robert Kitson had established his home in Sicily, as well as at least his local reputation as an artist, and embarked on the sequence of commissions from Frank Brangwyn and donations of works of art and other artifacts that continued to enhance Leeds institutions and the City Art Gallery until 1947.³¹

1.5 Collecting contemporary art — innovation within a traditional mould

It is apparent that the Leeds Art Collections Fund was very much a small club of connoisseurs interested in contemporary and English art. But it was not a means of self-aggrandisement. Many of the donations by Sadler and the Kitsons were made through it anonymously. They and some of their artist friends actively searched for suitable works to lend to the art gallery which might subsequently buy or be given them. And their activities were of particular importance during the years after the first world war when the gallery had no director, or purchasing fund, but the sub-committee introduced the policy of establishing a significant collection of English watercolours, which the subsequent appointment of Kaines Smith as curator consolidated.

Until Sir Philip Hendy's directorship which was dedicated to the establishment of a collection of British oil painting and the setting out of Temple Newsam as a country house museum, additions to the collection of paintings had usually been contemporary works.³² From the 1890s purchases included sunny *plein-air* works like H.S. Tuke's bathing boys, and Scottish colourists like Arthur Melville, Brangwyn and the New English Art Club came from Sam Wilson, R.H. Kitson, and Hepworth as well as Sir Michael Sadler. The only real brush with English modernism came with the deposit of the designs for Sadler and William Rothenstein's aborted scheme for the Town Hall murals.³³ John Rothenstein did not stay long enough to do more than banish the plaster casts and buy a Spencer or so. Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth passed successfully through Leeds School of Art, which Bedford and Kitson had designed thirty years before and, through his close links with Dartington as well as Kenneth Clark at the National Gallery, Hendy became familiar with and a supporter of their work.³⁴ But the predominance of their image at Leeds is a much later phenomenon. What one sees in the development of Leeds City Art Gallery is a sensitivity to English contemporary art as it evolved under strong French influences away from the established pattern of Royal Academicians i.e. the line of innovation within the historical tradition of painting rather than the break into Modernism, as narrowly defined.

1.6 The English penchant for watercolours and architectural subjects

The world of watercolours is much more complex, not least because the collectors and enthusiasts were often themselves accomplished painters in the medium, and because of the use of architecture as subject matter. A love of watercolours has been multiply bound into the social structure of art in England since the eighteenth century. At this stage several relevant examples will make the point, which will receive much fuller treatment in chapters 7 and 10.

In the 1890s most English architectural training took place in established practices and great attention was paid to local and foreign travel to learn from historic buildings and sketch them. The architectural press as exemplified by *The Builder* and *The Architect's Journal* made use of penline perspectives but contemporary buildings featured in photographs in the new collotype reproductions of *The Architectural Review*, *The Studio* and *Country Life*.³⁵ The Bedford and Kitson practice made use of all these ways of publishing their designs and buildings. Francis Bedford, himself a pupil of that fine draughtsman and watercolour painter Sir Ernest George,³⁶ was an outstanding artistic draughtsman and published his drawings to illustrate articles on the use of colour in building etc. Sydney Kitson, a pupil of E.J. May of Bedford Park and the 'Queen-Anne' revival, was a keen student of architecture, particularly since the Renaissance in England, but he also made an intensive study of Byzantine churches with his student friend H.M. Fletcher.³⁷ His early sketch books are full of just the sort of vernacular architectural details in the Home Counties for which Lutyens is renowned but of which Ernest George was also a prominent exponent.

From their domestic and public commissions in Leeds and Scarborough, and their Yorkshire banks, one can see the ways in which Bedford and Kitson kept up with contemporary trends in design for twenty years with functional and innovative plans that received commendation in the architectural press. By the time of his early death in 1904 Bedford was taking note of C.A. Voysey's houses but Sydney Kitson fell naturally for the stripped classicism of Curtis Green after his first response to the brick and columned 'Wrenaissance' of architects like Reginald Blomfield.

It is easy to see why men like this found watercolour painting a natural extension of their art and collecting such works a logical progression from it. That John Sell Cotman's works should have appealed to Sydney Kitson convalescing from the major tubercular haemorrhage that had effectively destroyed the prospects of developing his architectural career in 1923, is not surprising. Like Kitson, Cotman had been interested in the architectural antiquities of their home counties, Yorkshire and Norfolk. Masses of his work became available when family collections were dispersed and his artistry in watercolours was just then made plain by a major

exhibition at the Tate Gallery. What is impressive is that S.D. Kitson should have been so whole-hearted, methodical and scholarly in his quest for Cotman. Other writers were more aesthetically critical and evaluative but lacked the stable biographical basis that has made Kitson's research definitive.³⁸

This interest in early English watercolours was not an enthusiasm for architectural design drawings or even for perspectives, but for a medium which often made use of architectural subjects. It had been a part of the Romantic movement, of British historicism, and of that scholarly and gentlemanly pursuit of the arts which runs right through some 200 years of art in Britain. There were great professional artists like Girtin, Turner, de Wint, Muller and Cox and those who made a particular art of architectural subjects like Prout and Roberts. There were highly accomplished artists who as gentlemen collected their works, learnt from them and even travelled with them, like John Ruskin, Thomas Gambier Parry and Hercules Brabazon, the last championed for the first time in old age by the New English Art Club.³⁹ One cannot call them amateurs but they did not need to live by their art. Much the same is true of many gifted members of local groups, like the Leeds Fine Arts Club, that provided a critical as well as a genteel forum for sketching and painting and discussing art.⁴⁰

Robert Kitson exemplifies this well. He and his Cambridge friend, Cecil Arthur Hunt, both obtained first class degrees, enjoyed the society of tennis and later, in Hunt's case, billiards at the Athenaeum, and pursued the development of their proficiency as artists. Hunt married and stayed in England, giving up the bar when his artistic success enabled him to make the professional change in 1919, narrowly missing election to the R.A. when Russell Flint was successful, and living in the artistic community of Chelsea and a farming retreat on Dartmoor.⁴¹ Kitson came into his inheritance soon after graduation on the relatively early death of his father in 1899. This permitted him to live abroad where he designed his villa and gardens in Taormina. A champion of Frank Brangwyn's work, he commissioned works from the full range of his versatile hand and learnt to draw and paint on sketching tours with him, as well as with Alfred East and a few other established artists who also came to stay in Taormina.⁴²

Whereas Sydney Kitson's collecting was associated with his architectural and scholarly interests, Robert Kitson collected what attracted him as an artist or caught his decoratively attuned eye. Venetian glass and textiles, inlaid and gilded furniture, baroque bric-a-brac cast out of churches, and Islamic pottery were among the things with which he furnished Casa Cuseni and the succession of houses he shared with his sister, Beatrice, in Leeds, and many of which he gave to the City Art Gallery. But all his pictures, with the exception of a few oil paintings, were prints and English watercolours and mainly works by his contemporaries. They represented his artistic taste rather than that of a connoisseur or specialist. Kitson's own work consisted of

landscapes, and in particular townscapes and drawings including architectural subjects. As for the British painter-etchers and their mentor Charles Meryon, the forms and colours of buildings and their materials provided a subject matter for Kitson that his confident, loose brushwork was able to convey convincingly as structures and volumes. C.A. Hunt adopted a more painterly technique in his watercolours of mountains and wilder landscape. Kitson's many sketchbooks are full of pencil sketches of men and women noted down on his constant travels around the Mediterranean, and many of his compositions are peopled in a lively and often colourful manner.⁴³

1.7 The social and cultural milieu of Robert Kitson in fin-de-siecle London and abroad

The nature of Robert Kitson's social, intellectual and artistic associations in London in the 1890s can only be guessed from the pictures he collected, from Cecil Hunt's scrapbooks, and from the mass of memoirs and subsequent studies of the artistic and literary coterie on the fringe of which one presumes they moved.

Although at this time both Sydney and Robert Kitson were well-to-do bachelors whose families were in close touch, there is no indication that they moved about together much until the 1920s. Sydney married in 1903 and was intent on his own family and practice in Leeds. Cecil Hunt had lodgings in Ryder Street where Rothenstein and Robert Ross's Carfax Gallery was also situated and Robert stayed with him regularly in London. Rothenstein recalled an encounter with Hunt in North Africa which indicates that he already knew him.⁴⁴ Brangwyn did a great deal of work for Sir Edmund Davis and his wife just before his designs for Casa Cuseni which were influenced by them.⁴⁵ The Davis's were patrons and great friends of Ricketts and Shannon who were also on close terms with Sidney Cockerell at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.⁴⁶ All were devotees of good printing and the revival of illustrated books from their private presses, but it was Cobden-Sanderson who came to lecture in Leeds for the Kitson and Holbrook Jackson at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1904.⁴⁷

Before settling in Taormina, Robert Kitson spent a lot of time sketching in Venice. He had his own regular gondolier, and he visited Naples and Ravello with his family and friends from Cambridge, although he wrote to say he found the social life of Capri more congenial than chilly Amalfi in the winter in 1899.⁴⁸ He had had rheumatic fever in Leeds and was advised to winter abroad. His selection of Taormina, the new winter resort publicised by Douglas Sladen, was for him the 'most beautiful place in the world' and he built his villa and terraced gardens to command some of its finest views across the town to the slopes of Mount Etna. But it is foolish to ignore Kitson's small collection of von Gloeden's photographs of scantily-clad ephebes and

heads of handsome Arab youths, his adoption of Tunisian costume and ways in Kairouan, the collection of young men's names and addresses in his sketchbooks, and his long friendship and movements to his mountain farm with Bobbie Pratt-Barlow, a distant relation who settled in the Villa Rosa just below Casa Cuseni and whose proclivities were later satirised by Aubrey Menon in *The Duke of Gallidoro*.

In London Robert Kitson stayed in the heart of the artistic community most traumatised by the implementation of the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* of 1885 and the conviction of Oscar Wilde.⁴⁹ Robert Hichens, the music critic and novelist of the witty satire of Wilde, *The Green Carnation*,⁵⁰ wintered in Taormina and Kitson collected his novels. He received the plaudits of Michael Magnus, eager to gain his financial support just before his final and fatal flight to Malta, and a copy of Norman Douglas's attack on D.H. Lawrence for the way in which he published Magnus's book posthumously when he, Douglas, was his literary executor.⁵¹ Kitson loved dressing up and before the First World War, helped to vitalise and light Taormina's carnival where he danced as a Tunisian *bey*. Like Shaw-Hellier, his older friend, whom C.R. Ashbee records when he was commissioned to design his villa at the other end of the town,⁵² he put young men into livery as servants and enjoyed the sight and company of these swarthy young companions. After the war he probably found even greater sexual freedom in Tunisia and Luxor, which he usually visited during the winter months on his own, very seldom accompanied even by Cecil and Phyllis Hunt and never by his sisters and family.

Fussell and others have tried to analyse the significance and meaning of 'going abroad'. Said has focussed particularly on the romantic and culturally imperialistic nature of orientalism and Aldrich has dwelt on the homoerotic opportunities and relief offered by sojourn in particular resorts and their cultural acceptance of deviance.⁵³ Whilst to some this revelation may come as a shock, particularly if they imagine that any sort of sexual deviance must be accompanied by orgiastic excess and grotesque forms of physical or social exploitation, there is little to suggest that Robert Kitson ever lived anything but a rather quiet, artistic and friendly life in Taormina, beloved by his Cuseni retainers and aloof from the fascist politics and tourist trade in the town below. As a local seigneur he was treated as a *Barone*, and he helped several young men to set up as artists, learn the craft of cabinet making etc. There was always work to be done in the garden and he found jobs for local people in times of great poverty. But although Taormina was regarded as home by the 1920s, Kitson was always on the move, being driven and walking around Sicily to sketch, travelling across Europe by train, and taking ship to North Africa, Egypt, Istanbul and once to Colombo and the Indian subcontinent. Like Lear, Ruskin and Brabazon he was most peripatetic and always armed with a sketchbook, pencil and a tiny paint box for capturing the colours on small water-colour cards. The dichotomy of his own discrete life with his family

and with friends and his liberation abroad were united in his artistic work and in this field of interest and endeavour which any and all could share and enjoy and in which he could find satisfaction and a critical sense of fulfilment.

One can see the ways in which the many disparate elements recounted in the following chapters, and introduced above, come together in this manner. Robert Kitson is understandably more enigmatic than Sydney or Ina Kitson Clark, and in words much less articulate — at any rate in terms of the memories and few letters kept of him by others. And yet one can see in his 87 sketchbooks where he was and what he was doing part of most days of his life from 1903 to 1947. His life is exemplified through his prolific art.

1.8 *Cotmania*, the world of watercolours and Sydney Kitson

Whereas Robert Kitson's life can really only be studied through his own art, his artistic commissions and his long association with Leeds City Art Gallery, Sydney's life and career falls neatly into two distinct periods. The first, to which reference has already been made, was spent in Leeds as an architect, most of the time with a brilliant partner. Their commissions reflect the social, economic and institutional developments of the city, were regularly published and achieved some critical acclaim. But although the practice revived under other partners after the Great War, Sydney's creative role in it was over after he had tried to extend his practice to London and fallen prey to Tuberculosis in 1923.⁵⁴

The second began with his infection by *Cotmania* while convalescing, an enthusiasm he came to share with Robert as well as his interest in the development of Leeds City Art Gallery. Unlike the architectural practice, which can only be studied through the architectural press and the buildings themselves supported by the ledgers of the practice, Sydney's quest for the life and works of John Sell Cotman is documented in detail through the equivalent of twelve journals up to the publication of the biography and his own death in 1937. Taken with the amassing of at least 845 works in his collection, for which he kept a cumulative catalogue, it represented a formidable undertaking which, while probably life-sustaining to him, placed great demands on his immediate family. Sydney's journals provide a revealing account of the social, economic and intellectual world within which English watercolours and drawings were sold and collected, viewed and appreciated, critically recorded and published between the world wars. Although based near Oxford, for over ten years he toured the country in search of Cotmans and provided a running commentary on who he saw, where he went and what he found.⁵⁵

1.9 Leeds and Sicily: art and culture

Compared with Robert and Sydney who pursued different artistic and professional careers and shared an affluence that made extensive travel, collecting and connoisseurship possible, Ina Kitson Clark's artistic and social trajectory was very different. Largely restricted to Leeds, to which she had come on marriage to the man who was to become the last managing director of *Kitsons of Leeds*, she joined and in several fields came to lead the women who were carving out a separate sphere of women's activities in education, health, religion and the practice of the arts in the city and the West Riding. In so far as these activities are relevant here, they lie in Ina's involvement with the Lady Patronesses of the City Art Gallery before the Great War, and her half century of membership of the Leeds Fine Arts Club. But, whereas both Robert and Sydney lived outside Leeds most of the time and, with the exception of the City Art Gallery, were involved in its life personally rather than through participation in the city's organized life, Ina like Robert's sister, Beatrice, was involved in precisely these affairs and throws some light on them.⁵⁶

In one sense Leeds, Sicily and the Kitsons illuminate a significant aspect of British cultural life which should not simply be told from the viewpoint of London, the South of France and the Bloomsbury Group. But in another sense there is nothing provincial about it. Robert was a watercolour artist of quiet distinction, whose work warrants attention and critical evaluation. The Bedford and Kitson practice contributed some notable examples to English residential design. And Sydney produced one of the most meticulous but readable biographies of any British artist. That Robert enabled Frank Brangwyn to achieve one of the most impressive decorative works of the era at St Aidan's and Sydney bequeathed most of his Cotman collection to Leeds, to which Robert had contributed works throughout his life and their friends Norman and Agnes Lupton a further fine watercolour collection when they died, has made the City Art Gallery, with that of Birmingham, and the Whitworth in Manchester, one of the most important outside London and the ancient university galleries. There are therefore several respects in which these Kitsons and their contribution to and involvement in the arts require consideration.

2 Leeds: its political, industrial and cultural development in the nineteenth century

2.1 The development of Leeds and its industrial economy¹

As Manchester was to Lancashire, so was Leeds to the West Riding of Yorkshire. Having been a primary centre for the spinning and weaving of woollen cloth, Leeds became one of its most important points of sale. By the beginning of the nineteenth century it was the cloth merchants who ran the city's economy and dominated its political and social institutions. Many of these merchants were also closely involved in the finishing processes of cloth production, fulling, cropping and dying, and these had become the chief cloth-related industries of the city by the mid nineteenth century.

However this degree of specialization in cloth production and marketing was associated with the mechanization of industry and transport, the development of more centralized modes of production, the rapid urbanization of Britain's population, and the exploitation of overseas markets as well as sources of raw materials. Many of the most successful industrial magnates in Leeds had little to do with the actual production or sale of cloth. The Marshalls introduced and developed the largest flaxen yarn mills and their mechanical innovations by Murray led to his establishing one of the many foundries and industrial machine-making works in the city.² The Becketts and Denisons were the most successful of those who established the Banking system on which much of the capital investment and exchange depended. In 1837–39 James Kitson and his partners built their locomotive for Robert Stephenson's Liverpool and Manchester Railway and one of Leeds many locomotive-buildings works was launched on the railway boom which was maintained through the development of railways abroad, in this case in Argentina, Australia, India and Africa until the Great War.³ In 1842 John Barran settled in Leeds from London and set up as a ready-made tailor and outfitter in 1852. By 1878 his factory extended over 15,000 square feet.⁴ Joseph Hepworth followed and then Montague Burton, who transferred to Leeds from Sheffield in 1906. All three took advantage of the influx of Jewish labour that resulted from the Russian pogroms at the end of the century.⁵ Meanwhile the Luptons had revitalized the cloth industry by further innovations, R.T. Harding had established the Tower Works as a major producer of textile mill machinery, James Bedford had built up the Yorkshire Dying Company from his family's works in the Kirkstall Road, and W.L. Jackson had the country's largest tannery, dependant on the importation of hides from India. In the 1890s Tannett Walker supplied the largest hydraulic presses to John

Brown of Sheffield and Krupp of Essen and William Clayton's hydraulic engineering works supplied gasometers and bulk containers.

To select these few is simply to indicate the diversity rather than the extent of industrial activity in Leeds throughout the nineteenth century. There were a great many others.⁶ But only some of the proprietors took an active part in the civic and political affairs of the town and even fewer had a direct interest in the arts outside their own houses. It has become fashionable in some histories of British economic and political decline, and in particular the theses of Wiener and Corelli Barnett, to lay the blame on what one may term 'gentrification'. But it fails to appreciate the impact of laissez-faire policies and therefore the reforming responses to it, of which artistic and cultural development were a part, just as it fails to appreciate the intricate network of middle class urban society as a distinct form of affluent enjoyment of the proceeds of industry.⁷

It would be equally naive to assume that the proceeds from the initial investment of capital could somehow have been largely restricted to re-investment in business development. To a great extent of course it was, for the firms could not have continued without it. Most of them were private, family-owned companies and there were a great many of them. And in 1877-78 Leeds was appreciably less wealthy than Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and even Bradford.⁸ Secondly, as already suggested, throughout the century new wealth was being made by fresh entrepreneurs so that even in the later period, 1871-1910, those employed in the clothing industry fell from 20 per cent to 10 per cent whilst those in tailoring increased to precisely the same extent, and those in the engineering jobs, which were generally better paid, held constant at about 17 per cent.⁹ Thirdly, although the actual numbers of people in professional occupations increased substantially between 1861 and 1911, they only represented an increase in the total proportion of those employed from 2.5 per cent to 3.6 per cent.¹⁰ What sustained the economy of Leeds during this period were its manufacturing and commercial industries but they did give rise to certain patterns of development in the city's social and political institutions.

Although it is true to say that, after 150 years, there is no obvious presence of the Kitsons in industrial Leeds, with only a few descendants of the family active in the political and land-owning life of Yorkshire and elsewhere, it is noticeable that, while the family firm continued in business until 1937, a significant number of the third generation of Kitsons not only maintained their connections with Leeds but took an active part in its activities. The attention given to local institutions and their civic consciousness was in fact maintained by several members of the family long after they might be thought to have left the city. Leeds was in no way peculiar in this respect but, like Sheffield, became institutionally developed in this way considerably later than Liverpool and Manchester.

2.2 The political and social institutions of nineteenth century Leeds¹¹

Over the last 25 years or so the social and political development of nineteenth and early twentieth century Leeds has received extensive attention from historians, itself the result of one of its later foundations, the University of Leeds. Several features stand out and are worth immediate reiteration. First, the period was one in which, whilst success and failure and the pattern of industrial development may have altered the membership and relative scale of different social classes and their economic position in the city, the gradations of social orders were maintained. Although the Becketts, the Gotts and the Marshalls intermarried with the aristocratic landed families, even the Whig Fitzwilliams, still more the Tory Lascelles, did not see their position assailed or incorporate the 'industrial aristocracy' into their social world. On the basis of their new wealth the latter could buy themselves out of Leeds, but their estates seldom became an alternative source of social capital and they remained patrons of the city and in that sense dependant on it socially and politically in ways not needed by the landed grandees.

Second, the primary divisions in Leeds society during most of the century, at any rate between those citizens who had a vote and therefore some constitutional say in its government, lay in religion and, associated with that, party-political allegiance. Until the Great Reform Act of 1832 Leeds had no members of Parliament although Edward Baines had an arrangement with the Whig grandees who contested the county seats. Until the reform of municipal government in 1835 the corporation, founded in 1626 and which supervised the markets and appointed the Justices of the Peace, was in the hands of Tory members of the Church of England, a self-perpetuating oligarchy of cloth merchants. Only as late as 1827-35 were a flax manufacturer and an iron founder admitted to the corporation and some of the most active were the medical practitioners who had founded the Infirmary in 1767 and conducted public health campaigns.¹²

What changed dramatically after the reform was the political and religious affiliation of those now elected to office in local government. They were Whigs, or Liberals, and non-conformists. Four of the new Liberal M.P.s were cloth merchants but they were also members of the Unitarian Mill Hill chapel.¹³ One mayor was a Roman Catholic, the first since the Reformation. Members of the established church quickly lost control of the parish vestry, the governance and oversight of the Poor Law and the Improvement Commission established under private acts of Parliament to upgrade roads and other public amenities. Even the Chartists who got control of the vestry in the 1840s still had to be drawn from those with the required qualifications to stand for office and to vote. For several decades, although the corporation members

reflected the diversification of the city's industrial base and Tory membership seldom fell far behind the Liberals, the aldermanic system preserved the Liberal's majority. Captains of industry became unwilling to stand for acrimoniously contested elections and by the 1870s councillors included far more shopkeepers and small proprietors vulnerable to economic turns of fortune and unwilling to embark on the major development and improvement schemes that the growing and polluted city required. Public scandals and the local political resurgence of the Conservative party were to change this dramatically by the end of the century.

2.3a Third, despite this change in the political and religious distribution of power in the municipal corporation, there was really no shift in the predominant position of the upper middle class in the institutional life of Leeds. In the cultural field the most important were the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, founded in 1819, which only published one volume of transactions and soon ceased to have much scientific significance but ran the only local museum and a library. However Morris sees it as 'central to the creation of an elite-led middle class public culture'¹⁴ and a means of keeping Leeds on the national cultural map. In 1842 just over 42 per cent of town councillors were members but by 1892 this had fallen to less than 9 per cent.¹⁵ But in the dramatic revival of local politics by 1894, 34 of the 100 councillors belonged to this Society.¹⁶ As important was the Mechanics Institution, founded in 1824, which like the 'Phil and Lit' was as firmly controlled by those members who had a proprietary patronal stake invested in it. Both were seen as having a public utility and potentially above religious and party wrangling. During the 1830s they were challenged by more populist associations with more reliance on ordinary members' fees and wider members' franchises, such as the Leeds Literary Institution and the Leeds Discussion Society, but in the slump of the 1840s when membership fell off and the loss of income meant that the cost of new premises could not be maintained, these collapsed. In 1840 the Mechanics Institution bought the L.L.I.'s hall in Park Square and evicted its Socialist Society tenants and two years later amalgamated with it.¹⁷ It was 'a middle class firmly led by its own elite and allied intellectuals'¹⁸ in which radical activists lost out to the financial authority and more secure cultural influence which that elite continued to wield. By the end of the century this situation seems to have remained very similar although the foundation of much more powerful institutions such as the university were to introduce new factors to the local cultural scene.

Fourth, but more difficult to assess because it has not been so widely researched, is the position of religion in the cultural life of the townspeople. It was by far the largest, most generally distributed, vociferous and divided forum for the expression and direction of ideas in the town. Throughout the century, the established church, for many years centred on the parish church, stood for Tory opposition to the Liberal dissenters. This was most firmly expressed during the crucial years of Anglican

revival in which a new parochial structure was developed by the vicar Dr W.F. Hook, with an extensive denominational elementary school system underwritten by the new Diocese of Ripon, in which the church staged a successful come-back.¹⁹ Dissent had multiplied but it had also fragmented, especially in the case of the most numerous Methodists and the Baptists. Both the Unitarians and the Quakers were small in number but highly influential due to presence in their membership of outspoken rationalists, nationally well-connected, as well as affluent industrialists.

But, for all the large new churches and chapels with their schools and meeting halls, they usually greatly exceeded the actual capacity of their attending congregations. Although of course the latter rose or fell with the popularity of their preachers, the fashionability of their forms of liturgy and the extent of their general parochial or congregational activities, one has to be conscious of the fact that at scarcely any time was congregational membership keeping pace with the growing population. And the two major issues that appealed to confessional consciences once the Test and related acts had been repealed by the 1830s, resistance to central and locally funded education and teetotalism, both divided the Liberal party members. The Unitarians and the Roman Catholics stood with the Church of England in support of a national system of education on lines they were willing to compromise. But the Congregationalist Edward Baines led the opposition through his paper, *The Leeds Mercury*, and effectively opened the means for a Tory victory in the general election of 1847.²⁰ Teetotalism firmly united the wealth of the brewers behind the Conservatives and upset the sober but sociable elite amongst the Liberals. While they held fast to free trade and the exploitation of the expanding empire and parliamentary reform, the Liberals kept a sufficiently united political platform. But this was severely weakened by national party division over Home Rule for Ireland and the re-introduction of tariffs with Imperial preference in the later decades of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The industrial and political leaders of Leeds took an active part in these disputes which were of fundamental interest to their businesses and the locality.²¹ By contrast local interest in the condition of the city and the 'New Era', as it came to be called, gave renewed significance to municipal politics, revived the disputatious fortunes of both political parties and re-involved the industrial leadership in the city's local affairs with results of great significance for its cultural institutions. Not only were the Kitsons active in these political affairs but so were several of those families with whom they intermarried and collaborated, the Tetleys, the Bedfords, the Barrans, and the Luptons.

2.3 The 'New Era' in Leeds — political and cultural action

So far this chapter has described the general municipal and institutional framework of Leeds in the nineteenth century within which the Kitsons and their like

participated as prominent citizens. Reference to the latter can then be made in some detail without distorting this general picture by apparently aggrandising the role of the Kitsons in the overall development of Leeds. Hennock and others have stressed the relatively inactive, i.e. *laissez faire*, and economical state of municipal Liberalism by the 1860s and 70s, when public health, improved-housing regulations, safe water, public transport and education were relatively ignored and left to inadequate resourcing by private and voluntary interests. They trace the change in Leeds to a later and shorter period than, for example, Birmingham, but one which was no less substantial and decisive when it came. Liberal complacency was shaken by the success of the Conservatives in winning Council seats from 1890 and then in regaining power in the Council from 1895–1904, for the first time in forty years. They won votes by local ward canvassing on a platform criticising Liberal ineptitude and inactivity in public works. The Liberals fought back with a defence of what they had done, published in *The Leeds Mercury* over several days in 1891, followed by manifestos setting out their programme for action in 1893 and 1894.²² Although both parties generally used the aldermanic elections to strengthen their future position, they once again appealed to prominent citizens to take the office of mayor and then got them to become aldermen for much longer periods which relieved the need to submit them to the possible indignity of contested elections which had discouraged their counterparts for the previous thirty years. At least five major projects and events were initiated during these and the immediately preceding years, which established the fields in which the Kitsons and their closest associates were active, in addition to those longer established institutions to which reference has already been made.

A The first project was the purchase of Roundhay Park for the people of Leeds on the initiative of the current mayor, John Barran, in 1871.²³ He had been a Liberal councillor since 1853 and was an alderman from 1868 to 1877 when he resigned in the year following his election to Parliament by the citizens of Leeds from 1876–1885. Supported by some members of the Town Council, Barran attended the sale which was expected to attract speculative building developers, and bought the two major lots consisting of the mansion house built for the Nicholsons in 1811–26 by John Clark and the extensive pleasure grounds they had laid out, and open farmland adjacent to the south west towards the city boundary. The 733 acres of the park and farmland could be retained as a public amenity and plots of land sold for superior residential use. But the sum, £127,000 was substantially greater than current legislation permitted and the whole area lay outside the town boundary so, once the Council had approved the scheme, it required a private Improvement Act to permit it, which could not be passed until 1872. Barran was then repaid with interest.²⁴

But it was a long time before the use of the area caught on and Old Roundhay residents were opposed to the arrival of a public park. Barran got his architect,

2.4 Thomas Ambler, who designed the Temperance Hotel in 1870 and the remarkably large and boldly Moorish warehouse and offices for him on the south side of Park Square in 1878, to design several houses.²⁵ But only after Leeds' first electric tramway, a private company, was set in motion in 1891 were many people brought into the area, a successful innovation that the new city council took up generally when the time came for it to exercise its option and municipalise public transport.

B The second, though only ultimately major, cultural project was the foundation of the Yorkshire College of Science in 1874 with new buildings in the grounds of *Beech Grove* at the top of Woodhouse. Sir John Barran was again a financial backer with Edward Baines, proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*, and the City of London's Company of Clothworkers. Dr Heaton, of *Claremont* in Clarendon Road, chaired the promotional committee. Textile technology was one special focus of the new college. Leading industrialists were aware of the decline of Britain's share of world trade and those who travelled abroad like James Kitson and the Nusseys attributed this to the low levels of education attained in England and the lack of technical expertise. Local clothiers seem to have had little interest in the project, with the exception of Francis Lupton and the Nusseys, and never came forward with financial support. As new departments were opened James Bedford came to serve on the Dying Committee and T.W. Harding and J.W. Wicksteed served in the Engineering Committee.²⁶

2.1 At the time the College was founded there were still over a thousand houses in Woodhouse inhabited by the industrial and professional elite of Leeds. Although the development of Headingley and Potternewton was well underway, many of the Woodhouse terraces and most of the churches were still in the process of being built in the grounds and gardens of the big houses. Even the latter had only been built in the first half of the century by those who decided to move up the hill from industrial pollution rather than risk the shorter move to the west end, or new town, adjoining the old town centre which soon fell prey to further industrial developments and the railways.²⁷ Unlike most of the new building during Leeds' greatest era of growth in the first half of the century when northern if not local architects like Chantrell, Brodrick and Corson designed the churches and chapels, public buildings and services, by this time Leeds was looking outside to those renowned elsewhere and established in

2.2 London. Sir Gilbert Scott had designed the Infirmary in 1862–8, and Alfred Waterhouse, who had made his name in Manchester, in the Assize Courts, the Town Hall and soon the University (Owen's College), was commissioned to design the textile industries' laboratories and the Great Hall from 1877–1894.²⁸ A decade later the College had become a junior partner in the federal Victoria University with Liverpool and Manchester but was forced to seek separate university status when the other colleges went their own way in 1904. It was to be an influential nucleus for

significant participation in the arts as well as educational and social development in Leeds over the following half century.

2.3 C The third project, if such it can be called, was the rescue and preservation of the site and extensive ruins of Kirkstall Abbey.²⁹ A Cistercian foundation of 1147, the abbey was, with the impressively sculpted Norman portal of Adel Church, the only really ancient monument in Leeds. Even the Parish Church was rebuilt in 1841. Abandoned after its dissolution at the end of 1539, the picturesque ruins in the bend of the River Aire had been a regular subject for the artistic topographers like Cuitt as well as the great painters of watercolours, such as Girtin, Cotman, Turner and Rooker who visited the area on their way to the sublime sights of the Yorkshire dales, the Greta and the other great abbey ruins.

The site of the abbey as well as much of the land up into Headingley was owned by Lord Cardigan. Large villas were already being built on the higher ground by the middle of the nineteenth century and Tommy Clapham had opened a Zoological and Botanical Garden nearer the town in 1840. Its opening arrangements became one of the dissenting *causes celebres* when Edward Baines campaigned against turnstiles being open for business on Sundays. A compromise was reached when arrangements were made for Sunday tickets to be sold at outlets in Briggate earlier in the week. But despite its socially improving potential, Baines was actually none too keen on the exposure of middle class children to contact with people from the working classes anyway. In the circumstances the gardens failed as a business and were sold off in 1859, 1863 and 1866 although it needed the laying out of Cardigan Road to set off the main wave of building in the 1870s.³⁰ In the meantime the banks of the Aire and Kirkstall road had been largely industrialized with the Butler's Kirkstall Forge,³¹ Bedford's Dyeworks and other mills and works needing to take water from the river. The abbey was no longer so picturesque in sylvan splendour.

There were at least two schemes to do something about the mouldering ruins in the early 1880s. The proposal to restore the abbey church to full use according to the plans of G.G. Scott, met with the opposition of the local architect J.W. Connon, lecturing to the Leeds Architectural Association in 1886, on the conservation grounds of 'Anti-Scrape'. The S.P.A.B. had already been enlisted in 1882 when Thackeray Turner tried unsuccessfully to get it out of the hands of the Cardigans' agent.³³ As part of the general sale of the Headingley estate, Lord Cardigan's widow put the site of Kirkstall on the market in 1888. At least two further schemes to buy the ruins by private groups to prevent speculative development or ignorant restoration fell through. So did the Council's attempt to buy them at auction. Leeds' ancient monument was endangered. Its salvation came in 1889 when Colonel North, the nitrate king, bought the abbey for £10,900 and presented it to the town.³⁴ The ruins were cleared of ivy and undergrowth, the most precarious walls shored up and a great open-air service

was held within the ruins of the abbey church in 1895. And Kirkstall Abbey became one of the favourite subjects of research for local historians and antiquaries, amongst them some of the Kitsons.³⁵ One wonders what their reaction would have been to Norman Shaw's restoration and rearrangement of St John's Briggate in 1866–68 if they had been of age then.

D Leeds was comparatively late in having its own art gallery, which opened to the public in 1888. That it got one at all was largely due to the initiative and persistence of Colonel T. Walter Harding. A resident of 8 Hillary Place in Woodhouse since 1870, Harding inherited the house being built for his father T.R. Harding.³⁶ Together they had developed the substantial Tower Works, which manufactured cards, combs and steel pins for the weaving industry in Britain and abroad. The tall brick chimneys of the works, standing out above the railway station viaduct and the canal, were directly designed from Italian renaissance models. The Lamberti tower in Verona was the model for the one built in 1864 and Giotto's campanile for Florence Cathedral for that to follow in 1899.³⁷ By 1883 Harding had moved to Headingley and was elected as a Liberal town councillor for the ward.

The public exhibition of both old masters and contemporary art was not new to Leeds. During the preeminence of the Gott family of Armley House and mills, in the first half of the century, the Northern Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts had been formed. Its first exhibitions were held between 1809 and 1811, and there are catalogues of subsequent ones from 1822–1824, as well as 1830 and 1834, when the society achieved royal patronage from William IV. But by 1839, 1843 and 1845 these Polytechnic Exhibitions seem to have become not so much great shows of works of art from local county collections, including the regular showing of Walter Fawkes' Turners, and a point of sale for established local artists, but rather a means of demonstrating the uses of art for industrial purposes.³⁸ Indeed these last three were jointly organized by the Mechanics' Institution and the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society to raise money to build the Institution's hall and public baths. The 'rhetoric of the civilizing virtues of art and science was the common ground on which churchmen and dissenter, Tory and Liberal, came together'.³⁹ In 1869 an ambitious *National Exhibition of Works of Art* was held in the newly built wards of Scott's General Infirmary to celebrate its completion and try to raise money for it. But of course it was also a temporary show.⁴⁰

What Harding campaigned for was a public gallery for the permanent display of art as well as temporary exhibitions. In the first of his two municipal cultural projects, he used a celebration of the Queen's Jubilee to arouse public interest and, in this case, considerable funds by subscription. Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1855, it was lawful for local authorities to raise up to a penny rate and in 1886, the council voted £8,000 from such a source to extend Corson's municipal buildings of

1874–84, which lay behind the older warehouses already fronting the Headrow, in order to provide an art gallery and a commercial reading room linked to the main building by a sculpture cast gallery. Funds were also raised from the Queen's Jubilee subscription in 1887.⁴¹ W.H. Thorp, a local architect who was also actively involved in the fine arts, won the competition to design the gallery and it opened with a substantial exhibition of works lent from the collections of local citizens as well as the county families. Not a few came from the Hardings' own collections of which some became a foundation donation to the gallery. Leeds now had a place in which to exhibit works of art, the nucleus of its own permanent collection, and a small staff under a curator with its own sub-committee of the Library Committee of the Town Council.⁴² Harding was co-opted as chairman of this, although he had just vacated his seat on the Council owing to his disagreement with the Liberal support for Home Rule in Ireland. But he returned to the Council as an alderman in 1895 after the Conservatives had won control and elected eight Liberal Unionists.⁴³

Harding was devoted to the renaissance idea of public art, especially in the form of 'the new sculpture'. In the boiler house at Tower Works he installed bronze medallions of innovative textile engineers by Alfred Drury. After his success with the art gallery, Harding turned his attention to the more public face of the town and specifically the main point of entry by rail. With the exception of the once residential Park Square, by 1890 an enclave for professional consulting rooms offices fronted by Barran's colossal St Paul's warehouse, and the Town Hall steps from 1858 which became Victoria Square, Leeds had no focal point or urban public space. Harding determined that this should be provided.

The site was substantial but irregular. Most of it became available from one of the many phases of urban redevelopment of Leeds following a Parliamentary Act of 1885.⁴⁴ After Scotts' General Infirmary was opened, its predecessor served as municipal offices until Corson's Municipal Buildings were completed in 1884 and it was replaced by the Yorkshire Penny Bank in 1894. To the south-east was the bulk of the Coloured Cloth Hall of 1756–1758. No longer much used owing to the transfer of the worsted market to Bradford and other changes in the marketing of cloth, part of the site was designated for and ultimately sold to the Post Office. This left the rest of the site available but it took time to get the Council to buy some additional land to achieve the area required to layout the square.⁴⁵ Leeds had been designated a city in 1893 and Sir James Kitson became the first Lord Mayor during his term of office, 1896–1897, the latter being the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Year.⁴⁶

2.5 City Square effectively commemorates all these. Once the land transactions had been completed Harding undertook to finance the layout of the square at the end of 1896. He had already arranged to bring up sculptures by Thomas Brock, in 1894, and Alfred Drury, Henry Fehr and Hamo Thornycroft, in 1896, to the Leeds Art Gallery's

Spring Exhibitions. Thornycroft's maquette of *Edward I* was included in the sketch drawn by the City Architect, William Bakewell, to Harding's specification and adopted by the City Council in preference to that of the Leeds and Yorkshire Architectural Society. In the event it was Brock who designed the prancing statue of *The Black Prince* for the central gardens, surrounded by Drury's nymphs of *Morn* and *Even* to light the square which was formally opened in 1903 when Harding came to the end of his term of office and was made a Freeman of the city. Puzzling as the choice of subject for the central statue has been to the citizens of Leeds, who assumed it had some reference to Edward I's introduction of Flemish weavers, it seems more likely that it was symbolic of chivalry and the monarchic constitution to which Harding was passionately devoted and in support of which he had stood against Herbert Gladstone, Sir James Kitson's friend and the standing member, in the General Election of 1900.⁴⁷

The sculptural embellishment of the square was to be completed by four standing statues of Leeds worthies. Joseph Priestley and Dean Hook, by Drury and Frederick Pomeroy, were given by Harding, and John Harrison, by Fehr, by Councillor Boston. Fehr's other statue was of James Watt, instead of Ralph Thoresby, at the request of its donor Richard Wainwright.⁴⁸ This central area was flanked on two sides by the new General Post Office, of 1896, and the Unitarian Mill Hill Chapel and its Sunday Schools, rebuilt in a Gothic design of 1847. Theatres and banks filled the other side and corners. But the railway side remained an embarrassment until the L.M.S. rebuilt the Queen's Hotel to the design of W. Curtis Green in 1933–1937, although the dining room was redecorated with Burmantofts faience in 1902 to C. Trubshaw's design.⁴⁹

Although they are not physically adjacent, Harding's contribution to the Art Gallery and the City Square may be seen as elements in his wider project for Leeds. They exemplify his ability to get Council support for public expenditure on cultural and civic amenities and his own vision of public spaces adorned with works of art. Harding paid for attendants to maintain decorum in the square for two years after which the City Council continued to do so. He also gave back to the city, as a fund from which to buy works of art for the gallery, the £5,000 which he had received for the sale of some land elsewhere in the city for a public project. By the time City Square was completed, Harding had already retired to Cambridge, where he undertook the substantial restoration and remodelling of Madingley Hall as his residence.⁵⁰ But as we shall see in Chapters 8 and 9, through subsequent donations and bequests, not only Colonel Harding but his son continued to maintain the family's interest in the gallery where their role and example were of critical importance to the development of the permanent collection, for which the Council provided no purchasing grant for nearly fifty years.

E Finally, reference should be made to the later phases of yet another major institutional development, that of church building, particularly that of the Church of England. With the major exception of the Methodists, whose numbers warranted

buildings for religious worship in most districts, most non-conformist congregations were gathered from wider areas of the town. Although chapels might be rebuilt like Mill Hill in 1847 or resited as the population moved out of the city centre, the number of congregations in any one denomination multiplied infrequently and then often by schism. The situation of the established church was quite different. The ancient parish of Leeds included an extensive out-township served by chapels. Even the additional churches built within the town did not have their own parishes and this included the three churches built under the parliamentary 'Waterloo' grant of 1818. During his incumbency from 1837–1859 Dr W.F. Hook changed all that, obtaining through the Leeds Vicarage Act of 1844 the means of creating new autonomous parishes with their own churches, vicarages, and schools which were the responsibility of resident vicars. For the first time since the city's population growth took off, new church provision exceeded the percentage of population growth. Even for the next twenty years, new churches were built at a rate only a little less than the growth of population.⁵¹

By the last twenty years of the century, this number had dropped substantially. On the other hand, those churches which were built were often very large and a great deal of thought as well as money went into their design and decoration. Some of the most architecturally significant of these were built, or rebuilt in the case of inadequate older chapels, for the affluent occupants of the new suburbs. Most were designed by architectural outsiders and not architects already established in Leeds. The Parish Church of St Michael, Headingley, was totally replaced by J.C. Pearson's new design of 1884–90. So was St Matthew's, Chapel Allerton by G.F. Bodley in 1897–90. These shared the spaciousness needed to accommodate congregations no longer assigned to galleries, lofty towers or spires, an expensive feature often omitted from less affluently supported projects, and the ability to attract further donations of church furniture, fittings, organs and stained glass.⁵²

But some churches were also built in the more densely populated areas, still being laid out with the short back-to-back terraces that are so characteristic of Leeds, and which managed to avoid even the 1909 Act that finally banned such building and went on constructing them until 1937.⁵³ One of these was the new parish church of St Aidan, Roundhay Road. It was an area of substantial housing development, much of it after 1888–9 when J. Hall laid out the area between Roundhay and Harehills Road according to the council's bye-laws for J.W. Archer who had just bought the estate from the Earl Cowper.⁵⁴ The church was designed by two architects from Newcastle, R.J. Johnson and A. Crawford-Hick in 1891–4 and an appeal was launched for it as a memorial to a previous vicar of Leeds, Bishop Woodford, just as All Souls, Blackman Lane by Sir George Gilbert Scott of 1876–81 had been a memorial to Dr Hook.

St Aidan's is a vast brick basilica, internally somewhat Byzantine with its rendered arcades on stone columns and long clerestory. But externally it is all of brick with a Lombardic, even Germanic, 'westwerk' formed by the apse of the baptistery rising above the bend in the hill between a round turret and the base of a great tower never completed. St Barnabas in Oxford's Jericho of 1869 is a rather similarly designed church for a similar congregation on a much less prominent site for which the campanile was executed. At its beginning St Aidans had some substantial benefactors and its first churchwarden was William Clayton, the proprietor of a works specializing in hydraulic gasometers and other large cylindrical tanks. The furnishings of the church, in an opulent neo-baroque style of carving that is Italianate as much as it is 'Wrenaissance', have a richness and scale unusual in such churches which were to be complemented by the Kitsons' subsequent contributions to the interior.⁵⁵

2.4 Leeds as a social and cultural stage

In setting the political, social and cultural scene within which we shall see the activities and contributions of several members of the Kitson family and their associates, it will have been obvious that the nineteenth century was a period of enormous growth and development for the city but yet one in which several significant items were relative latecomers. Over the century it has been argued that an urban industrial, and to a much lesser extent professional elite, of middle class patricians maintained their position in the town's social institutions. Nevertheless, with certain notable exceptions who were often newly successful entrepreneurs like Barran, the Liberal hold on local government coupled with the rancour of contested elections led to a decline in participation of such men in local politics until the resurgence of the Conservative party towards the end of the century. This in turn sparked off the much more active and interventionist programmes of the Liberals and the assumption by local government of the provision of services hitherto left to *ad hoc* boards like education, or to private companies such as water, gas and mass-transport, or to churches and voluntary societies such as much elementary and further education and the arts.

Industrial development in Leeds was characterized by a large number of firms, only a few of which were of considerable size, making a shifting proportion of different products. As a primary local marketing centre, Leeds had a substantial role in distribution and exchange with an accompanying growth in industries associated with transport, banking and printing. In specializing in the finishing and marketing of cloth, there was a marked decline in actual cloth production whilst the engineering firms producing mill machinery and locomotives held their place in the local economy. The presence of finished cloth and tanned leather naturally led to the siting of clothing and

footwear manufacturing in the town as these became mechanised, as well as the development of dyeworks.

With the major exception of religious activity, to which a great deal of time was devoted, and to whose main protagonists and office-holders considerable prestige was attached, most of the organizations and societies in which citizens participated were really quite small. Even the churches and chapels primarily operated at a congregational level although articulated by the press, public meetings and occasional events, like exhibitions and public lectures, which many members of the public attended. It was therefore a local society within which networks of communication and influence were easily established and in which resourceful men and women could make a considerable impact.

What is rather more difficult to gauge is the extent to which these same people acted on a stage far more extensive than the West Riding. Quite apart from their links with events and people in London, their education, travel and reading of periodicals offered them a wide range of people, knowledge, tastes and centres of influence and activity which was both part of a move away from Leeds but also a source of enrichment for its institutions. No better example of this process could be envisaged than that presented by members of the Kitson family.

3 The Kitsons of Leeds

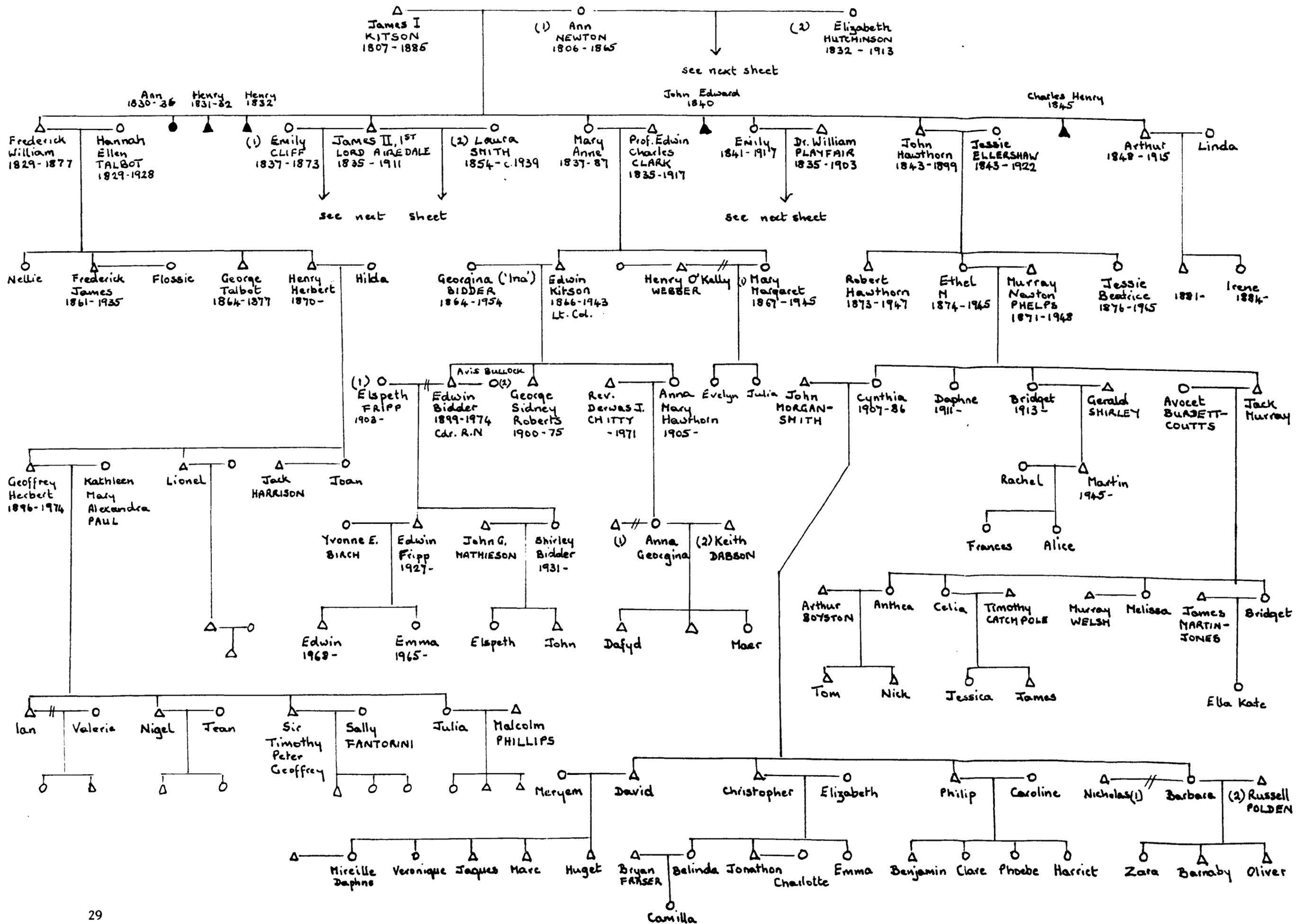
In outlining some aspects of the development of Leeds in the nineteenth century, the setting and types of activity have been exemplified in which members of the Kitson family became involved. In the account that follows, the Kitsons will be placed within this development. Rather than follow their order of birth, which can be referred to in the genealogy, it seems appropriate to introduce, first, those who were primarily involved in the business, in local politics and some other local activities, and then, those members of the family who were also involved in the arts in Leeds. From various accounts it seems as if they formed rather different social circles within as well as outside the family although this should not be exaggerated. Family occasions and the annual Christmas and New Year celebrations usually brought them all in close touch with each other.

3.1 James I Kitson and the foundation of the Kitsons' position in Leeds¹

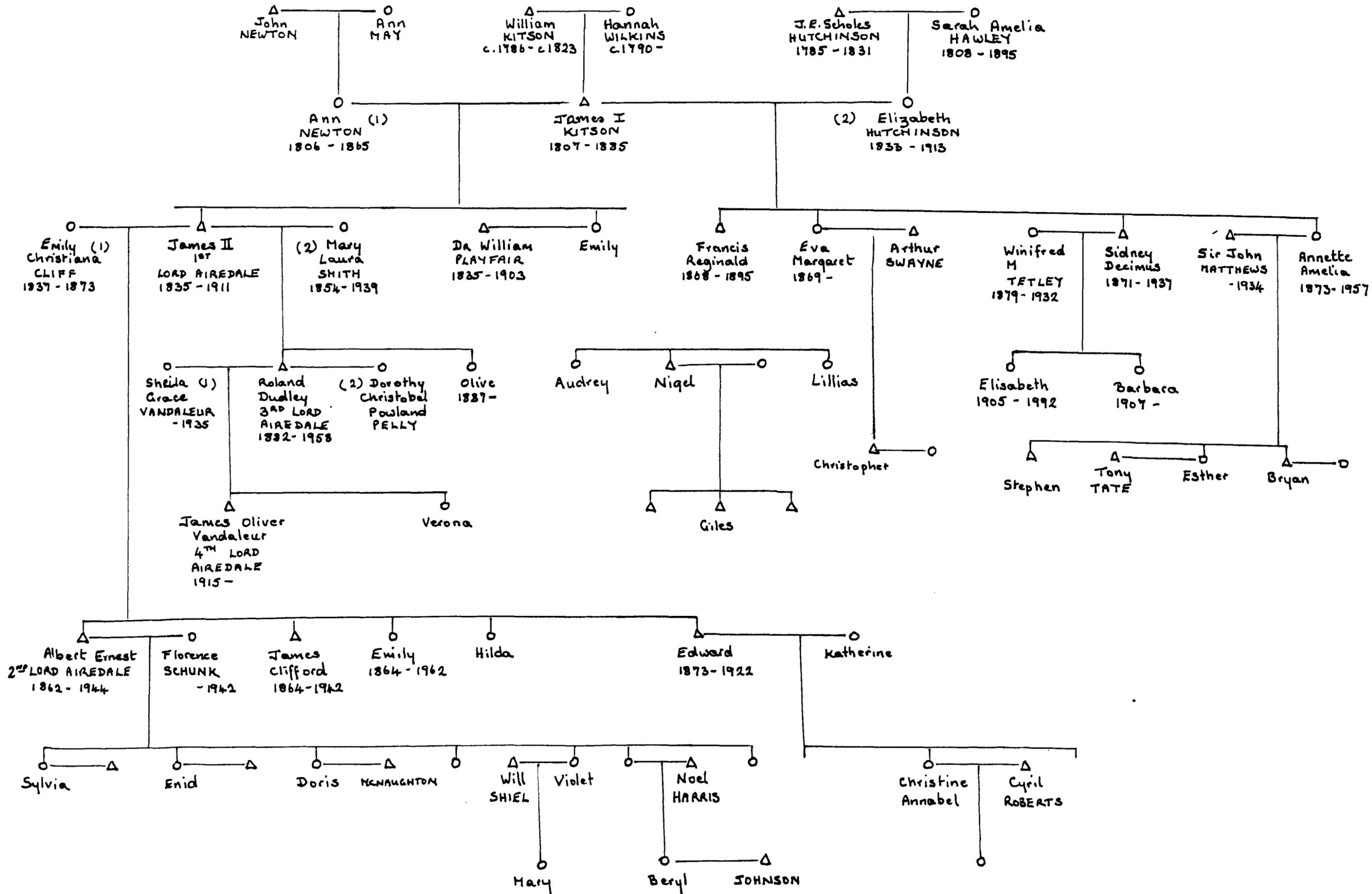
James Kitson, here referred to as James I to distinguish him from his son James II who was only ennobled as the 1st Baron Airedale in the last few years of his life, was born in 1807, the son of the publican of Brunswick Tavern on the western edge of Woodhouse. He was apprenticed to a dye works until about 1828 although he took over the tavern on his father's death. He joined the Mechanics Institution in 1825, the year after it opened and by 1829 was one of the working men on its committee. He recalled an interest in steam locomotion that could only be furthered by scientific reading and study and, in response to a survey of members by the secretary replied 'I have always found more pleasure when my mind has been engaged in scientific pursuits ... than either in the company of bacchanalians, or by the contemplation of any advantage to be obtained by unnecessary or showy apparel or furniture'.²

James I was a member of Leeds parish church where his first six children were baptized and in the 1830s, with Anglican Tory radicals, he supported Sadler's campaign to restrict working hours in factories and subscribed to the building of St George's church in Mount Pleasant in 1838. Trades Union meetings of the dyers and other cloth finishing trades took place in James I's tavern, as did those of the Ancient Order of Foresters which seceded from its parent body in 1834 and of which James I became Chief Ranger. The next year things brought many changes. James I moved his family to Hunslet and, with financial capital from Laird and the technical knowledge of Todd, an apprentice from Murray's Round Works, he began to produce railway locomotives. Although the first dates from 1837, the *Lion*, which is once again in steam, was the first of six sold to Robert Stephenson in 1838 for the Liverpool

Genealogy 3.1 First family of James I Kitson (less descendants of Lord Airedale and Emily Playfair)



Genealogy 3.2. Second family of James I Kitson (plus descendants of Lord Airedale and Emily Playfair)



and Manchester Railway. Others were supplied to the North Midland Railway. Launched on the railway boom, and with two different partners, James I developed the firm at the Airedale Works in Hunslet, buying out the partners' heirs in 1865 when he became sole proprietor.³

James I's shift to the position of one of the major entrepreneurs of Leeds accompanied changes in his religious and social views. Impressed by Charles Wicksteed, the Unitarian minister at Mill Hill from 1835–54, James I began to rent a pew there in 1840 and four years later was a chapel warden and member of its committee, subscribing to the new building of 1847 alongside the far greater sums contributed by the Marshalls and Luptons.⁴ Wicksteed had himself married one of the Luptons of *Beechwood*, Roundhay. Politically James I generally voted for the old Liberals, Whigs like Edward Baines. But although he subscribed to the Anti-Corn Law League, and the campaign for disestablishment and the abolition of the church rate and against the educational clauses of the 1843 *Factory Bill*, he voted for Marshall and the Tory, Beckett, in 1847 and distanced himself from Baines' views on voluntarism.

This was consistent with his concern for the development of education in the nation. He outlined to Samuel Smiles, a fellow Unitarian, how important the Mechanics Institution had been to his own career. At the time, 1860–1862, he was Mayor of Leeds. He had been secretary of the Mechanics Institution in the 1830s, seen through its purchase of the hall and merger with the Literary Institution and served as Vice President, becoming President in 1851 when he served on the local committee for the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park.⁵ He had already joined the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society in 1843, becoming one of the shareholding members in 1846. In the 1860s he was to chair the building committee for Leeds new General Infirmary, designed by Gilbert Scott. In 1851 he also became the founding secretary of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce and was to chair the Leeds Northern Railway as well as to become a director of the North Eastern Railway and the Yorkshire Banking Co. It is perhaps no surprise that his labour force participated in a big strike in the same year in favour of a standard wage, James I arguing in favour of differentials.

Clearly James I Kitson had worked his way up to a dominant position shared with the established business families who made up Leeds middle class elite. His residential moves within the town paralleled this. By 1847 the family had returned
3.8 from Hunslet and was living in Blenheim Terrace until they moved to *Little Woodhouse*, one of the mansion villas enlarged earlier in the century, for about a decade up to 1865.⁶ In that year they made their final and most prestigious move,
3.6 buying *Roundhay Lodge* on the Nicholson's estate opposite the Lupton's house, *Beechwood*. They moved into the old house, while a substantial mansion was built by
3.7 Dobson and Chorley for them on a higher location with southern views.⁷ Elmet (or

Elmete) Hall was in fact to be the first home of James I's second family, because his first wife died before it was ready for occupation. James I then married Elizabeth Hutchinson at Southwell in 1868. The daughter of the vicar of East Stoke in Nottinghamshire, she brought her children up as Anglicans and it seems as though James I re-attended the established church, for which in the case of St John's, Roundhay, he now held the advowson and was a trustee.⁸ Throughout this period until his death in 1885 he remained chairman of Kitsons at the Airedale works.

If James I had any interest in the arts, there is little reference to them except in the case of music. Kitson Clark recounts that he nearly became an organ builder and that in 1857 he chaired the orchestra committee for the first music festival in Leeds to be held in the Town Hall's Victoria Hall which was opened by the Queen in 1858.⁹ About a year after the birth of the last child of his first marriage in 1848, he also commissioned a pair of very large portrait groups, one with his eldest sons, and the
3.3 other with his daughters and the youngest son on a donkey. Drawn in a rather naive manner they seem on a par with the design of Elmet Hall, where they are said to have hung on the circular stairway in the centre of the house.¹⁰

When Elmet Hall was sold in 1919 it was described as 'built to the designs of
3.9 Messrs Dobson and Chorley, and is distinguished by the solidity and finish which to generally characterised their work'.¹¹ It was approached from the lodge beside the
3.16 parsonage on the turnpike road by a carriage drive uphill to an octagonal tower with a portal surmounted by the Kitson arms and motto '*palnam qui meruit fi*', which being loosely interpreted means 'Fortune blesses the deserving'. The late Elisabeth Kitson, who made a study of heraldry, formed the view that the arms had been appropriated from an East Anglian family of the same name but the text sounds home-grown and in keeping for a friend of Samuel Smiles.¹² A substantial part of the house consists of vestibule, hall and staircase saloon, with the reception rooms leading off the latter and a continuing passage, with a southern aspect down the hill. To the rear a prominent and intricately designed service wing in buff brick stretched back in a shrubbery with its own boiler house and chimney. Gillows fitted out the dining room. Elmet Hall had a tower, an oriel, bay windows, a glazed dome, a small campanile, a pyramidal roof as well as balustrades, and an array of 'urnials', if one can so describe its finials, with which the Villa Borghese gardens would have met competition. Its south eastern aspect suggests a central core extended to each end but the plan and the apparent history of the building belies this. Part of its interest lies in the extent to which subsequent architecturally-sensitized generations avoided its characteristics in their own plans and elevations. Sydney Kitson was born then in 1871 and is even said to have knocked the urns off with gusto when involved in the restoration of the house but they seem to have survived as long as the auctioneers' photographs in 1919.¹³

3.2 Frederick and James II Kitson (1st Lord Airedale)

All James I's sons were prepared to enter the business. The eldest, Frederick was apprenticed in Airedale works. He became a brilliant designer for whom, in 1854, James I bought the ailing Monk Bridge iron foundry in Holbeck in order to provide Airedale with its raw materials but also to develop its own markets. Frederick bought *Burley Hill* above Kirkstall and imported Italian craftsmen to decorate it at great expense.¹⁴ After his early death in 1877 his widow remained there until she died in 1928. Both his sons entered the foundry and continued to manage it until the business failed in the slump between the world wars. One of them, Frederick, was to be Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1908–9, the third Kitson to hold this office. His brother, Herbert became a town councillor and alderman and his descendants have remained active in Conservative politics until recent years, Geoffrey Kitson being Pro-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, until 1970.

On finishing his education at the free-thinking University College, London, at the age of 19, James II Kitson joined his elder brother in managing Monk Bridge. When a family crisis occurred in 1876–77, he also became involved in the Airedale works. James I had had a stroke. John Hawthorn had suffered an illness so severe that he had to give up Alpine climbing. And Frederick had died. When his father died in 1885 James II took over the whole business which, on the death of John Hawthorn in 1899, was made a public company managed by T.P. Reay until his death in 1912, when James II's son Edward became managing director of the Airedale works until his early death in 1922.¹⁵

James II was obviously a remarkable entrepreneur. His career in Kitson and Co is virtually unsung by Kitson Clark, and Talbot Griffiths adds little more until his political partnership with the Gladstones. His business ventures in imperial Russia included visits with James I in 1869 and with his wife in 1870 to St Petersburg and in 1898 to the Caspian oilfields of Baku with Herbert Gladstone, and he also went with his daughter Emily to the USA. The lack of information makes it difficult to know how much the company's exports to India, South-east Asia, Australia and Argentina were the result of James II's efforts. Given his free-trade convictions and the sheer extent of his own political and other patronage and activities, it seems unlikely that the relatively middling scale of the family business could have supported so much, let alone such a large family so well, without his considerable success in other ventures.¹⁶

James II has been described as demonstrating a 'proud aloofness'¹⁷ but I suspect he was also demanding and domineering. In politics, as will be outlined, this was eminently successful as it was in business, but at home it ended in different tragedies. James II's first marriage to Emily Cliff united the interests of locomotive and engine

manufacturing with fireclay, coal mining and a major iron works at Frodingham in Lincolnshire. It was but one of a series of marriages which linked the Kitsons, the Cliffs, and the Talbots, whose Kidderminster clothier activities had been transplanted to the West Riding. As in the case of the Quaker dynasties, one can see how these cousinages kept capital and business interests in the family like cross-cousin marriages in other societies.¹⁸ But the endogamy stemmed from the exclusive characteristics of their religious membership. The Quakers were endogamous by choice, a select brother and sisterhood. But the Unitarians, as rationalist heretics, Socinians, were so by exclusion. And they thrive on this advantage.

James II was a devout Unitarian all his life, becoming a Sunday School teacher on his return to Leeds from London, where he had lodged with minister Wicksteed's father, and in later life he presided over the Mill Hill trustees until his death in 1911. Where his father gave the chancel rails, he added the chapel's vestry in 1897 and another chapel in Holbeck. Talbot Griffiths records how members of the Mill Hill congregation, regardless of their wealth, of the medical profession on the Leeds General Infirmary Board, and in due course the staff of the Yorkshire College of Science, 'were always accepted in the charmed circle' of this upper middle class familial elite.¹⁹

3.17 On his marriage in 1860 James II moved to Hanover Square in the one-time grounds of Denison Hall, and then with his rapidly expanding family to *Spring Bank* near Headingley Parish Church. During the 1860s and 70s both James II and his wife became actively involved in the creation and development of education in Leeds. Dr J.D. Heaton, their previous neighbour at *Claremont* was a prime mover in the campaign, which was at least three-stranded.

James II played an active part in favour of the Bradford Quaker M.P., Forster's *Education Bill* from 1869–70 but was unable to dissuade some of his fellow Unitarians from forwarding a petition against its religious educational proposals. The voluntary scale of provision was simply inadequate and a nationally funded system that could incorporate these schools was required. The Conversation Club, a luncheon discussion group of 12 leading professional and industrial men founded in 1849 of which James I was a member from 1856–69, proposed the establishment of a group calling itself the West Riding, and subsequently Yorkshire, Board of Education. Arrangements were made for (London) matriculation examinations to be taken in the hall of the Mechanics Institution.

However, when the Cambridge Local Examinations were extended to girls, in 1866 Dr Heaton called together a group of Leeds women to supervise them in the Philosophical and Literary Society's Hall. In addition to Mrs Heaton these included James II's wife Emily (née Cliff) and Mrs Ford, a Quaker activist whose daughters were later to achieve prominence in the arts and the campaign for women's rights in

political and industrial affairs.²⁰ This committee was taken over by the Leeds Ladies Educational Association in 1867, then the Ladies Committee of the Yorkshire Board of Education and became the Yorkshire Ladies Council of Education after the statutory boards were established following the Education Act of 1870.²¹ Mrs Kitson undertook to provide the courses on hygiene and housekeeping to working women and published two pamphlets in 1873, the year of her sudden death at the age of 36 just after Edward's birth.²² A generation later Ina Kitson Clark was to play an active role in this Council which by then was especially concerned to provide practical training for women to find respectable work in fields other than teaching and nursing which were already established.

The third strand in the campaign for education flowed directly from the reaction of Leeds industrialists to the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1867 as outlined in Chapter 2. The following year James II proposed a central West Riding college; 'its professors would be a general source of enlightenment to the county'.²³ The Nusseys, Leeds cloth merchants, set up a technical school which ran for four years. James II's Conversation Club proposal was put to the Yorkshire Board of Education and its subcommittee developed a scheme for a College of Science with four endowed chairs to which a fifth was added in textile technology after the Nusseys secured financial support from the Clothworkers' Company of London. The college was founded in 1874 and in 1875 Dr Lyon Playfair, a Liberal M.P. for Leeds and brother of James II's sister's husband, launched the fund raising campaign with words that, as so often in Leeds, indicate the elite's self-conscious self-reliance and competitive class-consciousness. 'Our universities have not yet learned that the stronghold of literature should be built in the upper classes of society, while the stronghold of science should be in the nation's middle class.'²⁴ But only when the Department of Engineering was established in 1884-5 did James II contribute £1000 and become a Life Governor and Member of Council.²⁵

James II's active involvement in local liberal politics may be seen to date from these years. Like John Barran, who had been Mayor in 1871-2, he became convinced that Leeds Liberalism needed reorganization on tighter party lines than that of the old Whigs like Edward Baines. Gladstone's government had fallen in 1874 and in 1877 James II, J.S. Mathers and the *Leeds Mercury* editor Reid took this on. James II became President of the Leeds Liberal Federation in 1880. This was the year of W.E. Gladstone's victory over the Conservatives in Midlothian, but he also won a resounding victory in Leeds as did John Barran. When Gladstone relinquished his seat in Leeds it was offered to one of his sons, Herbert, who had lost his elsewhere. Rather grudgingly unopposed he became one of the M.P.s for Leeds until 1910 and a close friend and ally of James II for the rest of his life. James II was host to the Gladstones when the G.O.M. came to speak in Leeds in 1881 and from 1883-90 he

was President of the National Liberal Federation during the critical period when Parnell and the Irish M.P.s held the balance in Parliament and Gladstone responded with the offer of Home Rule to Ireland. James II not only helped to hold the Liberal Party to Home Rule in 1886 and therefore to Gladstone, when Joseph Chamberlain and others split away, but he also held the Leeds party to Home Rule so that Leeds only elected one Liberal Unionist to its group of Liberal M.P.s. In 1887 James II was made a baronet.²⁶

It is notable that James II's active involvement in Liberal party political organization was focussed on the parliamentary success of Gladstone's free traders. Unlike John Barran but like many of Leeds industrial elite after the reform of the franchise, he did not stand for municipal office. Apart from his industrial directorships in railway companies etc., he played an active role on the board of the Leeds General Infirmary and in his will designated as heirlooms the ceremonial tools with which his father had laid its foundation stone, and in the 1890s accompanied members to inspect the potential sites for isolation and other asylums at Seacroft and elsewhere.²⁷

Although he took no active interest in the development of the arts in Leeds, in 1891 he presented the City Art Gallery with *The return of Persephone* by the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Frederick Leighton, after its acclamation as picture of the year at the Royal Academy. An impeccably researched and meticulously executed work with a classical subject by an established London Olympian, this gift of what was accepted as 'high art' seems characteristic of James II.²⁸ In 1903, the year of Harding's opening of City Square, he presented a large history painting by P.H. Calderon.

Although he became chairman of Kitsons on the death of his father in 1885, when he moved into politics James II effectively left the home management of the business in the capable hands of T.P. Reay, who became managing director when it was publicly incorporated after John Hawthorn Kitson's death in 1899. This period saw many changes in James II's pattern of life. In 1881 he remarried, this time a much younger lady from outside Leeds, the daughter of the Earl of Dudley's agent. In 1885 he

3.18 bought Gledhow Hall and its estate which, with the local nickname of 'little Switzerland' because of its steep slopes and long wooded valley, was to be Kitson territory in various ways for some decades. In buying Gledhow from one of the Beckett banking family, James II actually acquired one of the group of houses built by John Carr of York for eighteenth century Yorkshire landowners and Leeds industrialists, in this case for the ironmaster Jeremiah Dixon in 1764-7.²⁹ He had the services extensively rehoused in a buff-brick block with a glazed carriage house but how much remodelling of the house itself may have been carried out at this stage is unclear. However, the panelled dining room with its stained glass window must date from this time as did the renowned bathroom with its Burmantofts wall facing. An album of photographs of the house gives a clear indication of its reception rooms which

12.28 are virtually walled with pictures, both oils and watercolours, amongst which was
4.9b J.M.W. Turner's view of Gledhow Hall seen from across the valley of 1816, which was
to accompany James II's daughter and chatelaine, Emily, to her final retirement in
Tunbridge Wells.³⁰

James II's second marriage was a disaster. Talbot Griffiths describes it as one of several family affairs 'where the iron curtain came down'. As we shall encounter several more it may be worth considering these phenomena, commonly encountered in small communities where secrets are hard to keep but faces must be saved. John Davis, referring to the sexual misdemeanours of prominent citizens of a small southern Italian town in the 1960s termed it 'The Lady Godiva principle of secrecy — everyone knows but nobody looks'. By 1887 Lady Kitson had passed beyond mention although family legends attribute her second child to one of the Barrans, and her final apprehension *in flagrante delicto* to James II himself.³¹ Thereafter his daughter, Emily, acted as his housekeeper and hostess in an annual round that started with the family parties at Gledhow at Christmas and the New Year, moved to London for the summer season and back to Leeds in the autumn and the Music Festival. The spring months were spent in the Riviera with further visits at home and abroad during the summer.³²

The year of James II's presentation to the City Art Gallery, he accepted local pressure to stand for Parliament and although, like John Barran, he lost the Central Leeds contest, he won at Colne Valley and stood as its Liberal M.P. from 1892–1907, when he was ennobled as Lord Airedale of Gledhow and finally bought a house in London at 3 Cadogan Square in 1909. In the House of Commons he spoke seldom and then primarily on industrial matters and local services — railways, iron and steel, workmen's compensation, water supplies and Free Trade, this last being a major Liberal resolution in March 1906.³³ In the Lords he gave the address to the throne at the opening of Parliament in 1908, and in 1909, with the support of four more Leeds peers, carried an amendment which effectively excluded Leeds from the ban on building back-to-back housing in the *Housing and Town Planning Act*. Such houses continued in construction until 1937 although with shorter blocks and greater ventilation.³⁴ James II was opposed to the Lib-Lab pact that Herbert Gladstone, as Liberal Chief Whip in Asquith's government, drew up. This gave Labour the seat for Leeds East. James II viewed any pact with Trades Unionists as against the interests of his business which, at the time of the Taff Vale Railway dispute, Tom Mann castigated as noteworthy for its poor conditions of work.³⁵

3.20 In the meantime, he had been honoured at home in Leeds. When the
3.21 Conservatives won a majority on the Council, their first mayor was W.L. Jackson,
M.P. for Leeds North. But in a policy to reinvolve prominent industrialists in the town's affairs, he secured the election from outside the Council of James II to follow

him in 1896–7. His Conservative successor was C.F. Tetley, Chairman of the family brewery who had organized the recovery of that party's working class support in South Leeds, and then in 1898–9 the Liberal Unionist T.W. Harding.³⁶

3.3 James II's siblings, Emily and Arthur Kitson

Records suggest the maintenance of frequent contact between the families of Frederick and James II, who was equally close to his sister Emily. She had married Dr William Playfair, a successful London obstetrician who had been *Accoucheur* to H.R.H. the Duchess of Edinburgh. His brother became Liberal M.P. for Leeds South, and they regularly visited Gledhow during the Music Festival etc. As little contact as possible seems to have been maintained with the youngest of James I's sons, Arthur, who was paid to stay in Australia as the firm's agent until 1881 when he married there. After this it appears that an allowance was paid to his wife and when James I died this was maintained by James II and his brother John. She had two children in 1881 and 1884.

In 1892 Arthur's wife arrived in England and visited Gledhow with their two children. In 1893–4 she consulted Dr Playfair professionally and chloroform was administered. She had had a miscarriage (or an abortion?) which had presumably resulted in complications. The timing of the pregnancy suggested illegitimacy. The outcome was a libel and slander action in 1896 brought in the Queen's Bench Division by Arthur Kitson, who came over from Australia, against Dr Playfair, which actually hinged on his alleged breach of professional confidentiality in telling his wife who told James II who stopped Mrs Kitson's allowance. Playfair lost the case with exemplary damages of £12,000, reduced to £9,200 and settled out of court by James II to avoid the further publicity of an appeal. Arthur's family were cut out of the Kitson wills and disappear from mention.³⁷ Dr Playfair continued to practise after a fashion until his death in 1905 but his expected baroncy was blackballed by others in the medical profession.³⁸ He and Emily continued to visit Leeds. Their son, the successful actor-manager, Sir Nigel Playfair, became one of the Kitsons' major contributors to the arts. His mother had been painted by Sargent but his performance on the stage as Tony Lumpkin was to be the subject of one of Sickert's second phase of theatrical subjects which were of interest to and an influence on R.H. Kitson.³⁹ Some of their Playfair cousins were to effect useful introductions for both Kitson Clark and Sydney Kitson.⁴⁰

3.4 The Clarks and the second family of James I

James I's eldest surviving daughter, Mary, married Edwin Charles Clark, a member of Trinity College, and Regius Professor of Civil Law at St John's Cambridge. His family had the lease of Ellinthorp Hall near Boroughbridge, which the architect John Carr of York had bought for them when his niece married Clark's grandfather.⁴¹

His father had taken action to resist the depredation of the vale of York by the railways from Leeds and York which had of course founded the Kitsons' fortune. The Clarks, the second family of James I, and the children of John Hawthorn Kitson were to form a close network of friendship and shared interests that were to last through the two following generations. Their contributions to the fine arts and their artistic activities in Leeds, Sicily and elsewhere form the subject of this thesis and will be extensively discussed in future chapters. However they need a general as well as subsequent specific introduction to complete the picture of the Kitson family up to the end of the nineteenth century.

The Clark's son, Edwin Kitson, who was always and will now be referred to as E.K., was born in 1865 and followed his father to Shrewsbury, where he became headboy and a classical scholar, promise that bore fruit at Trinity, Cambridge, when he was awarded a first in the classical tripos. E.K. records that

Five days before I came of age my mother died and as I walked with my father and my uncle James on the lawn, to the enquiry of the latter "and what is E.K. going to do?", with an unpremeditated impulse I said "I am coming into your factory if you will have me". My father had expected a schoolmaster's career and was not pleased. My uncle said "if you come *there*, you will have to work", and I was not pleased, but it fixed my intention ... so following the talk on the lawn at Newnham House in September 1889 I ... stepped into Airedale Foundry at 6 o'clock in the morning ... being there at intervals and becoming the oldest hand in it at Whitsuntide 1939'.⁴²

E.K. set up house with two other bachelors, Gerald Elin and Reggie Kitson, the elder son of James I's second marriage, in 13 Wellclose Place near Blenheim Terrace. In December 1888 E.K. had written to his father describing a big 28 ton casting. 'It requires some pluck to manage that, and the foreman is one of the nicest men in the works. We soon find out the nice men, and have made great friends — though all our great friends I am sorry to see are Gladstonians. I don't think even Sir J's weight will bear much on me. ... Your follower in time, politics, everything save attainment, and affectionate son'.⁴³ Quite how overbearing James II could be was envisioned by E.K. many years later to a cousin and recalled by his daughter. 'You crawled on the floor, knocked on the door and then put your head up, and might be allowed to stand up'.⁴⁴ The old patriarch must have been a holy terror to his subordinates, a characteristic not lacking in the impact of subsequent generations of Kitsons on their offspring. They were a proud, forthright and demanding set of strivers.

3.22 By November 1891, it is clear how E.K. sought release from the worries of the foundry, by the researches of the antiquary, coupled with active participation in the Leeds Subscription Concerts with the Tetleys and the children of James I's second family, and the Leeds Philharmonic Choir.⁴⁵ His mother had sung as first soprano. 'The only soft pleasure I allow myself is the Kirkstall Coucher book, immense humour tofts and crofts, & reliefs and aids — at least to me.'⁴⁶ Kirkstall Abbey, which Colonel North had just presented to the town, was a great source of interest to several of the Kitsons. E.K. was not the only one researching its archives for the Thoresby Society. So was his 'young uncle' Reggie who lodged with him. In 1895

E.K. published an edited late medieval account, with translation, of the foundation of the abbey and Reggie's collaborative work on the charters related to the abbey's possessions in Allerton was also published about the time he died, aged 27, from a septic sinus.⁴⁷

In 1893 E.K. had taken his sister on holiday to Naples, where one of his Playfair cousins introduced him to Georgina Bidder. Ina, as she will now be called, was out with her friend visiting her brother who was working at the Cambridge table in Dr Dohrn's marine research institute in Chiaia gardens, where the aquarium is still one of the popular sights of the city.⁴⁸ Her father had been seventh wrangler in the same year, 1866, that E.K.'s father was the senior first in classics.⁴⁹ After a long courtship they were married in 1897 and the following year moved to 9 Hyde Terrace, finally settling in 1903 at James II's suggestion, in the house vacated by the Oates family at Meanwoodside, for the rest of their lives.⁵⁰

Although she died much earlier at the age of 49, E.K.'s mother was a contemporary of James I's second wife. An Anglican parson's daughter, Elizabeth Kitson probably shared much in common with the Clarks and after her husband's death spent a lot of time with them in Cambridge before settling at May Lodge in Scarborough until her death in 1913. Her son, Reggie, as already described, joined the family firm. Her elder daughter, Eva, married their curate in Scarborough, Arthur Swayne, a handsome Cambridge graduate with a good singing voice which, like his wife, he contributed to the Leeds Subscription Concerts of which he was a secretary and to the soireés and other musical events they put on to raise funds for the church of St Aidan where he became the second vicar in 1897.⁵¹ The parish was to receive the attention of both Eva's younger brother Sydney, and her nephew R.H. Kitson, as architect and artistic patron respectively, to which greater reference will be made in Chapters 4 and 5. Sydney did not go to Shrewsbury but to Charterhouse before he too went up to Trinity and gained a 2/1 in the History Tripos. His subsequent training and practice as an architect forms the subject of Chapter 4 as does his involvement in local cultural affairs from the time of his resettlement in Leeds in 1897. Their younger sister, Annette, married the Chief Justice of the Bahamas, Sir John Matthews, who retired and was subsequently a commissioner for the Inland Revenue.⁵²

3.5 John Hawthorn Kitson and his family

Although I have come to him last, J.H. Kitson, named after one of Stephenson's partners who had supported James I, was not the youngest of his children. He had gone, like James II, to University College before entering the Airedale Works of which he was presumably destined to be the managing director. But in 1876 he was so severely ill as to have to give up the mountaineering for which he made a name in the Alpine Club by the new routes and fast ascents he achieved on the Weisshorn, the

Matterhorn, the Jungfrau and other Swiss peaks.⁵³ Although his visits to Switzerland
3.13 continued they were recalled by the development of a substantial collection of alpine
3.27 plants in a rockery above the main lawns, now densely overgrown with trees. Family
3.28 accounts attribute his decline to alcoholism which would account for the problems at
the Airedale Foundry in his father's later years, which brought James II into managing
this as well as Monkbridge. He died quite suddenly in 1899 and was added to the
family graves at St John's, Roundhay.

3.25 J.H. Kitson married Jessie Ellershaw⁵⁴ and they had three children. The eldest,
Robert Hawthorn, was born in 1873 and, from Shrewsbury School, went up to Trinity
to read Natural Sciences. Following his first class degree in 1896, the Master,
Montague Butler, wrote in congratulation as did a Shrewsbury schoolmaster, who also
3.29 urged him to try for a Fellowship. In the following year Robert was elected to a
to Harkness Scholarship and would have devoted the time to geological studies.⁵⁵
3.34 About this time, probably after returning to Leeds, he suffered from rheumatic fever
and was advised to spend the winters out of England, in a dryer/sunnier climate that
Leeds could offer. Whether he ever actually entered the family firm is unclear but if he
did it could not have been for long.⁵⁶

Given that Robert was already established in a Venetian hotel and busy
sketching by the time his family arrived in the spring of 1899⁵⁷, it seems likely that he
had already decided to become an artist, and reasonable to turn to his friendship with
Cecil Arthur Hunt. Robert was a man given to making deep lifelong friends and Hunt
was one of the first. They met at Trinity, to which Hunt came to read Classics from
Winchester and he too obtained a first. Both formed the Mayflies Lawn Tennis Club
and played against College teams and Hunt continued playing after moving to
London.⁵⁸ They probably went sketching together as well. Hunt wanted to become
an artist but his father, a distinguished amateur archaeologist of Torquay, insisted on
him taking a professional training first. He did so, being called to the Bar in 1899 and
practising until 1919, but he continued painting and in 1914 was elected to the Royal
Society of British Artists.⁵⁹ As recounted in Chapter 1, Hunt's flat was in the midst
of the art world of St James's to which Robert would have been introduced. When
Hunt married Phyllis Lucas, a retired London solicitor's daughter, at St Alban's
Streatham in 1903,⁶⁰ Robert was his best man and subsequently godfather to their
first son, by which time Robert was living permanently in Taormina and had
established his own artistic circle which will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Robert's elder sister, Ethel, was obviously quite as intellectually able as her
brother. A proficient hockey player at Halliwick, the girls boarding school she and
Beatrice attended in Yorkshire, she went up to study history at Newnham,
Cambridge, passing out with a first class in 1899. Her diaries of that year indicate just
the combination of domestic responsibility and intellectual activity that were intended

to be generated in the college houses designed by the architect Basil Champneys for groups of young ladies with their resident Fellow.⁶¹ The association of free-thinking and the progress of women's education brought many pioneers of the movement as well as progressive Cambridge luminaries into close contact with these young ladies and Ethel was introduced to more by the Clarks who lived close by. In addition to the Sidgewicks, the Darwins, her cousin Jane Harrison, Virginia Woolf and other Stephens, Ethel Kitson came to know Bertrand Russell and his wife Alys, who made a point of inviting her to meet Sidney and Beatrice Webb, when they were in Cambridge and to give a lecture on 'Democratic Institutions in the U.S.A. and the Colonies' looking for research assistants to help collect the material for their projected work on local government.

Mrs Webb is going to give us some research work to do, which is a delicious prospect, but we got on with her very badly; she is clearly a man's woman. Supper was dull in spite of the people being really interesting. After supper Mildred and some of the others smoked, then the men appeared. I talked at length with ... Mr Sidney Webb. Mr Webb was most interesting and told me what to work at and how to do it.⁶²

The evening ended with a rush back to Newnham, which appeared to be burning down. Although this turned out to be a hayrick, the Fellow sent to chaperone them got separated which added to the excitement. During the vacation, the Webbs came to Cromer Hall and Ethel went to tea with them 'and was much alarmed. They want me to study all the local governing bodies in Roundhay'.⁶³

Ethel Kitson did collect the material and Beatrice Webb recorded coming to Leeds to see her on 22 September 1900.⁶⁴ She was particularly interested in the town because it had grown so large before the reforms of 1835 without anything beyond its parochial institutions, not even M.P.s. Although the work, now collected in the Webb Local Government Collection, did not see publication itself Ethel did proceed to edit accounts of the Civil War with E.K. from the Fairfax papers for the Thoresby Society in 1904.⁶⁵ At home in Leeds for several years, a few months after the sudden death of her father on Whit Sunday 1899, she recorded being plunged in work looking after Poor Law Children for Miss Baines, as secretary of a new Debating Society, being elected to the Higher Education Committee and reorganizing the Children's Summer Holiday Fund.

In 1899 the Russells had proposed her for membership of the Fabian Society. In Leeds she had already attended meetings of the Little Owls as a guest and became a regular member after graduating, arranging meetings at Elmet Hall starting in the 3.36 1900-1901 season.⁶⁶ The Little Owl's programmes from 1893 to 1911, when the Hon Emily Kitson was an influential member, reveals just how exclusive such conversazione of the female elite could be. Ina Kitson Clark was invited as a guest but never admitted to membership or asked to read a paper. In some ways the topics

for discussion compare with those arranged by E.K. for the Philosophical and Literary Society, but bear no comparison with those of Alfred Orage's Leeds Arts Club, which was formed during the same period and might have provided more fertile soil for a fledgeling Fabian.⁶⁷

With the addition of a few vicar's wives, the list of ladies who spoke and other members and their guests consists largely of Kitson, Talbot, Baines, Marshall, Schunk, Pease, Barran, Lupton, Gott etc. Only C.P. Mayo seems always to have spoken to a social topic: state aided old age pensions, state funding of school children, and Sonya Kovazlewsky as a woman who illustrated her times. Emily Kitson usually stuck to George Borrow. In addition to open meetings, Ethel Kitson spoke on 'A comparison between the age of Elizabeth and that of Victoria' in 1901-3, 'the Japanese' in 1902-3, 'Mahomed and the Koran' in 1904-5, but 'Euripides' in 1905-6 was cancelled.⁶⁸ Then in 1907 she married Murray Phelps, a retired Indian Army general's son and a solicitor in Birmingham, and her attentions were given to her family, both her children and, especially after her husband's return from the Great War in a state of deep depression, maintaining a home in financially relatively reduced circumstances. She and her brother remained devoted and close friends.

In certain respects Ethel's position in Leeds was filled by her younger sister,
3.37 Beatrice, who went to the same boarding school but did not proceed to higher
education. Apart from her devotion to a school friend, Miss E.M. Woodgate, to whom
she wrote daily and to whose home on retirement from the civil service in 1945 she
3.38 devoted her remaining years, Beatrice Kitson kept house in Leeds for her mother at
Elmet Hall and after the Great War in Chapel Allerton and then from 1922 for herself
and her brother, on his regular summer visits to Leeds from Sicily, at *Stonegates*, a
long house built beside the road down to Meanwood with bay windows looking east to
Chapel Allerton.

Like her sister, Beatrice was an early bicyclist and, unlike her brother, she took to driving her own car. She bought a cottage in Wharfedale near Ilkley and this became a frequent retreat with her friend Ethel Mallinson. Although, unlike Ethel Kitson,⁶⁹ Beatrice never took to sketching herself, she became a regular attender at the meetings of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, of which Ethel Mallinson was a secretary for many years.⁷⁰ After her sister left Leeds, Beatrice was admitted to the Little Owls and spoke on the subjects of 'The House of Este' and 'The rise of the Kingdom of Italy in 1907-8 and 1909-10.'⁷¹ After Mary Kingsley came to speak in Leeds in 1898 she maintained a correspondence with her.⁷² She became actively involved in social matters in Leeds. In 1910 and 1911 she was instrumental in the invitations to Mary Dendy to speak in Leeds and Ilkley on the formation of forming colonies for the feeble-minded, at the time of the Royal Commission that led to the passage of the *Mental Deficiency Act* of 1913.⁷³ In that year Beatrice was elected to the Board of Guardians

but, although a member of the Otley Women's Liberal Association in 1914–15, she spoke out publicly against women's suffrage.⁷⁴

After the Great War she stood unsuccessfully for the City Council as an Independent supported by the Leeds Women Citizen's League, but in 1920 she was appointed a J.P. and sat regularly on the bench at the Town Hall until she left Leeds in 1945.⁷⁵ A staunch Anglican, like the Kitson Clarks, Beatrice did not participate in party politics. But her years of public service culminated in her election as the first woman to become Lord Mayor of Leeds, in 1942–43. The circumstances were unusual, in that the Liberal Party, thanks to the lack of elections during the war, still had a minority presence on the City Council and the rotational chance of choosing its mayor. Its nominee, however, had a heart attack and died at his acceptance speech. Beatrice Kitson had an impeccable Liberal lineage and was already prominent in local civic affairs which made her acceptable to other Parties. Her acceptance, with the office of Lady Mayoress filled by Miss Elinor Lupton, marked the end of an era.⁷⁶ Elinor was another Little Owl, and an active member, with Ina Kitson Clark, of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education which had founded the Leeds Girls High School. All three women were to receive honorary doctorates from the University of Leeds in recognition of their services.⁷⁷

3.6 The Kitsons as exemplars of the Leeds elite

From the forgoing account it will have become clear how enmeshed members of the Kitson family were in the political, social and cultural developments of Leeds in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It will also have been apparent that they were, with the major exception of James II, Lord Airedale, in local and national Liberal Party organization, not necessarily pre-eminent. The Kitsons' position stemmed from the diversification of the economy and the rise of new manufacturing industrialists in engineering, tanning, dying, brewing and ready-made clothing who took over from the mill-owning Gotts and Marshalls, the banking Becketts and the newspaper dynasty of Baines. Something like a similar picture could probably be told through the Barrans, the Tetleys or the longer established family of Luptons and, where their interests and activities were shared with the Kitsons, they will be included too. Several individuals outside these clans also, of course, played a leading role in Leeds affairs of whom, in artistic developments, Colonel Walter Harding was pre-eminent, followed by Alderman Hepworth on the City Council, Sam Wilson as a patron of the arts and other specialized collectors, and Sir Michael Sadler, to whom full reference will be made where appropriate. But this familial review should help to indicate the extensive network of involvement of members of the Leeds upper middle class in so many of the city's activities, and their potential interaction. This has been emphasized by R.J. Morris as a feature of the city throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, and is

a corollary of Hennock's observation of their re-involvement in the politics and local service developments in 'the new era' towards the end of the century.

4 The architectural practice of *Bedford and Kitson*¹

4.1 The formation of the partners

The work of Bedford and Kitson regularly featured in the architectural press throughout the period of its founding partner's activity in the practice from 1897 to 1922, and it was also one of the relatively few provincial practices selected for especial mention in three publications with a much wider range of critical readership than the architectural profession. The special supplement of *The Studio* to greet the new century in 1901 featured *Brahan*, the Scottish country house designed and built for R.D. Pullar of Perth, in addition to several other Arts-and-Crafts houses and the decorative work of Frank Brangwyn.² In 1912 Lawrence Weaver came to stay with Sydney Kitson at *Hillside*, to which an article was devoted in 1913 as one of *Country Life's* 'Smaller houses of yesteryear'. And significant foreign recognition came with the publication of Hermann Muthesius's *Das Englische Haus* in 1904–5.

Leeds has ... a firm of very promising young architects who have already built a number of country houses which are among the best work of recent years. Their exteriors are more or less traditional in design, but inside they experiment in more independent ways, though without becoming fantastic, and create rooms which are striking for their comfort and their pleasant appointments and furniture and give an impression of quiet refinement. To judge from their work to date we can expect much of them.³

By the time Muthesius published his great work, lavishing so much praise on the free-style residential designs of British architects since Philip Webb, Bedford had already died aged only 38, and Sydney Kitson had only a decade of work before the Great War and his retirement with tuberculosis. So this critical acclaim requires explanation. Where did these young architects acquire their expertise? What sort of work did their practice undertake? Who were their clients? And what is particularly notable about their general and interior design of buildings and the directions in which it was developing? Largely thanks to the illustrated entries in the architectural press, but also to the survival of the account and cash books of the practice, as well as most of its executed buildings, one can provide answers to most of these questions, although hardly any drawings can be found outside those officially deposited for approval and no note of clients' specifications or responses.

Francis W. Bedford was born in 1866, like Kitson the son of a successful manufacturer. His father James Bedford was the proprietor of *Bedford and Wood*, a dyeware and chemical factory in the Kirkstall Road, and the family house was at 22 Clarendon Road, part of the development opposite Claremont, the erstwhile home of Dr Heaton, and just above the previous residences of most of the senior members of

the Kitson family.⁴ During this period, under the management of Francis's elder brother, James Edward Bedford (1855–1927), the firm expanded considerably, becoming the Yorkshire Dyeware and Chemical Company Ltd. Like the Kitsons and the Luptons, J.E. Bedford was a Liberal and entered local politics, being elected to Leeds City Council in 1910 and Lord Mayor in 1914–15. He was chairman of Leeds School of Art from 1895 and put his wide travels to use in the study of geology, of which London Society he became a Fellow.⁵

Francis Bedford was articled in 1883 to the Leeds architect, William H. Thorp (1852–1944) who designed the city's new art gallery in 1887, before entering the offices of Ernest George and Peto in London, one of the two most popular and successful architectural training practices in England, the other being that of Richard Norman Shaw.⁶ Best known for his redevelopment of the Cadogan and adjacent estates in an Anglo-Flemish red-brick style termed 'Pont-Street Dutch' by Sir Osbert Lancaster, George (1839–1922) was also responsible for some of the most
4.1 prodigious and picturesque country houses of the late nineteenth century of which
to Rousdon near Lyme Regis, built from 1874–1883, is an instructive example. He also
4.5 designed more modest half-timbered and tile-hung rural and suburban houses that were modelled on the vernacular architecture of the Home Counties from which Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), briefly also in the office, was to draw so much inventive inspiration in the earlier years of his own practice.⁷ Another in the office was Herbert Baker (1862–1946) who joined it in 1886, leaving in 1890 and in 1892 establishing a practice in Capetown where he adopted the Cape Dutch vernacular for Cecil Rhodes' *Groote Schuur* fitted out inside in the lavish Tudor style of the George and Peto practice.⁸ The friendship established between Baker and Bedford led to the former becoming a godfather to his second son, who served his articles in Baker's office where he subsequently worked as draughtsman until 1932.⁹

Because it was a period of very considerable activity in the practice, both in town and country as well as abroad, one cannot tell exactly what Bedford may have worked on except an L shaped house at Hardwick-on-Thames in 1889, built on a raised terrace with a substantial chimney creating an inglenook in the billiard room.¹⁰ However, going by Bedford's own domestic designs of the 1890s, one can see the commissions that probably influenced him the most. The plans of *Woolpits*, Ewhurst,
4.6 Surrey (1885–88),¹⁰ and of Batsford Park, Glos. (1888–93)¹¹ may have been influential when he designed his country house, *Brahan*, at Perth, as may some of the
4.7 offset and differently planned pairs of houses that were such a feature of the early
to work of the Leeds practice. The 'Old English' Elizabethan houses, *Littlecroft* (1884)
4.9a on Exbury Down in Hampshire,¹² *Glencot* built for the owner of Wookey Hole near
Wells in 1887,¹³ two houses at Ascot, Berkshire, of 1889 for W.S. Salting, the brother of the art collector,¹⁴ and Sir Ernest George's own residence in Streatham, *Redroofs*

(1887–88),¹⁵ in redbrick with 'Queen Anne' windows, all have features to which the Bedford and Kitson practice turned. Guy Dawber acted as the clerk of works at Batsford Park and on the strength of it left the office to establish his own practice reviving the Cotswold vernacular architecture of the seventeenth century.¹⁶ But the panelling and door furniture at Batsford Park reflect the Arts and Crafts Movement and the ballroom stonework verges on art nouveau, a characteristic of the decorative panels adorning the fronts of early works of the Bedford and Kitson practice. So Bedford may have been involved as well.

With his interest in furniture crafts as well as historic architecture, Francis Bedford must have found Ernest George, who joined the Art Worker's Guild in 1889, a mentor of like mind to his own.¹⁷ Like George, who published a series of etchings of old London and exhibited watercolours of Northern France, Flanders and Taormina,¹⁸ Bedford was a fine draughtsman and painter in water-colours. Whilst working in the office he studied at the Westminster School of Art as well as the R.A. and the A.A. schools.¹⁹ He was awarded the Silver Medal in the Soane Competition and carried off the Ashpittel Prize in 1890 when he was also awarded the Owen Jones studentship, which enabled him to undertake an extensive architectural study and sketching tour of Sicily and the rest of Italy and Spain in 1890–91. Several watercolours from this tour were subsequently published in *The Builder* as works of art (the *Certosa at Pavia* in 1893 and *St Petronio, Bologna* in 1894) or as illustrations to his article on 'Colour in Architecture' in *The Architectural Review* in 1897, the new journal's second year of publication. Five of them were given to Leeds City Art Gallery by his son Oliver, on the centenary of Francis Bedford's birth in 1966.²⁰

In 1892 Bedford returned to Leeds and started to practise. From the outset he took what work was offered which, from the account books, appears to have been very little for a couple of years. He provided perspective drawings for Thorp and others, and designed industrial buildings for his family's works, as well as several designs for interior decorators of repute, in particular Marsh, Jones and Cribb's work at Maryland House.²¹ He also built his first house, for his elder brother, in Shireoak Road in 1892–4, and pairs of unmatched semidetached houses in the same road and in part of the old Botanical Gardens beside the bearpit in Cardigan Road. By April 1895, Bedford was recording the first expenses arising from visits to Rufus D. Pullar at Perth and Carlisle, the first of the major commercial firms which retained the services of the practice for the development of its premises in the north of England. Bedford was also an active member of the Leeds and Yorkshire Architectural Society, being Honorary Treasurer in 1894 and Honorary Secretary in 1895. W.H. Thorp had been its first Secretary and President from 1890–1892.²²

Sydney Decimus Kitson, as already recounted, was the tenth son, or child to survive infancy, of James I Kitson.²³ Born in 1871, he was only twelve when his father

died and his mother, wishing to economise, took the family to Cambridge near the Clarks before settling at May Lodge in Scarborough, which had been developed as the summer resort and place of retirement for Yorkshire's gentry. After Charterhouse, 4.10 Sydney followed Edwin Kitson Clark to Trinity College in 1889. At Cambridge he formed many of the friendships that sustained his active social and professional life in later years, such as Charles Trevelyan and Walter Runciman, F.B. Malim who subsequently became Headmaster of Haileybury and H.M. Fletcher (1870–1953). Harry Fletcher was articled to Mervyn Macartney (1853–1932) when he left Cambridge in 1892. One of Norman Shaw's assistants, Macartney was in the group in 1884 who founded the Art Workers Guild, of which he became master in 1899. He was an exponent of later English Renaissance architecture (now termed English Baroque) and Editor of the *Architectural Review* from 1906–1920. Fletcher subsequently joined the London practice of Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer. He became President of the Architectural Association in 1917 and was actively concerned with the development of architectural education.²⁴

Sydney Kitson served in the office of E.J. May (1853–1941), the last pupil of Decimus Burton who had built Bloomsbury and so much of early nineteenth century 4.12 London. May had also been an assistant of Norman Shaw and had followed him from to 1880–1885 as the architect of Bedford Park, the primary exemplar of residential 4.14 suburban development using the ex-Goth's ideal for domestic design that became known as 'Queen Anne'.²⁵ May's subsequent practice was almost wholly devoted to domestic architecture and this was to be a major element in the Bedford and Kitson practice before the Great War. Sydney's sketchbooks date from these years of pupillage until the year before his death, but they are only particularly devoted to architecture and fittings until 1920 when he effectively ceased to practise. In the absence of other information those of the early 1890s are probably as indicative of his mode of architectural education as of the sorts of building that interested him. Their attention to English vernacular residential buildings and the details of fittings from the 'English Renaissance' are entirely in keeping with the domestic practice and 'Queen Anne' focus of E.J. May. Harry Fletcher remembered their London weekends sketching, measuring and talking about architecture but how Sydney's 'sociable spirit' was depressed by the absence of 'the family life in Cambridge and Leeds'.²⁶

A summary of the contents of two of the sketchbooks from these years will show 4.15 this plainly. After beginning in 1892 with the Lantern of Trinity's hall and some measured drawings in the V. and A. and of Greek capitals in the British Museum, he devoted drawings to details of flashing on the steps and of a screen in Hampstead parish church, and fittings at St Michael's, Cornhill. In March, 1893, he spent time in Surrey, sketching cottages at Farnham and almshouses at Godalming, both near his 4.16 old school, Charterhouse. Then he both sketched at Hampton Court and made

measurements of some of the Wren mouldings and the sovereigns' monograms. Pages 66 and 67 are copied from E.J. May's own sketchbook — the interior of the Hospitium of St Mary's Abbey, York, showing the method of supporting the beams in the roof, and a fourteenth century wrought-iron strap hinge. There follows a delicate pencil sketch using only vertical strokes which is suggestive of Whistler's atmospheric views of the Thames, or even that of the French Impressionists, a much less likely model. One finds Renaissance rusticated roundels of the sort Sydney later used in some of his vicarage and bank window designs, and all sorts of constructional details in the stonework of Bath, Glastonbury and Wells, and half-timbered jetties and chimneys in Statford and Warwick. The book concludes with two pages of Art Nouveau tendrils and lilies as if for a book illustration, and a lot of details of brick bonding, types of roofing, tile-hanging and lead flashing.

The sketchbook for 1893–4 continues the attention devoted to staircases. The previous sketchbook had more than five pages of measured details of a wooden one in Hampstead and this book includes No.3 Gray's Inn Square copied from May's sketchbook and the plaster cast components of one at the Palazzo Gondi in Venice. It also includes decorative details of seventeenth century furniture in a house at Weetwood, Leeds, and measured drawings of the fireplace of the billiard room in Gledhow Hall, as well as full size sections and drawings of Carr's dado mouldings etc and sketches of the main staircase in the Hall followed by Norman Shaw's staircase at Bryanstan dated January 3rd. He had probably spent Christmas with Lord Airedale in Leeds and, after a further visit to Surrey, he may well have stayed in a house in the Cloisters at Windsor which gave him details of door construction in a bedroom. This sketchbook ends with a lot of practical constructional details taken from Viollet-le-Duc's *Histoire d'une Maison*. One is repeatedly confronted by Sydney's attention to practical craftsmanship and details of construction rather than stylistic invention. The aim was to solve problems by seeing how past craftsmen had done so.

In 1895 Sydney had visited Naples and Rome. In February the following year he took his sister, Eva, to Milan and Venice, returning to Verona with Harry Fletcher for the start of their grand architectural study tour. They went to Vicenza, Padua and Venice and then by boat down the Adriatic coast from Trieste to Zara, Sobenico, Traii, Spalato, Cattaw, Durazzo and Corfu, then Ithaka, Cephalonia, Calamata and the Ionian islands to Athens. In his diary he recorded, 'The suburbs of Athens dreadfully untidy, dirty and wasteful ... The Olympic Games are in full swing'. On behalf of the British School at Athens they went to the island of Melos to make measured drawings of the Byzantine church at Kastro of which the plans were published in their article 'The Churches of Melos' in the School's Journal for that year. Through Dr Dörpfeld of the German School, they tried to arrange to join a trip to Troy but there was only one available place. On 2nd May Sydney recorded 'Tossed at noon in the porch of the

maidens for who sh^d go to Troy, I won the toss — we went to see Dörpfeld this evening and he holds out no hope of another place'.²⁷ In the event neither of them went because their tour was curtailed by Sydney falling seriously ill of typhoid fever. Harry Fletcher brought him back to Italy still seriously ill and stayed with him until the arrival of Mrs Kitson. In her last letter to Sydney of 25 June 1913, his mother recalled: How this date brings back the Perugia experiences. My long journey with Nurse, the first sight of you in bed, and the wonderful love of Harry Fletcher in his care of you. The good looking Irish Nurse, who threw her arms around my neck and sobbed, saying how she prayed you might recover. Then the big thunder storm which raged while the Italian doctor was describing your case and condition. Then, a tender message from the sick room, that you had asked for your mother, and my joy to sit by you and hold your hand, and know you were glad I had come.²⁸

Unlike his elder brother, who died of a septic sinus that year in Leeds, Sydney did recover and spent some time in the busy practice of W.D. Caröe (1857–1938) who had just been appointed senior architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. He acted as clerk of works at St Stephen's, Nottingham.²⁹ By the end of 1897 he had returned to Leeds and entered into partnership with Francis Bedford from 1st November. This was to last until Bedford broke the partnership on moving in the autumn of 1904 to London to form his own practice and began building his own house at Cobham in Surrey, but died suddenly a few months later at the age of 38 after contracting typhoid fever.³⁰

4.2 Prominent features of the practice: the sources of information

In reviewing the work of Bedford and Kitson's practice, it is necessary to consider the current sources. In addition to the buildings themselves, of which most survive although often subdivided and put to different uses, there were a substantial number that received mention in the architectural press, usually with plans as well as external and occasionally internal photographs. For many years the records of the practice were stored at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, on the board of which sat the senior partner, William Ledgard, a devoted thespian. What was ultimately retrieved were the account and cash books for the entire period from 1892 onwards and a few drawings for some of the banks which formed part of the practice's recurrent work. Sydney Kitson's sketchbooks do not provide a record of his own architectural designs.

From Francis Bedford nothing is known in public or private hands except the few watercolours published or given to Leeds City Art Gallery and these virtually all predate his practice as an architect. On the other hand it is quite obvious that he was an ambitious young man, eager to put his work in the public and professional eye and from the beginning he made full use of the architectural press. Just before he set off on his own for London, he published several perspectives of his earliest architectural

work and all the perspective drawings from the joint practice carry his signature. It seems reasonable to assume that those drawings that do not, which are usually elevations and plans, may emanate from Kitson or Bedford depending on the design of the building and its date, and attribution of responsibility for different designs is sometimes suggested by the records of expenses incurred by one or other partner in travelling to sites outside Leeds. However, as most of the published work of the practice was within the city, the accounts and cash books tend to be of little use in attributing designs to specific partners although they help to confirm some distinction between their types of design. In addition each partner did undertake private work outside the practice and this does not appear in these records.³¹

It seems reasonable to suppose that commissions undertaken for members of Bedford's or Kitson's families and close connections were probably carried out by the relevant partners. The expense accounts certainly support this. But even this mode of distinction has its limits as C.E. Mallows' obituary of Francis Bedford for the R.I.B.A. Journal in 1904 discloses. In addition to attributing almost everything published by the practice to Bedford, he appears to cite Sydney Kitson as the source of information on Bedford's decoration of domestic interiors including *Hillside*, *Gledhow Hall*, and *The Red House* at Chapel Allerton, which were either Kitson residences or most obviously buildings designed by Sydney. It therefore seems advisable to review the work of the practice as a whole, unless there is clear evidence for specific attribution to either partner, although Bedford's work before forming the partnership and Kitson's after Bedford left it of course remain their own.

Given the different architectural formations of the two men, one would expect the pupil of Ernest George to favour the picturesque and varied profiles of Anglo-Flemish and vernacular design and materials, and that of E.J. May to favour red-brick and stone dressed 'Queen Anne' designs. In the latter case of Sydney Kitson this seems accurate, allowing for his subsequent adoption of a more opulent English baroque after the turn of the century. But in Bedford's case it is apparent from his earliest designs in 1893–1894, he could turn his hand to whatever current style seemed appropriate. Bedford was an inventive designer as well as very able draughtsman, but, apart from his own residence at Cobham, one does not know what he might have designed on his own after 1904.

4.3 The development of Bedford's domestic designs

Three domestic designs by Francis Bedford before Kitson entered the partnership provide good examples of his range as well as what the practice was to produce over the next decade and why it achieved notice. The first is the design of *Arncliffe* for his elder brother's home at the top of Shireoak Road, a new development in what had
4.19 been the Earl of Cardigan's land beside Headingley Hall.³² Lying off the main road in

a select development behind the historic centre of Headingley — the Shireoak itself, the Skyrack Inn and St Michael's parish church — Bedford set the house far back in its deep site beyond the building line of the other houses and facing west with an open view across their gardens. *Arncliffe* was built in brick on lines consistent with those of a 'small Tudor manor-house' — great gables and chimneys of cut bricks set on edge, mullioned and headed windows and wide doorways, with a little Jacobean renaissance strapwork decoration. The geometry of the chimney breasts was treated with emphasis. Inside, the dark panelling, high relief plasterwork and columned fireplaces were boldly consistent with such a design, and the dining room ceiling was loosely based on the *Plantin Haus* in Antwerp. The plan, however, was a remarkable innovation, being akin to the kind of butterfly plan adopted by E.S. Prior, Lutyens and Edgar Wood in the next decade, and for which the plan resulting from Norman Shaw's remodelling of *Chesters* in Northumberland of 1890 may be said to have set the precedent.³³ In Bedford's plan, however, there is no intention of creating a balanced distribution of rooms and an 'Old English', or Jacobean, style is used with no Roman Baroque features. So it is more appropriate to look for precedents set in the offset planning of large bays or rooms on the main front of e.g. *The Tudor House* in the Hampstead by George and Peto of about 1882³⁴ and the Jacobean porch of *Motcombe House*, Shaftesbury, built by them in 1892–94, which also provided a separate service wing like that built at *Arncliffe* in the same years.³⁵

Shireoak and North Hill Roads, with some plots adjacent to Cardigan Road beside the old bearpits, were to be sites for several subsequent Bedford and Kitson houses. In its early years the practice designed several houses for James Bedford, probably representing his speculative investment in urban residential development for he lived himself at *Sycamore Lodge* at Woodhouse Cliff. The development of North Hill Road was on land bought by Norris Hepworth for which site plans were drawn up in 1897. It was on several of these different sites that Francis Bedford, and later the joint practice, designed pairs of semi-detached houses with different plans. Double-houses are a characteristic of the Arts and Crafts Movement, but George and Peto had adopted this mode of planning in Norwood in 1882, using plain brick with tile hanging, and at Ascott in 1889.³⁶

The first of these was *The Old Gardens* off Cardigan Road of 1892–94.³⁷ The pair were designed as if one large house at the top of long gardens, its picturesque unity being composed from a variety of tile-hung and half-timbered gables and prominent bays with latticed casements. An even larger pair seem to have been built a few years later in North Hill Road.³⁸ Their apparently rambling elevations, together with prominent use of the roof-space and towering chimney stacks, gables and dormers above a stone-built ground floor, were typical of the revival of Home-Counties vernacular designs with which Bedford was very familiar from the George and Peto

practice and Kitson from his sketching studies in Surrey. But it is also reminiscent of
4.2 Ernest George's *Rousdon*, 1874–83, with its garden front designed to look like an
accretion of different buildings,³⁹ and the variety in the elevations and use of gables
also echoes Philip Webb at Standen in 1891.⁴⁰

4.39 As pairs, their plans are quite different although the complement of rooms is
basically the same. Their entrance porches are differently situated, one protruding and
capped with a balustrade, the other integrated within the house itself and giving the
impression of a subordinate point of access.⁴¹ They represent good examples of the
application of the free planning to semi-detached house design and a radical departure
from the general form of mirror-image planning which was little more than an
adaptation of the modular repetition of terraced housing. In Leeds, the Home-
Counties vernacular was equally innovatory, where red-brick terraces, filled the
spaces between the houses of the more affluent built in local stone.

At *Arncliffe* the main rooms are splayed around the concave front with a porch
4.26 leading into the panelled hall with its large seated window-bay separated from the
to stairs by a decorative screen-door.⁴² The morning and drawing room windows face
4.28 into the southern rose garden with a Netherlandish gazebo at one outer corner and the
4.21 two-storey coach-house and servants' quarters in a picturesque half-timbered block
at the other. Apart from the addition of an escutcheon-decorated oriel window in the
4.24 northern gable, perhaps commemorating his mayoralty, *Arncliffe* remained unchanged,
serving the needs of J.E. Bedford until his death in 1924 and his widow until 1932.

Even more unusually Bedford achieved the same differentiation in plan when he
adapted the English vernacular 'Queen Anne' style for an apparently axially balanced
4.44 classical building. Although one is tempted to attribute Nos.2–3 Shireoak Road to
to Sydney Kitson, so obviously could they come from E.J. May's office, published plans
4.47 and the account books indicate they were another of James Bedford's rather select
speculative developments of semi-detached houses in 1894.⁴³ The central and
apparently only front door is actually to the right-hand house which has its dining
room set back behind the drawing room, while the left-hand house has its principal
rooms on the front with its main door and internal porch to the side and the hall and
staircase placed in the rear corner of the plan. Both in the use of deliberately irregular
4.49 and picturesque vernacular-revival blocks and in those of classically-balanced design
and proportions, Bedford adopted a freely planned interior, presumably in order to
make the smaller houses appear more substantial and in keeping with their larger, or
at least detached, neighbours in mixed developments. Although he laid stress on their
experimentation within, Muthesius went on to refer to the comfort and pleasant
appointments of houses designed by the practice. But he was primarily interested in
free-style detached houses, so could he have missed this novel feature in their semi-
detached designs?

Muthesius's perceptivity is, however, well supported by the case of *Brahan*, a substantial house designed for Rufus D. Pullar in Scotland. *Pullars of Perth* were a dyeing and cleaning firm and gentlemen's outfitters and had connections with *Wood and Bedford's* dyeworks in Leeds.⁴⁴ In 1895 Francis Bedford began the series of visits to Perth and Carlisle which subsequently extended to other potential sites for branches in Ripon, Leeds, Newcastle, Blackburn and Edinburgh, as well as to Brussels and Antwerp in 1896 for similar or other reasons.⁴⁵ Although Sydney Kitson occasionally visited Perth or other sites, the work for Pullar was largely Bedford's and much of it devoted to *Brahan*. Bedford must have thought highly of his first designs because he published them in *The Builder* a year after they had been superseded by quite different designs which he did not publish until 1904, although photographs of the completed house appeared in *The Studio's Special Supplement* of 1901 and eventually in Muthesius in 1905.⁴⁶

- 4.50 The first *Brahan* project of 1896 was an uncompromisingly Tudor stone-built mansion with extensive store and service wings. But the plan of the main house was
- 4.51 essentially axial — two rectangular, bay-fronted rooms flanking a transverse hall of similar size with one room and two blocks of communication and service areas to the rear. Only the side-set porch disturbed this balance on the garden front. The
- 4.6 similarities between this first plan and that of George and Peto's Batsford Park designed and built from 1887–93 throughout Bedford's time in their office, are numerous although *Brahan* was more compact.⁴⁷ In elevation, however, it was
- 4.52 another stone gabled 'Old English' house. Both the revised plan and character of the
- to elevation of 1898 were quite different. Instead of stone mullioned windows and leaded
- 4.53b bays, the house appears much lighter as well as more lightly built, with harled walls, long rows of small-paned windows and even more prominent, half-timbered, gables on the garden front. The manorial hall has gone to become circulatory space in the centre of the house. Room has been found for a billiard room as well as the library and all the main rooms were distributed freely around the garden fronts of the house. Although from the front not unlike the elevations of Voysey or Ballie-Scott, the rooms were not strung along a passage as in Voysey's single-view-dictated country houses⁴⁸ and, given the use of carving and metalwork inside⁴⁹ as well as panelling by Marsh, Jones and Cribb and glass by George Walton of Glasgow, one can see what *The Studio* and Muthesius found attractive. It was experimental and refined without being fantastic or 'quaint'. Work continued in 1901 on gates, gardeners' buildings and an entrance lodge, and the stables and modifications to the fernery garden entrance in 1903. The design of the stables was published separately from that of the house, in 1904.
- 4.43 A smaller house which can confidently be attributed to Bedford is *Dalguire*, built for Donald Stuart in Harrogate near Temple Moore's St Wilfrid's Church in 1897.⁵⁰ With a combination of Pateley-Bridge stone on the ground floor and tile hanging or half

timber above, as well as a fully-used roof space, the elevations resemble those already referred to in Leeds. All the gables are thrown out on jetties but chimney stacks articulate the changes of angle. These arise because the plan is radically different. The three main rooms form the arms of a T, linked by a central hall with its own bay window entered from one junction of the T and a verandah filling the angle on the opposite side of the morning room. As the house is placed in the centre of its gardens, these three rooms have quite separate prospects. It is a sophisticated and yet essentially simple free-style plan.

4.4 Domestic designs of the *Bedford and Kitson* practice

From the records of the practice, one can see the significance of Francis Bedford's relatives in commissioning domestic designs for their investment in new sites or the maintenance of the property they let out. Remarkably few domestic commissions came their way from the Kitsons, who lived in older property and, with the exception of James I Kitson, did not build new houses for themselves. Apart from relatively minor works to extend or modify Albert Kitson's *Cober Hill* north of Scarborough, and Sydney's mother's house there at *May Lodge*, Emily Kitson's bedroom furniture at Gledhow Hall, replumbing and panelling for F.J. Kitson at *Gledhow Grove* (now Chapel Allerton Hospital), and measured plans of *Roundhay Lodge* for Robert Kitson in 1902 before it was let to Sydney's future brother-in-law Harold Tetley, no work for them is recorded between 1897–1904. But then the extensions to Sydney's own *Hillside*, which he rented from James II Kitson from 1901 until given it outright in 1909 six years after his marriage,⁵¹ do not figure in the books.

The domestic clients of the practice were mainly manufacturing proprietors and a few professional men. *Weetwood Croft* was built for J.H. Wicksteed, the son of the Unitarian minister who had married one of Lupton's daughters.⁵² An important development for the practice was the laying out of Allerton Drive (now Allerton Park Road) between Hawkhills and Allerton Park on the rising ground opposite *Hillside* and Gledhow Hall. Talbot Griffiths was to recall it as 'Profiteer's Park' in the 1920s but it dated back to the beginning of the century. The development was on a larger scale than Shireoak Road and the Bedford and Kitson practice contracted to build so many individually designed houses that they employed a clerk of works to oversee the whole development.⁵³ In 1902 *Pen-y-Bryn* (now demolished) was begun for Christopher James, followed by *Webton Court* for W.J. Cousins, *Aros* for A. Campbell, alterations to *Esholt House* next to *Webton Court*, a house built in the 1840s also owned by Mr Cousins, *The Red House* backing on to Allerton Drive for Bernal Bagshawe, and in 1903 *The Rookery* opposite the entrance to the road for Ben Day. Some of these, like *The Rookery*, and *Webton Court*, were built in stone with tile-hung or half-timbered upper floors in the picturesque manorial vernacular already

established by Francis Bedford. But others were built in red brick with stone dressings and the axial plans and 'Queen Anne' fenestration that may be attributed to Sydney Kitson. Like so many of the 'Queen Anne' prototypes by Philip Webb and his successors, J.J. Stevenson and others, this one was also called *The Red House* (now *Gledhow Manor*). And it was published with a plan and photographs in *Architectural Review* in 1904 but no perspective. Sydney Kitson lacked Bedford's facility as a draughtsman and made use of the new publishing techniques.

In 1901 he had designed the Vicarage for his sister and brother-in-law, Arthur
4.61 Swayne, the second vicar of St Aidan's.⁵⁴ It was sited on steeply falling ground off a
narrow street of terraced houses below the Roundhay Road. The planning of the
house made the most of the site and separated familial from parochial uses. Both
4.62 main entrances led into the parish rooms on the ground floor with a stairway leading
down to them or up to the principal residential floor. The spacious hall, stairway and
domestic services were all sited on the northern side facing the narrow forecourt,
while the study and all the main reception and bedrooms above looked south or west
4.63 into the garden. The servants' quarters filled the roof. The vicarage, only very
recently demolished, was built in red brick, with Ancaster stone quoins and a
4.64 prominent southern bay illuminating the study, drawing and principal bed rooms. The
drawing room had the inglenook, with little cupboards above the fireplace, that were
de rigour. Although grouped in a partially symmetrical way, the distribution of the
windows is typical of this school of architects whose irregular keystone fenestration
expressed the function of the spaces behind in an almost Gothic manner. Sash
windows were used and the front door and landing window above united in a single
moulded stone composition in a typically baroque way with the date and inscription
carved in the stone between. A more compact but otherwise similar vicarage was
4.66 designed for All Hallows in Hyde Park in 1902 of which a perspective drawing by
to Bedford was published in *The Builder* in 1904. But the bull's eye window at the rear
4.68 could come straight from Sydney's sketchbook of 1892-93.

At *Hillside*, Sydney Kitson had, also in 1901, remodelled quite a small house to
4.69 serve his purposes as a bachelor and then extended it after he married in 1903 to
to accommodate his young family. The house was built on a sharp corner in the steep
4.72 road running into the Gledhow Valley below Gledhow Hall, and the original small
4.9b farmhouse had already been extended southwards to form a double-bayed villa. In his
Country Life article of 1913, Lawrence Weaver (1876-1930) described how Sydney
4.73 had adapted the back of the little house to provide an entrance way and hall-study,
4.74 gutted the front to create a 36 ft long sitting-room with a columned loggia linking the
bays onto a terrace across the garden front, and later added a substantial gabled
extension with a dining room, nursery etc. A canalized stream ran down the centre of
the lower lawn to a watergarden with a small column topped by a replica of

Verrochio's *Putto with a dolphin* in the courtyard of Florence's Palazzo Vecchio.⁵⁶

- 4.75 The long sitting-room, or gallery, had a fireplace at either end, over one of which David Roberts' painting of the *Temples at Paestum* was let into a panel.⁵⁷ On the windowless north wall the largest of Sydney's mother's embroideries from designs by Sir Robert Lorimer was placed in a plaster-moulded panel. Further decorative unity was given to the room by light swags and ribbons of plaster work around the ceiling and over the doors to a design in period with those of Carr of York who had designed Gledhow Hall. Kitson's artistic interests are also apparent in the various plaster and bronze casts of classical and renaissance sculpture; the most prominent being
- 4.76 Michelangelo's *tondo*, and a reduction of the *Adorante*, now in Berlin, which had at one time been in the collection of Isabella d'Este. *Hillside* may not have been 'either in elevation or disposition, a single, well-thought-out conception, but a very successful and agreeable adaptation of not very promising materials'.⁵⁸ It was a delightful house to live in with several characteristics of the purpose-built Bedford and Kitson houses.
- 4.77 *The Red House* of 1903-4 was one of these. It was built in extensive gardens across the valley for an affluent client, Major Bernal Bagshawe, who was Chairman of the Leeds Forge Company. Lawrence Weaver's first edition of *Smaller Country Houses of Today* (1910) has several examples of English Baroque revival houses of this kind, designed on an H plan with a balanced front, decorative quoins and substantial moulded eaves.⁵⁹ *Bengeo House* in Hertfordshire by Walter Cave (1863-1939) is one. *Luckley* by Ernest Newton (1856-1932) at Wokingham is another. And the restoration of *Whixley Hall* near York by W.H. Brierley (1862-1926) in 1905 demonstrated a reinstatement of the real thing, built by William Etty in 1719.⁶⁰
- Kitson was designing within a tradition with which he was not only familiar but which, in the grander manner of Edwardian Baroque, was eclipsing the brief attempts of the Arts-and-Crafts architects to venture into large public building design. Hopton Wood
- 4.78 stone was used for the plinth and the columns of the portico, and the house was of red Woodville bricks from Leicester with Ancaster stone dressings, and sash windows.⁶¹
- 4.79 The plan of the Red House is unusual and the internal effect rather grand. One to enters through an outer hall from the spacious portico into a great glazed atrium.
- 4.82 Surrounded by a balustraded gallery on all four sides, this was designed to display the owner's art collection — apparently Bartolozzi or similar portrait prints of the
- 4.83 eighteenth century. The hall was provided with a massive bolection-moulded fireplace to of coloured Derbyshire marbles. All the main rooms of the ground floor led off this hall
- 4.86 under carved overdoors. Each of the fireplaces was individually designed using fine
- 4.87 polished woods or painted reliefs with marble panels. The dining room, as later in to Kitson's remodelling of Hazelwood Castle, has an arched buffet at the kitchen end.
- 4.89 Directly opposite the front door a wide staircase mounts below a tall window, lightly tinted with a slender stained-glass swag that echoes the glass in the hall ceiling and

the porch designed by George Walton (1867–1933). This breaks into the double flight of an imperial staircase emerging onto the gallery through a colonnaded screen, such as Kitson was to use at the back of the central hall at Gledhow Hall in 1913 when he opened it into the room in front.

Upstairs the mode of access to the bedrooms is the reverse of those below. None open directly onto the gallery which leads to separate suites of front and rear bedrooms, that in the nursery treated to a Kate Greenaway type of relief on the mantelpiece. *The Red House* was obviously designed for entertainment and house-
4.90 guests and amply provided with cloak rooms, lavatories, water closets and bathrooms,
4.91 as well as central heating. Most of this equipment as well as the turquoise tiling was
4.92 still *in situ* in the early 1990s, when the author studied and photographed the house,
4.93 and had served the needs of a local authority residential home for forty years after it ceased to be a family home in the 1950s.⁶²

Effectively the two main garden fronts to the south and west were designed as balanced fronts, but on the east side there is a distinct break in design between the
4.94 main house and the service wing which has dormers and its guttering supported on
4.95 tendril-like wrought iron brackets of the kind one sees on houses by Voysey and other
4.96 Arts-and-Crafts architects. The stable block below the house on the same side has a
massively moulded semicircular entrance arch to its courtyard and was fitted with
4.97 patent looseboxes supplied by the St Pancras Iron Company as well as a motor house.

Even grander was *Redcourt*, the large brick and stone-dressed house designed for Colonel F.W. Tannett-Walker on the esplanade at Scarborough.⁶³ With its baroque turrets and double-colonnaded loggia one feels that Reginald Blomfield would have approved. With Brodrick's Grand Hotel, it adds a continental touch to this seaside resort. The Bedford and Kitson practice had already carried out commissions for Tannett-Walker in Leeds. He was another of the foundry proprietors and an
4.98 engineer who bought *Carr Manor* in Stonegate Road. This had been built between
1881–1883 for the eminent Leeds physician who invented the pocket clinical
thermometer, Dr T.C. Allbutt, to the designs of E.S. Prior (1852–1932).⁶⁴ Prior was
one of the most original domestic designers to come out of Norman Shaw's office, a
founder-member of the Art Worker's Guild, Secretary of the Arts and Crafts
Exhibition Society from 1906–1917, and Slade Professor at Cambridge from 1912–
1932.⁶⁵ An authority on Gothic sculpture and architecture, he provided his client with
4.99 a substantial, stone, bay-fronted, south fronting house in the tradition of Yorkshire
manor houses. Although the original stable block of 1796 had been retained, Tannett-
to Walker required a service wing and Bedford and Kitson designed this in 1895–1900 in
4.101 the form of a courtyard entered under broad arches from the drive or the western side
of the garden. A projected music room was abandoned.

Redcourt seems to have been commissioned in the same year, 1899, but built over a longer period up to 1902. At £12,692.7.9 it cost just over £1600 more than Major Bagshawe's *Red House*, and £500 more than the new *School of Art* which the practice also completed that year. Designed in a grand manner and externally impressive, it is planned with its long elevation towards the sea and two shorter fronts, each terminated with octagonal corner-bays and leaded turrets, and a battlemented parapet, with semi-circular brick gabled dormers possibly derived from Kew Palace on the main east front. Access is obtained through an entrance court terminated by the colonnaded loggia that leads the eye through to a garden parterre flanked throughout its length by a palmhouse. This loggia also leads into a long covered porch with steps up into the central hall. There are only three large reception rooms. As in *The Red House*, a service wing runs back from the main house abutting, but with no access to, the rose garden. Being the second prominent front of the house, this wing is treated as more integral to the whole design, although lacking turrets and balconies, than the service wing of *The Red House*.

If it is correct to assume that this group of houses owe their design, although possibly not their interior decoration, to Sydney Kitson, there still remain several to be attributed, only one of which was published at the time. One, the best known due to recent illustration, is *Redhill* opposite *Arncliffe* in Shireoak Road, designed and built in 1900–1901 for Joseph Nicholson and subsequently extended in 1910 for E.A. Hirst. Half-timbered and tile-hung, with gables and dormers over a stone ground floor it is the epitome of Home-Counties vernacular without any attempt to relate to local traditions which made Prior's Carr Manor so distinctly Yorkshire manorial. Inside the plaster frieze of trailing foliage is similar to Bedford's designs in *Arncliffe* and the fireplace to those of *Brahan* and others inside the North Hill Road pair of houses.⁶⁶

The other two houses built on Hepworth's land in North Hill Road are not only detached but quite different in design from both the 'Old English' pairs of houses and *Redhill* and the 'English Renaissance' or Baroque revival. *High Garth* was built for John Drew between 1901–1902.⁶⁷ Costing £1632.7.4, it was much less expensive than the £4111.18.5 of *Redhill* or even the £2,367.19.4 of St Aidan's Vicarage. It sports a gable and some ball-finials but is otherwise distinguished by the plain simplicity of its walls and the long, wooden-mullioned windows, projecting as bays on the ground floor. The neighbouring house is rather heavier owing to the use of stone mullions which are square in section. But it also was rendered white, although built a little earlier in 1898–9.⁶⁸ Like the redesign of *Brahan* in 1898, it looks as though the impact of Voysey's work was being felt, at least in some external features. Bedford's last house, *Headingly* at Cobham in Surrey represented this conversion far more completely, exhibiting the long rows of windows with thin glazing bars, those on the first floor placed close to the eaves, an overall use of white rendering, even for the

chimney stacks, and the planning of the principal rooms in a row facing south with a linking corridor and gallery to the entrance front — all characteristic of Voysey's work.⁶⁹ Even the green slates of *Brahan* and the current paintwork of Hepworth's house are features of *The Orchard* and other Voysey designs.⁷⁰ Given Sydney Kitson's movement from 'Queen Anne' to Neo-Georgian and his subsequent liking for the stripped-classical designs of William Curtis Green, one can appreciate the difference between the partners within an eclectic and versatile partnership.

4.5 The commercial work of the practice

Reference has already been made to the design of industrial buildings for the Bedfords' dyeworks and a certain amount of rented-property maintenance for Bedford's father and Herbert Denison, a relative of his mother, as well as B.R. Heaton in the vicinity of Clarendon Road. Work was also undertaken for J. Dixon Marshall at Cardigan Mills. *Kitsons of Leeds* had their own arrangement with the Chorley and Cannon practice, although some industrial work came in from J. Edward Schunk of Potternewton House whose parents were neighbours at *Gledhow Wood* and whose sister was married to Albert Kitson, a domestic client of the practice.⁷¹ Bedford had already obtained the commission to develop the premises of *J. Pullar and Son*. Within six months of Kitson entering the partnership, one finds the first reference to work for the Yorkshire Banking Co. Ltd. It was a Leeds bank with which the Kitsons had been closely associated over three generations. James I and James II Kitson were both directors and Albert Kitson was to become one after its merger with the London, City and Midland Bank at the turn of the century. The Yorkshire Bank had its head offices in Boar Lane and commissioned W.W. Gwyther to design its prominent rotunda in a grand Baroque manner at one of the corners of the new City Square in 1899.⁷² With a series of commissions as well as a maintenance contract outlasting both Bedford's and Kitson's active involvement in the practice, the Yorkshire and then the Midland Bank became one of its main stays.

The first branch banks designed for the practice could not have been more different
4.113 from each other and date from 1898 and 1899.⁷³ The first, built in local stone with
to Tudor gables and mullioned windows and a sharply carved Arts-and-Crafts floral and
4.116 heraldic panel, is situated at the north eastern corner of the broad market square of
Thirsk. One might assume it to have been designed to fit unobtrusively into the local
environment, as it would in Ilkley or Knaresborough, but it is actually the only stone
building in a square of sub-Georgian houses and rather imposing due to the small
scale of many of the latter. It is assumed it was designed by Francis Bedford because
of some similarity with the new gymnasium he had designed in 1895 for St Peter's
School in York which was intended to harmonise with the existing neo-Gothic
4.115 buildings of 1830.⁷⁴ The Hunslet branch was little more than a shop front with a

4.116 caretaker's flat above, but the ground facade of Ancaster stone is quite grand with a wide Baroque arch over the banking-hall window and a bullseye over the entrance.⁷⁵ Both buildings, like the houses of the practice, made use of r.s.j.'s which, over the driveway into the yard at Thirsk, are actually exposed.

During the partnership the expense accounts indicate that Sydney Kitson usually went to visit the sites of these banks outside Leeds and one may assume he was largely responsible for their design. Unfortunately few more were published and that at Keighley in any case postdates Bedford's departure. The practice carried out work
4.117 at York and Morley, designed new premises at Middlesborough, Scarborough, Ripon
4.118 in 1901, and Armley in 1910. At the end of 1901 came the first of a similar set of commissions for Lloyd's Bank, a branch in Saltaire, followed in 1904 by fitting out and structural alternations to their premises in Vicar Lane. The practice moved its offices into the chambers over the bank and remained in the building they designed to replace it behind Blomfield's facade when The Headrow was rebuilt after 1928. Commissions were also obtained from Martin's Bank of Liverpool. The period between 1900 and the outbreak of the Great War was a heyday in branch bank building and the Bedford and Kitson practice benefitted from the work.

At least three designs for banks, offices and shops were published in *The Architect* (photographs by Charles Pickard of Leeds) or *The Builder* (perspective drawings) during this period, all after Bedford's death and therefore to Sydney Kitson's design. They are so similar as to provide a conspectus of his approach to
4.124 commercial design. The first, of 1909, is a shop and offices for Thornton and Co. in
Brigate, Indian Rubber Manufacturers, which was subsequently extended to an
4.119 identical design. The second is a bank with office chambers for Colonel Somerville in
to Doncaster's High Street of 1912,⁷⁶ and the third, Lloyd's Bank at Keighley, of the
4.123 same period. Although the Leeds building is faced with Burmantofts faience and the others in stone, they are all of the same kind, curtain walls to a steel-framed structure. In August 1910 *The Builder* devoted its monthly review of engineering to another reinforced concrete and terra-cotta office building with illustrations of the building under construction and five engineering drawings. This was designed by Sydney Kitson for the Post Office in association with G.D. Martin and built in Infirmary Street beside the Yorkshire Penny Bank but has by now been demolished. It was a six storeyed building above the Cloth Hall Tavern, which was a Tetley's public house. The critical assessment is of interest:

Until an appropriate and pleasing architectural style has been evolved for reinforced concrete buildings the most suitable method of applying that material is to employ it in the form of a skeleton afterwards clothed by stone, brick or terra-cotta. This mode of treatment is well illustrated by the building described in the present article. The reinforced concrete construction throughout is in accordance with the Coignet system.⁷⁷

For all these street front buildings, Kitson designed balanced classical facades, the ground floor treated as a rusticated or a very simply pilastered base, with the employment of fluted, engaged Doric columns in the centre of the two floors above, i.e. a giant order supporting an entablature with a parapet above the cornice, the centre of which was emphasized by a substantial framed tablet. The regular groups of windows are treated as non-load bearing curtains in a variety of ways. In Keighley use is made of large rectangular keystones and fascias motifs, corresponding to the much more dramatic Mannerist designs adopted by Joass and Holden for the fenestration curtains in their taller London office blocks of 1905–1907.⁷⁸ The doors at either end of the street front led to the public banking hall and chambers above, respectively.

The second major commercial client that Sydney Kitson brought to the practice followed his marriage to Winifred, the elder daughter of Charles Tetley, Chairman of the Hunslet brewing firm of *Joshua Tetley and Son*. Although the stables designed by Kitson in 1909 have been preserved as the company's museum, most of the industrial premises have been demolished and rebuilt several times since his day. It seems that only one commission was published in the general architectural press, and that was a slight line perspective of new bottling stores for the Brewery, not unlike an eighteenth century country house stable block which, *The Builder* commented, 'shows how architectural character can be given to a building fulfilling simple practical requirements'.⁷⁹ One is reminded of Nikolaus Pevsner's distinction between buildings and architecture. After the Great War the many pubs emanating from the practice sporting Tetley's convivial huntsman trademark were in a Tudorbethan style used by other members of the practice. But Sydney Kitson was specifically brought
4.125 back from his practical retirement in 1926 to design the large neo-Georgian brick
4.126 roadhouse that replaced the *Queen's Arms* on the western side of the Harrogate
4.127 Road.⁸⁰ Significantly this was situated on the edge of Chapel Allerton, for which he
had designed so many of his neo-Georgian buildings before the war and the parish hall
4.128 which does not appear in the ledgers of the practice. In 1913–15 Kitson had also
designed a tall stone extension to his father-in-law's residence in Weetwood,
to *Foxhill*, and added dormers to Corson's mansion of 1862 framed by the squashed
4.130 Baroque, or Caroline, volutes that are a hall-mark of Kitson's designs.⁸¹

Lastly, the practice was at least twice involved with hotel design. The first, for a
4.131 consortium proposing a development at Filey, came to nothing. But the other,
4.132 originally projected as the Fountains Abbey Hotel, was executed as the Ripon Spa
Hydro Hotel in 1906. Situated on the Fountains Road out of Ripon, the hotel adjoins
the fearsome red terracotta swimming baths and public garden in which is
commemorated the first Marquess of Ripon (1827–1909), who was Viceroy of India
and first Chancellor of the University of Leeds. The residential wings of the hotel are
offset and fan out either side of the main reception rooms fronted by a loggia on both

sides.⁸² Once again the dormers of the central block bear Kitson's characteristic volutes.

4.6 The public commissions of the practice

Although the practice did not undertake much work for public agencies, what it did was both significant and substantial and the lack of design and other records is unfortunate. Since 1896 the practice had carried out work for the Blind Institute in Albion Street, and in 1899 they remodelled *Pease's Buildings* in East Parade for the Leeds Board of Overseers of the Poor Law.⁸³ This was a plain-fronted Italianate house that Kitson enobled by the use of stone dressings and a more elaborately Baroque treatment of the steps below and windows above the porticoed porch as an entity. Two years later they carried out the first of several works at *Carlton Barracks*, the headquarters of the 3rd Volunteer Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment in which E.K. Clark took such an active part. But these were either relatively small, or, like the extensions to Thorp's Medical School, and the amalgamation of two large villas in Hyde Terrace to create a Maternity Hospital, of little architectural significance. The practice carried out a lot of work for Leeds General Infirmary including the substantial King Edward VII memorial extension in 1920 when Kitson was much less active in the practice.

The three notable commissions were that from the City of Leeds Corporation in 1901 to design the *Dewsbury Road Police Station and Free Library*, the limited competition won in the same year to build the new *School of Art* for the Leeds Institute for Science, Art and Literature (originally the Mechanics' Institute that had done so much for James I Kitson); and the commission to build an even larger building for the *Leeds Public Dispensary* which was also won in a limited competition in 1902.

The Dewsbury road site, like those jointly serving similar public services in
4.133 Woodhouse and Chapeltown, is set on a corner. The extensive but relatively low
4.187 building is of red brick with stone dressings like the Clayton Halls and Vicarage of St Aidan's, a confident but not in any way flamboyant 'English Renaissance' building like the Bank in Morley. Because it has been gutted in the course of a major restoration, and was apparently unpublished, it requires further research to establish how it was originally planned and used.⁸⁴ The Police Station is now the District Probation Office but the Fire Station has been united with the Library, all the doors and main entrance
4.134 to which appear to have stained glass designed by George Walton who did other work for the practice. Fortunately the other two were published as 'current architecture' in consecutive volumes of the *Architectural Review* in 1904.

The *Leeds School of Art* was set up as a Government school of design in 1846 and in 1868 amalgamated with the classes arranged by the Mechanics Institute since 1824. As will become obvious in a subsequent chapter the headmasters, or directors,

often played a significant role in the artistic life of Leeds as critics or members of the Leeds Fine Arts Club. The new school was to be sited in a narrow side street and linked to both the Mechanics Institute and the Boys' Modern School, which had more imposing street frontages. Probably for this reason it was designed in a largely functionalist manner with the tall, north lit window wall of the studios treated like two adjacent pavilions with their metal structure left exposed to provide its own decorative emphasis. With the exception of the *Glasgow School of Art* for which C.R. Mackintosh won the competition in 1897, and more numerous warehouse and office blocks, this
4.135 seems to be one of very few large public or private buildings to adopt such a bold
to design at this time. The same lines are continued around the entrance front by the
4.138 dressed-stone string courses across the Accrington redbrick, some of which frame the mosaic panel by Professor Gerald Moira of the Royal College of Art.⁸⁶ Although a conventional design, even this made use of new material, Rust's Vitreous Mosaic, which was to provide an instructive precedent when the decoration of St Aidan's Church came to be reconsidered a few years later.⁸⁷ Unlike the Glasgow Art School, however, the interior at Leeds is quite unremarkable, with Doric columns supporting the r.s.j.'s in the entrance hall and undemonstrative railings around its narrow area outside.

When the *Leeds Public Dispensary*, founded in 1828, came to be rebuilt owing to a street improvement scheme, the decision was made to site it in the new development of North Street, now one of Leeds' few relatively intact Edwardian zones of light industrial factories and warehouses. Although its tallest frontage is to North Street, most of the long building runs up Hartley Hill and Brunswick Street. As a charitable health agency it had been resited near some of the poorest parts of Leeds, which had recently taken in many of the Jewish refugees from Russian pogroms. The opening ceremony was conducted by Sir Thomas Albutt, F.R.S., the Regius Professor of Physic at Cambridge.⁸⁸

4.139 The North Street front, which housed the administrative offices, board room and
to residential quarters is a substantial pile, a Neo-Baroque palazzo. One can perceive
4.144 elements which seem to have descended from prestigious London city buildings like Belcher's Institute of Chartered Accountants of 1893.⁸⁹ There are the corner quadrants, with their use of engaged columns in the upper storeys, and the pronounced use of horizontal rustication in the plinth as well as around some of the bays of columns. And the central bay is treated as an entity within gigantic rusticated pilasters, but with different forms of articulation at each storey — the sculpted overdoor, the oriel, windows framed with columns with, and without, rustication, and finally a recessed, segmental, broken pediment. But perhaps one should not look much further than the heavily illustrated books by Gotch and Blomfield on the architecture of the Renaissance in England, which justified Edwardian Baroque as an

essentially English style.⁹⁰ With its emphatically keyed windows and the contrast between the stone dressings and red-brick walls, one thinks of the sketches Sydney made at Hampton Court within a few months of joining E.J. May's practice.

- 4.141 In plan the design of the Public Dispensary was consistent with the functional ingenuity already observed in other buildings of the practice.⁹¹ The casualty department was entered close to the North Street access, but the outpatient's department, although on the floor above, could also be entered at street level further up the hill, through a boldly rusticated door topped by a curvaceous broken pediment
- 4.143 framing a delicately sculpted figure of Hygeia.⁹²

The design of these three buildings is quite consistent with *The Red House* in Chapel Allerton and *Redcourt* at Scarborough. One is tempted to see in them the hand of Sydney Kitson with his obvious interest in classical and English Baroque architecture. He was to become a friend of Gotch and wrote with some approval of Blomfield's Headrow proposals twenty year's later. But they may just as much represent how far Francis Bedford, like so many young as well as older architects of his generation, had come from the Anglo-Flemish precedents set by Ernest George. It was after all Bedford who set up practice in London after the success of these commissions had put the practice in the public eye and Sydney Kitson never obtained such significant public commissions in the decade of active practice still remaining to him before the outbreak of war, except for the two halls of residence for the Leeds City Training College in Beckett's Park.⁹³

But he did become a Fellow of the R.I.B.A. in 1906, and of the Society of Antiquaries the following year. And his esteem among local architects led to his election as President of the West Yorkshire Society of Architects in 1910–1912, when he also served on the R.I.B.A. Council in 1910. In 1911 he was co-opted onto the Art Gallery subcommittee of the City Council, joining R.H. Kitson who had been co-opted in 1903, and continued to serve on it until ill-health forced his resignation in 1934.⁹⁴

4.7 The decorative domestic and ecclesiastical work of the practice

It seems appropriate to consider the decorative work of the joint practice with Sydney Kitson's own later works because of the extent to which this involved remodelling existing buildings rather than designing *de novo*. Although Mallows used Kitson's praise of Bedford in this respect as a means for attributing virtually all the decorative work of the practice to the latter, this seems incredible. Whatever his skills Bedford was dead before some of the fine domestic work of the practice for which Kitson was responsible. Both men took a scholarly interest in architecture and were attentive students of what they observed. Kitson's sketchbooks up to the 1920s are full of architectural and decorative details with a view to their potential use. He

had a particular interest in John Carr and remodelled or restored several of his houses.⁹⁵ Bedford studied and published on the work of Baldassare Peruzzi (1481–1536) as well as ‘A plea for the use of colour in architecture’ for which his own buildings are perhaps notable in their richly colourful materials — quite a contrast to the grey moorland stone around Leeds.⁹⁶

The quality of Bedford’s decorative designs is apparent from his earliest interiors for R. Hebblethwaite at *Maryland House* in Headingley in 1894, *Arncliffe* and *Brahan*. His transformation of St James’s Church in 1898, now demolished but apparently a rather austere octagonal chapel, was acclaimed as a Neo-Georgian miracle.⁹⁸ The organ case, choir stalls, minister’s desk and ‘sanctuary’ of Headingley Hill Congregational Church of 1904 was in the kind of free-gothic adopted by Arts-and-Crafts designers.⁹⁹ This followed a design for an organ at Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Glasgow of 1902 that may have been associated with Rufus Pullar, because it figures immediately after an entry accounting for furniture designed for *Brahan*.

Sydney Kitson undertook little church work, and in his will he directed that he was to be cremated and his ashes scattered in the garden of his home at Kidlington. His work for his sister’s church, St Aidan’s, will be considered in Chapter 5, but his wooden font cover with its carved scenes in relief for the Norman Chapel at Adel in 1921 should be noted.¹⁰⁰ Kitson did design one complete church, St Wilfrid’s, to replace the temporary mission churches at the top of Harehills in St Aidan’s parish. He was commissioned to do so at Miss Ripley’s expense in 1906, but the lack of funds and then the advent of the war led to its postponement indefinitely. By the time enough had been collected to go ahead in 1927, Kitson seems to have had nothing to do with it and James Parish is credited with executing the design.¹⁰² Roger Shaw is convinced that both the purple-tinted brickwork, the gothic tracery and the overall design used was Kitson’s, but to reduce costs the roof may have been lowered by Pyman with the result that the clerestory windows have become dormers, and the Lady Chapel was left unbuilt.¹⁰³

The practice, which in these cases appears from internal evidence to have been Sydney Kitson, undertook a series of major remodellings of large houses which entailed extensive decorative schemes. Kitson’s first was for Thomas Hodgkin at *Barmoor Castle*, a Northumberland country house of 1801 by John Paterson of Edinburgh (d.1832) where he subsequently designed estate cottages. Work was undertaken for Henry Barran at *Shadwell Grange* from 1901–1903, and he extended his father-in-law’s house, *Foxhill* in Weetwood as already described.

A major commission of this kind was the alteration and other work undertaken for Miss Eyres, the heiress of a Leeds stuff manufacturing family who had inherited *Dumbleton Hall*, a Neo-Jacobean manor designed by G.S. Repton in 1830 near Evesham in Gloucestershire, which included some very large plastered and panelled

rooms.¹⁰⁴ Electricity was installed and cottages erected in 1903.¹⁰⁵ Works were also
4.153 undertaken in the church and the pulpit and seating renewed in 1905.¹⁰⁶ In 1903,
to *Scarcroft Grange*, on the Wetherby Road, was extensively remodelled for C.F. Ryder,
4.154 a Tetley connection.¹⁰⁷ And in 1908 Kitson published a large but rather poorly drawn
perspective of proposals to make substantial additions to *Wydale House* near
Pickering for H.H. Illingworth in 1905.¹⁰⁸

By 1910, he had the help of Charles Gascoyne to produce a distant view in
4.156 perspective of Hazelwood Castle, near Tadcaster, which he was altering and reducing
to for the Leeds solicitor, E.O. Simpson, in 1909–10.¹⁰⁹ The mediaeval chapel continued
4.159 in Roman Catholic use, but Kitson demolished the Jacobean wing to the level of a
garden arcade and restored Carr's great hall and south front to prominence with a
terrace and steps. Gothic lights revealed in the restoration were left exposed but the
installation of continental panelling and fireplaces as well as modern redecoration have
radically altered much of the interior since Kitson's work. However the dining room
has a buffet and fireplace familiar from *The Red House* in Gledhow Lane. At a similar
once Roman Catholic family home, Brandsby Hall, similar work was undertaken for
R.S. Pearson in 1914–19.

Owing to the absence of specific dates in the letter book it is not clear whether
Kitson embarked on major internal alterations of Gledhow Hall and No.3 Cadogan
Place for the first Lord Airedale, in his final year of life, or for his son and heir, when he
inherited them. Sydney had only received small commissions for designing the motor
house and lodges at Gledhow before, whereas Albert Kitson had been his client at
4.160 *Cober Hill*. Whichever the client, he redecorated the morning and dining rooms, the
to latter with dark panelling also used in the library on the first floor, which was fitted
with a Corinthian pilastered doorcase and carving of the Kitson's arms. A year later
4.163 and certainly for the second Lord Airedale, he remodelled the dark hallway in the
centre of the house by opening it through to the garden front, using Doric columns to
4.164 support the beam between them.¹¹⁰ Similar designs for panelling were executed at
to No.3 Cadogan Square in 1910, which the first Lord Airedale had only bought a few
years before, and indicate both the quality of Sydney Kitson's own decorative designs
4.171 and those of the craftsmen employed to realise them.¹¹¹

4.8 The office of the practice and Sydney Kitson's later work for the R.I.B.A.

The first offices of the practice were in East Parade. They were subsequently
4.188 moved to chambers in Greek Street and in 1908 to chambers over Lloyd's Bank in
Vicar Lane, which was extensively altered and extended in that year. Although there
are few written reminiscences of the practice, the cash books and ledgers give an
indication of its scale from 1901. Both Bedford and Kitson were drawing an income of

about £1200 annually and employing a draughtsman and/or clerk of works on their larger residential site developments and public works.

In 1901 the practice admitted Martin Shaw Briggs (1882–1977) as a pupil and he served his time until 1904, during which he spent 2½ days a week at the Leeds School of Art, studying antique and life drawing. His fees of £25 *per annum* were paid by his father, the Revd. G.S. Briggs. In 1904, after overseeing some of the work underway at Dumbleton, Briggs left for London with Thorp and Proctor¹¹² and, on the introduction from Bedford, was taken on as a junior assistant by George and Yeates. Although only receiving 35/- a week despite having already passed his R.I.B.A. final exams, even this only lasted about three months because ‘some terrific commission for a titled client fell through’.¹¹³ Briggs then set off on the tour to Calabria and Lecce which led to the rediscovery of the ornate local Baroque architecture upon which he based his first book.¹¹⁴

After Bedford’s departure, Kitson reduced the scale of the office by half but from 1909 the work increased and he employed Charles Gascoyne to draw the perspective for the Doncaster bank and offices that was published in *The Builder* and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1912.¹¹⁵ Gascoyne was as gifted a draughtsman as Francis Bedford, and also won the R.I.B.A.’s Owen Jones travelling studentship. He and his
4.172 partner, George Nott, entered several architectural competitions, in 1913 winning the
second prize for their Harrogate Elementary School Design, for which Kitson was the
assessor¹¹⁶, as well as for a hostel at Exeter.¹¹⁷ In 1915 their design was among the
4.181 ten finalists for the Board of Trade Offices in London, which Vincent Harris won.¹¹⁸

4.173 Gascoyne became a close friend of the family and joined them on holiday at
to Harlech in 1913, where he sketched the view of the castle from *Llysbach*, the holiday
4.180 house Sydney had designed for his sister, Eva, and Arthur Swayne in 1911. To the
girls Gascoyne was ‘Uncle Gaslight’ and he painted their dolls and teddybears as well
as both their portraits and one of their father, to whom he may have seemed like the
son he longed for. It was therefore a bitter blow when Captain Gascoyne died of
wounds as a prisoner of war in Germany late in 1917 at the age of 26.¹¹⁹

4.182 Kitson had himself volunteered for the tenth Yorkshire Hussars — he was a keen
rider to hounds — and as a major spent most of the war as an Assistant-Provost
Marshal at various camps in England until he went to France to help organize the
transport in 1918.¹²⁰ The practice was effectively left in the hands of an assistant
unfit for the armed services, James Parish, with whom a partnership agreement was
drawn up in June, 1915.¹²¹ Work did not pick up until after the war when William A.
Ledgard became a partner in 1920 and Noel Pyman was taken on as pupil, or articled
clerk, in 1922, becoming a partner in 1929.¹²² They took the practice through the
heyday of its Tetley years.

Kitson had moved with his family to several places during his war service and they settled in Boston Spa after his demobilization in 1919 until they moved to No.40 Ladbroke Square in the summer of 1923. With such an expansion in the practice staff and most of the work being in Leeds and unpublished, it is impossible to attribute many commissions to individual partners.¹²³ Given the knowledge that Kitson was involved in relatively few of them, a resumé of only these will be provided. However it should not be supposed that, as Kitson effectively retired from practice, he ceased to benefit from it financially. He was the senior partner and, although his share of the profits was more than halved to that of a junior partner after he left for London in 1923, he received an annual share of between £500 and £1,400 every year until at least 1931.¹²⁴ It is also apparent that Kitson was scrupulously professional in his dealings with clients. Even the smallest works carried out for his relatives were charged for and put through the books of the practice.¹²⁵

In addition to the maintenance of several of their homes, and the design of items of furniture, Kitson also saw to the design and erection of their tombs and gravestones, the metalwork for which was sometimes obtained from Birmingham

3.21 Guild. The most notable were first Lord Airedale's bronze and granite memorial in St
4.184 John's churchyard at Roundhay and the supervision of the new east window for Mill Hill Chapel, both of 1911-12. The window consists of eighteen lights designed

to suggest that the religion of the English race from the first adoption of Christianity to the present time is a connected whole. The most advanced and the most conservative of present day Christians alike trace back their descent to forefathers who were won from heathenism by the preaching of the Roman missionaries.¹²⁶

It completes the series of commemorative windows which includes one to Lord
4.183 Airedale's mother, Anne (née Newton) (1806-1865), with lights of virtuous biblical women by William Morris and Ford Madox Brown.

Sydney Kitson designed several grave monuments to members of the Tetley
4.185 family, the last, at Lawnswood Cemetery on the Otley Road, in 1925 for his mother-in-law, and subsequently his own wife and her father, as well as the dedication plaques for the organ case at St Michael's, Headingley in 1913. The years after the
4.187 Great War brought a sequence of war memorial designs for several of the churches with which his previous clients were associated as well as more substantial monuments for local district committees, such as the one in the historic Skyrack centre
4.186 of Headingley, with bronze mounts, and a smaller version in stone alone outside St Peter's, Hunslet.

But he seems to have set his sights on the sort of professional practice represented by the commission, in 1922-23, to remodel and decorate the interior of Goldsborough Hall, for the newly married Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles, whose appreciative letters he kept to the end of his life.¹²⁷ In May 1923 Sydney and

his family removed to Ladrooke Square and his architectural career in Leeds came to an effective end, with the documented exceptions of the large set of book and record cases designed for the Yorkshire Archaeological Society in 1925–26, the *Queen's Arms* at Chapeltown for *Joshua Tetley and Son* in 1926–27, and the restoration of the stone-lettered balustrade topping Temple Newsam and the clearance of its forecourt etc, which will be referred to in Chapter 9.

In fact this move did not result in the professional developments he had hoped for, primarily owing to the first of a series of severe haemorrhages due to tuberculosis contracted during the war. Instead, during his convalescence, his daughters aided by Robert Kitson caught his interest in the watercolourist John Sell Cotman, which forms the subject of Chapter 10. Sydney did, however, recover sufficiently to provide a final and substantial contribution to his profession as the Honorary Secretary of the R.I.B.A. from 1928–1934, after serving on several of its committees.

From the *Cotmania* journals that form the main source of Chapter 10 and some of his obituaries, one can see why architects with busy practices should have relied on this congenial, considerate and witty fellow to present the public face of the profession at the many dinners, meetings and conferences of local architectural associations as well as those of the Institute itself. Fred May's caricatures of the latter are full of Sydney's old friends. His initial term ran through the Presidencies of Sir Banister Fletcher and Sir Raymond Unwin.¹²⁸ But he was asked to stay on to see Sir Giles Gilbert Scott into his first year before retiring owing to a marked deterioration in his health in 1934 after which he began to write *The Life of John Sell Cotman*.

In 1924 Sydney had written on the new style emerging in contemporary architecture and he came back to the subject in several later addresses. He was well aware of the impact that new materials must make but his idea of this was really the stripped classicism of his friend William Curtis Green (1875–1966), whose Dorchester Hotel won his admiration.¹²⁹ H.M. Fletcher had become President of the A.A. in 1917 and was closely concerned in architectural education. Sydney examined for the R.I.B.A.¹³⁰ and, when Fletcher was Vice-President they attended local meetings together. In 1931 Sydney spoke about the *Registration Bill* at the annual dinner of the West Yorkshire Society of Architects in Leeds, proposing in his toast that local authorities should provide opportunities for newly qualified young men and clean up the cities. In his reply the Lord Mayor instanced the new City Hall and extension of the University.¹³¹

In 1930 the Institute's annual conference was in Norwich and Sydney guided members around Russell Colman's collection of Cotman's watercolours at *Crown Point*, and at Cambridge in 1933 the annual dinner was held in the hall of his old college, Trinity. Fletcher spoke and the President praised Sydney's contribution to

the Institute.¹³² He had been a diplomatic force during the heated debates leading up to the *Registration Act* of 1931¹³³ and in 1933 supported the Secretary, Sir Ian Macalister, in the libel action brought against the officers of the R.I.B.A. by Sir Edwin Lutyens and his new joint society with surveyors.¹³⁴ Sydney had retired just before the centenary year of the R.I.B.A. in 1934 to be succeeded by Harry Fletcher when the Institute moved to its new headquarters in Portland Place. He had been disappointed with the results of the competition but was pleased with the final building and happily photographed with Kenneth Clark and Sir Augustus Daniel, the new and outgoing
4.190 Directors of the National Gallery.¹³⁵

Sydney took a great interest in the collections deposited in the R.I.B.A. library and helped to get them into some order.¹³⁶ He also contributed substantially to them, giving a drawing by C.L. Clerisseau (1722–1826) of the *Porta Aurea*, Spalato in 1929 and a drawing by Robert Adam (1728–1792) in 1932, both associated with his interest in early Hellenic travellers, which were followed by a Mezzotint of Carr of York in 1933, and William Alexander's drawing of *The Chancel of Conway Church, 1813* in 1935. Some 150 letters by Sir William Chambers, the first treasurer of the R.A. and one of England's official architects¹³⁷ were bought and presented in 1933. When E.H. New, 'The New Loggan', had died in 1931, Sydney bought a general view of *Oxford from Hinksy Hill* to present with another of his drawings in commemoration. It was fitting that the council of the R.I.B.A. marked their appreciation of Sydney's services by filling a major gap in his Cotman collection with *No. 815 a Sketching Club Sepia c.1803*. In return the library were bequeathed the best of his architectural drawings by John Sell Cotman, often indicating how these buildings had looked before the greatest luminaries of the Institute got their hands on them.¹³⁹

4.9 A concise assessment of the *Bedford and Kitson* practice

The output of the practice has at least six characteristics. First, there is the translation to Leeds and Harrogate of a robust and lively form of Home-Counties vernacular house design — tile-hung jetties with stone below, half-timbered gables and small-paned casements. Colourful outside, panelled and with decorative plaster and metalwork within, they made free use of possible plans and, in particular, an ingenious way of linking dissimilar semi-detached residences.

A second and contrasting feature was the use of red-brick with stone dressings and the tall sash-windows characteristic of light, spacious 'Queen Anne' houses. With the turn of the century the style of design was transformed into the use of the heavier, more opulent, balanced fronts of the 'Wrenaissance' or Edwardian Baroque, which was generally used for the larger private and public buildings from the practice and could be seen as a third though later feature.

A fourth characteristic was the occasional use of materials in often almost decorative ways, such as rolled-steel joists, materials long since used for industrial buildings. It was the structural use of such material that made the free plans possible. But it was only in the *School of Art* that such materials were used demonstratively. In their banks and offices, use might be made of one of the patent reinforced concrete frameworks available at the time, but they were clad in classical screens of tiles and faience, brick or stone. One should add, however, that the practice is notable for its use of a wide range of traditional materials which gives variety, colour and different forms of emphasis to the buildings. Even the use of new materials for mosaic work is consistent with this.

A fifth characteristic was the careful attention paid to the functions of the buildings in their design. The inventive plans are an indication of this. But so is the use of durable as well as attractive materials which have stood the test of a century of domestic or public use. Attention to detail is as apparent as the comfortable spaciousness of the Bedford and Kitson designs. And the decorative unity of their interior designs exemplifies the sixth feature of their work, although much less of this remains in the redecorated and altered interiors of most of the buildings today. Their houses stand with the best of the smaller houses of their day, catering for affluent and discriminating families of taste.

Much more could be added on the contribution of the partners to their professional and other associations in Leeds to which some reference has been made as well as to their published work. Sydney Kitson's honorary work for the R.I.B.A. concludes this chapter but much more will be presented in Chapters 8 and 9 on his association with Robert Kitson on the Leeds City Art Gallery's sub-committee and in Chapter 10 on his quest for Cotman.

Chapter 5 Frank Brangwyn and R.H. Kitson: artistic friendship fulfilled by fruitful patronage¹

5.1 C.A. Hunt, R.H. Kitson and Frank Brangwyn in the London art world of the '90s

When Robert Kitson and his close friend Cecil Hunt came down from Trinity in 1896, they settled in precisely that part of London's art world that had been most affected by the aftermath of Oscar Wilde's trial and conviction under Labouchere's amendment to the *Criminal Law* of 1889. Kitson may have worked for the family firm in Leeds and he was soon elected to the Leeds Fine Arts Club as an artist member.² But by at least 1899, his sister's diary indicates that he was already spending at least the winter in Venice and the Bay of Naples owing to an attack of rheumatic fever and medical advice to seek a warmer climate. When in London, it is most likely that he

5.1 lodged with Cecil Hunt, whose apartment in 2 Ryder Street was in a new block incorporating art galleries on its ground floor, including the *Carfax Gallery* that was

5.2 founded by William Rothenstein and a group of New English Art Club members, and subsequently managed until 1908 by Robert Ross, Wilde's devoted friend and protector after his conviction.³

Cecil Hunt, to whom Rothenstein briefly refers, must act as a surrogate for lack of information on Robert Kitson other than his participation in some of the sports, like tennis and even golf of which Hunt was a talented organizer. Born in 1873, he was at Winchester with Lord Alfred Douglas (1870–1945) some of whose published poetry he later stuck into his scrapbook with a press-photo of the author. He read classics at Trinity and wanted to become an artist like Kitson, although neither of them had had any formal art school training. But Hunt's father insisted on him obtaining a professional qualification.

Arthur Roope Hunt (1843–1914) had a legal training himself, but lived the life of a cultured gentleman in Torquay after arranging advantageous terms for relinquishing his interest in the family Port wine business of Hunt, Roope and Teague.⁴ He achieved renown as an amateur geologist and was one of those instrumental in the excavation of Well's Cave and the foundation of the Torquay Museum and Natural History Society, a Ruskinian gothic building with a programme and collection like that of its Leeds counterpart. Hunt's father bought the Dartmoor farm, *Foxworthy*, in order for the children to grow up somewhere less crowded than Torquay, and he had a small yacht in which they cruised along the coast of the west country.

Both Cecil and his sister, Muriel, had an artistic proficiency and, although she died relatively young, she had held exhibitions of her pictures of cats, one of which was

acquired by the Princess of Wales, the future Queen Mary.⁵ Hunt studied for the Bar to which he was called in 1899,⁶ and continued to practise until the Great War, when he served as a special constable guarding Buckingham Palace and was enlisted in the Home Office in 1916 to work on Irish matters after the Easter Rising as well as the Committee on the Employment of Conscientious Objectors until 1919.

Throughout this period he continued to paint and exhibit his work, to write reviews of art exhibitions, such as one for *The Pilot* on the Royal Academy of 1901, and until at least 1900 to publish his poetry. His scrapbooks indicate that he first exhibited at The Alpine Club in 1900, selling four of the six pictures. A year later the *Ryder Gallery* at 10 Ryder Street, for which the ex-secretary of the *Carfax Gallery* then worked, mounted a joint exhibition of Hunt's work with that of Eldred Bruce, the son of his future brother-in-law. This won Hunt some praise from the critics. His first exhibited oil painting, other than at the Alpine Club, was accepted by the Society of Oil Painters in 1902, a study of Roundhay Woods at night, painted after a visit to Robert Kitson, who had just paid two guineas for his first watercolour by Hunt, *Portresina*.⁷

5.3 Cecil Hunt was a handsome young man about town well-connected by family and education and much in demand at the dinner tables of his hostesses. One may presume that Robert Kitson was a welcome guest to accompany him when he was in
5.4 town. In May 1903, Hunt married Phyllis Lucas, at St Alban's, Streatham Park, with Kitson as his best man and the latter became godfather to their first son, Esmond, in 1907. Although her father, a London solicitor, has just died after the loss of her brother in the Somalian Campaign, her sisters had all married imperial proconsuls with the exception of one who married the publisher, George MacMillan.⁸ Alfred East, A.R.A. and his wife were among the wedding guests and their Christmas card that year consisted of two signed etchings, one delineating French poplars very like East's later painting for Kitson's dining room.

5.5 In November 1903 Hunt received his first preserved letter from Frank Brangwyn who offered to make him two prints and hoped to etch *Chateau Gaillard* in Normandy. Five months before Brangwyn had written to Kitson to inform him that the oil painting
5.7 of *Leeks* that he had bought was back from exhibition in Exeter with his chosen frame damaged but he asked for a further loan for an exhibition of Brangwyn's work in Amsterdam. He was planning a sketching visit to Barnard Castle with Kitson in the autumn and thanked his sister for a 'bit of carpet' she had made up for some unspecified use.¹⁰

Although it is obvious that the two friends had close links with the artist in 1903 when and how they first encountered him and his work is uncertain. Alfred East (1844–1913) seems the most likely connection. He had gone sketching with
5.6 Brangwyn in Spain before he married in 1896 and in 1902 had bought his oil of *The*

Cider Press, which marked a turning point in Brangwyn's artistic career.¹¹ He also visited Elmet Hall for the first of several times in the autumn of 1903. Alfred East came from a similarly successful manufacturing family as Kitson, in his case boot and shoe making in Kettering. He travelled for the firm but had also taken the opportunity of studying art in Paris and the *plein air* work of the Barbizon painters. He carried his commercial acumen into his business as an artist and became widely known abroad where he furthered the cause and raised the profile of British art. In 1899 he was sent by the *Fine Art Society* on a painting tour of Japan, in which he accompanied Arthur Lazenby of *Liberty's*, and like Mortimer Menpes, produced many small watercolours to fuel the orientalist enthusiasm. Elected to the Royal Academy in 1899, he was knighted in 1910 for his services to British Art at the Venetian biennial international exhibitions and those in St Louis and elsewhere, becoming an R.A. in 1913, just before his death from cancer.¹² His championship of Brangwyn culminated in sponsoring his election as an A.R.A. in 1904 with the support of the sculptor Sir George Frampton, whose *Victoria Memorial* had recently been unveiled at Leeds.

Brangwyn could not have been more different from East in temperament, being shy but artistically precocious. Eagerly assisting his father's precarious living as an architectural draughtsman and decorator, he dropped out of education at Westminster School, but was picked up by Arthur Mackmurdo, the innovative but not prolific architect and designer who founded the Century Guild and other ventures in the Arts and Crafts movement. Not only William Morris (1834–1896), but later Selwyn Image (1849–1930), found work for Brangwyn to do copying designs from the South Kensington Museum and other sources in 1887–1889.¹³ In Chelsea he shared a studio with Herbert Horne, later a renowned Florentine collector, and adjacent to Jacob Hood (1857–1939), Frank Short (1857–1945), and William Llewellyn (1860–1941) a subsequent P.R.A., as well as near to J.J. Shannon (1862–1923) and the sculptor Stirling Lee (1856–1916), soon to be a close friend of Cecil Hunt. Although, like Kitson and Hunt, keen on dressing up as a young man and in demand for his impersonations, he was socially ill at ease in gracious and opulent 'society' and fled such situations when they arose throughout his life. Gentlemen and women who dabbled in the arts were not his sort, which makes his rapport with Kitson of some note. Brangwyn clearly regarded him as serious about art and in the future a considerate patron.

5.9 Brangwyn was, however, enterprising in both seeking the means of gaining artistic experience from travel and the observation of other artists at work, and, from 1904, obtained a flood of decorative commissions, the extent of which stretched his organizational capacity beyond its limit and sapped his physical strength.¹⁴ His coastal voyages to Falmouth and Mevagissey were followed by others along the North African coast to Istanbul and the Black Sea and in 1891 he went with the

Scottish colourist, Arthur Melville (1858–1904), to Spain, revolutionizing his palette to the delight of continental critics and academies but to the detriment of his reputation in parts of the English artistic press.¹⁵

From 1888 Brangwyn had paintings accepted by the Royal Academy and also exhibited at the Institute of Oil Painters, the New English Art Club, founded in 1886, the Grosvenor Gallery, and the Society of British Artists, which Whistler graced for a while before his departure in high dudgeon.¹⁶ The trip to Spain was written up in the first two issues of *The Studio* as 'Spain as a sketching ground'. When the Chelsea Arts Club was founded, Stirling Lee became the first president. Clausen, Whistler and Brangwyn were founder members. The latter then spent five months in South Africa and Madeira on an advance from the Bond Street gallery owner, Larkin,¹⁷ followed by a sketching tour of Tangier and Morocco with Dudley Hardy which was more irksome because the towns were fortified places and therefore out of bounds to draughtsmen.

In London Brangwyn became friendly with Phil May, the graphic artist from Leeds, whose life was being destroyed by bonhomie and booze. In 1895 his despairing wife invited Brangwyn to join them in Picardy in the hope of getting her husband back to serious art work. But the attempt failed and Brangwyn got little work done to cover his expenses. May died in 1903 aged only thirty nine and Leeds City Art Gallery was the ultimate beneficiary of his memorial exhibition.¹⁸

5.11 Brangwyn, however, returned to France where he had been commissioned by Siegfried Bing (1838–1905) to decorate the exterior of *La Maison de l'Art Nouveau*, his new Parisian gallery in the Rue de Provence. He designed both the frieze and stencilled patterns for the corner facade and two murals with some stained-glass panels made by *Tiffany's* of New York for the interior. It was Brangwyn's first major
5.10 decorative commission, his reputation based on the triumphant showing of *The Buccaneers* at the Paris Salon in 1893 following the grudging reception of its blazing colours at the *Grafton Gallery* by several London critics.¹⁹ He was then aged twenty eight and in the following year married Lucy Ray, a nurse, settling at *Temple Lodge* in Hammersmith in 1900.

An artist of the nineties, Brangwyn's work is so different from the exquisite but ephemeral work of Charles Conder, the studied sensuality of Aubrey Beardsley's graphics and blandly passive drawings and paintings of William Rothenstein, that it is difficult to envisage the same, small, artistically sensitive world within which they all moved and the extent to which their work appealed to the same patrons. Sickert and the Beggarstaff brothers, William Nicholson and James Pryde are a different matter, with whose work Brangwyn's art seems to have had more in common. Robert Kitson was to share some of their common traits of bold draughtsmanship, strong colour and a well defined composition. But Brangwyn was usually more exuberant and even

voluptuous, with the Venetian painters and Rubens in his eye. His disapproval of Sickert's style and subjects are discussed in section 57.

Brangwyn first visited Venice in 1896, in connection with a mural decoration but his reputation for decorative work over the next five years was made in London. His first opportunity came in 1899 when the President of the Shipping Federation, Thomas Lane Devitt, offered to commission Brangwyn to paint one of the series being painted for the lunettes of the Royal Exchange.²⁰ The next summer he was commissioned by E.J. Davis (later Sir Edmund) and his wife to decorate their bedroom and music room at 11 Lansdowne Road in Kensington. This couple were not only collectors of contemporary British art, a selection of which they gave to the Luxembourg in Paris during the Great War after the Tate had turned it down. They also supported artists, in particular Charles Ricketts (1866–1931) and Charles Shannon (1863–1937) who were accommodated in a purpose-built block of studio-flats in Lansdowne Road, and Charles Conder (1869–1969) who decorated another bedroom at No.11 in his evocation of French Rococo. Mrs Davis was herself an artist and her musical evenings entertained a similar society to those invited by Mrs Stirling Lee and Phyllis Hunt to their homes in Chelsea a few years later.²¹

5.13 Brangwyn may have painted only the frieze of the music room but the bedroom
to 5.15 was designed in its entirety, furniture, panelling, the frieze, a silver table-lamp and the
dressing-table set.²² Although he adopted a neo-Renaissance design for the silver
mounts of the hairbrushes etc., the furniture and panelling were executed in
unembellished cherrywood with an emphasis on the main vertical or horizontal lines of
the object designed. Stylised flat floral panels in marquetry were let into the cupboard
doors and table tops and the frieze consisted of loosely draped ephebes in muted
tones tossing flowers before a broadly blocked-in landscape. Brangwyn must have
executed this commission much faster than his larger decorative murals because they
were completed in time to be photographed *in situ* in 1899 and were also used for the
special number of *The Studio* in 1901.²³ The relative severity of his designs is in tune
with some contemporary work of the arts and crafts movement, but his decorative
motifs and painting have closer affinity with the continental *l'art nouveau*. He joined
the Viennese Secession at its inception in 1897, and in 1913 was enrolled as a
member of the Royal Academy of Art in Berlin.²⁴

5.59 In 1901 Brangwyn embarked on his next, and much larger, decorative commission
to paint a series of ten historical murals and ultimately three allegories for the Hall of
the Skinners' Company. It was planned for completion in 1907 but took several years
more.²⁵ T.L. Devitt had recently been a master of the company and was again the
instigator of a project for Brangwyn. But the artist became the victim of his own
success and collapsed with exhaustion in 1908. His time with Robert Kitson was
therefore to be something of a relief. But he had accepted his commission while busy

running a sketching school in Belgium. They were already in close touch over the interior design of the British pavilion at the Venetian International Exhibition of 1905 which had been awarded to Brangwyn, whose work was also then a strong influence on Cecil Hunt.

During this first decade of the century, Hunt's artistic work was critically well received. In 1904–1905 he was invited to lend the same picture for exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, the Cartwright Hall in Bradford and Manchester Art Gallery. He himself reviewed an exhibition of 'Irish painters at the Guildhall' for *The Weekly Survey* for which he also wrote on the work of Conder, the two Shannons and William Rothenstein. In 1906 Leeds City Art Gallery asked to borrow *The Monastery, Assisi* which had been on exhibition at Liverpool,²⁶ and the author Eden Phillpotts, another Brangwyn patron, bought two of Hunt's oil paintings and commissioned a third, of *Dartmoor*. In 1907 a review of his next exhibition at the *Ryder Gallery* saw the origins of his style of painting in the *plein air* school, and specifically the work of de Wint, Alfred East and Albert Goodwin (1845–1932). Schiff's criticism of Brangwyn's influence is discussed in Section 5.7.

5.16 With his friend the architect Ralph Knott (1878–1929), Hunt attended Brangwyn's London School of Art in its first year in order to learn to etch. Brangwyn offered to do the biting of his plates and at least four were completed by 1912, two of the *Bay of Naples* and two of the *Alcantara Bridge* near Taormina, which he had sketched on a visit to Kitson in the year before.²⁷ John Wright, A.R.E. (1894–1929) had been staying in Taormina and may have added to Hunt's and Kitson's interest in etching. On returning to England, Wright borrowed Hunt's studio in order to complete his etchings for exhibition at the Baillie Gallery in 1913 and he subsequently exhibited at Leeds.²⁸

Hunt also corresponded with Alfred East about appropriate modes of framing. It was East who proposed him for membership of the Alpine Club in 1908, to which was added membership of the Athenaeum in 1909, with Lord Rayleigh and Hunt's father as sponsors. In the same year he co-edited a book with Randall Davies, the water-colour connoisseur,²⁹ and his portrait drawing by George Lambert was exhibited at the Modern Society of Portrait Painters. In 1907 Stirling Lee exhibited his marble relief of Mrs Hunt at the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, and wrote to thank Hunt for drafting a model form of agreement for sculptural commissions for the recently founded Society of British Sculptors of which he was secretary.³⁰ A year later Ralph Knott, who had worked in Sir Aston Webb's office, entered and won the competition for designing County Hall for the L.C.C.³¹ So he had just achieved
5.17 fame when he designed the Hunt's Chelsea home, *Mallord House*, in The Vale, in 1911.³² This was to be their London home and Hunt's studio almost until he died and a *pied a terre* for Robert Kitson on his annual visits from Sicily.

5.2 Kitson, East, Brangwyn and the Venetian exhibitions

Kitson was already spending long periods in Italy by 1899, sketching in Venice and the Bay of Naples. Brangwyn did not know the city well but East did and was a member of the international committee of the Venetian Exhibition founded by Professor Antonio Fradeletto, the standing deputy elected to Italy's House of Representatives. Probably on East's advice, Brangwyn was twice commissioned to design the interior and execute the murals for the British pavilion and in 1909 served on the Appeal Committee with George Frampton, T.C. Devitt and others to raise the £3000 needed to make the Fine Art Pavilion a permanent British exhibition gallery at what is now established as the Venetian *Biennale*.³³

In 1905 Brangwyn designed the whole composition with long settles with sculpture soles in the centre, pilastered walls for the pictures and a frieze to accommodate the four panels he painted himself. In depicting *Potters, Blacksmiths, Excavators* and *Steelworkers*, the artist had great scope for depicting muscular masculinity expressive of the dignity of labour – a parallel to the sculpture of Hamo Thorneycroft.³⁴ In November 1904 he wrote to ask Kitson, who had painted a watercolour of a blast furnace, if he could obtain some photographs of such a subject for him, as well as of a punching machine or steel rolling table.³⁵ A steel rolling mill became the subject of *Steelworkers* with the rest in the background. The smoking chimneys and potbanks with one of the workers also figured in the bookplate that Brangwyn designed for Kitson in 1905. In April he asked Kitson to smooth out some contretemps with Fradeletto about potted plants in the pavilion and to obtain a candle he needed for a picture. By May 1905, he seems to have arranged for Kitson to obtain seats for the pavilion, which Brangwyn was not planning to visit until the autumn.³⁶

Having been awarded a gold medal for his work by the delighted Exhibition Committee, Brangwyn hoped that Venice would buy them. Back in January he was expecting a visit from the Leeds clothier, Samuel Wilson (1851–1918) and in a further but undated letter refers to the sum of £400 agreed for painting an additional panel of *Spinners* to hang over the door across the end of the gallery at Leeds which was to take the Venetian panels at Wilson's expense. However by the beginning of October, when the exhibition was due to close, the future of the frieze lay undecided. Although it is clear that Kitson was instrumental in stitching up this arrangement it is less obvious how Mark Senior, who advised Wilson on his acquisitions, may have been involved. Wilson's bequest to Leeds City Art Gallery included works by Brangwyn painted as early as 1901 and the artist had hopes of a decorative commission for *Rutland Lodge* at Potternewton. But the latter ultimately went to (Sir) Alfred Gilbert for the remarkable symbolist fireplace now in the Wilson Room of Leeds City Art Gallery.³⁷

Brangwyn got a lot more out of his Venetian visits. He embarked on a series of enormous etchings, usually on zinc, taking advantage of 'foul biting' to deepen the tone and fill the spaces he found so difficult to leave alone. The wide angle of his vision and the use of architectural subjects to more than fill the image is reminiscent of Piranesi, and the use of lively and sometimes diminutive figures strengthens the parallel. His etching of the *Salute through the rigging* won the Grand Prix in Milan in 1906 and at the next Venetian Exhibition in 1907. Leeds City Art Gallery bought *A Venetian Funeral* in 1906. And in 1909 he won the gold medal at the Viennese Secession for his etching of *The Bridge of Sighs*, the composition of which was assisted by photographs Robert Kitson took at Brangwyn's precise specification.³⁸ In 1907, when he painted the second frieze for the British pavilion, he intended to portray Venetian subjects but, after completing two, was asked to revert to British subjects by the local committee.³⁹

Kitson was unable to help because he had only just moved into *Casa Cuseni* and had his mother out to stay with her companion. But he had just bought Brangwyn's large oil *The Rajah's Birthday*. The artist promised him 'The elephant picture' in a letter of 1905/6, and in another of 1907/8 told him of three other offers for it. Even when finished Kitson and Leeds were to see little of it for several years due to its demand for exhibitions in Spain, the Royal Academy, and in 1911 for the British pavilion that Lutyens had designed for the International Exhibition in Rome.⁴⁰ The picture is all about pageantry and colour, to which the person (as opposed to the anniversary) of the Rajah is almost incidental. Blazing with reds and yellow it uncannily depicts just what Kitson was himself to witness, sketch and exhibit in *The Golden Cart, Madura* on his visit to South India in 1924.⁴¹ Brangwyn had, by contrast, never seen anything like it beyond the Indian miniatures he collected. But he had a vivid imagination and the Venetian school of painters to draw from.

5.3 The verge for the new University of Leeds and the christening caskets for Kitson's godchildren

Reference has been made in previous chapters to the Yorkshire College, and the Kitsons' involvement in its fund raising and departmental committees, in company with several clients of the Bedford and Kitson architectural practice who were governors and office holders. As the Victoria University, Leeds was united in a federation with the colleges at Manchester and Liverpool from 1887 but, when this broke up in 1903, it was relaunched with its own charter as the University of Leeds. The foundation was financially supported by several Yorkshire County Boroughs, especially those of the West Riding, and several London livery companies, initially the Clothworkers and then the Skinners and Drapers. T.C. Devitt was one of the

Skinner's representatives on the Council. Sir John Barran (d.1905) was one of the few subscribing Leeds clothiers apart from the Nusseys, who were woollen manufacturers.

After his father's death in 1899, Robert Kitson stepped into his shoes as a subscribing governor and life-governor and then offered to present the new university with its verge. Brangwyn, by then well known to both Kitson and Devitt, was commissioned by the former to design and make it. In February 1905, he promised to send Kitson 'a drawing for the wand' next time he wrote but, as with many commissions, it was not a simple task.⁴² 'I have tried many people to make it but all have said they could not undertake it. So it is now being done by my man under my own eye. It will be, I think, to your liking, but will not be finished until near Xmas. There is so much work in it – more than I thought', he wrote in October 1903.⁴³ But in 1908 several modifications had still to be made to the design, presumably for casting purposes, and Brangwyn sent Kitson several alternatives, proposing in particular a square section for the metal part of the shaft, which was selected. He finally wrote to say 'the mace is underway and will be ready in about 8 weeks. It will cost a good bit to make. Do you want it in solid silver? If so it will be about (all told) 50 pounds. Let me know if this [is] well'.⁴⁴ There is no record of Kitson's reply.

These were not the only difficulties. Early in 1909, just before he set out to stay with Kitson in Taormina and visit the awe-inspiring ruins of Messina, Brangwyn had confessed

I have been having a devil of a time with the – mace. After starting my man came to me and said he was afraid he could not do it as it was too difficult. It is awful there is no-one in England who can do a simple job like this. I am going to take it to Paris in a few days as I have heard of a good man who will do it. I am so sorry to keep you waiting but it is not really my fault. I have already lost a good bit on the job, but it must be done and shall be.⁴⁵

5.27 It was cast by Stabler and carries his mark on the knob at the base of the staff but
to surrounded by roses, perhaps a grove of Academe. These figures correspond with
5.29 those in bookplates Brangwyn designed for Edith Hope, Mario Borsa and Madeline Wells in 1919–20⁴⁶ but derive from the figures he painted in the friezes for Sir Edmund Davis and Robert Kitson and the acolytes in mosaic at St Aidan's. They perform for *l'art nouveau* the functions of angels in Gothic and *putti* in Renaissance and Baroque art, and figure in the marginalia of *The Studio* as well as *The Yellow Book* and in contemporary photographs from Taormina.

During the arrangements for the transfer of the Venetian panels to Leeds, if not before, Brangwyn had come to know the Kitson Clarks. At the end of 1906 he wrote

to thank E.K. for the fine cast of a horse, sending an etching by way of thanks and reassuring him that the damage done to the panels could 'easily be fixed up' because the canvas was good quality.⁴⁷ In 1908/9 he thanked E.K. for drawings of the shields, asked for the one of the University by the end of September and wrote that 'the words you sent me for the inscription will do first rate if you will kindly put them into Latin'.⁴⁷ Robert Kitson had complained to the university that the arms previously sent for this purpose had not been 'definitely granted' by the College of Arms and hoped this had been remedied so they could be 'incorporated in the Mace which I am anxious to see before I go away in September.'⁴⁹

One further problem interrupted the completion of the verge. The arms of the founding cities, the donor and the university itself were to be applied in beaten silver, with the central arms on a background of green enamel. In April 1911, Brangwyn was exasperated because 'The Vice Chancellor wants the mantling over the arms. Shall we do it? ... I have made many drawings but they do not give me any satisfaction'.⁵⁰ He included a marginal sketch showing where it would have to go in the space above 5.36 the square of green enamel. Presumably Kitson supported the artist because these heraldic embellishments were omitted. By the end of June the verge was finished and Brangwyn wrote that 'It looks better but it is difficult to do much as the metal is cast'.⁵¹ He appended a sketch of the beaten plate with the arms of the university on its green enamel background and in due course sent out a photograph of the finished work.⁵²

With an overall length of six feet (183cm) the verge has a long wooden shaft designed to be carried in both hands in front of the bearer, rather than over the shoulder like a mace. This is surmounted by a silver shaft of 41cm, which provides the classical support for an annular finial 18cm in diameter. Green enamel decorates the facets of the upper knop as well as the central cartouche containing the university arms. Three coats of arms are to be found on the elaborately swagged volute that supports this collection of achievements. In front is the one adopted by the Kitson 5.30 family, with those of Kingston-upon-Hull to the left and Leeds to the right. Around 5.31 the outer surface of the ring itself are the arms of York, Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield. On the back of the University arms is a commemorative cartouche with E.K.'s Latin text 'Universitati • Loidensi • Hanc • Virgam • DD • Robertus • H • Kitson • A • S • MDCCV' (Robert H. Kitson gave this verge to the University of Leeds in 1905). The space on the the support below is left blank, and surprisingly does not carry the arms of the subscribing West Riding of Yorkshire.

The verge design is not unlike many Guild and Examination certificates, illustrated magazine covers and title pages of the period by Walter Crane and others, and in stark contrast to the vigorous muscularity of so many of Brangwyn's drawings and mural paintings. More consistent with the latter is his decorative treatment of the

christening caskets that Brangwyn designed for Robert Kitson to give his two godchildren, Cynthia Phelps and Esmond Hunt.⁵³ They were made in wood with dark, highly polished mouldings. Cynthia's has small painted panels let into the sides depicting nude male and female figures at leisure on the beach or on grass. Whether the idea of such a present came from Kitson and had Florentine antecedents, or from Brangwyn is unknown. The little paintings compare with Brangwyn's large oil *The Fruits of Industry*, painted in 1901 for the Skinner's Hall but rejected and replaced by that of *Harmony*. It was probably completed in 1911. Other such presents designed by Brangwyn for Kitson included napkin rings and a pendant but there is no record of how these looked.⁵⁴

5.4 The furniture and decorative designs for *Casa Cuseni*

While working on the Venetian panels and the university verge, Brangwyn had also accepted the commission in 1905 to work on the furnishing and decoration of the new villa that Robert Kitson was having built for himself in Taormina. Although he did make some suggestions for the gardens, Kitson's large *Sketchbook 79* indicates quite clearly that he designed them himself. The same appears to be the case with the house itself where final modifications were directly related to local building materials and techniques. Both form the subject of Chapter 6. The fitting and furnishing of *Casa Cuseni* was a much more collaborative exercise between Kitson and Brangwyn which may well have been assisted by the fact that, for most items, the artist sent the client his suggestions and designs but the latter employed local craftsmen to realise them.

The evidence for what was done may be found in Brangwyn's letters to Kitson, in several of Kitson's sketchbooks but primarily *No.79*, in a few photographs of the Ragusa family delivering some of the dining room furniture and its initial installation before Brangwyn painted the frieze, and in the family tradition recounted by Daphne Phelps. In a few cases the items have, as it were, to speak for themselves because only one perspective and no working drawings survive. This is not unusual. Unimplemented projects are more likely to be preserved than those executed because the drawings for the latter become the specifications in the craftsman's workshop or the builder's site and have served their purpose once the work is completed. More remarkable is the survival of several working drawings for Sir Edmund Davis's furniture which must have been returned to Brangwyn and were therefore at hand for him to send Kitson as ideas for what he might like to have designed.⁵⁵

It is appropriate to work from the actual furniture known or thought to have been designed by Brangwyn or Kitson and then from other sources which may confirm the attributions or the chronology of manufacture. The first is a folio cabinet, with a simple lozenge-shaped marquetry design, made for prints and watercolours in Kitson's collection and/or his own finished work. By October 1905 this was in hand to be made

by J.S. Henry of High Wycombe for £16. In January Brangwyn had written to tell Kitson that Henry was in Taormina so they may have had a direct consultation about it.⁵⁶ At least a year earlier, however, Kitson had sent Brangwyn some drawings of his antique furniture as well as several rugs probably obtained in North Africa. It seems that Kitson was seeking designs which would harmonise with the fine group of Venetian and Southern Italian *cassettoni* that he had already collected for the future house. Brangwyn suggested he 'send a bit over just to see what it is like. The simpler ones with inlay sound good'.⁵⁷

Kitson gave Brangwyn a relatively free hand with the dining room. By 1906 he had designed both a dining table and sideboard.⁵⁸ Although he referred to it as a folding table, what was made and possibly what he meant was a loose-leaved table. The characteristics of his furniture design over this period are obvious and consistent, using unadorned and unpolished wood, usually with the vertical elements square in section, forming a basically plain framework within which the functional parts were fitted. Style in the sense of movement in the design was achieved by the attenuation of these forms, as in the furniture designed by Brangwyn's mentor Mackmurdo, with any application of ornament restricted to the upper parts of the structure.⁵⁹ They are typical of arts and crafts designers who followed simple forms and a straightforward use of materials without the self-conscious craft revivalism and even rustic archaism apparent in some of the work of the Barnsleys, Waalls, and their Cotswold craftsmen.⁶⁰

The dining-table for *Casa Cuseni* is not unlike others designed by Brangwyn, and demonstrates all these characteristics, with its chamfered square-legged carriage and simply-bevelled edge. It was made in local Pecan nutwood⁶¹ by Don Gaetano Ragusa, whose cabinet-making workshop in Taormina included his sons Beppino and Giovanni. Brangwyn offered to try and arrange for one of them to serve some time in J.S. Henry's workshop but in the event Kitson brought Beppino over and found a place for him in *Maple's* of Tottenham Court Road.⁶² It was delivered to *Casa Cuseni* in 1907 as Kitson's mother recounted, with some relief in a letter to her elder daughter on 2 March 1907.

Kitson's *Sketchbook No.79* includes two drawings of a table like Brangwyn's in use as a lady's tea-table which may be his own rendering of the artist's design to another scale. But it also includes several drawings for the sideboard, one of which virtually matches the finished object. Perhaps he sent this design to Brangwyn to work up, or he may have rejected or modified the latter's design and used Brangwyn's drawings for the Davis's drop-catch handles as the basis for his own work in the sketchbook. At any rate the sideboard is a very elementary structure and even the chequer-pattern on the doors is not executed in marquetry. The eight dining chairs were definitely made to Brangwyn's design. He mislaid the original drawing in 1906

but sent another.⁶³ They are also severely rectilinear but lightened in tone by their slightly-moulded and undulating ladder-backs. At the same time Brangwyn promised drawings for a settee and asked whether the sideboard had yet been made and how it looked.

Brangwyn is reputed to have designed beds for *Casa Cuseni* but after the Second World War they felt too uncomfortable and were cut down and used to make tea-trolleys. Brangwyn certainly sent Kitson a water-coloured perspective of a day-bed, to which Kitson added notes on the cushion and inlaid ends. But it may have been intended as an idea for Kitson to work from himself, because *Sketchbook No.79* has three different designs for straight-slatted bed-ends. The substantial settee or divan in the *salone* is most likely to be to Brangwyn's design, despite no further reference to it in his letters, because nothing like it appears in Kitson's sketchbooks either. Now richly decked with large, plain silk cushions of various hues, its structure differs fundamentally from the dining room furniture in the use of round-sectioned rails and an outward-curving back and arms. Kitson's own designs for a settee were more baroque, armed with animals, and his drawings for dining chairs had cabriole legs. *Sketchbook No.3* of 1907 includes designs for two upholstered armchairs, presumably for the *Salotto* but these may never have been made, or made to a simpler form.

Kitson and Brangwyn probably pooled their ideas for the decoration of the dining room. In 1906 when he was in Bruges, the latter wrote of deep green and gold-brown tiles he had seen, samples of which he would send out with the fireplace in mind. Kitson's sketchbook includes one much like that installed, using small blue tiles. In any case the model for the design was that illustrated in colour in the *Studio* special number of 1901.⁶⁴ The panelling has the same attenuated emphasis as the other furniture, achieved by relatively closely aligned verticals with an additional transom at the top to lighten the effect of such a high dado. The designs are similar to those for Brangwyn's own home at *Temple Lodge*, Hammersmith, the billiard rooms he designed as a project for *Messrs. Thurston* and for Captain Winterbottom at *Horton House*, and a screen which may have been for the Venetian pavilion or the *Palazzo Rezzonico*.⁶⁵ All this, and the furniture, was in place before Brangwyn ever visited Taormina. What prompted his first visit early in 1909 was a horrified thrill at the desolation created by the Messina earthquake at the end of 1908 although he also had some suggestions for the reconstruction of Kitson's upper garden,⁶⁶ and their time seems to have been devoted to sketching *Life among the ruins* etc around Messina. Brangwyn returned to London with a mass of drawings to work up for the major exhibition of etchings and watercolours to be mounted by the Fine Art Society in 1910. But he returned the following spring to paint the dining room frieze.

For the frieze at *Casa Cuseni*, he painted a series of rather androgynous youths with a few maidens carrying baskets of fruit, flowers and even infants – redolent that

is of fertility, amidst swags of wisteria with which Kitson swathed the pergola below the house. These ephebes are already familiar from the university verge, various bookplates and *St Patrick's dream* and *The conversion of St Augustine* in the chapel of Christ's Hospital, Horsham. Just such lads as had provided the motif for the Davis's bedroom frieze and Kitson's dining room also feature in an illustration of *The Thames*,
5.50 a lithograph of a flautist amidst spring flowers, and a drawing in Elliott's collection of
to Brangwyn's drawings at Mildura delineating a young man and woman with a basket of
5.58 flowers.⁶⁷

Given the brilliant colour and massive vigour of Brangwyn's large murals for
5.59 semi-public places, like the Royal Exchange, the Skinners' Company hall and the dining room of Lloyd's Registry of Shipping, his muted tones and placid treatment of domestic interiors is instructive, suggesting a sensitivity to the scale and use of the premises he was decorating. The dining room at *Casa Cuseni*, sixteen feet square, is a relatively small but cube-shaped room. But fortunately its muted tones were painted in tempera directly onto the plaster rather than in oil paint onto canvas and the colours therefore remain clean and clear. Several of Brangwyn's earlier pictures and decorative schemes were ruined by the bitumen he used, like Sir Joshua Reynolds, to add lustre to his oils.⁶⁸ The decoration was completed by a band of his favourite blue which picked up the colour of the fireplace tiles and the coved ceiling painted in yellow ochre.

Such a design is in marked contrast to the typically *l'art nouveau* murals, such as
5.11 *Dancing*, which he painted for Byng in 1895 and the similar murals by Ettore de Maria
5.12 Bergler in the great ballroom of Ernesto Basile's *Villa Igeia* in Palermo, completed in time for the new century. Nevertheless it is of interest that the style of furniture design favoured by Basile (1857–1932) and his furniture manufacturer Vittorio Ducrot was seen in Sicily as a *Stile Inglese*, or *Stile Liberty*, owing more to the Arts and Crafts movement with which Brangwyn was associated than the 'quaintness' of contemporary French and Belgian *l'art nouveau*. Unknown to the Italian art world, Brangwyn and Kitson had brought to Sicily and realized in a permanent form what the leaders of artistic taste in Venice had been eager to acquire in the temporary form of exhibitions.

The painting that dominates the dining room, however, is Sir Alfred East's
5.52 landscape of a river winding slowly between tall trees – an evocation of France – that fills the space above the fireplace in a somewhat ungainly manner, being so long and the frame so wide for the relatively narrow wall between the side windows of the room. Symbolically it seems most appropriate because it was East who had put Brangwyn and Kitson in touch, East who had first encouraged Kitson's painting and collecting, and East, only recently elected a full R.A., who signed the picture in 1913 just before he died at the height of his influence on the British art world. For several

years East had planned to come to Taormina but was too busy or too ill to do so. He seems to have come in his final convalescence after the ultimate failure of his cancer operation in the U.S.A.

In December 1910, Brangwyn wrote to tell Kitson that the frame for a picture by East was on its way.⁷⁰ But this was almost certainly for the large watercolour of *Rochester across the Medway* still hanging at *Casa Cuseni*. Its white frame matches the one surrounding Brangwyn's own watercolour of the great church of *St Eyoul at Provins* which was despatched in the same crate and was hung by Kitson at the south end of the *Salone*. The wide frame of the dining room landscape is in the same wood as the panelling but it overlaps the frieze and one wonders if it differed from Brangwyn's expectations, because the narrower fireplace is exactly what he had in mind. East's picture broadens the room where most of the other lower accents are vertical. But it was clearly painted to fit precisely into the full space that was available.

Brangwyn also advised Kitson on some aspects of the *Salone*, by correspondence.⁷¹ The *Salone* doors presented a problem because, although quite large enough for use, and in proportion to the smaller rooms at either end, they appeared narrow in this double-cubed room. Brangwyn suggested widening the moulded architecture around them and provided a pen sketch of what he was proposing. Kitson obviously adopted it as an ideal solution. He had already designed the architraves for the other doors of the house. On the first floor these were in unpainted reddish wood with a flattish bolection moulding. All the bedrooms had built in wardrobes with drawers below and panelled doors like those to the room itself. *Sketchbook 79* includes Kitson's designs for these. He disliked hanging cupboards because of their interference with the architecture of a room, which will be considered again in Chapter 9.

The walls of the *Salone* were a different matter. After his second visit in 1910, Brangwyn suggested the placing of two large panels with roundels inside a single moulding on either side of the fireplace on a 'dark grey gold' painted ground ... 'Should look fine with grey classic subjects!' Kitson did not take up the offer and acquired tall Venetian mirrors to hang over the *cassettoni* at either side of the room. But he did erect a substantial carved open-work screen panel over the broad fireplace in the centre of the same long wall.⁷² Like Martin Briggs, the ex-pupil of the *Bedford and Kitson* practice, who published his book on Lecce in 1910, and the Sitwells who followed in the 1920s, Robert Kitson was attracted rather than repelled by Southern Baroque architecture and design, which will be considered more fully in Chapter 6.

5.5 The impact of Sicily on Brangwyn's art

Although the impact of Brangwyn's art and advice on Kitson's painting will be discussed in Chapter 7, one should not underestimate the importance of these Sicilian visits to the development of Brangwyn's own work. By the time he paid them, the two men were already friends, had been sketching together in several parts of England and the continent, and had formed an extensive collaboration as artist and patron.

When Brangwyn finally made his plans to come to Taormina he had only just heard that Kitson was all right. *Casa Cuseni* had survived the earthquake that destroyed Messina on the 28th of December 1908. Kitson's mother, out for another winter, supported his efforts with those of several American residents to relieve the sufferings of those who survived the tidal surge in Giardini on the coastline below the town. Then the wounded and the refugees from Messina itself began to be brought out through the railway tunnel and the full scale of the disaster became known.⁷³ Kitson himself subsequently suffered a severe psychological breakdown.⁷⁴

Although North America had by then experienced the destruction of Sherman's march through Georgia and Paris the Prussian bombardment and the Commune of 1870, most of Europe and especially England had for over a century not witnessed such man-made or natural devastation as Messina. The horror but fascinated wonder of it comes across in Brangwyn's letter.

What a terrible calamity but at the same time something splendid about it all, looked at from a distance and not having any friends killed one feels it must be full of great things for the painter. The great desolation, the crowds and camps, the crowds rushing away from the burning ruins and all must be terrible and splendid.⁷⁵

When he arrived in March 1909 and saw for himself, he was overawed by the appalling grandeur of Messina's ruins and the amazing social life of the city's survivors amidst them. In his later conversations with William de Belloche, he recounted the birth of babies behind the awnings of stalls in the streets and the makeshift night-life and brothels.⁷⁶

Above all Brangwyn and Kitson moved around and sketched. Kitson sketched in black chalk in a tiny sketchbook and in watercolour on small cards and subsequently completed several watercolours on large sheets of coarse-grained paper. Brangwyn must have made many sketches to have subsequently produced the substantial series of large watercolours and huge etchings that he exhibited at the *Fine Art Society* in 1910. Brangwyn worked in the studio on a large format using large brushes full of paint but these watercolours are quite light in tone as is well exemplified by that of the

5.68 *Immacolata*. This had survived the earthquake beside the ruined Norman cathedral
to
5.71 and became a focus of local pilgrimage for those thankful for survival. He aggrandised
his architectural subjects by the theatrical use of little figures, as in *Life among the*

ruins which is still hanging in *Casa Cuseni*. As was typical of baroque painters, but also Piranesi and the Japanese woodblock artists, Brangwyn's compositions more than fill the space available and the lowering ruins of the earthquake seem to burst through the frames of these etchings.

The ruins in Kitson's watercolours are no less impressive being well modelled as if drawn in paint. But they lack the Brangwyn's dramatic *chiaroscuro* and histrionic groups of people scouring the heaps of rubble, rescuing a double-bass etc although these also appear in Kitson's *Sketchbooks 5, 7, 9 and 12* of 1909–1912. Brangwyn's exhibition was a great success, not least because it purported to show prints from zinc plates etched on the spot amongst the ruins. All the drawings were sold. But Brangwyn was afraid the truth of his studio work would lessen their appeal to the public, so when Cecil Hunt bought one of them, the artist wrote asking Kitson 'when you see Hunt do not mention to him anything about the Duomo at Messina as everyone thinks it was done on the spot. It is of no importance but is best left so'.^{5.72} Only small etchings like that of *The Carmine* in Taormina could have been worked before the subject, even using drypoint.^{5.73} Those like *The Headless Christ* in a ruined apse were based on preliminary sketches and/or photographs. Frank Fulford, of *Headingley Castle* in Leeds, bought four watercolours including *The Immacolata*, and became another of Brangwyn's patrons in Leeds. The artist had just sent Kitson two drawings of the Mill at Messina and a church to Elmet Hall, but retained the watercolour *Unloading coal, Bruges* to send to an exhibition of his work in Berlin. Brangwyn wrote nostalgically; 'I look back on my stay with you as one of the fine times of my life'.^{5.74}^{5.75}⁷⁸

Brangwyn had come to rely on Kitson to help him obtain things he needed for his picture compositions such as brass pots, candlesticks, a chest and red velvet. To these were added rugs and 'pots', Brangwyn's term for all sorts of ceramics, but particularly those of mediaeval Persia and the Islamic world of which he amassed an outstanding collection. In about 1913 he sent Kitson a small etching for Christmas and a lithograph for his friend Don Carlo Siligato, saying that he would like to paint lemons, his 'strongest impression of Sicily', and asking for a case of them to be sent.⁷⁹ Such a request was manageable but others, like sending over one of Kitson's *cassettoni* when he was designing the furniture, were quite impracticable because of the bulk as well as the delay, risk of damage and sometimes loss suffered in transit. But Brangwyn had a naive and personalized approach to matters of business and art, resorting to barter – 'swaps' – as a means of exchange that circumvented liability for cash transactions and taxable accounts.

Kitson was, as already described, a potential source of photographs, e.g. of a blast furnace and rolling mill for the steelworkers' panel for Venice of 1905, of the Bridge of Sighs for Brangwyn's etching of 1909. An undated letter of 1909/10 when

the *Fine Art Society* show was in preparation was particularly full of requests – ‘a little sketch’ of the roof mosaic for his large watercolour of the Duomo ruins at Messina as well as a photograph, and an additional photograph of ‘an old sow laying down showing her dugs’, which he demonstrated in a little pen drawing. Kitson had taken a photograph of Brangwyn squatting among the pigs on the hillside near *Casa Cuseni*. They were probably used for his large sanguine and charcoal drawing of *The Swineherd* in which a sow in farrow is delineated.⁸⁰ Also from his Taormina visits
5.76 must have come the original drawings of very elderly Sicilian women, which Brangwyn
to used for a lithographed poster in aid of the French Benevolent Society during the
5.77 Great War.⁸¹ Kitson’s drawing of the same women is in his *Sketchbook No.4* which also includes detailed studies of the Church of the Carmine at Taormina, another subject for Brangwyn’s etchings of 1910. In April 1911 Brangwyn even suggested that they collaborate on a book with his own illustrations and Kitson’s text.

Given the additional trips in which they chose to go sketching together in Picardy, Assisi, Venice and Provence and projected ones to Spain and North Africa which did not materialise as joint-visits, their association was not only artistically fruitful but bound them in a lasting friendship and mutual respect. This must have been sorely tested by Kitson’s really major commission from which resulted not only one of Brangwyn’s most accomplished works but one of the greatest religious and decorative works of art executed in England of the first half of this century.

5.6 Brangwyn’s mosaics for the apse and chancel of St Aidan’s Church, Leeds

The new parish of St Aidan was created in 1888 astride the Roundhay Road up to Harehills. It serves the population of about 7,000 who had moved into the back-to-back terraces built on land originally belonging to Earl Cowper, who gave the site for the church. In line with the High Church Anglican interest in ecclesiology, the Vicar of Leeds, Dr Jayne, decreed that this should adopt a basilican plan and form a memorial to Bishop J.R. Woodford, a former Vicar of Leeds. It was designed by Russell James Johnson (1832–1892) of Newcastle-upon-Tyne but was largely executed by his surviving partner A. Crawford-Hick in 1891–1894.⁸² Its closest parallel is St Barnabas in Jericho, Oxford, built in 1869 to the design of Arthur Blomfield (1829–1899) which has two apses and a morning prayer chapel at the east end of one of its arcaded aisles. But the unfinished St Bartholemew in Brighton, begun in 1872, shows the same spirit and makes equally demonstrative use of Arts and Crafts decoration. Both of them were the gifts of Tractarian patrons and have a lofty baldacchino in their sanctuaries such as was intended for St Aidan’s.⁸³

By contrast, St Aidan’s owes some of its most daring decorative features to members of the Kitson family, only some of whom were Anglicans and others free-

thinkers of Unitarian origins. The chief reason for this is that the vicar from 1897–1911, Arthur Swayne, was married to Eva, the elder daughter of James I Kitson’s second wife, Elizabeth, an Anglican parson’s daughter. His brother-in-law, Sydney, 5.78 became the parish architect and extended its parish halls to provide a lively social centre for bazaars musical conversazione and amateur dramatics.⁸⁴ Built in 1906 in memory of the first Churchwarden, W.W. Clayton of *Gipton Lodge* in Roundhay Road, the halls were designed in the restrained Edwardian Baroque style typical of contemporary institutional buildings such as the Dewsbury Road Police Station and library designed by the practice in 1901.⁸⁵ Sir James II Kitson, Bart. M.P. performed the opening ceremony.

The church, though simply planned, was lavishly decorated outside and within. 5.79 Outside one finds the Romanesque brickwork of Lombardy with an elaborate *Westwerk* of a Germanic type. Inside, the Byzantine lines of the arcade and clerestorey predominate but the ‘Wrenaissance’ furnishing is as opulent as the neo-baroque favoured by bankers at that time, with much use of coloured stones and 5.80 marbles in the baptistery, which was Crawford-Hick’s last contribution to the church 5.81 in 1901–1903, and paid for by a loan from Mrs Kitson, the mother of Mrs Swayne.⁸⁶ Sydney designed the elaborate wrought iron font-cover in 1913, which was made by Silas Paul, the Head of the Ironwork Department at the Leeds School of Art.

The choir is raised at least five feet above the nave, as in a Roman basilica and some German Romanesque churches, and the high altar is raised up a further short flight of steps in an eastern apse. In 1908 its one thousand square feet remained a bare and bleak focal point for the whole church. Robert Kitson offered to remedy the deficiency and commissioned a set of four murals from Frank Brangwyn. They were to depict scenes from the life of the patron saint who had brought Christianity to the North of England – the landing of St Aidan in Northumbria, his distribution of food to the poor, his preaching and his death. Four seems an inappropriate number because the centre of the apse would have been blank and in the event the first scene was relegated to the middle-ground even in the preparatory cartoons.

Brangwyn started work on the murals and he may have completed two, but his visits to Leeds to install the Venetian panels in the City Art Gallery, to deliver the Verge in 1911, and to clean the Art Gallery’s murals so soon after their installation, convinced him that painted murals in so prominent a position would soon be damaged from frequent cleaning or their obfuscation with Leeds grime. From the beginning Brangwyn attended to this commission as well as all his other work. He sent a sketch off to the Vicar in November 1909, and to Robert Kitson he proposed modifications to the ‘sea wall’ and its steps and that the names of the patrons should be inscribed on the risers of each step.⁸⁷ A year later the scale of St Aidan’s apse had registered with the artist as ‘an awful large thing’. At the beginning of 1911 he

said he had started on the centre-piece, 35 feet long. By April 1911, he had decided it needed to be pale to look light in the dark church and had ordered the canvas. The vicar came to see the unfinished canvas when Brangwyn happened to be out.⁸⁸

By August 1913, with a new vicar less attentive to his proposals and the loss of his original designs because the Diocesan Registrar died and his official papers were
5.82 destroyed, Brangwyn began to propose mosaics, to be paid for by instalments.⁸⁹ He was already in dispute with Sydney Kitson. As parochial architect, he had proposed a blue/white marble for the dado that Brangwyn considered too cold, preferring a warmer stone.⁹⁰ In any case he cannot have been in sympathy with Sydney Kitson's 'Wrenaissance' architecture and probably disliked the retable which was in position at the beginning of October. By the end of 1913, Robert Kitson had come to an
5.101 agreement with Brangwyn about the 'sea wall' of the chancel and the area above the paintings, and Brangwyn wrote proposing that mosaic should be used for the high wall and steps for which he would lend £250 for five years from its completion which, with the fixing of the paintings, he intended to be in May, 1914. He also offered a £50 loan to cover the costs of a flat band of canvas between the upper stone string course of the apse and the murals, which would be painted in blue tempera 'interspersed with medallions filled with emblems – say of the Evangelists to cost £60'.⁹¹ The costs of scaffolding and the strip of canvas would be charged to Robert Kitson.

However on 6 January 1914 Sparrow wrote that the use of mosaic had now been accepted and that Brangwyn was to begin the drawings for it. But the cost proved as prohibitive as the sea-wall mosaics and 'hard York' stone steps would have been without the artist's offer of a loan. But by September Brangwyn had found a much cheaper medium than small glass mosaic, a vitreous substitute made by *Rust's* in
4.136 London. *Bedford and Kitson* had already used *Rust's* vitreous mosaic for Moira's panel over the entrance to Leeds School of Art as well as in several of their banks, so the choice is not so surprising as some authors have made out. Robert Kitson took the Revd. Mason to see it and he was impressed enough to agree if the costs would be met. Even though this would now cost between £800 and £900, rather than the £5,000 for smaller glass cubes, it would still be far more expensive than tempera-painted canvas.⁹² So Brangwyn devised a hairbrained scheme to get the vicar committed to the expenditure with Kitson forced to pay the whole bill after all. The vicar was outraged when Brangwyn's site supervisor proposed it baldly and he sent copies of the correspondence to *Casa Cuseni*. Brangwyn complained that 'the Vicar is a poor kind of fish – he will not help in any way and writes to Sparrow very foolish letters such as one would expect from the keeper of a cookshop!'⁹³

Matters were far from settled but Robert Kitson let Brangwyn get on with it. By the end of November work had started on the mosaic. He had created many preparatory drawings and three great cartoons in tempera. The design was

transferred to sheets of paper to which young girls, not called up for war work and with nimble fingers, gummed mosaic tesserae of appropriate colours. These were sent up to Leeds in blocks and Sparrow supervised their application to the wall of the apse and grouting. They were completed in 1916 and Arthur Swayne came to preach at their unveiling on 13 October. A splendid commemorative edition of photographs was published. The mosaics were a triumph. But the bill was quite a bit more than estimated and, although he paid up, there were no more commissions from Kitson.⁹⁴

Although undated, there is a plentiful supply of preparatory designs and drawings for St Aidan's which seem to have followed a stable course despite the vicissitudes of the actual media to be used. The apse is a complete semicircle under a high semi-dome. The chief mosaic runs around the whole of the apse with the four episodes from St Aidan's life depicted from left to right. What is recorded of this may be found in Bede's History and others derived from it or a common source. However, neither Brangwyn, the vicar, nor the Kitsons seem to have paid much attention to this source as the mosaics lack any reference to the conversion of King Oswald and the miraculous legend of his white horse.⁹⁵ The preliminary designs and drawings for the paintings and mosaics are now liberally distributed across the globe. Two of the cartoons themselves are in the monastery of St Andrie at Sevenkerken near Bruges, while the central panel is at Mildura Arts Centre.⁹⁶

The first known design for St Aidan's is a large watercolour now in Bruges. It blocks out the main episodes in the Saint's life amidst a predominantly treed landscape. In the executed design Brangwyn gave far more prominence to the figures right in the foreground and, by adopting a dual perspective, mapped out the landscape leading to Lindisfarne behind them.⁹⁷

An examination of the drawings should be coupled with an analysis of the mosaics themselves. They begin with St Aidan feeding the poor. A group of gorgeously appalled servitors bear overflowing bowls and baskets to distribute to the ranks of beggars on the right, a group including some of the draped youths familiar from *Casa Cuseni*, the Leeds University verge and the Davis's bedroom in Kensington. Drawings for some of the figures on the left exist and the cartoon, dated 1915, is at Zevenkerken in Bruges. This lacks the second scene of St Aidan alighting with some of his followers in Northumbria but the brown paper upon which it is to be painted is left blank for it. This portion of the cartoon is in fact depicted in the wide central canvas in tempera at Mildura which extends to include the whole scene. Through the device of placing one scene in the middle distance, Brangwyn had overcome the compositional problem presented by four scenes on the same scale and retained the central focus on St Aidan preaching. He also thereby achieved a connection between the scenes in the foreground, with all their figures, and the

unpopulated landscape and map-like vistas of the distant coastline and sky which extended to the upper string course of the apse.

There are several drawings for the central scene of St Aidan preaching.

Brangwyn was attracted by the opportunity of depicting all the ages and conditions of man. He contrasted the greyish-white habits of the monks with the gorgeously coloured apparel of the nobles and the semi-nudity of the poor. Conspicuous among the former are the drawings of old Franklin, a favourite model whose portrait in Bruges identifies him behind the geese on the left of the monks.⁹⁸ Brangwyn worked out his
5.90 composition of figures and gestures in a series of chalk drawings, delineating the
to whole row, even those subsequently obscured by placing a monk in the foreground
5.92 with his back turned to the spectator. St Aidan stands just off centre in creamy-white facing his flock and the scene is terminated by a knot of standing figures, also with their backs to the spectator, whose different poses provide the necessary articulation between the two scenes.

Brangwyn made similar drawings for the scene of the saint's death. There are
5.94 groups of figures drawn in the round with the saint's body in full view, and separate
to drawings of the foreground monks, who partially obscure it, survive, as well as
5.97 charcoal and pastel drawings of single figures. Those in coloured pastels do not match the colours finally chosen for their robes in the mosaics.⁹⁹

With the exception of the landing scene, almost all the action in these large works runs through the large figures in the foreground with touches of trompe-l'oeil to
5.87 heighten verisimilitude in the forms of a bulldog, flowers and domestic geese, and a
5.93 pitcher actually against the lower border string course. More than half the composition, for which I know of no drawings except the cartoons, is devoted to the horizontal bands of water, forest-land, coastline and bright sky running back in
5.98 perspective against which are placed two clumps of trees behind either side of the saint and an irregularly placed set of tall tree trunks which traverse the whole height
5.99 of the mosaic like stage scenery. Such trees appear in some of Brangwyn's lithographs, e.g. the *Beguinage at Bruges*, as well as in the masts and oars of his shipping compositions.¹⁰⁰ They are reminiscent of the attenuation of his furniture and almost identical to the small enamelled plaques that Lalique designed for corsages and small boxes, which have similar tree trunks and autumnal colours against a blue and green ground.¹⁰¹

Very wisely Robert Kitson and Brangwyn had decided that something would have to be done about 'the sea-wall' as they called the ambos and steps to the choir
5.100 leading to the mosaics. A line of white-robed acolytes mounts the steps against a
to deep blue background on each wall, the back of which is treated with a starry sky
5.103 concluding with Brangwyn's signature. Dressed in albs, as the officiating clergy and

their servers are today, they populate the sacred space between the mosaic acolytes and the saint above the high altar in a most appropriate way.¹⁰²

Rust's vitreous mosaic did not glisten as glass mosaics would have done so Brangwyn was determined to exclude Sydney Kitson's sample for the dado of blue-white marble to avoid chilling the warm and softer glow of his mosaic. However, 5.104 Rust's medium came to the rescue and, instead of stone or marble, a tiled pattern was to 5.105 executed with a vertical motif, against which to stand the chairs and altar.¹⁰³

Throughout these years Brangwyn wrote regularly to Kitson in Taormina and they met in London or Leeds and in Venice. Although he disapproved of the wooden retable placed behind the altar to take the candlesticks, Brangwyn was obviously very pleased with reports of his mosaics – 'said to be splendid' he wrote to Kitson before either of them had seen them in April 1917 and he arranged to get it photographed for 'a fine notice'.¹⁰⁴ They were published in the *Architectural Review* early the following year. In 1918 he asked if Kitson would like to follow his artist friend, Cecil Hunt, and became a member of the R.B.A. of which Brangwyn was president. He would need to send a watercolour for electoral consideration.¹⁰⁵

5.7 The final years of friendship and a last commission

With the end of the war, Brangwyn was plunged into a mass of decorative projects, most of which ultimately led to disappointment: the Matsukata *Sheer Pleasure Arts Pavilion of 1922*, lost due to the Tokyo earthquake and slump and a subsequent conflagration in the Belgravian warehouse where the collection itself was stored; the mosaics for the dome of *Selfridges of 1923*, which could not be built because the L.C.C. feared damage to the adjacent underground railway line; the *Stations of the Cross* for Father T. Ryan's leper colony near Pretoria of 1924, which achieved notoriety because of its Great War imagery but was rushed to completion 5.106 unsatisfactorily; and in 1925 the commission from Lord Iveagh to fill the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords with an extensive scheme of murals in memory of the peers and sons of peers who had fallen in the war, which became the great disaster of the artist's career when they were rejected in 1930 and were only shown to the public at 5.107 the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition in 1933 before installation in the purpose-built but glaringly-lit new Guildhall of Swansea in 1934.¹⁰⁶

With the completion of St Aidan's there were no more commissions from Robert Kitson, although they continued to correspond occasionally and to meet when Kitson stayed with his sister in Sussex.¹⁰⁷ But the St Aidan's commission had a long after-life. Brangwyn had an offer from a foreign museum to buy the cartoons but he hoped to sell them to Leeds. The City Art Gallery had no room and after the city suffered the embarrassing fiasco of the University Vice-Chancellor's project for modern murals in the town hall there was little enthusiasm. With the exception of the huge central

tempera painting, they were enormous studies not finished pictures. When the new Civic Hall was nearing completion in the 1930s, Brangwyn raised the matter again but the architect told the City Engineer that there was no room for them.¹⁰⁸

By the time the Director of Leeds City Art Gallery had expressed an interest in benefiting from the dispersal of Brangwyn's collection, it was too late. Brangwyn had divided the cartoons. The central and much the largest painting was bought by Lord Beaverbrook's Australian newspaper friend R.D. Elliott and offered to Mildura in 1944, forming part of Elliott's large bequest of paintings and drawings by Brangwyn and Sir William Orpen (1878–1931) in 1950.¹⁰⁹ It hangs on permanent view with other murals and related designs. The flanking cartoons, on brown paper, were given to St Andrie in Zevenkerken, for which Brangwyn had designed a group of small stained glass windows in the monastery church and a series of large *Stations of the Cross* for the Chapter house, a severely furnished room in which they provide the only decorative and contemplative focus. But except for illustration in a liturgical journal in 1937, the cartoons have remained rolled up in the church gallery ever since.¹¹⁰

By the end of the Great War, the arts in Europe had taken a different direction which has come to be accepted as Modernism, the term adopted by some at the time. There was in fact a far greater variety of innovators in the period leading up to the war. In Leeds Professor Michael Sadler's vice-chancellorship at the university and Frank Rutter's appointment to the City Art Gallery not only brought *avant-garde* artists to the city and put their work on exhibition but added to the debates of the Leeds Arts Club in which the immigrant artist Jacob Kramer and the Yorkshire farmer's son, Herbert Read, discovered new visions of art in society.¹¹¹ The Kitsons were involved in several of these developments but none of them became enthusiasts for Modernism. Schooled in the Arts and Crafts Movements and the New English Art Club, Robert was attracted to innovative developments within the traditional forms of British art. Sydney took up the stripped-classical alternative to exposed steel, glass and concrete construction. And Ina Kitson Clark preserved the select sociability of the Leeds Fine Arts Club until several years after the Second World War had been won.

Like many British artists, Brangwyn was of much the same persuasion. Remarkably innovative, he was his own man but no exponent of new philosophies through art. Immensely successful with commissions before the war, he had actually been exhausted by the work although the support of a sequence of assistants did help. His prominence and the voluptuous colour of his murals made him the obvious target for Wyndham Lewis in his first edition of *Blast* in 1914, with which an exhibition in Leeds was associated.¹¹² But, like C.R. Mackintosh and his Glasgow colleagues and Alfred East, he was much more renowned on the continent and in the United States. He was treated at Venice, or the Vienna Secession, on a par with artists who are now

regarded historically as the heralds of 'modernism' i.e. what was new in contemporary art.

One critic and collector with whom Brangwyn, Robert Kitson and Cecil Hunt were in close touch was the author Sydney Schiff (1868–1944) whose short-lived quarterly *Arts and Letters* was published in 1919.¹¹³ His second wife, Violet Beddington, was the sister of Ada Levenson, Oscar Wilde's 'sphinx' and a good friend of Robert Ross, so it is likely that Hunt and Kitson came to meet him through the Ryder Street circle and the London art world of exhibitions, clubs and Chelsea.¹¹⁴ Schiff started life with a substantial private income and became a patron of *avant-garde* artists and authors but his expressions of welcome and interest seem to have been louder than his rather patronizing manner might ultimately bestow. Sir John Rothenstein recalled a particularly embarrassing invitation to stay with the Schiffs at Caux where the latter was so preoccupied with his own writing that he proffered 'an ever diminishing measure of friendliness'. But his father obviously had no misgivings about staying close to them in 1929.¹¹⁵

In 1911 Schiff wrote to Robert Kitson from a Grand Hotel in Switzerland to say that he and his wife thought Robert's Tunisian venture foolish and under-nourishing, and he thought Cortona was not worth a visit to meet him there. Instead Schiff wanted him to join him in Munich at the end of his own tour of Germany where the standard of artistic life and body of intellectual human beings impressed him. Schiff 5.110 took himself very seriously and said he could not bear it if Robert 'made light of his words'. He obviously considered Kitson's relationship with Brangwyn very close because he suggested that he should show him the letter too.¹¹⁶

Obviously Robert did not just accept Schiff's point of view because a subsequent letter in disagreement elicited the reply from Schiff that it was 'by far the most interesting one I have ever had from you'. He was dismissive of Kitson's 'nice man' as well as Brangwyn's personal attraction to Kitson, explaining that he considered Brangwyn spoilt by success. And Schiff resented the manner in which he said the artist treated him 'as a fool' when 'as a class, artists are the most awful idiots on 5.111 earth'. In particular he quarrelled with Kitson's support for Brangwyn's dismissal of 'the Chelsea School of Art' and Sickert in particular, stating that

I believe in the rising School and I disbelieve in Brangwyn as teacher ... Art ... is not linked in everlasting Siamese Twin companionship to beauty. Art and aestheticism have nothing to do with each other. Art may be expressed for the time being by beauty but it may be expressed at another time by something terrible, yes, even by something hideous. The expression of art is one thing. Art itself is another. ¹¹⁷

Schiff, like Sadler, Rutter, Kramer and Read, followed *The New Age*, and sought revelation in new artistic discoveries. Draughtsmanship counted for nothing 'unless ... the indices of a message, however small, which has ultimate value. Without

intellectuality, Art is nothing'. The Great Masters of the past were venerated because of their contribution 'to the sum of *permanent human values*' (Schiff's emphasis). Confident of constant progress he believed that 'mankind has found its highest expression in the England of today, horrible and sordid though the mass may be'.¹¹⁸

Schiff complained that 'the worst of him is that he will never show me anything unless you are there',¹¹⁹ but by 1912 Brangwyn had obviously had enough of him. Schiff didn't care for his collection of *objets de vertu*, praised the work of artists he disregarded and yet still wanted something from him. In 1910 Schiff wrote to
5.109 announce that he was going to bring his uncle to buy *Men playing cards* to present to the Tate Gallery but nothing came of it. And yet three weeks later he called 'with his Amorette' whom the artist considered 'very nice' and hoped he would be happy.¹²⁰ Schiff bought nothing from Brangwyn's exhibition at the *Fine Art Society*, but the following spring Brangwyn heard that Schiff wanted to meet Kitson in Venice with some idea of doing something for modern art, and the artist 'offered to make him a room in his new house as a wedding gift'.¹²¹ But it was over a year before he wrote to Brangwyn to accept his offer. Brangwyn told Kitson he was 'only too happy to do so if he will have everything made to my design. It will not cost a great sum. Something simple and nice'.¹²²

These matters seem to have rested. But in January 1913 Sydney Schiff bought a watercolour of *Messina* by Cecil Hunt and wrote to invite him to come and see the house in Cambridge Square as it progressed and added that he liked 'the picture and I should be very glad indeed if I felt sure you would paint up to this standard'. He advised Hunt that there was 'no salvation through the imitation of other people's work' and he would never

be satisfied by taking up ruins and demolitions as subjects for study. Such subjects have a certain meretriciousness which is as the fragment of a statue may suggest the mind the beauty not present. Please do not think it impertinent of me to suggest to you to draw and paint studies of still life in your own studio.¹²³

Addressing such a letter to an artist who regularly exhibited at the Alpine Club, and was soon to be invited to accompany the Royal Geographical Society's Everest Expedition, seems affront enough. But having told a *plein air* mountain painter to stay at home with fruit and flowers, Schiff had more to say. After moving into Cambridge Square, he sought to sweeten the news that he was 'extraordinarily hard up' and would only be giving him 'a cheque for the picture shortly', by telling Hunt 'Robert Ross dined with us and admired your picture, remarking: "That's what Brangwyn tries to do and does not succeed in doing"; so you can take unction to your soul'.¹²⁴

Hunt who had only recently attended Brangwyn's art school and learnt to etch and had been impressed by his post-Messina works at the *Fine Art Society*, did not

let it rest and must have entered the debating lists as Schiff may have hoped he would. Just before war broke out in 1914 Schiff replied to what must have been a respectful difference of opinion with a much more philosophical form of argument. He propounded the expressionist concept of art as 'the artist's personality through his work', as opposed to stylistic imitation as a form of acting, but commended Hunt's 'fluency of statement'.¹²⁵

It seems inconsistent that the same man who argued with Robert Kitson against the necessity of art to pursue beauty, should criticize the latter's closest friend for painting modern ruins and devastation. But his target was really Brangwyn. Would he have applied his expressionist philosophy in the same way if they had followed Sickert or Epstein? Although he may not have undermined their appreciation of Brangwyn's art, Robert Kitson was in due course to become an enthusiastic advocate of Sickert's painting. And Hunt's late sketchbooks include colourful small depictions of vases with cut flowers not unlike the work of Hercules Brabazon (1821–1906) whom Kitson also collected or even Henri Matisse whom he otherwise dismissed.¹²⁶

Schiff marked Kitson's subsequent advocacy of Sickert by sending him a copy of Emmons' biography of the recently deceased artist soon after its publication in 1942, in which his wife, Violet, included a small 2x1 ins. pencil profile of her husband,¹²⁷ so it appears that they never lost contact. During the Second World War, the Schiffs provided a home for Sir Max Beerbohm and his wife, also refugees from Italy, until both were bombed out in August 1944 and Schiff himself died.¹²⁸ Although he had criticized Brangwyn and thereby Kitson's artistic taste and aesthetic conservatism at the height of his sometimes protracted commissions from the artist, it is more likely that Schiff and the more ebullient and less argumentative Sadler broadened his interests than soured his relations with Brangwyn.

Although there is a long gap in the surviving correspondence between Kitson and Brangwyn following the completion of St Aidan's and he offered no more commissions, there is no evidence of any serious breach between them. Leeds City Art Gallery bought two of Brangwyn's watercolours in 1923 and 1924 after which all his works from Sam Wilson's collection entered the permanent collection in 1925.¹²⁹ In 1926 Kitson was going to Constantinople so Brangwyn asked for a postcard of boats in the Sea of Marmora. He had also just seen Harry Becker (d.1928) so Brangwyn suggested he should buy one of his pictures for the Leeds City Art Gallery.¹³⁰ Brangwyn was busy on the House of Lords panels but responded to Kitson's postcard with a sketch of Palma de Majorca, where he had a friend, and a lithograph for him to give Don Carlo.¹³¹

Brangwyn would, however, have nothing to do with the postage-stamp sized pictures Princess Marie-Louise asked him to paint for Queen's Dolls' House. It was designed and master-minded by Lutyens but Sir George Clausen and other helped to

suggest appropriate artists. Robert Kitson submitted a watercolour and Cecil Hunt similarly responded to his invitation in 1922. Hunt had only just collaborated in the R.W.S. presentation of a portfolio to Princess Mary on the occasion of her wedding in 1921. A.C. Benson and E.V. Lucas edited a de luxe edition to commemorate the presentation to Queen Mary and their contributions were recorded.¹³²

Like Robert Kitson, Cecil Hunt had also kept in touch with Brangwyn, at least at Christmas. When his elder son, Esmond, died in 1927, Hunt asked the artist to design a memorial window for Manaton church.¹³³ In the original design a far from
5.112 heavenly choir sing lustily to the accompaniment of a cello beneath tracery laden with
5.113 apples and birds, but the P.C.C. preferred not to have the instrument and when the window made available was a different one it had to be modified.¹³⁴ But the joyous spirit of youthful noise in a fruitful arbour remains. It was made at his Hammersmith studio by Silvester Sparrow using an old technique for varying the thickness of the glass to add texture and depth to the colours. Phyllis Hunt's appreciative response delighted Brangwyn and he wrote of hoping to accept her invitation to stay; 'The West in April is lovely beyond word and I should like to see it again', but he never came.¹³⁵

These things might have ended with Brangwyn sinking into the silence of a recluse but for the looming Second World War. In the summer of 1937 he wrote after an illness with some feeling of satisfaction that he had just done a big decoration for Odham's press and put the finishing touches to the Skinners' Hall with *Education* and *Charity* to replace Anning Bell's gesso panels at the window end. But his main purpose was to give Kitson a large watercolour in exchange for *Leeks* which he wanted to give to the museum being named after him at the *Arentshuis* in Bruges.¹³⁶

Kitson had high hopes that Italy would keep out of the European conflict, taking the feelings of people in Taormina as his guide, and was planting trees. But Mussolini muscled in on the fall of France and he had to depart quickly. In 1943 Brangwyn was pleased to hear his house was safe but distressed by the bombardment of Genoa. The old artist had given refuge to the second family of the etcher William Walcot (1874–1943), who was working on an L.C.C. rebuilding scheme in his garden studio, and Brangwyn added; 'by the way, London must be nearly as fine as Messina'. He was correct and Robert Kitson took advantage of his connections and status as an artist to sketch the smouldering views of the city around St Paul's. Brangwyn, however, was working on illustrations of the life of St Francis and had dug out old notes and sketchbooks from their time in Assisi and was eager to borrow any of Kitson's sketches of the place to assist his task. He lamented the loss of all kinds of characters as well as his old model, killed in an air raid shelter next to his old home *Temple Lodge*,¹³⁶ but there was clearly still some life among the ruins!

Brangwyn's association with Robert Kitson was mutually satisfying and successful. Both found good friends in each other. Kitson learnt a freedom of

movement with his pencil and a broad confidence with his watercolour brush from sketching with Brangwyn. And Brangwyn carried all his many forms of commissions from Kitson through to completion, despite long delays and some hanky panky with their arrangements. Much loved at the time and respected by Kitson's heirs, Brangwyn's furniture and dining room are still in use and his watercolours and christening presents on display in their various homes. So are his verge at the University and his mosaics at St Aidan's. Brangwyn's Venetian murals form part of the Sam Wilson room at the City Art Gallery even if his large paintings for Kitson are in store. Kitson's relationship with, and patronage of, Sir Frank Brangwyn may be considered the most important of his many contributions to the artistic life and production of his time.

Chapter 6 English arts and crafts in Sicily at the beginning of the twentieth century: the design of *Casa Cuseni* and its gardens by R.H. Kitson

6.1 Taormina – the ‘new winter resort’ and its settlement by expatriates

By the time Robert Kitson came to settle in Taormina in 1900, on medical advice and with his father’s inheritance, the town was achieving a reputation amongst the winter swallows. Robert Trevelyan may well have introduced him, by visiting his aunt who had just inaugurated her gardens below the town. But friends in Leeds, London and Capri also knew the place well.¹ Not surprisingly Kitson was enchanted. For him it was ‘the most beautiful place in the world’, a sentiment soon shared with Douglas Sladen, whose publishing career became devoted to the advertisement of Sicily as ‘the winter resort’, as well as the editors of *Macmillan’s Guides*, who considered the views towards the streets of Messina and to Mount Etna ‘of magical beauty and unsurpassed grandeur’.²

6.1 These, with the extensive remains of the Greek theatre, had aroused similar enthusiasm in the more intrepid grand tourists like Richard Payne Knight, Göethe and John Stuart Mill, a century or so before in the days of the Bourbon kingdom. Since the success of Garibaldi’s campaign and the union with the new Kingdom of Italy, Sicily had become much more accessible. In the lives of the great engineers like Bidder or Stephenson, passing in his yacht to inspect the dockyard and railway installations at Alexandria, the island was on the horizon.³ But to their grandchildren, the erstwhile Kingdom of the Two Sicilies presented a variety of opportunities even more easily reached by the very modes of transport upon which their family fortunes were built.

E.K. met his future wife after taking the steamship from Spain to join friends in Naples, soon after Reggie Kitson’s death in Leeds. Ina was visiting her brother, George Parker Bidder III (1863–1953) at Dr Döhrn’s Zoological research station. The Hawthorn Kitsons paid the Aquarium a visit in their railway holiday to the Bay of Naples in 1899.⁴ Taormina had been linked to Messina and Catania by rail within six years of the battle of Calatafini and was connected to the continental network in 1875 although the line from Messina to Palermo was not completed for another twenty years.⁵ After he settled in Taormina, this was the means by which most of Kitson’s family and friends found their way to visit him for the next half century, although he himself often used the steamer ferries and his own Fiat tourer.

Although there had been British merchants in Messina for centuries, the most significant English interests were based on the Marsala wine trade. On the western

side of Palermo, the Whitakers held court in the *Villa Malfitana* and the *Palazzo Ingham* in Via Roma opposite which the Anglican Church was built by Henry Christian (1832–1906) in 1872–1875.⁶ The Florios, heading the Sicilian-Genoese conglomerate company that owned a shipping line, docks, several factories, sulphur mines and in due course the Ingham-Whitaker *Baglio*, married into and absorbed some of the most extensive Sicilian principalities.⁷ The Anglo-German naval rivalry was played out in the annual cruises of the Kaiser and King Edward VII, often accompanied by their royal families. The bloody murder of Giulia, Contessa di Trigona, by her rejected lover in 1911 only added the scandalous *frisson* of a *crime passionale* to this glittering but insecure society. She was the younger sister of Bice Palma, the future Principessa di Lampedusa, whose lover Ignazio Florio commissioned Ernesto Basile (1857–1932), the Sicilian architect of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, to design and build the *Stile Liberty* edifice on the seafront below Monte Pellegrino, called the *Villa Igiea* in 1899. Intended as a sanatorium, it was only viable as the de luxe hotel it has been ever since it opened in 1900, the flagship of the winter resort.⁸

The eclipse of the Bourbons and the union with Italy brought more than Piedmontese officers, the railways and Genoese capital to Sicily. It also led directly in 1866 to the first and much more wholesale dissolution of monasteries since the suppression of the Jesuits in the eighteenth century. Nelson had preserved Sicily from the Bonapartist reforms that had transformed much of the rest of Italian society and the land holdings of the religious orders. In most Sicilian towns the conventual buildings became schools, barracks, hospitals, libraries, museums and even prisons and factories. But Taormina was a poor backwater by this time and no longer the significant stronghold on the coastroad between Messina and Catania that had made it politically significant in the middle ages. Some monasteries were already ruined, like the *Badia Vecchia*, or sparsely inhabited by religious, but few of them were put to alternative public use after secularization. Although most of the actual churches remained in occasional use, their buildings were sold and mouldered. The huge Dominican complex became the property of the Catanian Prince of Cerami, whose ancestors had founded and endowed it, and the convent of *Santa Catarina* was bought by the British Consul in Messina, Mr Rainford.⁹

Although the first expatriate artist to live in Taormina was a German, Otto Geleng (1843–1939), whose 1863 lodging was in a property owned by the La Floresta family beside the ancient theatre, which he had admired in a painting exhibited in Berlin in 1860, the town became just as attractive to other northern Europeans, especially the British, as well as to Americans.¹⁰ La Floresta opened their property as the Hotel Timeo and Geleng soon married Filomena Zuccaro who lived at the upper end of the town. By the time Sladen published his book in 1905, several of the old religious houses had become the homes of expatriates. Sir Edward Hill, after a rapid

reconnaissance had bought Santa Catarina from Mr Rainford, and brought his family out from Cardiff in an especially large and well equipped coach. The convent chapel was made available to chaplains for the services of the Church of England.¹¹ In due course his daughter, Mabel (1866–1940), started a school of needlework and lacemaking which she affiliated to the Royal School of Needlework in London. Taormina had little work to offer and this was aimed to provide opportunities for women to earn, presumably from sales to tourists.¹² Charles King Wood (1868–1942) an American, took the *Carmine* where he had his studio and encouraged tourists to call for tea and then buy his work, sometimes with embarrassing consequences.¹³ The Hon. Albert Stopford lived beside the Capuchin convent and had gardens above S. Guiseppe rising to the top of the town where he grew, amongst others, the *Stopford Rose*.¹⁴

6.2 With these exceptions, the other expatriate villas and most of the big hotels were built outside the old town walls often close to ex-monastic sites. This was where vacant land was available with open views from the precipitous edges of the mountainside. Because building went on before and after the Great War, using local craftsmen and a subdued *Stile Liberty/Art Deco* style as well as more flamboyant historicist revivals of local mediaeval and baroque *palazzi*, visual dating can only be approximate. And, although the non-catholic cemetery usually reveals the ages of those expatriates who were buried locally, only a few have inscriptions that suggest times of arrival in Taormina.

6.4 A substantial number of these new villas were built on the winding approach road below the Porta Messina, facing east along the coast to Capo S. Alessio and the Calabrian mountainscape. This was where Colonel Shaw-Hellier (1836–1910) bought a flat site for the villa that C.R. Ashbee (1863–1942) was to design for him in 1907, just below *San Pancrazio*.¹⁵ The Hon. Alexander Nelson Hood (1865–1937) had already built his on the cliff face below Santa Caterina and its extensively terraced gardens from 1904.¹⁶ Both were friends of Robert Kitson, and his sister recorded frequent visits to the Colonel's previous residence, including meals, as well as tea with the Duca and the chance to see his garden. Both were also keen gardeners. This was also where the Siligato family built one of their two hotels, the *Castello-a-Mare*, the other being constructed above the Roman cisterns of the *Naumachie* fronting the Corso with splendid views across to the ancient theatre and the sea.

Two of the foreign settlers followed quite different paths in Taormina, but may indirectly or directly, have had the greatest influence on Robert Kitson's choice for this idyllic home in the sun. The first was Florence Trevelyan. The Trevelyans were a Cornish family that had married into wealth in Northumberland before setting out to rule the empire, run government ministries for the Liberal Party in the House of Commons and propound the Whig interpretation of History. She inherited Hallington,

while the senior branch of the family continued to live at Wallington, enjoying the landscape where Capability Brown had learnt his craft and the fine house on which Pauline Trevelyan, the friend and patron of Ruskin, Millais and William Bell Scott, had lavished her artistic gifts.¹⁷

6.9 Florence Trevelyan arrived in 1882 with her cousin Louise Perceval, the niece of the Prime Minister assassinated in 1812, en route for the Eastern Mediterranean. They stayed at the Hotel Timeo, and Florence Trevelyan never left it. She bought the view, that is all the land below the hotel to the cliffs above Giardini, and in due course a tract of the mountains at Menticino north of Castelmola, to which in old age she was carried in a litter. There she was laid to rest in a mausoleum in 1907, her marble bust staring out to the view of Mount Etna above the Alcantara valley. A soft heart for stray dogs brought her into contact with the local surgeon, Dr Salvatore Cacciola, and after marriage they lived in the substantial villa built beside the Hotel Timeo. She became a recluse after the loss of her only child at birth and he a socialiser welcome to the expatriates.

Although virtually unmentioned in the many publications on the Trevelyans, except as the source of G.M. Trevelyan's home at Hallington when he retired from the Mastership of Trinity College, Cambridge, her presence in Sicily may not only have encouraged the historian to embark on his romantic quest for Garibaldi but have paved the way for Robert Kitson's own settlement. Not only was his friend, Robert Trevelyan, her favoured nephew but the eldest son and heir to Wallington, Charles, was a family friend, regular visitor at Elmet Hall, and Liberal candidate for the Elland constituency in which Sir James II Kitson took an interest. In a manner of speaking families like the Butlers and the Trevelyans 'owned' Trinity whereas it was their education at Cambridge that 'made' this generation of Kitsons, not only E.K., Sydney and Robert but Ethel too. But the Kitsons' relative wealth and position remained based in Leeds which offered political opportunities, as for example to Charles Trevelyan.¹⁸

Florence Trevelyan came from England, married locally, invested in land for its aesthetic value as landscape and gardens, but lived a quiet life with her dogs and young retainers. Although of course unique, she typifies an enduring mode of British expatriate life. Utterly different, but just as archetypical in Taormina, was the life of Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931), a young Prussian who first came to Taormina in 1875 after meeting Otto Geleng in Berlin where the latter was giving art classes to members of the court. Like Robert Kitson, von Gloeden was given medical advice, in his case to take sea-bathing for T.B., and like Kitson enjoyed good health for most of the rest of his relatively long life.¹⁹

Von Gloeden enjoyed his early years in Taormina but when his family's affairs in Germany took a massive turn for the worse, he had to make ends meet as best he

could, and that lay in the commercial exploitation of the skills he had already developed in photography.²⁰ In England his photographs had been exhibited at the Egyptian Hall in Pall Mall in 1893, as well as in *The Artist* and *The Studio* where they formed the inspiration for a sonnet by Kaines Jackson and the subject matter of Gleeson White's 'The Nude in Photography'. *The Bathers* by W.T. Tuke had recently been bought by the new City Art Gallery in Leeds and Tuke's work featured in *The Studio* in 1895. Gleeson White was effectively presenting photography as a *plein-air* art form with examples from Sicily as well as those taken by Frederick Rolfe (the self-styled Baron Corvo) in the open air.²¹ Both Gustav Klimt and Lord Leighton had already exhibited Olympian nude compositions with the Bay of Naxos from Taormina as a backdrop.²²

After his step-father's imprisonment and the sequestration of his assets in 1896 with the help of his step-sister Sophia Raab von Gloeden established his studio and residence opposite the entrance to San Domenico, which opened as a Palace Hotel de Luxe in 1896.²³ With his able Sicilian assistant, Pancrazio Bucini, nicknamed *Il Moro* after his swarthy appearance, and good equipment sent out by his sympathetic supporter, the Grand-Duke of Mecklenberg-Schwerin, Friedrich Franz III, von Gloeden embarked on his successful career producing photographic views of the local landscape and antiquities, peasant life and costumed characters about the town, and portrait heads, nude youths and arcadian scenes posed in the gardens and countryside around Taormina, on the Tunisian coast, and during an expedition to von Pluschow in Naples.

Robert Kitson, who lived nearby, was one of his clients and several of von
6.10 Gloeden's prints survive in his collection.²⁴ He and his visitors also took their films to be developed and printed there and from Brangwyn's letters, one finds that Kitson and von Gloeden were good friends before the Great War, and that they went to lunch with him and his sister.²⁵ One of Kitson's undated sketchbooks, of unusually high quality paper and presumably dating from this period, includes a large group of sketches of young men, clothed as if arabs but probably draped in sheets with towel-turbans, which take after von Gloeden's languidly posed models and may delineate
6.11 the young men he dressed up in livery for parties.²⁶

Whilst there is no evidence of any connection with von Gloeden before Kitson came to Taormina, there can be no doubt that he would have heard of its attractions and probably seen them in the London exhibition or *The Studio*. Sladen, in his 1905 Guide to Sicily, specifically advertised Taormina, as 'an admirable artist's place, because it is full of picturesque bits' as well as a good place for 'kodaking native
6.12 dress'. Even if he went on to say that 'nobody goes about naked as might be imagined from the photographs', the point was made. By then the town was a haven of German, English, Scandinavian and American artists and aesthetes in whose

company Robert Kitson was at home with himself. His nieces spoke of Sicily having a liberating effect on him, even if Kairouan was to become the place to which he went alone without visits from his sisters and family friends.²⁷

Probably most of the Kitsons holidayed abroad. Ethel counted her visit “*The time of my life*”, bar *none*, up till March 1905’.²⁸ But she had caught the spirit of Taormina society as well as the interest of Don Ciccio Atenasio, a future mayor of the town in Fascist times who did marry another foreigner, the Dane Inge Borgesen, as well as the American Brint Wetherill whose attentions were less tiresome. She drove away in a bower of violets provided by Don Carlo Siligato(1875–1959). He was the son of a master builder and hotel owning family living on a fixed income derived from these sources. So he enjoyed the carefree existence of a young man about town. Leanly built with a dark moustache he appears light and dapper in early photographs beside the strikingly handsome and erect, even military, appearance of Robert Kitson.

6.13 He was already Kitson’s dearest friend when Ethel came to stay in 1905 and he regularly sent Christmas greetings to her on postcards of his own pictures of Taormina or other views. His album includes photographs of the picnics in 1905 as well as Ethel

6.14 laying the foundation stone of *Casa Cuseni*. He was Don Roberto’s constant companion at Taormina and often motored about with him in Sicily, where he learnt to paint in watercolours and oils. But he does not seem to have visited Elmet Hall until the summer of 1913, although Ciccio Atenasio and Carlo Wood had done so within a few months of Ethel Kitson’s exhilarating visit with her mother in 1905.²⁹

How different it seems from the French Riviera where Lord Airedale spent the winter after the Leeds Musical Festival and Christmas at Gledhow Hall with his family. Even he kept it up to the end, dying in Paris while returning from the south.³⁰ But true to character he had remained a business man abroad and invested in a new hotel in Monte Carlo.

6.2 The design of *Casa Cuseni* and its construction

When Robert Kitson decided to settle in this ‘most beautiful place in the world’ in 1903, he bought a tract of the mountainside below the Rocca on which to build his

6.15 home. The site was 260 metres above the sea and lay off the mule-track to Castelmola above the Porta Cuseni. But it was a wild area nicknamed ‘Pucidazzo’, after an old woman’s shack on the site, by the local Sicilians, who could not imagine why anyone risked living outside the town gates.³¹ At that time it was also relatively remote from the main areas of expatriate hotel and villa construction below the town and outside the Porta Messina, although this was soon to change as Taormina became more extensively built up. The *Hotel Internazionale* (now *Excelsior*) had already started building in 1904 just outside the Porta Catania, and the placing of *Casa*

6.16 *Cuseni* so high within its own gardens was designed to ensure that the views remained unimpaired.³²

Casa Cuseni was named after the faubourg of Taormina below it, the streets of which still retain the closely packed plan of village footpaths. Kitson directed the villa and indeed almost the whole site, to face south-west. It commands a panoramic view eastwards from Mount Etna, and the constant climatic changes on its slopes, to the sea and across the *campanili* and machicolations of Taormina itself. It is therefore very open to the light but shielded from the hottest and most glaring sun by its garden trees and pergolas.

There is extensive evidence of how Robert Kitson arrived at the designs for *Casa Cuseni*³³, and three things are clear. By the time he worked in *Sketchbook 79*, Kitson had virtually finalized his wide-H shaped plan for the house. However he had by no means settled on the elevations. Thirdly, Brangwyn was only concerned with the design of some of the furniture and the dining room frieze for *Casa Cuseni* after 1905, and although he made some subsequent suggestions for geometrical mural designs for the *salone* and for the steps to the upper garden, these were not taken up. Brangwyn's own studio at Hammersmith has a plain blocky appearance and his mentor, Mackmurdo's *Brooklyn* in Private Road, Enfield, has a flat roof which was most unusual in England at that time, c.1887, as well as statuettes topping the pilasters set along the ground floor.³⁴ But the earliest drawings for *Casa Cuseni* were even further from these than the final design which hardly suggests that Brangwyn provided the inspiration even if he would have approved what eventuated.

Knowing of Sydney Kitson's architectural training and his practice in Leeds as well as his knowledge of Italian buildings and gardens, one is tempted to look his way.

4.77 But although Sydney Kitson had designed the substantial *Red House* in Leeds, built in
4.79 1903 and published in *The Architectural Review* in 1904, which had two tall bayed rooms in front linked by a great galleried hall with a porticoed front door below a terrace, those are the sum of its associations with *Casa Cuseni*. The scale of the rooms and their proportions differ so much. Even the small house he converted for his own use, *Hillside* below Gledhow Hall, merely shares the superficially similar
4.70 features of a portico supporting a balcony. For all the classical and renaissance
4.71 sculpture displayed inside, it was a very English vernacular residence with a neo-Georgianised interior. *Casa Cuseni* was not like this.³⁵

What of the architectural literature of the period? Robert Kitson was an artist and he subscribed to *The Studio*. But there are not stacks of early copies of the *Architectural Review*, still less of *The Builder*, at *Casa Cuseni*. Looking through Lawrence Weaver's slightly later volumes on *The Smaller English Country House*, first published in 1910, one is struck by the absence of any plan, except two, which bears a resemblance to *Casa Cuseni*. One is a house built in 1906 by E.P. Warren

(1856–1937) in Berkshire, and the other was designed by Ernest Newton for the Channel Islands.³⁶ More similar in elevation was the *Château Eleonore*, built for Lord Brougham at Cannes in 1836, but that was a typically Italianate villa such as Sir Charles Barry designed, for which Kitson had other models closer to his home.³⁷ On the other hand, a similar eying of Palladio’s villa plans frequently turns up the proportions and the sorts of relationship between rooms that Kitson’s villa displays, most notably the central *salone* which connects with every part of the ground floor, and the flanking of a double cube by two single cube rooms. The main difference is that Palladio’s central *salone* usually ran through the villa from front to back as was normal in the palaces of Venice itself whereas Kitson’s ran across it.³⁸ But the explanation is simple enough. Kitson was not copying Palladio. He was using some of his design principles. As *Casa Cuseni* was built into an excavated mountainside there was nothing at the back at ground level except an airing court. In elevation the major departure from Palladio’s palaces, but not his villas, was the provision of greater height for the *piano nobile* on the ground floor.

Of course many of the great English country houses of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries used such a plan, Hugh May at Coleshill as well as William Kent and the English Palladians. But they usually kept to an almost unbroken front, with rooms stepped forward only beyond the core of three rooms where they assumed the role of end pavilions as at Wilton, or corner-towers as at Holkham and Houghton.³⁹ With its roof pavilions of the 1950s, *Casa Cuseni* assumes such a profile now but this was not what Kitson designed. The parapet and roof were quite level apart from the central chimney stack.

There is one Sicilian source for his plan, with which Kitson would have been quite familiar, at least in reproduction, Ernesto Basile’s *Villa Igiea*, designed as a spa but effectively a *de luxe* Hotel for the Florio family.⁴⁰ Featured in *The Architectural Review* in 1901 the ballroom suite, a double cube flanked by single cubed anterooms, has the proportions and spatial rationale of Kitson’s design, although on a much greater scale. And its dining alcove plays, internally, a function akin to that of *Casa Cuseni*’s external *loggia*. At the other end of the hotel, a more elongated suite of *saloni* gives onto a *loggia* and terrace leading to the Mediterranean. Even in its exterior Basile’s design has some of the same blocky austerity of Kitson’s building. The comparison is justifiable but one should not infer a direct connection between the two. There were always Palladio and the Anglo-Italianate Riviera to draw upon.

It is worth dwelling a little on the original plan and particularly how it differs from the use given to it today. *Casa Cuseni* was designed for Robert Kitson’s own bachelor use, and the entertainment of the small numbers of family or friends who came to stay for several weeks each year. Except on the service side close to existing houses, all the windows were tall double doors, which gave the three rooms access to the *salone*,

the *loggia*, the front terrace, and the kitchen or hallway. The *salone* also had its own access to the kitchen and the hall, thereby maintaining its balanced proportions. The main door faced the small side garden cut into the hillside, with Kitson's monogram as the bell-housing and the lunette dated like a foundation stone to 1905, and, like the *salone*, the hall provided access to everywhere — the *salotto*, the *salone*, the ground floor washroom and water closet, the rear *loggia* and kitchen door opposite, and the marble staircase. It may have been rather draughty but is quite logical. There are no inglenooks or the cubbey-holes so beloved by arts and crafts architects and no Home Counties' vernacular transplantation to southern Italy.⁴¹

From this and previous sketch-plans in *Sketchbook No.79*, one can see that the kitchen area called for some rethinking, in particular to reduce the size of the scullery and increase that of the kitchen itself and its storage space. Similarly the staircase was rethought several times, being finally modified to remove a central flight which equalled the two parallel flights, which were built, and replace it by three small groups of steps to lower, mid and top landings. No handrail was provided as Kitson considered such fittings ruined the spacious nobility of the staircase as a whole. In 1910 Weaver criticized Lutyens for a similar subordination of function to aesthetics.⁴²

There is no evidence for a similar evolution of the first floor design in the sketchbook nor any loose final plan. There has also been a lot more subsequent alteration at either end upstairs to create suites of rooms and more bathrooms. Essentially, there was a small guest suite at the north west end with a bathroom and sleeping place for Kitson's manservant behind it. Two bedrooms and a studio ran over the *salone* connected by a rear corridor. And at the south east end was Kitson's bedroom with the balcony on which he shaved himself every morning. It was neither a house designed for family living nor for a host of servants. Although there are photographs of liveried footmen before the First World War, it is not obvious that they had more than a decorative function. For most of his later life at *Casa Cuseni*, Kitson's staff consisted of an arab chauffeur, a young Sicilian manservant who came into service at the age of fourteen and various local men who subsequently drove his car, and a cook/housekeeper who did not live in but was in due course provided with a house at the top of the village below, and a non-resident gardener, augmented by helpers and labourers on a casual basis and his *muratore* (builder).⁴³

By contrast to the H plan which seems to have been fixed from the outset, Kitson made various designs for the elevation with an interesting outcome. They differ in three important ways from what was eventually built. One set of elevations and other sketches clearly indicate that Kitson had a much more ornamental facade in mind, with elaborate swags around the windows, presumably to be in stucco. Taormina had few precedents but Sicily has plenty.⁴⁴ The rear corridor was to be supported on posts or columns with shoed brackets above the open walkway between the kitchen and the

hall. Thirdly, the front *loggia* was designed with a varying number of arches supporting the bedroom terrace. Although there are many photographs of the site in preparation and the actual building of the house, which show exactly how it was constructed and of what materials, no working drawings survive. If they were made, like those for the furniture, they probably perished in their actual use. One feature is apparent in the measured ground plan. There was to be no defacement of the facade with drainpipes. All these were built within the walls themselves and served the great cistern that underlay the terrace in front of the house.

Eventually of course Kitson had to compromise with the way in which the house was to be built from the materials readily available for local use. He worked closely
6.38 with some of the best local craftsmen and a *capo-maestro* as builder, Antonino
to
6.41 Siligato, the father of his close friend. Don Carlo himself acted as his go-between,
spiccia facenne. It is this procedure, which arose from necessity anyway, rather than the bold Palladian villa design, that approximates to the sort of principles advocated by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Throughout his life Kitson was on close terms with his master craftsmen and he even managed to maintain this by correspondence during the Second World War. That *Casa Cuseni* was built in exactly the same materials as
6.42 were in use elsewhere in Taormina is quite obvious when one compares the building
6.43 photographs with contemporary buildings that remain unstuccoed like the *Villa Carlotta* (once the Hotel Bristol).⁴⁵ Kitson's own photographs tell the story of its construction.

Kitson was keenly interested in geology and applied himself to the principles of engineering. *Casa Cuseni* was built on a platform cut into the steeply terraced olive groves. The builders used the rough stones to erect the thick outer walls, which were coursed at regular intervals with broad tiles, a traditional local method. The whole
6.44 was then stuccoed and finished with an ochre wash, all the lime being slaked on site
to
6.58 after bringing the water up on muleback from the parish fountain in the town below. Lightly rusticated stone was dressed on site for all the architraves which are strictly ornamental because the openings are all spanned by relieving arches filled in above the stonework. Pieces of volcanic larva were packed into the spaces between the joists over the coved ceilings and below the first floor parquet.

Local materials were used, therefore, as well as traditional methods of wall construction. The wide apertures that might have resulted from the use of steel lintels were therefore precluded and three-dimensional stucco ornament was also omitted, leaving *Casa Cuseni* to rely on its stripped Palladian proportions rather than a lot of classical, or rather baroque, embellishments. Where these were used, they are
6.59 authentic. The curvaceously 'bombé' wrought-iron balconies, with their substantial
6.60 sculpted consoles, enrich the plain facade in the vernacular baroque tradition established when Sicilian towns were rebuilt after the massive 1693 earthquake.⁴⁶

The Tuscan Doric Order used for the *loggia's* columns is a more sophisticated and technical feature. Presumably once rolled-steel joists were proposed as the means of tying the bedroom terrace to the whole flooring framework, the need for thicker piers and an arcade could be dispensed with. In fact Kitson reversed his earlier designs. In front he built an open *loggia* with columns supporting a wide terrace, while it was at the rear he built a brick arcade supporting the closed bedroom corridor instead of a stone or wooden colonnaded one.⁴⁷

6.3 Arts and Crafts and the *Genius Loci*

Enough reference has already been made in Section 6.1 to convey the attractions of Taormina to the Kaiser and King Edward VII as well as to their subjects. No less than the Duchess of Sutherland took a lease on Lady Hill's Convent of *Santa Caterina* in 1903 which had already been enjoyed in 1890 by Lord Ronald Gower, who with his friends Alick Yorke and Hamilton Aïdé was a welcome guest of Tina Whitaker in Palermo as well as at Queen Victoria's Court.⁴⁸ Considerable social cachét was added to the English community by the decision of their friend the Hon. Alexander Nelson Hood (1865–1937) to establish his main residence in the *Villa Falconara* which he built below the town in 1903–4 whilst staying at the Hotel Timeo. As Duca di Bronte, he held the title and estates of Maniace granted to Horatio Viscount Nelson, but as Controller to the Duchess of Teck from 1892 and private secretary to her daughter when she became Princess of Wales in 1901, he acted as a lodestone for the bachelors at court as well as the novelists Robert Hichens, Marion Crawford and Norman Sharpe, pen-named Fiona Macleod, who is buried at Maniace.⁴⁹

The romantic walled Graeco-mediaeval town, perched precipitously above the sea, facing south-east to the warmth of Africa and west to the forceful bulk of Mount Etna, was most attractive. 'Most people go there because its scenery is hardly to be surpassed anywhere in the world, and because they will meet plenty of people, and because it is an amusing place to shop at.' wrote Douglas Sladen in 1905, but popularity had its drawbacks.

Taormina is full of vulgar bars, styled American, but not kept by Americans – it only means whisky, largely made in France. ... Taormina suffers from artists badly – they swarm, and have made models dear and independent. ... Many of the the shops sell their pictures. Taormina is the artists' town of Sicily. ... There is no place better ... to see girls carrying huge jars of water on their heads. The type is handsome and the dress picturesque, and they know how strangers admire them. But they don't like being kodaked unless they are paid for it.⁵⁰

There were many 'artists' bits' which Robert Kitson was to paint during the next half century. The Romans had given the Greek theatre their usual form of stage entablature, the ruins of which provide the romantic framework to the view of Etna,

recorded and extolled by St Non, Goethe and many artists and travellers of the nineteenth century. The town had a prosperous position during the middle ages on the route from Messina to Catania and the main street runs between two gates so-named with a further gate and clocktower dividing the upper from the lower town. Most of Taormina's gothic buildings overlie classical ruins but, with the exception of the 6.67 *Palazzo Corvaia*, where the Sicilian Parliament met in 1410 to chose their ruler,⁵¹ the 6.68 street consists of rather small, sheer-faced *palazzi* that are now hotels and *pensione*, and innumerable shops and boutiques, for Taormina still prides itself on being Sicily's premier tourist resort.

There are two historic *piazze*. One lies between the *Palazzo Corvaia* and *Sta Caterina* and the site of the town's theatre and also gives access to the Greek Theatre and the *Hotel Timeo*.⁵² The other is the symbolic centre at the top of the 6.69 town with the *Commune*, the *Duomo*, and the much-restored fountain surmounted by 6.70 the centaur, *stemma* of the town. Halfway between is the *piazza* fronting *S. Giuseppe* which is laid out as a tourist's *point de vue* and recreation space. Further west than 6.176 the *Duomo* are some of the Taormina's most distinctive gothic buildings, the *Palazzo* 6.6 *del Duca di S. Stefano*, and the *Badia Vecchia* with the substantial convent of *S. Domenico* below jutting out over the view towards Naxos. Taormina has no statue to 6.7 Garibaldi but there is a plaque with the comments of King Vittorio Emanuele III about 6.71 the view from the *Hotel Excelsior* in 1922 '*Che incanto questo e il posto più bello del mondo*'.

Apart from the obvious crenellations, turrets and *campanili*, the most characteristic features of the town's secular architecture fall within two period types. The first is the set of substantial but roughly coursed stone gothic palaces, approached through a narrow court from which steps rise to a corbelled gallery and *piano nobile* with wide pointed windows. Local stone and dark blocks of larva are used to give a colourful chequer-pattern to these buildings. Quite different are the sub-classical light stone facades of the later palaces embellished only by their mouldings and bulbous, wrought-iron balconies, and occasionally by flat stucco patterns as in the conventual parts of *S. Domenico*.

In his analysis of the architectural work of C.R. Ashbee, Alan Crawford characterizes the quality of his design within and for the *genius loci*.⁵³ While this is common to Arts and Crafts architects like Philip Webb and the earlier work of Sir Edwin Lutyens, who learnt and used the materials and building techniques of Surrey and the Thames Valley, it is the singular feature of Ashbee's buildings which otherwise follow every style and material of vernacular architecture. In Chapter 4 it has already been suggested that Bedford and Kitson's architecture departed from this principle in the use of southern English forms in Yorkshire. In Taormina, however, the principle was carried a stage further than in Britain because the settlers did not merely

design buildings in keeping with their surroundings. They extensively developed the environs of the town even though it was often in ways that echoed or even flaunted Taormina's historic cultural associations and styles. Their designs are as fundamentally English as they are Sicilian in association, a characteristic they may share with their German counterparts although this requires its own research.

The Duca di Bronte's villa exemplifies this well, although it also reflects the popularity of Venetian Gothic which Baron Franchetti had revived along the Grand Canal.⁵⁴ Built below the road on the approach to Taormina from the coast, only the
6.73 roofs of the *Villa Falconara* are visible from it as well as one of the upper terraces with
6.74 stone and thin-brick walls and terra-cotta urns. Like *Casa Cuseni* it was built into the cliff to face Mount Etna and has a central *loggia* onto the front terrace. But it is totally secluded within its own semi-circle of hills.⁵⁵ The gardens have extensive colonnades and tiers of steps that supported pergolas which reflect the *Beaux Arts* tradition in design and also characterized Harold Peto's garden designs in the Riviera.

Unfortunately Lord Michael Pratt has found no evidence of who, if any one, may have worked with Alexander Nelson Hood on the design of his villa or its gardens. He could also have done it on his own like Kitson but it looks too sophisticated. One wonders when his association with H. Inigo Triggs (1876–1923) began. Triggs's connections with Taormina were strong. He was married to one of the Hill's daughters and, after retiring to the town because of ill health, designed the Anglican
6.75 church of St George and a mortuary chapel for the unconsecrated part of the town's
6.76 cemetery just before his death in 1923. This church and chaplaincy replaced the use of the chapel in *Santa Caterina*, which was no longer available after the death of Lady
6.72 Hill, when Mabel moved into *La Guardiola* which Triggs could have designed with its belvedere and the steeply terraced gardens on the opposite side of the road. The renaissance arcaded interior of the church is faced with roughstone and local gothic motifs on the exterior. The Duca organized the collection of subscriptions for the building fund and probably arranged for its construction, but this may have been his first collaboration with Triggs. Because the gardens of *Santa Caterina* have been almost obliterated by the subsequent convent's school, and *La Guardiola* is extensively overgrown with cypress groves, there is nothing local with which to compare the *Villa Falconara* and the few published clues are ambiguous.

Triggs had served in Banister Fletcher's office and won the Royal Academy's Travelling Scholarship in 1898, a few years after Francis Bedford. Travelling around collecting material for his first book on Inigo Jones, he took to the idea of a career as a writer and architect of formal gardens for which he became as celebrated as C.E. Mallows (1864–1914) and E.P. Mawson (1885–1954).⁵⁶ His first book, *Formal Gardens in England and Scotland*, of 1902, had no obvious association with the English
6.77 in Italy. But his second, in 1906, was *The Art of Garden Design in Italy*. With its
to
6.84

superb collotype plates, reproduced prints, and his own plans, it has never been excelled. By then he had obviously been disappointed with Sicily of which he wrote critically 'that there should also be no good modern gardens is only attributable to the extraordinary lack of artistic instinct that seems to pervade Southern Italy'.⁵⁷

Such a comment of course suggests no association with turf turning in Taormina at that time and could imply the contrary. But Ethel Kitson's diary of 8 March 1905 specifically refers to the great fun she had at an evening dance at Carlo Wood's in the presence of Mrs le Blond. Audrey le Blond had taken the photographs for Triggs's Italian book and it appears that, whether or not she may have had anything to do with *La Falconara*, she was certainly in the circle of Robert Kitson's expatriate friends at just the time he was putting his ideas for *Casa Cuseni* and its front terraces and approach onto paper. So at least Triggs's book could have given him suggestions.

With Kitson's third English gardening precursor, Florence Trevelyan, one is on quite firm if much crazier ground. Hailing from the cultural core of the landed Whig gentry, she demonstrated a vigorous expatriate taste and style of life coupled with a
6.85 strong commitment to some aspects of local life as well as vernacular design. A
6.86 protectress of ill-treated dogs, she commemorated them with accusatory monumental inspirations rather like the anti-mafia wreaths today.

The gardens that Mrs Cacciola-Trevelyan developed below her villa are
6.87 remarkable for the curious pavilions and bothies that she called *The Beehives* when built in 1899 — rustic Japonaiserie in the style of mediaeval Sicily. However fantastic
6.88 — and there is a mock-prehistoric stone circle — her structures were highly original and yet derived from local models and motifs. Terraced out on a cliff face, the actual construction of the garden was one of the many local feats of engineering in the town at that time. The brick walls, tall trees, urned parapets and bougainvillae pergolas make a fine but not unusual garden. But its structures defy description — 'as if designed by some dotty Englishman which one then finds they are' remarked a past Master of the Faculty of Royal Designers.⁵⁸ Rustic woodwork, brick turrets and peep holes, crenellations and a form of pagoda lurk in the shrubbery and rear up amid the cypresses — picturesque in an unrestrained way and yet echoing the sorts of construction one finds in the mediaeval parts of the town. In this way they are both utterly alien and yet typically Taorminese.⁵⁹

No-one could have been a greater exponent of the principle of *genius loci* than Robert Kitson. It permeates his whole relationship with Sicily. He took to the island and its people and the Sicilians took to him. His house, although markedly different in proportion and lack of gothic details from a lot of local new building before the Great War, in fact depended on local craftsmen and local materials so much as to simplify his intended elevations and conform to local conditions. In the case of the gardens, like those of Florence Trevelyan, the materials were almost all local but they were used to

realise his own designs which in some cases had local associations, but in others stemmed from the long tradition of Anglo-Italian garden design which was at its height in Italy itself just then. However at times they were more whimsically designed and may be associated with the contemporary revival of the rococco through *art nouveau*, most familiar through the Paris Exhibition of 1900.⁶⁰

6.4 The gardens of *Casa Cuseni*

The garden was an integral part of Kitson's overall design and commanded his attention from the time of his initial plans in about 1905 until his final modifications of the access to accommodate his severe heart condition after the Second World War. Each component carried its own name and most of the designs for distinctive features were worked out in his sketchbooks over thirty years from 1905, including the actual sites for some plants, fruit trees in the 1930s and 40s and his rose collection in 1910–17. Although now filled with mature fruit and flowering trees and a mass of local wild flowers, the underlying layout is original.⁶¹

Kitson fitted a series of simple geometrical shapes into the tall, narrow site.

6.89 These can be appreciated as a single design but can really only be understood by
to
6.92 reference to the steeply rising levels. As already stated the whole plan was axially
orientated on the villa itself, ignoring older existing terraces which followed the
mountain's contours. Access was provided by a variety of steps, ramps, paths and
staircases linking the many levels, which were enlivened by handsome grain or oil jars
at their angles to take plants. The large *Sketchbook No.79* includes many ideas for the
front gardens because they had to be designed and built with the house to provide safe
access to it. But, with the exception of the means of access, one can see from
subsequent sketchbooks that the purely garden architecture and furniture engaged
Kitson's attention after the design of the house and its access had been worked out.
It seems useful, therefore, to consider the gardens according to the likely order in
which they were laid out rather than just their initial sequence of designs. Having
understood the problems that the site represented, it will then be appropriate to
consider the more decorative motifs and their possible origins.

There were several different problems that confronted Kitson from the outset. One had to get up to the house from the old muletrack to Castelmola. If the garden was to be full of plants it had to be watered and that required water collection and conservation. If there was to be some order to the plan, the lower levels of the garden had to be treated as a whole despite their natural topographical departure from such a plan. Finally, an appropriately distinguished aspect had to be offered to those arriving at the gates of *Casa Cuseni*, which would also present them with an intelligible means of mounting to the house.

From the outset Kitson solved several of these in one grand design. The storm water from the house was drained into a large cistern, the brick-tiled roof of which provided the broad terrace fronting the *loggia*. At its centre, the entire height had to be
6.93 mounted by stairs, but at either side were interstitial terraces, one side of which
to
6.102 incorporated another cistern and supported the long pergola which was the first part of the garden itself to receive his attention. After several semi-circular, double-flighted designs of the kind familiar from lesser drops in formal gardens of the time, all broken to provide access to the pergola, he settled on a less demonstrative but more secure and buildable design. The double flights were built in one plane, their landings giving access to the pergola and terrace. But the circular motif was retained by the marble fountain-head set in a niche with *putti* and the manner by which the terrace was finally attained by a short semicircular flight of steps. Kitson boldly drew the design in elevation and abandoned the intricate planes with subsidiary compartments, for which he had provided no elevations.⁶²

The lower levels of the front garden and the initial access were largely
6.103 encompassed in one axial plan. A broad tribune, from which one could view the final
to
6.105 stairway and fountain as well as the garden below, would be reached by a straight ramp on either side, one starting just above the so-called Greek well and the other from steps in the angle below the *pozzo nero*, cesspit. Each again provided dual
6.106 access, either to the central parterre or a further ramp terminating at the lower
to
6.107 fountain and gateway. The earliest sketch-plans show the essentials of this design, which Kitson retained until construction.

The lowest corner of the garden was integrated into this design in 1912 by paths and a circular bed beside a further well — all the circular features were of the same diameter. Because a certain amount of realignment and rebuilding was required when the road to Castelmola was built and graded for motor traffic in 1931, it is difficult to determine exactly what plan the original entrance followed. But Kitson's ideas for the
6.108 gates and outer walls are to be found in sketchbooks dated 1913 and 1915 as well as
to
6.115 1932, so his intentions seem to have remained much the same. The high, half-moon gates are hung from tall, pierced piers in an undulating and colourful, rococco wall with railings across its apertures.

Having established the elements of the lower garden plan and some of the initial construction, it seems appropriate to complete the story before embarking on that of the upper garden. It is told by Kitson's sketchbooks with occasional complications because not all of them are dated and some only datable by inference. Some designs seem separated by several years although they relate to the same feature in the gardens. He depicted some in pencil or watercolour sketches which imply when they may have been constructed as well as the artistic pleasure that Kitson subsequently got from them after construction as their plantings matured.

The gardens of *Casa Cuseni* are terraces, or hanging gardens so they were inevitably architectural. But unlike the house, which is severely fronted in plain stucco, the walls of the garden are often treated with whimsical designs. These are to be seen as one approaches from below. Similarly, the garden terraces and the pavements of the principal pathways are also patterned, in their case geometrically, to be seen from above. From the beginning one can see that Kitson had these in mind, although the basic plan and elevations were his primary initial concern. At every level there is a well, fountain or cistern tap for watering the garden.

As soon as he had moved into the house on 18 February 1907, his sketchbooks included garden design details such as the splayed consoles flanking the great top stairway and the tribune giving access to it. This tribune of brick and stone projects from the retaining wall and is the first architectural eminence gained in the climb from the gates which then becomes centred on the house itself. It echoes the machicolations of Taormina's Gothic *palazzi* and is not unlike some of the smaller and more restrained pavilions in Florence Trevelyan's garden. From the sketchbooks it looks as though the lower garden and the walled parterre below the tribune were laid out in 1911 and 1912, after which in 1913 Kitson also drew a couple of pages of caricatures, based on a moustachioed face, which became the stucco motif on the wall.⁶³ However, the stucco grapes on the retaining wall of the *pozzo nero* and the strapwork designs seem to date from 1922 and 1927 when he also redesigned the patterned brickwork floor of the tribune.⁶⁴ Perhaps it had settled or the surface had crumbled. Or perhaps it was because he had such good rapport with his *muratore*, 'Usurdu' Bucalo. Their partnership was commemorated in the stucco portrait profiles adjoining the strapwork as one mounts the ramp to the tribune.

Although its plan and brick piers seem unexceptional the importance of the pergola in the overall design of the garden should not be underestimated. From the terrace below it, and in particular from the formal garden over the *pozzo nero*, one obtains the best view point of the house towering above and receding from the bright piers and shady recesses of the pergola below. Kitson drew and painted the subject several times.⁶⁵ It was always a central part of his design and the seats in it were probably originally designed for its construction in 1907. The coloured strapwork seatbacks were finally designed in 1914–15 when he probably began to give serious attention to the main feature of the lower garden, the tall exedra with a fountain falling into a shallow basin with fish and papyrus.⁶⁶ The earliest ideas associated with this are some drawings of grotesque masks as headed finials to the main piers probably of 1908–9. One is reminded of those Roman 'emperors' outside the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford but there are many possible models in Italian gardens where herms abound.

As in the decoration of the facade of the house, Kitson was initially inclined to adopt more sculpted elaboration than is shown in his final designs. Because most of

them are not inscribed or identifiable, it is not always easy to distinguish sketches intended to form the basis for his watercolour pictures, from those of existing gardens or sculpture elsewhere which may have influenced him, or from his own ideas for designs that he did not pursue. One of 1910 seems to incorporate a stuccoed exedra with a free-standing fountain column such as one finds in the Normans' Benedictine cloister at Monreale.⁶⁷ A group of sketch designs in 1915 indicate his thinking — pierced pierheads surrounding a low basin with a fountain source near the top. But in sketchbooks dated as late as 1921–22 he was still designing the marble work of the basin itself.⁶⁸

It is difficult to gauge exactly how one first encountered this imposing feature on entering the gardens because the track to Castelmola originally took a lower route. But if one of the earliest sketch-books has been dated correctly, Kitson's ideas for the undulating rococo wall were formed at the time the house was being built and then repeated in the new wall and gates designed in 1931.⁶⁹ In 1934 the triangle of land below the road was planted as an orchard and part was given to Maria Nigri, his cook/housekeeper, for her residence.⁷⁰ What we now find is that the colourfully pilastered gateway leads into a cool tile and pebble-patterned pavement, or *ciottolato*, before an elaborately topped exedra with a basin of papyri. The fountain head is a terra-cotta lion, of ancient Greek design, possibly found on the site like other terracottas built into the garden's structures.⁷¹ Like the floor of the tribune it is a little place of its own, a common feature in such gardens.

The Rosebook begun in 1910–12 indicates that almost all the cultivated terraces of the garden were ready for planting by this time. But only the old roses on the house itself and a few *Banksia* still survive *in situ*. The current planting owes its free design to Kitson's niece Daphne Phelps, who has retained his plans and kept his now mature plantings where they do survive. The three major features of the upper gardens were being worked out in sketchbooks as early as 1900–10 but seem to have been revised over the following five years, at least as far as their decoration was concerned. Following the devastating Messina earthquake at the very end of 1908, Frank Brangwyn wrote in January (presumably 1909) having heard from Sir Alfred East that Kitson was all right but that the garden had been washed away by the great rainstorm that accompanied it, and that he approved of Kitson's idea for the upper garden with supplementary drainage to take off the rush of stormwater which might cause the tank to overflow. He promised a design for a little fountain or basin and proposed his subsequent visit for 2–3 weeks in March. Brangwyn also referred to a small garden he had just seen in *The Studio* by Lutyens and added a pen-sketch of a flight of steps more like those already built in front of *Casa Cuseni*, i.e. a broken flight of steps up to the back gardens. In 1910 he added a little sketch for a pergola and basin.⁷²

But Kitson built nothing like this at the rear of the house. Access was provided
6.89 by a long flight of steps that climb up the ancient perimeter wall from below the *pozzo*
nero to the long walk level with the *Corte della fontana*. This initially provided access
to the first of the three main elements of the upper gardens. The first terrace above
the level of the house is immediately above the garden leading to the main entrance.
6.139 The high retaining wall has a stucco decoration, now overgrown with flowering
to
6.141 climbers, and is topped with a balustrade and obelisks. They appear in sketchbooks of
1913–15.⁷³ Although in Britain one thinks of these as characteristic of Northern
Renaissance gardens like Montacute, and its revival by architects like Matthew Digby
Wyatt at Castle Ashby, in Italy obelisks had continued to be a subordinate feature of
garden design throughout the baroque era as well in urban planning where they
retained their original prominence. At *Casa Cuseni* they seem to justify the height of
the wall below and protect those in the upper garden from danger. One simply does
not know if Kitson had British or Italian examples in mind and the fine illustrated
English books of the period could have provided examples from both sources as could
places he had seen on his own travels.⁷⁴

At the centre of the rear wall of this formally planted garden is a sundial and
trough-like basin. In the centre of its face is a wittily sculpted gnomon, in marble, with
an incised groove to allow rainwater to drip off its beak into the basin. Although it
6.142 looks like a sundial, it does not appear to have functioned as one and there are no
to
6.144 sketches for it. It is framed by small bright black and yellow tiles that Kitson must
have obtained in Tunisia, where they were used in the decoration of the Bey's palace
about this time and are to be found in other buildings above the suqs of Tunis.⁷⁵ They
are also set into the sides of the trough below. The effect is quite jazzy, given the
strong primary colours and rectangularity of the components, and quite different from
the more elaborate and architectural features of the lower, front garden. One thinks of
the sunburst motifs of the 1920s and commercial *Art Deco*. But this fountain is five to
ten years earlier. It is another interesting example of Kitson's use of traditional
materials for a very personal, even quirky, design that can also be placed within the
more general framework of contemporary artistic development.

One gets a similar impression from the decorative motif over the wide stucco seat
6.145 at the centre of the retaining wall above the topmost element in the original gardens,
to
6.148 the swimming pool. There are plans for this in sketchbooks of 1908–10, and a sketch
of it as built among the almonds of 1911, but the piers may not have been stuccoed
until 1918–19.⁷⁶ Although it was placed on the central axis, and is therefore at the
north-western border of the site, the rectangular pool is turned west to confront
Mount Etna, which it originally reflected. It must have been idyllic by moonlight. The
piers supporting the jasmine pergola around the deep pool have bands of pink stucco
and the wide seat is backed by a playfully stylized floral motif in coloured stucco.

Unlike the more formal parts of the garden – the front stairway, the pergola and the fountain court – the swimming pool had a lighter function and was not designed to reflect their more academic forms. It was one of the few secluded parts of the gardens.

6.149 Kitson was a devotee of swimming and sunbathing but I have found no evidence
to that he carried it to the level of a cult. His sister gave him Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*
6.151 which had influenced Edward Carpenter and C.R. Ashbee, but Kitson does not seem
to have followed their rustic ideal of a simple outdoor life and certainly never coupled
this with socialism. But it was through swimming that he met and enjoyed time with
young people as one can see from snapshots taken on the beach. Even in his last
years he made the effort to show three young lieutenants around the gardens after
Turiddu had picked them up. They came, appropriately from Leeds, Bradford and
Sheffield.⁷⁷

6.162 The third element of the upper garden was the one of which it is said that Kitson
was most proud and with which he was obviously most delighted. Celebrated in his
sketches and watercolours, it was where photographs were taken with friends and
distinguished visitors such as Alexander Nelson-Hood who took tea with tangerine
sandwiches on the *ciottolato*. From the jazzy tiled fountain in the obelisk garden,
there is a gentle rise up a patterned brick path to the terrace level with the roof of *Casa*
Cuseni. A long walk runs right across the garden bisected by a stony path rising by
stages through groves of olives, almonds and cypresses. Some Greek and Roman
moulded ceramics, that may have been found on this or similar sites during their
excavation, are set into the walls. So was a plaque of St Giorgio that Kitson
designed.⁷⁸ On the axis of the house and viewable through the chimney stack at the
centre of its roof, Kitson constructed *la corte della fontana*. This represents his
primary achievement as a designer of a specifically Italian garden-room.

6.154 A long *ciottolato*, a multicoloured pebble and tile pattern with arabesques, paves
the court which is cut into the hillside in the same way as the house.⁷⁹ A series of
island beds of lemons etc. on either side side leads one down the pattern from an
almond tree to a shallow fish-tank in which are reflected the sparkling floral tiles set
into its apsidal central recess, and the rather squat nymphs in the arched niches to
each side. The retaining wall is of stucco washed in pink and blue, surmounted by a
pergola festooned with wistaria and lemons. But in Kitson's time, like most of the
other gardens, it was full of roses as well, in this case planted along the beds under its
walls.

6.155 Kitson's sketchbooks show the care he took with its design. He began in 1909–
to 10 with exactly the plan he finally executed, a long *vasca* with three niches, but
6.160 between the retaining wall and the swimming pool above, the pergola proposed was to
be a substantial triangular arcade. If this design of 1910 was for the court, it also
called for a dynamic central feature and more elaborate strapwork on the stucco wall.

He was also working out the size and number of flower beds. This central niche design, again of 1910, includes a statue of the *Immacolata*. Kitson collected the baroque fittings that the churches were casting out so perhaps he envisaged the Virgin for his court. Or perhaps some composition elsewhere served as a model for his idea. A little watercolour sketch of 1910 indicates that what he had in mind was something more aquatic like a dolphin and this was also sketched in 1911 when he worked out the actual structure of the court more fully. By 1910–16 it looked more architecturally baroque, but he had raised the pergola directly above the niche and this may have been influenced by illustrations he saw of gardens in Portugal, for there is no sketchbook or record of a visit to that country.⁸⁰ In 1912 he was working out the tile pattern for the pavement and as late as 1915 was recording such patterns on a visit to Siracusa. The designs appear to have been finalised in 1914–15 with drawings for the 6.161 6.163 6.164 6.169
statued niches that seem close to what was executed. But the only contemporary records of the colourful tiles finally set into the centre apse seem to be watercolours to after its completion. These tiles also appear identical to some in the Bey's apartments in Tunis and in the Zawiya Sidi Sahab on the of outskirts of Kairouan, where Kitson had established his winter retreat.

Although this is the most traditionally Italian of Kitson's garden designs, it makes use of motifs and materials from a variety of sources, which may be most closely compared with the colourful stucco of the Iberian peninsular or Northern Italy and Venice. This is consistent with Kitson's style throughout the gardens and his references to past models through a contemporary design in the materials available to him. *Ciottolato* pavements are found throughout Sicily, and in the palaces rebuilt in 6.153 Catania after 1693 they are the norm. But they are in any case widely found in Italian gardens as well as in the patterned pebble walks and pavements of English garden design at that time.

The gardens as we see them now to some extent represent the mature form of Kitson's plantings, particularly in the citrus and other fruits — loquat, persimmon, pomegranate and almond. The different types of vine on the pergola, the wisteria, and the white and pale yellow Jasmines can be seen in his watercolours. And the 6.170 6.171
chrysanthemum frutescens beside the great jars at the front stairway must be the direct descendants of those caught in his early photographs as the *Banksia* roses must also be. But in their wilder and luxuriant form today the gardens also reflect the naturalistic principles and plantings of Kitson's niece, Daphne Phelps, who has now lived at *Casa Cuseni* longer than her uncle and devoted these years to conserving and enriching the fertility of the soil.⁸¹

Kitson himself was an enthusiastic rose grower and collected both old roses and new ones, such as that named after Miss Rosalie Bull (d.1928), another resident of Taormina and a friend. He bought the land right up to the crags below the *Madonna*

della Rocca and laid out his last garden in 1938 above the swimming pool. He named it the *Avenue della Pace* in commemoration of his hopes of the Munich Agreement and added its plantings to his *Rose Book*. But the peace Kitson longed for was not kept and, when Italy entered the war after the fall of France in 1940, he found his passport had been stolen and he could not slip across to Malta, but accompanied his friend and neighbour Bobbie Pratt-Barlow, who had broken his leg which was in plaster, to Switzerland via Rome and finally got out of France by plane to England. His final years were, however, spent back with his faithful Sicilian retainers, because he was petitioned to return by the town council who invited him to preside over the committee set up to oversee the reconstruction of Taormina. Although most of its zoning regulations now seem to have been circumvented, the conservation of the old town's historic spine and scale of building may largely be attributed to key decisions made at that time.⁸² Like C.R. Ashbee in London and Jerusalem, Kitson tried to conserve the town to which his own constructions were so sympathetically related.⁸³

6.5 C.R. Ashbee and the Guild of Handicraft in Taormina

A tantalizing void in this research has been the lack of evidence of personal contacts between Robert Kitson and C.R. Ashbee. One might have expected it because Ashbee was a Cambridge man, although at Kings some years before Kitson went up to Trinity. Ashbee had also lectured in Yorkshire for Sadler's External Studies Delegacy at Oxford. He and the School of Handicraft did exhibit at the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions in Leeds but his connections with M.E. Sadler may not have endured after he stopped lecturing or his presence in Leeds been required for the exhibitions. His architectural client in Taormina, Colonel Shaw-Hellier, was a good friend of Robert Kitson, and had entertained his sister and friends several times during her visit in 1905. Because their local social circles coincided one would have expected him to introduce them and take Ashbee to see Kitson's recently completed house. But there is no reference to *Casa Cuseni* in Ashbee's journals despite his description of walks around the mountains above the house. And he did record a call that he and Janet made on 'The Duke of Bronté – a dry discerning little man – who is a neighbour of the Colonel's here and is building a great garden staircase with rows of columns' and teatime discussions with von Gloeden about the mixture of 'racial types' to be seen among Sicilian youth.⁸⁵

- 6.172 Shaw-Hellier had bought a site just below the convent of *San Pancrazio*, an ancient temple of Isis topped by a baroque church with a cloister-like entrance court.
- 6.173 The views east along the Sicilian coast and across to Calabria are splendid because the cliffs tower into craggy mountains along the road towards Messina. Ashbee was thrilled with Sicily and the prechristian urges that he, like the colonel, perceived in local youth.⁸⁶ Like Gibbon, Payne Knight and Sir William Hamilton, their analysis of

local society and psychology was a direct reflection of the archaeological record. If one scratched the surface, there was the real thing. Shaw-Hellier preserved all the finds from the excavations and invited Jack Beazley out from Oxford to classify them, the scholar who was to create the corpus and the artists of ancient Greek ceramic painting.⁸⁷ Ashbee had gone out in 1908, with one of the Guildsmen from Chipping Campden, Alec Miller, who was a carver and modeller. But they were worried by the state of affairs at the Guild of Handicraft which was about to fall into liquidation. So he was delighted when Beazley turned up and, after Alec had left for Florence, he thoroughly enjoyed their sight-seeing tour of Segesta and Selinunte which were still sufficiently isolated from the prurience which Ashbee felt was bound to follow the railway and impose 'bathing drawers'.⁸⁸

But Ashbee's expression of his philosophy of life and art and liberated response to Sicily was not all he shared with Robert Kitson, excepting of course his socialism. He also recorded his observations of the way in which the *Villa San Giorgio* was being built and the parallels with the many photographs that Kitson took of the work underway at *Casa Cuseni* are obvious. The Barone di Policastrello, one of Ethel Kitson's 'crowd' in 1905 who had subsequently got into a matrimonial scrape with a title-hunting American, acted in the role assumed by Don Carlo Siligato for Kitson, as *Spiccia facenni* with the workmen. One can see it all ...

I don't think that I've ever enjoyed a piece of work so much and I wish I might stay here another month watching the work and making the drawings as they are wanted. To be with and among Sicilian workmen is a perfect revelation. Their amazing quickness, and receptivity, their love of beauty, their grace and feeling and their exquisite manners are a perpetual pleasure. To watch them daily and the *barone* acting as a clerk of works, doing the interpretation, making the bargains and negotiating the finance is better than any play ... They have no sense of time, will work hours longer than they need for the delight of it, will dramatise the tiniest incidents of the day's labour and for the sheer delight of acting ... whether it be fury, humour, pathos, passion-everything is done with a refinement of courtesy that is beyond words. I of course am the centre of this little system, and they literally fight for my approval. There has been a fearful family feud for four days now between two of the handymen because I commended one and rebuked another, and I understand they threatened one another with knives.

The Barone understands them ... He talks for hours at a time and revels in dramatic bargaining. When he wants to swear gently he says "*Ma Benedetto Christo*", when furiously he blazes out with "*Santa Trinità*"! He devotes his whole time apparently to the Colonel whose slave he is. The delicacies and refinements of life among Sicilians appear to be so thorough and genuine and so completely understood by the highest and lowest that there is nothing incongruous in their workmen intruding upon "*Sua Ezzelenza*" in the morning at his home before he has had his café and discussing bargains with him while he is dressing and his costume ... is very *recherché* and distinguished. They always know how far they can go, and they overstep what to us would be unbreakable limitations by their innate breeding. Every Sicilian is a gentleman. I suppose if he knifed you he would do it with some refinement, anyway it is a great delight working with workmen who have such perfect manners.⁹⁰

6.174 The foundation stone of the *Villa San Giorgio* includes a Masonic dedication to the 'Grande Architetto del Universo' and united the name of the local contractor Ingiere Vinciguerra with Ashbee's own and that of their patron, Shaw-Hellier. The stone mason on the job, named Arrigo, was probably the *Capu-Maestru* like Nino Siligato at *Casa Cuseni* so the situation on Kitson's site would have been less complicated. His role would have been more like that of Ashbee but there was probably even more discussion about the actual design and what could be built. Ashbee described Arrigo fixing 'cheap King's Road Wallpaper' on the walls so that he could make drawings for him because ordinary paper would have 'cost him a day's wages'!⁹¹

On his first visit Ashbee had described the 'sticky starchy English just on the act of thawing but never quite' whom the Colonel invited to a dance on 8th January. But Kitson, dressed in Moroccan garb, would have been the life and soul of such a ball with Shaw-Hellier himself, had he been there. When the writer Robert Hichens called, he and the Ashbees had soon begun talking about the 'the limitations of art and the latest types of Drama, Novel, and Music using Hichens's own work for illustration' until the Colonel created a gardening diversion to break it up.⁹² But the latter made a point of inviting twelve guests to Ashbee's final dinner in 1908, most of them Americans and several of them architects, for whom he prepared the choicest of
6.186b puddings himself.⁹³ Kitson was presumably away.

It is pointless to speculate further about the lack of reference to *Casa Cuseni*, except to assume that Shaw-Hellier knew the house well and could probably have arranged to take a visitor there even if Kitson was away because the latter would
6.175 have known about his building plans. What makes the question of some interest is
6.18 the fact that the plan of *Villa San Giorgio* is familiar.⁹⁴ It follows the same distribution
6.19 and proportions of rooms in the two main ground-floor suites of the *Villa Igiea* at Palermo, but bears no resemblance to it in elevation. And we have already suggested the similarity between this plan and that of *Casa Cuseni* just up the hill. Even if Ashbee had not seen it, the Colonel knew it well enough and could have specified such similarities. Although taking the form of a semi-circular bay, the deep alcove for sitting-out in the *salone* also resembles an inverted *loggia* as at the *Villa Igiea* and this chief room is flanked by ones of smaller size which project forward onto the garden terrace towards the view, as in the case of *Casa Cuseni*.

Ashbee designed a substantial villa set privately in its own levelled garden, with an adjacent service wing. The *Villa San Giorgio's* elevations are not very noteworthy. It is a gentleman's residence on a rectangular plan with large, mullioned windows and little external ornamentation, plainer in fact than the fashionable contemporary villas then springing up below the old town with their colourful stucco and *Stile Liberty* embellishments. Ashbee's models were probably the more severe palazzi of earlier

centuries, plain cubes pierced by windows but with walls otherwise free of much decoration.

6.178 In the case of Ashbee's villa the exceptions to this severity are all significant. There are four of them. The primary exception is the front porch, a hemispherical colonnade with a semidome, a simple plan, but with its capitals picked out in black larva squares reminiscent of Hoffman's Viennese decoration, and the door itself boldly
6.176 panelled in fine wood. By contrast the gothic shape of the external back stairway,
6.177 giving access to the minstrels' gallery above the *salone*, is taken directly from much-
'kodaked' local buildings like the fifteenth century *Palazzi Corvaia* and *del Duc di S. Stefano*. Local materials and local motifs set the new villa in Taormina.

6.179 One can see something like this in the garden front as well. With its bays and stone-paved surrounds the building looks the sort of residence it is rather than a mock castle. But above the bay of the *salone*, Ashbee introduced a characteristically local motif – the flamboyant traceried roundel window from the Savoca *duomo*, smaller versions of which he would have seen in several churches in Taormina itself. One knows it is Savoca because several photographs of this window are stuck into the journal that he and his wife kept.⁹⁵

Above the flanking ground floor bays and over the bedroom balconies is the other prominent feature of this front, a set of pergola piers which in their completed form would have supported joists festooned with jasmine, vines or bougainvillae. Bare as they are today they look odd and ungainly. Crawford suggests that these roof-terrace piers are not local but may owe their origin to Baker's construction of *Welgelen*, a house in the Cape for Cecil Rhodes, which Ashbee had recently seen.⁹⁶ Indeed this may be so, but perhaps he was also trying to recreate on this garden-front something of the mass of tumbling rocks, gardens and dwellings that is so characteristic of Taormina's steps and terraces but not of this unusually flat site.

6.180 Inside the villa Ashbee made the most of his opportunity to use local materials and refer to the historic culture of Sicily. Payne Knight had considered every construction since the Greek temples barbarous.⁹⁷ Ashbee was most impressed by
6.181 the Norman's cathedral at Monreale and in the spacious, arcaded entrance hall of the
to villa he introduced both the coloured marbles and geometrically inlaid patterns that
6.184 feature in Sicilian Norman dadoes. They form the principle component of his decorative schemes within the villa. The colonel was given to entertaining and
Ashbee provided three round-headed doorways in the *salone*, a truly great hall with English mediaeval or Tudor connotations. At one end is a heraldically cast-iron grate with a tall overmantel inlaid with local marbles. At the other end is a minstrels' gallery with gilded fretwork panels designed and carved by the Guild of Handicraft.

Flanking the double-height *salone* are a small sitting room, and the dining room linked with the kitchen like *Casa Cuseni*. Each of these rooms has bays projecting

windows into the garden, and another English cast-iron grate. In the dining room the overmantel takes the form of an inset bas-relief of *St George slaying the dragon* which was also designed by the Guild. Another similar medallion is set into the wall opposite the marble newel staircase.⁹⁸ The bedrooms are quite simple and were furnished with large *Stile Liberty* beds and wardrobes that were bought but not designed for the house.

Sadly the garden is rather empty and bare now but Ashbee referred to geraniums and heliotrope.⁹⁹ The greater part lies to the south of the house and is well-shaded.

6.186a But the garden front runs out and down in low terraces with stone seats around the sort of pool that could have graced any Lutyens' garden in Somerset or Stanway. This one is however flanked by palm trees with the coastal view already described.¹⁰⁰

When Colonel Shaw-Hellier came out to Sicily he had no intention of returning to *The Woodehouse* at Wombourne, which he left to his nephews. The Ashbees were impressed that a man already over seventy years old should embark on such a project but delighted by his boyish spirit. In fact he had not long to live and when he died in 1910 he left a droll warning in a niche on the main staircase in the form of a painted
6.187 chatelaine standing on a tortoise with her hand over her mouth entitled *The silent and good woman*.¹⁰¹ He was buried under a stone celtic cross in the non-catholic section
6.188 of the town cemetery on the headland below his villa nearly two years before *Country Life* featured the *Villa San Giorgio* in 1912. Kitson and Brangwyn's *Casa Cuseni* had to wait until 1981 and 1985.

6.6 R.H. Kitson and the Arts and Crafts Movement

Both in relation to Frank Brangwyn and his designs for dining room and furniture for *Casa Cuseni* and in his sympathy for the *genius loci* in his own designs for its gardens, Robert Kitson was acting in a manner consistent with the Arts and Crafts principles. And, in Europe, their products as much as their principles were then seen as innovatory and liberating from the forms of academic and historicist convention, although to subsequent Modernists they came to seem technologically reactionary and traditionalist in a vernacular fashion.¹⁰²

In the case of *Casa Cuseni*, both the house and gardens were designed for his own use and reflect Kitson's tastes and bachelor status, with requirements for only a small household. The inspiration for both the proportions and architectural components of his villa were essentially Palladian and his whole site was axially planned. But his approach to craftsmanship and his close association with local artisans is characteristic of those inspired by William Morris, whose eclectic enthusiasm for well
6.189 designed and crafted objects was well exemplified by the variety of things Kitson
6.192 to collected and the ways in which he displayed them. Ecclesiastical craftwork, much of it baroque bric-a-brac, was juxtaposed with fine antique furniture. Sculpture, ancient

and oriental ceramics, and contemporary British pictures were both displayed and used around the house, which was no antiquarian museum. And this approach directly schooled Kitson's own selection of subjects for drawing and water-colour work from nature in the open air, which is the subject of Chapter 7.

As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 8, the Kitsons – Robert, Sydney and Ina Kitson Clark – were promoters of the Arts and Craft Exhibitions Society in Leeds where the Yorkshire Ladies' Council for Education sponsored annual shows at the City Art Gallery. Ina Bidder, as she then was, had been an active member of the Kyrle society in South London,¹⁰³ and got entries from several local and other craft schools. With the support of the Lady Mayoress, Mrs Currer-Briggs, the patron of C.A. Voysey, Robert Kitson proposed a much larger Arts and Crafts Exhibition of national significance. This was mounted in 1905 and Cobden Sanderson stayed at Elmet Hall when he came to give a lecture. Holbrook Jackson of the Leeds Arts Club and Kitson gave votes of thanks and Cobden Sanderson gave the latter a copy of his edition of essays by the followers of William Morris.¹⁰⁴ Brangwyn helped by suggesting appropriate contributors and lent his design for a large tapestry which he subsequently gave to the City Art Gallery.¹⁰⁵

Kitson's relationship with Sir Frank Brangwyn was something of an artistic partnership. Of Brangwyn's designs for the dining room, which were locally made, it seems appropriate to quote one of Gimson's rare writings that Mackmurdo published in 1892, and which would have been familiar to any student of John Ruskin:

As regards design, the first necessity is that the worker must show in his work something of the pleasure that he takes in natural things. And the second necessity is that he must have knowledge of old work, not that he may reproduce it, but that he may learn from it how to express his ideas, and learn from it also what things are most worthy and capable of expression in the particular material he has in hand.¹⁰⁵

These principles were also, of course, reflected in the way in which Casa Cuseni was built and the materials used for its construction. And, in a different way, they underlay the design and engineering of the terraced garden and its cisterns. Kitson brought wit and whimsey into some of his designs for fountain features and serious care into the most formal parts of the garden. His eclectic approach, using materials and motifs from many sources, was that of any expatriate traveller carving his creation out of a difficult terrain on foreign soil. Florence Trevelyan had made some local references in her *beehive* follies. Kitson's designs are less local in that sense, but they were steeped in the colour and forms of baroque and rococo design. He had come a long way from a world in which 'all that is not Gothic can never be art'.¹⁰⁶ Although the classical tradition had never died in Leeds, one should not forget the rococo references to be seen in some of the pavilions of the 1900 Paris international

exhibition and its Italian successors. 'Quaintness', however was not a feature of Kitson's taste or Brangwyn's structural designs.

There was a contemporaneity in Kitson's designs as well as historical and local points of reference. And there was a sense of place as well as respect for craftsmanship, a functional approach to planning and a technical rectitude in the use of materials for construction. These form the characteristics and principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement in British architecture and design, which he like Ashbee transplanted into Sicily.

Chapter 7 The Art of R.H. Kitson

7.1 Serious artistry and artistic accomplishments

Although Robert Kitson's importance as a patron of the arts arises from the Brangwyn commissions, his role in the development of Leeds City Art Gallery and its collections is so closely linked with his own tastes in contemporary British art and well-made antique furniture, ceramics and glass that these will be discussed together in subsequent chapters. The mosaics at St Aidan's are works of considerable artistic significance, one of the few major religious decorative achievements of this century before the modern movement denied their purpose and style of execution. *Casa Cuseni* was a very successful collaborative project with Brangwyn and some of the local master craftsmen. But both the house and its hanging gardens were essentially Kitson's own creation, thoughtfully designed, maintained and developed over forty years by himself and his circle of retainers. It fulfilled its function as his home and he was delighted with it.¹

But Robert Kitson saw himself as an artist. However modest he was about his achievements, he took his art very seriously, spent a great deal of time at work on it, and was a ceaseless and ubiquitous sketcher, moving nowhere without a sketch book, pencils, and at least a tiny watercolour box with six colours and a little brush.² One might ask, when Cecil Hunt and Robert Kitson had such similar starts in life, and came to be artists without any formal art school or alternative *Atelier* training, and the former made such a success of his art, why the latter should be accorded much critical attention?

After all, although several members of his family respected his work and preserved it in considerable quantities, they have just framed the relatively few which they particularly liked. Only in Sicily has Kitson been given any popular acclaim. The works of art that he collected and the furniture he sent home, with the Leeds ware and other items from Elmet Hall, *Stonegates*, and Brimpton have generally held pride of place. During the war his Sicilian retainers looked after his sketchbooks and watercolours with similar respect and affection. Too few of the pictures were ever sold for his name, as distinct from his subject matter, to elicit much attention from the London salerooms in the last decade.³

The fact that Kitson filled over 86 sketchbooks in his lifetime, and left several hundred relatively complete watercolours and sketching-cards, is of itself of course no guarantee of quality or capability, however remarkable his persistence. To make such an assessment is not easy because it is difficult to review the full range of British watercolours contemporary with Kitson's own work. But fortunately the Royal

7.1
7.2

Watercolour Society's new gallery at Bankside has helped to stimulate interest in exhibiting the watercolours in provincial collections, often their finest works. With American interest in British watercolours supported by funds large enough to sponsor extensively illustrated catalogues, colour has at last been widely added to the many indifferent half-tone and other black-and-white reproductions hitherto provided with even the most authoritative texts.⁴

But even so the same names appear in almost every publication and, once into this century, the impact of London, a few colonies of *avant garde* artists, and the success of the Bloomsburies in establishing the critical language of reviewing and assessing works of art, leaves so much of the remainder without a comparative frame of reference. In Chapter 5, the arguments that Sydney Schiff had in his correspondence with both Kitson and Cecil Hunt primarily focussed on his growing antipathy to Frank Brangwyn in favour of new art. But Schiff was clearly drawing on both the current debate about what Roger Fry termed *Post-Impressionism* from 1910–1913, and the wider discussion of more expressionist art conveying a message by writers like T.E. Hulme (1883–1917) in *The New Age*.⁵ Edited by Alfred Orage and Holbrook Jackson, this periodical aimed to project much more widely the ideas they had developed in the Leeds Art Club which Sadler continued to encourage in the city.

Hunt and Kitson went on painting in their own ways and people liked what they did just as they do today, but they got increasingly little critical attention. They did nothing to shock anyone, but worked within a tradition and contributed to its change and development. But neither was ideologically a traditionalist and their art was highly contemporary rather than retrospectively archaistic. And in no way were their modes of painting similar or derived from a single model. Nor were they the spare time or lady artists used as a means of income in classes and sketching schools by impecunious artists, who despised and disparaged their association with such people.⁶

There is a hierarchy amongst artists which distinguishes 'real artists' who are professionals, from 'amateurs' who do good work and sometimes exhibit but are considered lovers of art rather than artists. In their lifetimes Cecil Hunt achieved the former, Michael Sadler assumed the latter, and Robert Kitson was probably until the 1920s on the borderline. This ambivalent reputation would have been reinforced by his lack of formal training or alternative work experience. His series of London exhibitions over the period 1925–39 does however distinguish him from some of the younger members of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, like Elaine Barran, who could otherwise be considered a parallel in the next generation.⁷

Amongst Kitson's own family, his sister Ethel considered draughtsmanship his strong point, whereas Sydney is said to have remarked that Robert lacked the drawing ability of a trained man, presumably meaning himself although it was his style of

drawing that seems to have changed most under the influence of studying and recording John Sell Cotman's work and sketching alongside Robert Kitson. Sydney judged him very capable with paint as a colourist, but other members of the family attributed to Cecil Hunt a regret that Robert had no training in painting. This seems unlikely for Hunt is remembered to have wondered how different his own work might have been with training. But he could have been remarking on the great difference between the two friend's work. Hunt worked with much thicker paint and, to the author, appears to have considered the surface of his images to create very painterly pictures. Kitson often drew with a very full brush of paint and his pictures convey the volume of what is depicted, especially the buildings and landscape. His most finished pencil drawings are in his sketchbooks not underneath his watercolours, which had their own structure. But Hunt's mountainscapes were commended for conveying the sense of mass and geological underpinning, and Kitson's views of India, North Africa and Venice for their vibrant colour. So much lies in the eye of the beholder.

Robert Kitson himself may have had a humble view of his own talents but obviously never considered them a hobby or an expendable way of filling the time. Until his last post war years, when the railways were nationalised and currency was almost impossible to export from the United Kingdom, he had no need to live off the sale of his pictures. But he exhibited regularly and most of these works were for sale. Where there are records, however, it looks as though the few that were sold generally went to members of his family and friends, so that Kitson used to claim that most of his best work was in England after their return from these exhibitions.⁸

Table 7.1 Watercolours exhibited by R.H. Kitson in one-man and other special exhibitions

	Rome 1920	FAS 1925	London Academies 1926-7	Redfern 1939	Catania (when titled) 1946	Total (some in more than one exhibition)
Sicily: Subtotal	11	7	1	24	23	
<i>Casa Cuseni</i> views	–	1	–	1	–	2
Taormina: streets and prominent buildings	3	2	–	4	5	14
Marionettes	2	3	–	1	2	8
Views of Mt Etna etc	1	1	–	6	4	12
Views in Sicily inc <i>feste</i>	2	–	–	3	5	10

Sicilian buildings	3	–	1	4	4	12
Messina earthquake	–	–	–	–	1	1
Flowers and almonds	–	–	–	5	2	7
Italy: Subtotal	1	10	2	4	8	
Rome (Piazza del Popolo)	–	1	–	–	–	1
Other (Atrani)	1	–	–	–	–	1
Venice: Backwaters	–	3	1	–	–	4
Grand Canal	–	3	–	1	–	4
Piazza S. Marco etc	–	1	–	–	–	1
France (Albi, Arles bullfight)	–	2	–	1	2	5
England (Coastal scenes)	–	–	–	2	4	6
Malta	–	–	–	–	2	2
Constantinople	–	–	1	–	–	1
Egypt: Subtotal	0	7	5	11	5	
Cairo	–	3	–	–	1	4
Luxor: Nile and boats	–	3	1	6	1	11
Village	–	1	–	1	–	2
Morocco	–	–	4	4	3	11
Tunisia: Subtotal	8	9	2	6	7	
Kairouan: Interiors	2	3	1	2	–	8
Markets	3	1	1	1	–	6
Buildings	3	4	–	2	2	11
Nefta oasis	–	–	–	1	2	3
Other places	–	1	–	–	3	4
India: Subtotal	0	16	1	2	2	
Madura (temple and festa)	–	5	–	1	1	7
Cities and buildings in the Princely States	–	6	1	1	–	8
Other places (temples etc.)	–	5	–	–	1	6
Total exhibited works with titles	20	49	11	47	45	172

7.9 Outside Leeds, Kitson's first substantial exhibition was in Rome in 1919 with a
7.10 group of other foreign artists resident in the Italian capital. He exhibited 19
watercolours of Sicily and Kairouan, including *La Presa di Trieste a Taormina* which
was to be bought by Leeds City Art Gallery in 1924.⁹ In October 1925 his one-man
show at the Fine Art Society included 57 works of which 22 were the product of his
recent sketching tour of India. Thirteen of these watercolours were sold, including
subjects from Egypt, Tunisia, Fez and Taormina as well as India and Aden.¹⁰

7.11 Kitson was elected an associate of the R.B.A in 1921 and in 1925 had just been
elected to full membership. In the following two years, a list in his hand indicates that
he exhibited two or three large and one or two small watercolours at Goupils (1926)
and the R.B.A. (1926–27), as well as three at the Royal Academy, but it looks as if
only two of these were sold.¹¹ The Redfern Gallery mounted another one-man
exhibition in 1939, and although the gallery has no records it seems likely that
Esmond de Beer bought the two watercolours now at Dunedin from this show.¹²
After the war, when strapped for the cash in Italy needed to restore *Casa Cuseni*, he
accepted the request of the *Centro Italiano di Studi Anglo-Franco-Americano* in
Catania to mount what became his final exhibition in June 1946. At least thirty
watercolours were shown and eleven were sold.¹³

Robert Kitson kept the press reviews of at least some of his exhibitions so there
is some indication of how his work was received critically at the time. They generally
liked his 'clean and gay' colours but not his drawing of architecture, which some
considered 'both aggressive and flimsy' because the colour 'values that determine
distance' were not 'true', and others disliked them because of their 'awkward'
compositions. It was an era of dazzling architectural perspectives as well as
architectural etchings so one can guess the sorts of model that they, like Sydney
Kitson, had in mind. Others felt that 'the joys of colour for its own sake' did not reflect
on internal commitment and passion about the desolation of Jodhpur or the heat of
Aden. But the critic of *The Birmingham Post* was much more positive:

'The artist has a thorough command over his medium, he draws well and his handling
is direct and significant; he is, too, a sensitive student of nature, and he realizes open-
air effects with admirable subtlety ... he has chosen his subjects with much discretion,
and he has realized them with a correct appreciation of their local characteristics. ¹⁴

This makes the Herbert Thompson's review of the Leeds Fine Arts Club
exhibition of 1934 of some interest, because *The Yorkshire Post's* critic adopted a
more discriminating, painterly approach, praising Kitson's drawing but not the lack of a
consistent tone between all its parts which gave the effect of incompleteness in
otherwise powerful work. It was an observation which still has general relevance in
assessing Kitson's art.¹⁵ By contrast most of the Sicilian Press reviews in 1946,
which were far more numerous, ventured little further than repeating the notes about

Kitson in the catalogue and press release, although some were impressed by the ways in which he had captured the colour and a feeling for the contemporary mood and evoked just what they felt about his subject matter.¹⁶

7.2 Robert Kitson's formation as an artist

When Solomon Kaines Smith was cataloguing the acquisitions of Robert Kitson's work for the City Art Gallery in 1927, he sent a form to *Stonegates* which Beatrice filled in as best she could noting that he had already exhibited at the R.A., the R.B.A. and abroad, had received his diploma from the R.B.A. in 1923 (more likely 1921 or 1925), and had pictures in the public collections at South Kensington, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and Sydney, N.S.W. However she proceeded to write:

You will notice that Art Education is left blank, for strictly speaking he has had none, ah you mutter that explains much. What he had consisted in going about painting a good deal with Alfred East and Brangwyn when he first began. I hope you will accept the responsibility when he sees the "betrayal" .¹⁷

Kaines Smith replied in the same vein:

However I plead not guilty to muttering anything so blasphemous, but if it does not explain everything, it explains the delightful freedom and receptiveness of all kinds of new impressions, and of course the influence of both Alfred East and Brangwyn is from time to time apparent .¹⁸

Both were essentially correct. Nothing is known of Kitson's interests at Shrewsbury but the school had more of a reputation for rowing than the arts. At Trinity he played tennis with Cecil Hunt who already wished to become an artist and set out to do so in London after graduating whilst complying with his father's desire for him to become professionally established as a barrister. It seems likely that Hunt's interests and intentions would have influenced Kitson deeply but it is equally apparent that their own art, both in subject matter and even more in watercolour technique had very little in common. In no way was Robert Kitson a pupil, or follower, of Cecil Hunt as has already been explained.

The two artists who profoundly influenced Kitson's development as an artist were, as already discussed in Chapter 5, Sir Alfred East and Sir Frank Brangwyn, whose work he collected. They became his friends and he accompanied them on sketching tours. East had attended the Glasgow School of Art before going to France and painting with the Barbizon *plein-air* artists. He drew freely and fast with thick soft pencils and painted expansively in broad washes of light colour. He became President of the British Artists, an A.R.A. in 1899 and was knighted but he was only elected an R.A. on his deathbed. East was in close touch with Kitson by 1903 and he came to convalesce with him after his unsuccessful operation for cancer in the U.S.A., in 1912, when he may have painted the large landscape for insertion in Brangwyn's

panelling above the dining room fireplace at *Casa Cuseni*, although it was signed in the following year before he died.

7.12
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The earliest accounts of Kitson as an artist may be found in his elder sister's diary of 1899, in which we find him sketching out of doors in Venice, whilst staying in an hotel on his own, and staying on in Amalfi to continue sketching. One of his earliest sketchbooks, some four years later, demonstrates the influence of an artist like East in the way in which he drew trees near Droitwich. The scale as well as the draughtmanship is similar. But Kitson's painting never seems to have been as slight or even peremptory as one notices in some of East's watercolours.¹⁹ It was almost certainly East who introduced Frank Brangwyn to Kitson in 1903, the same year as the latter's first surviving sketchbook at *Casa Cuseni* and one rain-spotted watercolour of Rouen from the hills to the east. Robert Kitson was therefore aged thirty before one gets a glimpse of his artistic work.

Brangwyn was a polymath – painter, etcher, furniture designer and a large-scale decorative artist – and for nearly twenty years his artistic association with Kitson was highly fruitful. The actual Brangwyn commissions were treated separately in Chapter 5 but here it is useful to consider his art as it may have influenced Kitson's own work. Most of Brangwyn's work went through many stages of preliminary drawings and designs which he kept for future use in appropriate compositions. Although he certainly drew and painted in water colours on the spot, he claimed to do his etching and large water colour compositions in the open air, which his letters to Kitson show was often not the case. His oil paintings were almost certainly studio compositions and often creations of his own imagination, as is also borne out by the photographs and pots etc. that he asked Kitson to take or swap with him.

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to
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to
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Characteristic of Brangwyn's draughtsmanship is his use of thick, bold and sure lines using charcoal, or a soft pencil or chalk used very economically. His compositions almost always fill the space available – and a bit more. In this respect Brangwyn imbibed one of the cardinal traits of baroque art, whether one thinks of Rubens or the great painters of Venice and Piranesi. In every way his art demonstrates an interest in vibrant form, in *chiaroscuro*, and in the massing of foreground elements against a contrasting and sometimes glowering ground – the opposite of the flat picture plane said to constitute a dominant characteristic of the post-impressionists and the modernism which he could not abide. From the point of view of Kitson's artistic development, Brangwyn's draughtsmanship, watercolours and etchings were much more influential than the oil paintings of *Leeks* and the opulence of *The Rajah's Birthday* which he bought in 1903 and 1908. Brangwyn stayed twice with Kitson at *Casa Cuseni*, in 1909 and 1910 and they went to view and sketch the awesome ruins of Messina, devastated by an earthquake at the turn of 1908.

5.76 Kitson's sketchbooks of these years include carefully but confidently drawn full
7.20 length figure portraits – two ancient women dressed in black, a crippled piper, a young
7.21 woman in a flowing dress with hair piled up, and several of a youth draped in the
6.10 manner of the two bust-length photographs he acquired from von Gloeden, probably at
6.11 this time. He used an HB pencil and paid careful attention to hatching in the folds of
the costume and the moulding of the faces. It was a mode of drawing that he used
rather infrequently in topographical outline sketches during later life but never in his
figure drawing after this time with Brangwyn. The latter always used much softer
drawing tools.

5.61 During the decade before the First World War they went on several sketching
7.22 tours – to Montreuil and towns in Northern France, a souvenir of which, Brangwyn's
7.25 water colour of *Provins*, hangs in *Casa Cuseni*; to Vence, Le Puy, and in 1913 Avignon
to which Kitson nostalgically returned after the war and sketched the same subjects
outside the walls along the riverfront. But although they planned sketching tours, to
Venice and Assisi, as well as more trips to France and Brangwyn recommended
Bruges, Kitson's visits usually followed but did not coincide with the Brangwyns.

7.26 While Brangwyn was with Kitson in Taormina and Messina they worked closely
7.27 together. Kitson's *Sketchbook 79*, full of the first designs for *Casa Cuseni*, includes
several loose leaves of Brangwyn's designs for metal fittings as well as some of the
furniture designs he posted from London that Kitson did not adopt. But his
watercolours of Messina's ruins do echo those of Brangwyn. What the latter's
sketches on the spot may have been like is unknown. Kitson's are deftly and
suggestively drawn with soft pencil in a tiny sketchbook on fine paper.²¹ But their
style and composition are close to those of Brangwyn and this remained characteristic
of Kitson's work from that date. Indeed it seems reasonable to see this period as of
profound importance for Kitson's development and even training as draughtsman.

7.28 Kitson's watercolour paintings of Messina used the rather simple, flat and opaque
5.68 colours with white highlights that may be seen in Brangwyn's studio paintings of the
same subjects.²² As early as 1905 Brangwyn had written encouraging him to use a
full brush and plenty of colour, laying it on boldly.²³ This was certainly how Kitson laid
on his colour but, with the exception of his Messina paintings, the author has seen no
others that so closely follow Brangwyn. In painting Kitson developed his own manner
to achieve demonstrably different effects. Even as a draughtsman he was no
Brangwyn mannerist. But one can detect this artist's influence on the way in which
Kitson drew and used his brush, i.e. on his craft as an artist, as well as on the bold
composition and massing of his architectural subjects, and the almost square format
and large scale of his studio-finished watercolours. Too little remains of Kitson's
early work to tell whether he had been as interested in such subjects before he
worked with Brangwyn but one may certainly assume this common interest drew them

together. Whilst Brangwyn made a great number of huge zinc etchings during the first twenty years of the century, Kitson only etched one small plate of Randazzo, perhaps to learn the technique.²⁴ He kept to drawing and watercolours.

7.3 Landscape and architecture as subject matter

The one artist of the past whose influence on Robert as well as Sydney Kitson was considerable was the early English painter in watercolours, John Sell Cotman. Their quest for Cotman and his work after 1922 forms the subject of Chapter 10. But it is interesting to note that as early as about 1908, Brangwyn was referring to his sketching place in Belgium, Furnes, as 'a most delightful place like a series of Cotman watercolours'.²⁵ A substantial part of James Reeve's Cotman collection had been bought by the British Museum in 1902, whose keeper Lawrence Binyon had already written a monograph on Crome and Cotman in 1897. It was further illustrated in W.F. Dickes's book on *The Norwich School of Painters* in 1906 which may have brought the artist's architectural studies to the notice of Brangwyn and Kitson.

Although there is no obvious direct influence of Cotman's work on that of Robert Kitson until the 1920s, after that date it became the *raison d'être* of Sydney Kitson's imperilled life and of considerable artistic interest to Robert. The difference between their two collections is instructive, for Sydney amassed one of the most extensive study collections that could ever have been made, whereas Robert collected a smaller cross-section of Cotman's oeuvre. Although he gave nine of these drawings with his best Cotman watercolours to Leeds City Art Gallery in 1936 and 1945, he retained the majority of the architectural drawings as well as some of the artist's later paste-paintings and nearly fifty of Cotman's freely-handled last Norfolk drawings in his own collection until his death.

One might expect to find an obvious association between Cotman's work and that of Robert Kitson, but it does not seem particularly marked except in one general respect. In his early work, which was what particularly appealed to this generation of connoisseurs as well as painters seeking the 'patterns' of post-impressionism, Cotman had produced freely drawn trees and other rural landscapes with the watercolour applied in clear transparent washes. His later work in association with Dawson Turner was primarily devoted to extensive series of drawings of Romanesque and other architectural subjects in Norfolk and Normandy. Most of these were boldly drawn, sometimes using a *camera lucida*, and quite large. His painting, with the final etchings in mind, took the form of sepia or grey ink washes to indicate the form of the buildings in a strong light. But Cotman did take the opportunity offered by these travels to undertake some landscape sketching with a more picturesque intent. Robert collected some of these, including a group of bathers at a densely wooded

stream in Normandy, that demonstrates a much thicker and more opaque use of watercolour mixed with paste over a darkly shaded pencil drawing.

7.29
7.87b
7.88
With an artist like Robert Kitson, whose early years as an artist are unknown and whose mass of sketchbooks and paintings all belong to a developed and mature artistic mind, it is very difficult to say whether he was influenced by a past master or simply attracted to him by their common interest in subject matter or technique. In the case of East and Brangwyn one can see that they had a clear and lively influence on the way Robert painted. Because of Sydney's collecting, and their joint quest for Cotmans, Robert must have seen more of the latter's work than any other artist of the time but the purpose of his art was different. Kitson was clearly interested in the form and structure of architecture and landscapes so that the texture and natural geology or construction are apparent in many of his sketches and finished paintings. But they were not architectural drawings like those of Cotman. Nor did he make much use of monochrome washes except in a set of quite large sketches of Kidlington Church, Mentone and Taormina in 1934 and 1935.²⁶ Unlike Sydney, Robert Kitson did not make use of Cotman's compositional effects such as lightly and very cleanly pencilled clouds filling the sky, although they went sketching together on Robert's annual visits, to the Peers at Chiselhampton, and to local churches at Yarnton and Minster Level as well as Norfolk and the south of France.

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7.31
Robert Kitson's choice of architectural landscapes, and often specifically townscapes, as subjects for his art made Cotman's work immediately attractive. But he was not unusual in this respect. Ruskin had been stirred to active campaigning in writing of *The Stones of Venice* by the destructive restoration of a city whose unique qualities had claimed the romantic and even atmospheric attentions of British watercolour painters for over a century. Kitson had been sketching there since the 1890s and, like other regular visitors, he had the services of his own gondolier. Brangwyn was entranced by the combination of great architecture and nautical activity which saw fruit in some of his most successful etchings as well as watercolours.²⁷

But the attractions of architectural subject matter were not restricted to exotic localities. The gothic revival had thrown attention onto the most common mediaeval buildings in Britain, parish churches, while the early English watercolour painters had paid particular attention to the greater urban churches, the cathedrals and the ruined abbeys and castles as ancient monuments. In defence of such buildings as palimpsests of cultural history, William Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877. In Leeds, as already described in Chapter 3, the two main causes were Kirkstall Abbey, with which many of the Kitsons were involved, and the Jacobean interior of St John's Church. One of Sydney's great friends was Sir Charles Peers (1868–1952) who effectively created the Ancient Monuments Commission and the legislation upon which it was based.²⁸

7.32
7.34

But while the interests of some were primarily antiquarian and others evoked a mythical past for their current social gospel, Robert Kitson was attracted by the gaunt ruins of Kirkstall and Bolton Abbeys as part of the landscape of the Aire and Wharfedale, that is for the longstanding picturesqueness which had caught the attention of Cuiitt, J.M.W. Turner and Cotman as well as their patrons.

In an otherwise rather arid computerized analysis of the quantity of artist's landscapes devoted to various parts of the British Isles as well as localities abroad, Peter Howard has provided a useful characterization of the changing patterns, or modes, of landscape art with which the relative popularity, or paintability, of different places may be associated between the first Royal Academy exhibitions in 1769 and 1980.²⁹ Whatever London, southern English, and oil-medium bias may be built into the use of R.A. records is relieved by the length of their run of data.

But for reasons that will become more obvious in this and subsequent chapters, it would have been even more useful if the subject matter of the New English Art Club, the Royal Society of British Artists and the Royal Society of Painters in Watercolours had been included, as well as a separate analysis of some of the provincial institutions which mounted exhibitions, such as the Royal West of England Academy, the Leeds Fine Arts Club and the Society of Yorkshire Artists in Leeds, or others in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Although Howard does not attempt to separate architecture subjects from landscape in general, this is of little consequence here, because the art of which Robert Kitson's formed a part was not attempting architectural drawing but the use of buildings in and/or for its subject matter. It is therefore quite sufficient to know about the relative popularity of the country houses or cottages, industrial or other urban subjects.

Between 20–30 per cent of the subjects of R.A. exhibits were landscapes until 1900 when the proportion rose sharply to 48 per cent in the 1960s. Of these about 30 per cent were drawn from the continent of Europe after 1830 and increased slightly after 1911 although they were reduced during wartime for obvious reasons.³⁰ Like guide books, artists and their patrons tended to mediate between those adapting fresh terrain as attractive for subjects and visiting and the general, usually middle-class, public. The way in which Douglas Sladen advocated Sicily as the new winter resort, and Taormina for its views for 'kodaking' and 'artist's bits', has already been described in Chapter 6.

Of equal interest, for anyone following Robert Kitson's artistic travels, is the extensive writing of Sir Robert Playfair (1828–1899) on the North African littoral of the Mediterranean. He was the British Consul General in Algeria from 1867, an appointment progressively extended to include Tunisia and the whole of North Africa west of Egypt in 1889. The brother of one of the Liberal M.P.s for Leeds and of the fashionable obstetrician who was married to Lord Airedale's sister, Emily, Sir Robert

presided over the geographical section of the British Association for Advancement of Science when it met in Leeds in 1890, and gave Robert's mother a copy of Murray's Handbook, which he had written on his sphere of influence.³¹

Much of the historical development of British landscape painting is not of direct relevance to the situation in the first half of this century. However the new popularity of Cotman's work, with which Sydney and Robert Kitson were closely involved, owed a lot to the amenability of his early watercolours to the language of criticism, which Roger Fry and Clive Bell applied to the Post-Impressionists, and which Frank Rutter extended to Cotman's work. Classical landscape composition gave way to picturesque and romantic views that purveyed particular messages.

But from about 1870 until 1910 British artists began to evoke what Howard chooses to call 'heroic' features in the landscape, particularly the 'dreary landscapes' of the moors, heaths, fens, fells and marshes such as the River Wharfe and North Wales rather than the Wye Valley, and to the wilder coastal fishing ports of Cornwall, Whitby, Walberswick and the silt-dogged estuaries of Sussex and Hampshire. Artistic colonies flourished in the provinces, able to combine their relative seclusion and attention to vernacular architecture and rural life with the use of the train to take their works to London for exhibition and sale. The fishermen of England were given the role that Millet gave to French peasants and Stanhope Forbes, H.S. Tuke, Napier Hemy, and for a while Brangwyn accorded the same nobility and fortitude to the people of Newlyn, Falmouth and Penzance that J.M. Synge's plays gave to those of Arran and Connemara and French artists to the villagers of Brittany and Normandy.³² In London, Chelsea Reach replaced Hampstead as the subject matter as well as the home of artists.

Much of this will be seen to be reflected in Robert Kitson's movements in search of subjects and the settlement and subject matter of Cecil Hunt in Chelsea Vale, Dartmoor and the depiction of Alpine and Scottish mountain landscapes. But equally paralleled in Kitson's art was the shift from recording the great monuments of oriental antiquity to a portrayal of the contemporary life of e.g. Japan, Morocco and Egypt. Alfred East and Mortimer Menpes were sponsored to go and collect artistic impressions of life in Japan and Brangwyn went to South Africa with William Hunt (fl. 1888–1911) in search of the Boer farmers of the Cape.³³ 'In Algeria and Morocco the major focus was the street life, the bazaars, medina, and the street Arabs, pictures full of colourful and picaresque urchins',³⁴ a summary that could with certain important modifications be applied to Kitson's sketchbooks of the following generation if not to so many of his actual watercolours.³⁵

This latter part of the nineteenth century was the heyday of the olde worlde village and the wilderness in art, neither of which was of much appeal to Kitson in their English context. Industrial subjects were at their least common in English art.

7.35 They were never of much interest to Robert except as a record of the views across Leeds from Elmet Hall and Meanwood, with their blackened spires and sooty palls over the densely packed roofs. This focus on reality only changed slowly at a national level with a widening range of vernacular subjects over the first half of this century. It was most completely expressed in the work of the Scottish and English etchers and engravers who flourished until the Great Crash of 1929 and the economic depression of the 1930s removed their market, but also in the work of many painters in
7.33 watercolours, including Robert Kitson. With the exception of industrial and urban subjects and the simple forms of bleaker landscapes, such subjects were generally ignored by the *Avant-Garde*.³⁶

7.38 During these years between about 1910 and 1950 more sentimental versions of the heroic landscapes were exhibited at the R.A. and local scenic character, rather
7.40 than the greatest and capital monuments, were even more commonly depicted. The motor car made many more places accessible by day without expensive residential stays and photographs of picturesque Britain were widely published. But the personalized accounts of the buildings to be seen and places to be experienced continued to be published with illustrations from watercolours and various media of graphic art.

F.L. Griggs illustrated the *Highway and Byways* of English counties as did Joseph Pennell (1860–1926), Whistler's belligerent protégé, and others. But Kitson only seems to have collected Whistler, a group of whose etchings were presented to the City Art Gallery through the Leeds Art Collections Fund in 1924 and 1927. Although Brangwyn did publish *The Pageant of Venice* with a text by Edward Hutton in 1922, the terms for illustrating his text on *Cities of Sicily* were unattractive and it was poorly done by a less competent draughtsman. Unfortunately Hutton, who was a friend of Kitson, does not seem to have asked him to do the work, and when Brangwyn made the suggestion it was, as indicated in Chapter 5, for Kitson to write the text.³⁷ John Lane had asked D.H. Lawrence to write the book with Brangwyn's illustrations.

An impression of what he might have produced on Tunisia is exemplified in the forty-eight coloured plates by Graham Petrie, R.I. (1859–1940) published with his own text in 1908, some of which are very close to watercolours of the same subjects by Hercules Brabazon although they tend to make more use of deeply coloured detail than was usual for Kitson. All however do depict people, rather sketchily drawn in paint, in broadly defined architectural settings.³⁸ A master of this kind of book was Muirhead Bone (1876–1953) whose drypoint etchings were supported by his wife's writing and published in folios to accompany their reproduction in the commercially printed texts. His etchings were bought by Leeds City Art Gallery as early as 1893 and he worked on subjects in the city in 1905 where the Leeds Art Club mounted an exhibition of his work in 1909.³⁹

During these years the French and Italian Rivas set the pattern for coastal subjects which artists then sought in Britain and elsewhere. And the Alpine lakes, Tuscany and Umbria overtook Venice in popularity. Cecil Hunt, Robert and Sydney Kitson all took up these subjects in their spring and summer tours between the wars but it was really Hunt and Sydney who enticed Robert into the chill of the mountains. He preferred the southern coasts himself and Venice never lost its fascination for him. As described in Chapter 5, he was also encouraged by Brangwyn to Assisi, Avignon and Spain but seems to have spent little time sketching in Florence, only noting Norman Douglas's contacts there with Pino Orioli in 1929.⁴⁰

The Great War restricted access to the coast, especially for sketchers. Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868–1928) was apprehended for doing so in East Anglia. But it also produced the destruction of towns and the tortured landscape of the shell-torn trenches. To the younger men who had taken part in *Blast*, an appropriate subject matter was at hand. But Kitson and Brangwyn had seen it already as a result of the Messina earthquake and that was not man-made. Brangwyn produced posters and lithographs to aid the war effort but felt a deep personal guilt when his nephew was encouraged to enlist with the first American battalions and was killed.

7.41 Don Carlo was called up some time after Italy entered the war, and Robert Kitson joined the Red Cross, probably at the same time as G.M. Trevelyan involved Professor Tonks in his British Ambulance Unit for service in the North Italian battleground. But his recorded activities were restricted to several motor tours with Carlo Wood throughout Sicily and the southern regions of the Italian mainland, trying to arouse interest and collect money for refugees and soldiers' families.⁴¹ He only visited the front line in the west after the war in 1920 – when he went up with E.K. who had been restricted to the basecamp at Honfleur during the war itself. His own sketches then were small jottings, several to a page, which were not worked up into subsequent pictures and, although he collected watercolours and etchings by both John and later Paul Nash and Christopher Nevinston, these did not include their battlefield subjects. He did however, as already described, produce and exhibit a large watercolour of the announcement of the taking of Trieste in Taormina, a composition very similar to the small watercolour of the announcement of peace in 1918, which was one of the ten painted postcards he sent to Norman Lupton who was a captain serving with the British Expeditionary Force in France.⁴²

7.43 A characteristic of British artists' depiction of industry, shared with that of agricultural production, has been that, at least since Stubbs, de Louthembourg, Turner and Cotman, it has usually been focussed on obsolescent techniques and equipment.⁴³ Tumbledown cottages, ruined mills and engine houses, discarded wagons, and of course abbey ruins featured in Robert's English sketches, but his work in North Africa, Egypt, Sicily and even India was more generally focussed on preindustrial yet

7.44 urban societies, their modes of transport, festivities and drama, costume and means of
to livelihood, whether this was the Nile boatmen, the gondolas, or the mule, donkey and
7.46 pony-ploughs of the different regions. This exemplified not so much an orientalist
delight in exotic myth-fulfilment, as the sort of respect for craftsmanship and the
simpler modes of production which had led the Arts and Crafts Movement to the
Cotswolds, Dorset, Sussex and Suffolk and to the creation of utopian communities
such as the one at Christchurch in pursuit of Kropotkin's Tolstoyan teaching before the
Great War, and the Elmhirsts' visionary enterprises at Dartington during the post-
war depression.⁴⁴

7.33 But in Brangwyn's case an interest in the sheer strength of modern machinery
and dignity of manpower is apparent and Cecil Hunt was grateful for this introduction
to industrial subjects which was reflected in his frequent sketching of the china clay
spoil tips at Lee Moor east of Plymouth to which he also took Robert.

7.47 Although he arranged for photographs of blast furnaces and strip mills to be sent
7.48 to Brangwyn and used the bookplate designed for him, Robert never took to the
modern British industrial subjects that Edward Wadsworth found in the West Riding.
In common with the Leeds Fine Arts Club members, he set off to sketch at Bolton
Abbey and Kettlewell, Burnsall and Blubberhouses rather than the woodyards and
chimneys of central Leeds and Waterhouse's University building, which were the
subjects of artists like Charles Ginner (1878–1952) whom Rutter, Sadler and the
Leeds Arts Club brought to Leeds.⁴⁵ Robert also sketched the Southern English
countryside on his summer visits to friends and relations.

7.4 Travelling artists in watercolours

7.49 Reference has already been made to the Kitsons' specific interest in the life and
7.50 work of John Sell Cotman which led them literally to travel in his footsteps, usually by
motor. But however much this artist's subject matter and technique of watercolour
drawing appealed to him, Robert's own work seldom followed it very closely.
Kitson's own treatment of atmospheric effects suggests a more spontaneous reaction
than Cotman's and he used bold line and soft pencils in a manner not unlike chalk or
charcoal. Edward Lear sketched like this and so did Hercules Brabazon. Mention of
these two artists is deliberate and instructive. Robert Kitson was amused by Lear
(1812–1888) – he collected a little nonsense tale that Lear had written to a friend
with several caricatures⁴⁶ – and Sydney collected a large drawing that Lear had
sketched in preparation for his large oil painting of the temples at Bassae.⁴⁷ But Lear
is of interest primarily for a different reason. There is little in his manner of working to
suggest much technical influence on Kitson.

Lear lived alone with a small circle of loyal servants with whose family lives he
was intimately connected. He got great enjoyment from the families of the young

friends with whom he stayed. And he was constantly on the move. Although he lived for the latter part of his life in villas on the coastal hillside of San Remo, he continued to make artistic expeditions to the Greek Islands, Southern Italy and the Levant, usually travelling alone or with his Corfiote servant. His capacity for observation was insatiable and the amount of work he achieved in the field prodigious.⁴⁹

In other ways of course Lear could not have been more different from Kitson. Lear's epilepsy and depressions, his funny physique, his need to find an income from his art that drove him to extravagant publishing projects, and his sense of inferiority because the large oil paintings by which he set such great professional store made little mark on artistic society, have no close parallel in Kitson's life or art. Rheumatic fever took Kitson to the Mediterranean but he made remarkable recoveries from the few serious physical illnesses he encountered thereafter and was a handsome and distinguished looking man. An emotional and excitable man, at times rather unpredictable, he had the financial means to assuage his restlessness in travel which he did, but did not have to, put to great artistic use. The large finished watercolours which he exhibited and regarded as his best work, may lack the sparkle and life of some of his smaller paintings and sketches. But that probably indicates how taste has changed since he painted them rather than a failure on his part to attain his end. Kitson never had the ambitions of Lear nor, one supposes, the disappointments because by this time watercolour was an established and independent medium. And he continued painting to the end because he enjoyed doing so.

7.51 A much closer parallel in life and probably a profound artistic influence on the whole way in which Kitson went about painting, was Hercules Brabazon (1821–1906). A wealthy bachelor, he forsook the law and took an allowance on which he set off for Rome to learn his craft in the academies and *ateliers* of the city, before embarking on a regular round of sketching tours of southern Europe and the whole of the Mediterranean including North Africa, and even India, often in the company of accomplished artists with whom he was friendly such as John Ruskin and Francis James and, in later life, John Singer Sargent and Joseph Severn. He maintained accommodation in London as well as his country estate. He was hailed by the New English Art Club in 1891 and through the encouragement of these younger artists began to exhibit his work in the last fifteen years of his long life.⁵⁰

Several of the leading artists of the Club figure amongst those whose work Kitson collected – Sickert, John Nash, Sir George Clausen and especially Wilson Steer. It is hard to underestimate the significance of Brabazon's work for Kitson's post-Brangwyn development as an artist. When he collected his Brabazon watercolours is unknown but most probably when Leeds City Art Gallery bought three in 1921–1923. Kitson presented no less than another five from 1925–1932 and Sadler and the Luptons also collected them. There were several colossal sales of Brabazon's work

by his descendants from 1926–1927, but it was first exhibited at Goupils in 1892 and three more times between 1894 and 1899 just as Kitson and Hunt were completing their Cambridge degrees. It seems reasonable to suppose that Kitson became familiar with Brabazon's work at once, and one may view his self conception as an artist by direct reference to those members of the New English Art Club who represented what was new in English Art and their assimilation of the *plein air* and even Impressionist French schools which rejuvenated English modes of painting and subject matter well before the Post-Impressionist exhibitions of 1910 and 1912.

It is interesting to note that Brabazon was also a Trinity man and that he read mathematics. Being well schooled in geometry, he was therefore able to represent, in his economical drawings and suggestive watercolour sketches, buildings and landscapes that are utterly convincing in volume as structures. Kitson's own study of geology, and his subsequent proven expertise as an architectural designer and engineer, indicate a similar capacity which may account for the volumetric quality of his work.

Although Kitson's large finished watercolours are quite unlike those of Brabazon and at least initially owed a lot to Brangwyn, familiarity with his more spontaneous smaller watercolours and his sketches repeatedly recalls Brabazon's similar work. The latter's work has been so dispersed since his death, before any systematic study of his development as an artist, that it is difficult to reconstruct this in the way one can for Robert Kitson from his sketchbooks and dateable watercolours. Some particular features, such as Brabazon's use of tinted papers which were left to provide the main ground of colour to which he added suggestive highlights, or his deft use of pure white and colour, separately applied from the same brush, are less often found in Kitson's work. He seldom used blue or other tinted paper and did not cover his paper with a softly tinted tone to take off the effect of its whiteness, which he tended to use for unpainted highlights in the brilliant lights of his many Mediterranean subjects. Where he used body colour, it was a gouache which gave the opaque effects familiar from Brangwyn's watercolours.

What is similar is the way in which Kitson drew, the way he composed his pictures, his subject matter, his general use of colour, and his interest in both structure and the effects of light and atmosphere. Of course the example of Turner lay behind them both and Kitson not only collected one Turner watercolour but also regularly saw the one in the collection of his cousin, the Hon. Emily Kitson, as well as those in his friends' collections. All three were enthralled by Venice but Kitson followed Brabazon to Cairo and North Africa which opened a completely new world for him.

7.52
to
7.54

4.9b

7.5 Robert Kitson's *sketchbooks*

Because of the range of Kitson's work and the current possibility of considering the inter-relationship between its components which still largely survive intact in a few family collections, one can review them according to their medium and function. At least eighty-six sketchbooks are currently extant dating from 1903 until 1947. What went before is unknown but, considering how much of Kitson's effects were moved by his sister from Leeds to her new home in Berkshire after the war but before he died and have been preserved by the family, it is reasonable to suppose that he may have destroyed it. If this is the case, it reinforces the argument that Kitson's self-conscious work as an artist dates from his friendship with and learning from East and Brangwyn, his familiarity with the work of the New English Art Club, and his activities on the committee of Leeds City Art Gallery as well as his coming to Sicily and his interest in the Venetian International Exhibitions.

The contents of these sketchbooks represent Kitson's artistic biography.⁵¹ Several contain a substantial number of ideas, and occasionally measured plans or drawings, for *Casa Cuseni* and its gardens, furniture, Kitson's successive houses in Kairouan, and architectural and decorative details that interested him with reference to his own building and garden stuccoes. They have already been discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Almost all contain many rapid, and a few portrait, sketches of people he observed in public places as well as around his home. Initially men and women, but increasingly only men, were captured in their daily activities and especially in little groups in bars, cafés, strolling down the *corso*, crowded in *feste* or markets, and watching the marionettes in the local theatre or other spectacles. Although he did use some of the figures to staff his paintings, these sketches of people really form a *genre* of their own and of course indicate how Kitson came to be so well known. When he was at home in Taormina, or travelling alone in North Africa and Egypt, he must have spent his time observing people in public places and developed a speedy way of recording their movements and clothed volume, sometimes in line only and sometimes within the context of an illuminated interior or street at night. Animals received similar attention – sheep, goats, pigs, cows, mules, camels, elephants and sometimes the house-dog. And they, like the market women and water carriers, were often introduced into his paintings.

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Occasionally his sketchbooks include caricatures, perhaps done in a bar when in conversation with a group of young men, or sketches of people he knew like the Hunts or members of his family on the beach at Filey or Southwold. He was a man full of fun with children who would prepare amusing and personalized items for a dinner table or arrange a mock *festa* for the children of his staff in *Casa Cuseni* before calling them in for a big tea. But of course little of these ephemera survive. It was passing fun not an

art form. Occasionally the young people he was sketching would make a little drawing of him and these remain in his sketchbooks, one with the comment 'Arab portrait of me 'very like''.⁵²

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The vast majority of the sketchbooks record his travels, almost all of which were put to some artistic use for Kitson never moved without a sketchbook, however tiny, and a pencil. Most are quarto or octavo sized but a few are much larger and several very much smaller. With the exception of the first sketchbooks, few contain highly finished drawings. Those used in his watercolours are often little more than compositions because he drew with his paintbrush and did not colour in elaborate drawings. But some intended for future paintings include extensive notes of colours, light intensity and weather, for example in extensive mountain landscapes and the interiors of Tunisian cafés or mosques. Some of the sketches were very rapidly drawn using thick strokes of a soft pencil to indicate just the shapes and *chiaroscuro*. Others adopted fine outline drawings, such as a group of Maltese skyline views and others of Morocco and Constantinople.⁵³ Occasionally Kitson drew in a delicate red chalk and these drawings, although as suggestive as others, seem to have been intended for no further purpose, like those of the gates and terrace of *Casa Cuseni* on his return after the war in 1946–1947.⁵⁴

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Although the sketchbooks always tell their own story of places visited and people encountered, sometimes they record particular journeys, taken for some other purpose or at speed and presented as a series of vignettes on the same page, often within black borders like picture compositions. His Red Cross tour of Sicily and Calabria with Carlo Wood is one such case, including even the committee at their table in Licata and there were also the drives around Mount Etna with the Hunts and Sydney Kitson.⁵⁵ Hill town after hill town appears, duly titled, providing a complete itinerary. Others were his tour of the Great War battle fields with E.K. and his passage by boat up the Rhine during its occupation by the French, filling each page with three vignettes of riverbank views.⁵⁶ Normally when he used thumbnail sketches he was recording or working out a composition from something already sketched, or how a set of pictures would look hung in an exhibition.

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Robert Kitson obviously used his sketchbooks for first impressions as well as for working out some of his compositions. It seems likely that he used them for recording these before deciding on the subjects he would actually paint. One frequently encounters the original idea for a known watercolour. But in other cases the same subject is treated so many times that one must desist from attributing a particular painting to a specific sketch. Tunisian interiors, masted Nile boats at Luxor, Mount Etna, and the main buildings of Taormina were the source of constant interest. Kitson appears to have announced his return to Taormina each time he had been abroad by

7.69 sketching the fountain by the cathedral or the churches near the clocktower. And Mount Etna was the first and finest thing he saw each day.

7.70 Kitson seldom painted in his sketchbooks. The paper was in any case unsuitable. But they served a different purpose anyway. When he did use paints in them, the palette was restricted and almost certainly painted from the tiny six-colour paint box that still survives. The sketchbooks had several functions but these were relatively distinct from the painting of a specific picture.

7.6 Kitson's use of small water-colour cards

The opposite seems to have been the case with the small watercolour cards that he may have used throughout his artistic life. A great many of these little watercolours survive at *Casa Cuseni* and a few others in the hands of his friends and close relatives. Those in the Leeds City Art Gallery were sent as postcards to Norman Lupton at the Front in the Great War. Many of Kitson's watercolours refer so precisely to one of these little cards, that one may see them as an indication of what he intended to paint, if not necessarily what came to fruition. Indeed they often became the final picture and were exhibited and sold as such.⁵⁷

7.72 Ciccio Rigono, then in his twenties, learnt how to draw from an American, Miss to 7.74 Flora Fernald (1875–1935).⁵⁸ He used to watch Kitson painting in Taormina and became not only a young friend who took tea with him at *Casa Cuseni* but also one who would accompany him on local sketching trips and has continued to paint for his own enjoyment ever since. His description of Kitson's method is important because it is the only one we have. They would drive out to some spot, usually one that Kitson already had in mind (and had perhaps sketched in his book?). He worked on different sizes of paper, often taken from blocks in the case of smaller paintings, which he pinned to a sketching board that could be placed in a collapsible easel. He always took several of the little cards with him and would sometimes draw and paint several of these very rapidly, recording particular conditions such as the light at different times of day, or a particular atmospheric effect over Mount Etna. Sr Rigono had only seen Kitson sketching and assumed that, although they might go back a second time, he completed his paintings in the open air on the spot. When he went to *Casa Cuseni*, it was usually teatime and they chatted in the *Salotto*, so he had not had occasion to see Kitson's studio upstairs. Charles Baskerville also went sketching with him in the hills because he had a car and driver.⁵⁹

From the evidence of the large indoor-easel, Kitson's sketches of his studio, and the large watercolours he painted for exhibitions, it seems likely that at least the latter would have been painted in the studio and probably some of the other only slightly smaller pictures. It is very difficult to keep the paper moist enough to achieve the blended tones in some of his larger watercolours.⁶⁰ But the fact that he did paint

so much on the spot may account for the lack of tonal balance for which he was formally criticized in some reviews. With the notable exception of his paintings of India, Kitson's largest watercolours often lack the bright sparkle of his smaller paintings. For these he sometimes used lightly toned paper or card and they have a tonal unity that would result from a trained eye painting a picture as distinct from sketching an impression. Sometimes they are rather dull because their colours are muted and the contrasts underplayed. But they are almost monumental in their composition and must usually have been completed in his studio.

If this was Kitson's practice one can understand why he wished to lodge several impressions of the same subject in his mind because of the influence this could have on the finished painting. It may be added that, with the major exception of Taormina, Mount Etna, Nilotic, and several Tunisian subjects, few of his cards repeat their subjects. They so precisely model the larger watercolour that they may represent all that Kitson painted on the spot. In one notable case, however, there is a group of cards of the Amalfitan coast, very lightly drawn and largely restricted to softly hued washes running into each other, that convey the impressions created as the light and weather changed – predominantly green, mauve, blue or grey. Santa Chiara, Assisi, is also treated in this comparative way, but with quite different ochre colours. But there are no groups of finished watercolours on larger sheets to match them.

7.7 Kitson's paintings in watercolours of France, Spain, North Africa and the Orient

When Kitson painted his smaller watercolours on paper he seems to have used blocks of both quite coarse white paper and more finely grained buff-toned paper. Many of his sketches of Fez are dated but very few of Taormina or elsewhere in Sicily. Some may be estimated because they use paper from similar blocks. Sketches of other places are often dated or dateable from the little cards or sketchbooks, and some of his obviously finished work from exhibition catalogues. But many studies and apparently completed pictures carry no dates, especially those whose subjects he saw most often in Sicily, Tunisia and Luxor. It therefore seems appropriate to review his work as a whole, or according to its various forms, with little stress on possible periods of stylistic development, although one can see that he became far less dependant on Brangwyn's style after the Great War.

Kitson's drawings may be found in his sketchbooks. By the time he painted his largest pictures he made very economical use of drawing because he already knew what he wanted to depict. To a great extent these paintings are therefore drawn with the brush and not heavily underdrawn in pencil. In this way they are not fundamentally different from the little cards, or from the work of Brabazon, or Wilson Steer (1860–1942), four of whose watercolours of Whitstable fishing boats he

collected. Indeed there are watercolours by Wilson Steer of the Isle of Wight so close to Turner's own, and to Kitson's of Almalfi, that they may be viewed as one *genre*.⁶¹ Many of Kitson's watercolours of Mount Etna, Taormina and Fez belong to this category of impressionistic sketches. The subjects are repeated but the tones and colours change. Some are rather muddy failures but usually those of similar subjects represent variations on a theme and not improvements on one another.

It is difficult to know the extent to which Kitson's surviving paintings represent all, or a selected set of what he painted during his lifetime or left at his death. From notes he wrote on some of them, one may presume that at some stage, perhaps in the 1930s when the political situation was deteriorating or perhaps when he returned a sick man after the Second World War, he looked through his little cards and watercolours and may have thrown out what he considered unworthy or of no further interest to him.⁶² Contrary to the views of his friends, Kitson was both a draughtsman and a painter and he gave a pencil tone to his monochrome drawings just as he gave volume to what he painted with a watercolour brush irrespective of the size of the image. What he drew is therefore distinct from what he painted. This is well exemplified by the bulk of his surviving watercolours, on half-imperial sheets of white and occasionally lightly-toned paper. It is their variety of treatment that is impressive, a point one can also make about the little cards which are quite capable of considerable enlargement without losing conviction.

Kitson's paintings of France cover the whole period from before the First World War until the late 1930s. Although a few, dating from his trip with Brangwyn in 1913, seem much weaker in colour and structure, this is unusual. The farmyards and trees of Montreuil are richly coloured and vigorously drawn in paint and the same is true of the lighter tones and more bleached colours of Avignon and Le Puy. Little of Normandy or Vence remains, if it was ever painted, but a set of Mentone from the mid 1930s shows Kitson's experimental use of monochrome wash to convey the effects of bright light on a terraced landscape as well as the structure of a colourful Baroque town.⁶³ Paintings of interiors are not common but there are several in France which convey both Kitson's appreciation of and ability to convey the volumes as well as the dark masses of such subjects. Surviving paintings of Albi seem less effective but others were exhibited and may have been sold.

Spain, by contrast, almost always appears at its scenically most dramatic.⁶⁴ The sheer scale of the landscape and the vastness of the old town buildings made a deep impression on Kitson, which is conveyed in all-embracing views of Toledo and the golden bridges across the gorge at Ronda. He was deeply struck by the monumental calvary, *Piedad*, standing on a mountain top before Segovia. After sketching it several times at different scales, he composed a large and dramatic painting in muted tones of

subtle greys except for the form of the distant cathedral itself which is more sharply depicted.

7.93 His trip to Constantinople, unlike the passage through Greece, was highly
7.94 productive.⁶⁵ Like Brangwyn, Kitson produced a series of watercolours of mosques
7.95 and fountains, and a whole group sketched in the dilapidated cemetery beyond the land
walls of the old city. The romantic vision of the leaning tombstones and the great
cypresses framing vistas of the walls, mosques and the Golden Horn have proved
irresistible to many artists and photographers.⁶⁶ Kitson used these tall trees in his
compositions much as Brangwyn had used the tall trunks in his mosaics for St
Aidan's. His sketches of the ruins of Athens, a classical landscape, seem rather
pedestrian but Kitson enjoyed the barren mountains above Patras which he captured
in small but precisely depicted watercolours.⁶⁷

7.97 Unlike Lear, Kitson travelled quite comfortably in Europe and when he travelled in
to 7.100 North Africa restricted himself to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco where French hotels
were available. Indeed it is an education to find how much had been developed for
tourists by this time.⁶⁸ But in Kairouan he became so frequent a visitor that he took
first one, and then another house to which he would return. Nearly every year before
and after the Great War, Kitson spent the winter months from Christmas in North
Africa. He spent the most time in Kairouan, a holy town with a great minaret,
gateways, and a market which he drew and painted in all lights, and in Fez, where the
7.96 colourful landscape and hilly terrain impressed him. Kairouan is almost always
viewed from within and Fez usually from without. Meknes, Rabat, and Marrakesh
7.101 had colourful buildings and great gatherings of people. The men and boys wore gaily-
to 7.104 dyed robes and the activities within the ancient Roman amphitheatre of El Djem
attracted Kitson as much as those at Arles and Nimes, all of them variations on their
more tourist-ridden counterpart in Taormina. So did the palms and colourful
domesticity of the Nefta Oasis where the men and women washed at different times of
day.⁶⁹

7.105 If Sicily was liberating to a man of Kitson's spirit, North Africa must have been
7.106 positively licentious – a completely different culture of which he had no previous
experience at all. Sadly no letters survive which might indicate what he thought but
one notices that his sketchbooks are always full of people, young and old men sitting
in cafés or mosques or milling around in market places. Kairouan was ancient and
provincial with rough-hewn mosques and smoothly moulded mud-brick streets and
alleys. In Kitson's pictures subtle ochres catch that colour which is shot with a flash
of bright paintwork or the costume of boys leaving school or other figures passing by.
But several delicately depict the colourful company assembled in coffee-houses and
suqs or at some festival or religious gathering in a mosque. The blue teapot in one of

these became a well known feature of the pictures he exhibited in Rome, London and Leeds.⁶⁹

North Africa was in vogue for well-to-do and adventurous tourists before the Great War and Graham Petrie, R.I., illustrated his own text with watercolours.⁷⁰ It is instructive to compare these with Kitson's paintings. The subjects are similar but there is a sameness about Petrie's pretty details and figures quite absent from Kitson's more monumental pictures. Kitson's response to the oriental and muslim world was certainly romantic but not mendacious as is the current charge against such artists.⁷¹ It was the old world that he sought out not its falsification by substituting the fables of the West. And in Mogodor he recorded the overburdened lorries that must have been the predecessors of the mammy-wagons of West Africa.

But Kitson also bought the costumes that he flamboyantly wore for Taormina's Carnival balls before the Great War and collected carpets and tiles for his home and garden. For a few years in the late 1920s he even had an Arab manservant as his driver at *Casa Cuseni*. In Egypt, he sketched the vast brick buildings of Islam that had so impressed David Roberts a century before, and he stayed beside the Pyramids of Giza at Mena House and at Assouan, stopping in the most comfortably equipped hotels. But he spent most of his time in various hotels by the banks of the Nile at Luxor, where the intricate patterns of the masts, prows and gangplanks of the dhows below the steep banks provided a fascinating source for an almost abstract type of subject. He painted several pictures of the shaded waterfront with slight differences in the distribution of the masted vessels, presumably in order to permit an illusion of the space beyond as well as the screen of boats in front. But Kitson was of course not painting abstracts. He was carefully composing a picture which combined these qualities with those of spatial illusion and indeed technical precision, because he had already drawn details of the rigging and boat construction. Although the latter may not appear within the finished painting they informed and underly the structure of those elements which are depicted.⁷²

Although Kitson painted in North Africa and Egypt almost every year until the outbreak of war in 1939, he only visited India once over the winter of 1924–1925. What took him there is unclear but it seems that he probably travelled out with the Collector, Mr Cotton, who would have been returning to his post. They arrived at Colombo at the end of November and transhipped for South India where Kitson stayed with Cotton at his *Residency* in Trivandrum and Quillon for ten days before using Indian Railways to get to Madura for the great religious festival which climaxed with a huge golden cart in an elephantine procession.⁷³

Both Kitson's Indian sketchbooks survive and many of his exhibited pictures, as well as small cards and other watercolour sketches. So do two letters he sent to Beatrice in Leeds, which she sent on to Ethel. The good roads and the many schools

7.5 and art schools of the district impressed Kitson as much as the palm trees and the high costs of life and travel but the omnipresence of red-coated servants irritated him. At Madura the colour of the pageantry overwhelmed him. Although he did not mention it, Brangwyn's 'elephant picture' had come to life and he was exhilarated by it all.

7.119 I lived four hours this morning in the midst of this procession – great yellow towers containing silver balls or elephants and figures queer many armed – just like the sculpture and elephants galore and little shrines and great umbrellas and people. You cannot faintly imagine the colour of the women in the silk wraps chiefly oranges and reds and purples with great splashes of emerald and every other colour you can think of. The men either in their own lovely skins, or in white with silk wraps – general rosy, magenta and here and there some great turban or something extravagantly different.

Really it leaves all that I have ever seen far behind and is all so pleasant to be in. Everyone is so extraordinarily nice ... fortunately I have choked off the only bore I could not stand and who seemed as if he intended to spend his life with me.⁷⁴

7.120 Kitson proceeded to the temples of Tanjore and the real Rajah's birthday elephant at Mysore before proceeding to Puri and Calcutta where he entrained for Benares, Agra and the princely states beyond Delhi. Most of his time was spent achieving good sites for sketches of the streets with corners topped by *Chatris*, red escarpments
7.121 fringed by fortifications above Jodhpur, and the courtyards and washing-places of palaces and temples. At Benares the sheer mass of humanity populating the steps to
7.122 the river Ganges, the water itself, and the burning *ghats*, absorbed his attention. Never one to miss a festa in Sicily, Luxor or Morocco, India must have exceeded Kitson's wildest fantasies and he poured these realities out in the large number he exhibited at the end of 1925 at the Fine Art Society.⁷⁵ He even made a note of a hollowed stuccoed column at Benares which he used in his design for the new front gates at *Casa Cuseni* which were required after the construction of the motor-road to Castelmola in 1930/1931.

Although Kitson never returned to India, one feels he did not need to. After the pre-war thrill of Sicily and settlement in Taormina, and that of Tunisia and further settlement in Kairouan, he was widening his horizon and experiencing the colour, pageantry and architecture that the world had to offer. India was followed by Constantinople and Palestine was to follow but was cancelled, probably owing to the onset of his illness.⁷⁶ Sydney joked that he had lost his chance of conversion to christianity.⁷⁷ He had even contemplated a trip to the U.S.A., noting the Brewster's address and galleries and places to visit. Cecil Hunt did go in 1936 on board the *S.S. Queen Mary*, but Robert never got there.⁷⁸ The political situation was deteriorating fast, with Mussolini switching from the development of Sicily to settlement in Tripolitania and an imperial invasion of Abyssinia. And Robert was doing more with Sydney and his family in France and North Italy as well as England, and entertaining

7.75 them with spontaneous suggestions for walks and drives when they, the Kitson Clarks, members of the Phelps family and, almost every year, the Hunts came out to *Casa Cuseni*.⁷⁹

7.8 Kitson's images of Italy and Sicily

7.123 Italy presented a many-sided canvas to Kitson, just as it had to a sequence of
7.124 landscape artists and architectural draughtsman, and his sensitively different
7.125 response to the country's variety is impressive. Long before he knew Sicily, Venice
had enchanted him as it had Turner and Brabazon. Some of the widest range of
7.126 Kitson's paintings are represented by those of Venice – atmospheric watercolours of
San Giorgio, the Dogana and Piazza San Marco; colourful compositions of the Rialto,
the Doge's Palace and San Marco; lively pencil sketches of the Riva degli Schiavoni
and people traversing little bridges over the *calle*; quiet paintings of gardens peeping
over *calle* walls; and some of the great vistas of the Grand Canal and the Castello.
Kitson enjoyed the daylight and colour of Venice but he also painted it at night with
the lights of the café beside the *Zecca*, the *traghetto* stations and the gondolas
streaking across the Grand Canal.

Brangwyn had loved Venice and Kitson sent him photographs that helped him in
composing his etching of the Bridge of Sighs. But they also wrote about and went
back again to Assisi which could hardly have been more different. Kitson selected
three main subjects for all his sketches and paintings of Assisi – Santa Chiara viewed
at all times and from every direction, the steep inclines of the pink walls to the fortress
above the town, and the olive-groved landscape around it. The vast buttressed walls
of San Francesco received less attention than the Baroque Santa Maria Degli Angeli.
The simple structure of Santa Chiara with its campanile and rose window was the
essence of early Gothic architecture and Kitson went back again and again. Like
Kairouan and Taormina it was a place he depicted in every way.

7.127 By contrast he had one very productive sketching tour of the Umbrian towns and
7.128 San Gimignano where he painted the interior of the cathedral as well as its towers and
may have painted more intimate wayside scenes. Florence he seems to have avoided
7.129 most of the time. And in Rome and Naples he usually sketched the same subjects
7.130 near his hotel – the Piazza del Popolo and the Pincio gardens in the one, and the
fishing port beside the Castel d'Uovo in the other – although he did make several
excursions to the Almalfitan coast. He joined Sydney Kitson for a holiday in the
Lenno and the Alps but little seems to have materialized as paintings because he felt
so cold, wrapping himself in newspaper beneath his coat. He toured Umbria sketching
and drove up to Rome and back with Carlo Wood for the Red Cross, and to fetch the
Hunts, taking the opportunity of sketching the high bridges across the gorge at Ascoli
Piceno.⁸⁰ With the major exception of Venice, Kitson generally avoided the busy

cities and urban tourist havens. He was obviously also quite outside the fashionable renaissance artistic circle focussed on Florence and Oxford although the latter was a world in which Sydney Kitson was well known. Although, unlike Brangwyn, Kitson was a sociable man as his sketchbooks indicate with their names and addresses on the flyleaves, he was not an aesthetic socialite, despite being elected to the Athenaeum and his tours of London galleries with (Sir) Philip Hendy.⁸¹

In Sicily, Kitson accomplished a massive amount of painting, much of which has been dispersed locally in recent years. Some of his most carefully finished large pictures are of Sicilian subjects, including some of his most impressionistic watercolours, achieved by sponging off much of the paint and thereby merging the colours in the single tone of a night light or stormy cloud. He painted Mount Etna at all times of a day and in all seasons as well as the views down the mountain-slopes from Cuseni to Giardini and Naxos. The confraternity banners and statuary of the *feste* with their crowds, Carnival revellers, and marionettes were lively and colourful subjects, whereas the streets and churches of Taormina were often painted at night or in the deep shadow of a bright day. There are several sketches for one of his few celebrated pictures, exhibited at the R.B.A. in 1929, which depicted the young audience of the marionette theatre in Taormina.⁸²

Kitson painted a series of landscapes of the hill towns of the island, many of which still retain the remarkable characteristics of an acropolis today, whatever may have grown below their walls. He was especially attracted by Randazzo, a dark larva-built mediaeval town behind Etna whose colourfully lit festas he made a point of going to sketch. Unlike the guidebooks that were obsessed with classical antiquity and the Norman legacy but often ignored or even condemned Baroque architecture, Kitson was attracted to it as he was to the *feste* with which its theatricality was associated. He painted a large picture of the interior of the narthex to Syracuse cathedral with its Solomonian columns, a composition slightly altered between the original sketch and the finished work, and others of the Norman cathedral of Cefalu, the partially Baroque church of S. Nicolo at Randazzo and the Gothic gatehouses and *campanile* of other hill towns of the island. Like Sir George Sitwell he was aware of Noto long before Sacheverell published *Southern Baroque* in 1924.⁸³

Not surprisingly these compositions are often very dramatic, especially those of Castelmola and Forza d'Agro and in later years he went out to stay with Bobbie Pratt Barlow at Mufarbi to paint rugged mountains and olives without sign of human habitation.⁸⁴ But he had also painted more intimate scenes of the local fountains and stepped alleyways, of a young goatherd at his garden gate, and colourful evocations of his own pride and joy, the *corte della fontana* at *Casa Cuseni*. People not objects were what Kitson usually sketched indoors and although he collected some of Brabazon's impressionistic flower pieces, it seems that he started painting still lifes with flowers

quite late in his life. One of his nieces associated this with the influence of Charles Baskerville, whose portrait of Kitson is at *Casa Cuseni*, and it may also coincide with the period after 1930 when he was convalescing from a serious operation and unable to maintain his constant travelling and sketching activities. Baskerville described painting 'flower still-lives in watercolour, but Kitson painted landscapes or city scenes with figures, but may have painted flowers from his beautiful, carefully planted garden terraces about this time.'⁸⁴ Almost all these still lifes consist of his common garden flowers gracing pots and the Great War shell case grouped with some items from his collection in the *salone* and were all painted at *Casa Cuseni*. Some of these subjects may even be found on his little cards. At *Stonegates* he only sketched the window seat in the front room studio.

7.9 Robert Kitson's unbroken ties with England and English art

Leeds and his family and friends in England always retained Kitson's affection and interest. Every year Kitson came over and embarked on a round of visits to relatives and friends in London, Sussex, Oxfordshire, Devon and Norfolk. He always spent some time with his family in whichever was their current Leeds home and took
7.147 the Phelps family for a seaside holiday. But he seldom went on sketching tours except with Cecil Hunt in Devon, with Sydney Kitson in Norfolk and, once, with Cecil Hunt to the Scottish Highlands. As well as sketching they went to take advice from D.Y. Cameron (1865–1945) on the sorts of watercolours that should be collected by
7.148 Leeds.⁸⁵ Kirkstall and Bolton Abbeys, Barnard Castle and Wharfedale he painted from Beatrice's home in Leeds; the great barn at Aberford (Abbotsbury) in Dorset;
7.149 Blythborough, Southwold and Walberswick in Suffolk and Wymondham in Norfolk; the
7.150 deep purple mountains of Scotland; and the countryside of Sussex on trips to friends and family holidays. He never stopped sketching and his English sketchbooks are full of Elmet Hall and the views from there and from *Stonegates* over Meanwood towards the sooty skyline of Leeds, as well as of Kidlington Church and Minster Lovel near Oxford. But he often had no time to paint as well as draw.⁸⁶

7.151 Even during the war when he was in Tenby, exiled from his home in Sicily with a heart disease and feeling the cold badly, he still continued to sketch the leafless trees and grey slate roofs in watercolour on whatever paper he could find.⁸⁷ For the first time in the century, he had to spend several complete years in Britain but he probably lacked the physical strength, the financial resources and certainly the artist's
7.152 materials to undertake much serious painting. The most notable pictures of this period are a set of London – Piccadilly Circus during the blackout, and the dome of St Paul's rising intact from the smoking ruins of the London Blitz. It seems as if Kitson was as drawn to such subjects at the end of his artistic life as he had been to the destruction of Messina at its beginning. Unlike his still lifes and many of his English landscapes

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which are brightly and quite crisply drawn, these London paintings are softly washed in, using a restricted palette, impressionistic in the manner of his atmospheric and nocturnal paintings of Mount Etna, Taormina, Venice and Kairouan. One of his last watercolours in 1946 was of a ruined building near his home in Taormina, using his well-tried method of a small pencil and watercolour card sketch before the finished watercolour picture. But the last sketches in his own garden are idyllic. It was intact, the garden thriving with new fruit trees, and he had got back to it.⁸⁸

7.10 Robert Kitson in the context of British contemporary art

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In reviewing Kitson's work as an artist, one can look to East and Brangwyn as his acknowledged mentors, as well as Brabazon and possibly Steer, whose work he collected and appears to have emulated, as well as Cotman in a limited way. Some of the other artists he knew well and entertained at *Casa Cuseni*, in particular Cecil Hunt and Sir George Clausen, had works in his collection in Sicily but do not appear to have influenced the form or technique of his own watercolours, and the same can be said of John Wright, the etcher, whom he, like Hunt and possibly Brangwyn, supported and collected.

Robert Kitson's own art collection was neither formed for the purposes of academic study like Sydney's Cotmans, nor to provide him with models for his own work. It was a personal collection in that he bought the pictures that attracted him as an artist. But there is hardly any direct information on when and where he acquired them.⁸⁹ Particularly problematic are the many etchings which were given to Leeds City Art Gallery in 1945 or sold in 1973 by his heirs. The records of the Print Collectors' Club are too occasional to indicate if Robert was a regular subscriber and his collection therefore predetermined, or what seems more likely, an impulsive buyer with an impressively broad range of tastes.⁹⁰ Very few of these prints remain in the Phelps family collections, unlike the watercolours, drawings and oil paintings which were framed and hung at *Casa Cuseni* or *Stonegates*. Kitson put most of the prints away and in any case they were an art form that he only once adopted in practice himself. But their interest as a collection rests in the wide range they encompassed even if the most *avant garde* were absent. They included landscape, architectural and figure work as well as some of the etchings produced by the men who had taken the public stand as Vorticists. From those that are dateable it looks as if most were collected in the 1920s and early 1930s, but too many lack such information for certainty.

Although Kitson collected many works of art, he also acquired antique furniture, Persian and other ceramics, a lot of Venetian and other makes of glass, as well as costumes and textiles, which came from North Africa and Italy as did the terracotta and wooden ecclesiastical sculpture. This is best seen and understood in the context

of *Casa Cuseni* which has been displayed in Chapter 6.⁹² Kitson collected very few oil paintings. He and Beatrice took with them from Elmet Hall one of the family group portraits known as 'The donkey picture', which included his father sitting astride the animal. Apart from *Leeks, The Rajah's Birthday* and one of a Venetian subject by Brangwyn, which were much exhibited before the Great War, he only appears to have bought two others: *Josephine*, a female subject painted by R.O. Dunlop (1894–1973), and a painting that was assumed to be by Sickert. Almost all of these have been sources of confusion and victims of fashion at some time.⁹³ But as Kitson never attempted to paint in oils himself, they are indicative of his taste as an artist-collector rather than what influenced his own work.

Nevertheless his purchase of an oil by Sickert, possibly in the late 1930s but more probably about 1940, is of particular interest, culminating several years of encouraging Hendy and Hepworth to buy his work for Leeds City Art Gallery. From the correspondence with Schiff about the relative merits of Brangwyn and Sickert before the Great War, one can see that Kitson did not then appreciate 'ugly subjects' as art.⁹⁴ He never collected the sort of expressionist work that Jacob Kramer produced, still less the modernists that Sir Michael Sadler took up with Frank Rutter. But Sickert he came to champion with John and even Paul Nash, J.D. Innes and Augustus John whose watercolours and drawings entered his collection in the 1920s and 1930s as well as more conventional N.E.A.C. members who were elected to the R.A. like C.M. Gere and Clausen. All of them exhibited at the Redfern Gallery, where the director, Rex Nan Kivell was a friend and admirer of Kitson's watercolours.

Sickert's work is of particular relevance in assessing the place of Kitson's own art, because they were both obviously attracted by similar subjects. Schiff's correspondence with both Hunt and Kitson, although specifically directly against Brangwyn, was part of the wider controversy about what Fry chose to term *Post-Impressionism*. Sickert, like Spencer Gore, can be seen as one of the most prominent of the few English artists who, with extensive experience of French art, bridged both the divide between Impressionism and its successors, and between French and English art – more so than Tonks and Wilson Steer whose association was more specifically with Impressionism.⁹⁵

Sickert's drawings and oil paintings of Dieppe, of music halls in London, and of people inside their own domestic interiors, are paralleled in Kitson's use of architecture for subjects, the audiences of Sicily's traditional marionette shows, and his many sketches of people in bars and cafés and about the streets of towns. But his mode of painting in watercolours came more to resemble Brabazon and Sargent, as Rutter perceptively observed, than the Fitzroy Square and subsequent groups, which included Ginner and Gilman under Sickert's dominant influence.⁹⁶ From his collecting as much as from his own work one can see Robert Kitson's place within this

contemporary development, which seemed radical to its practising artists but was still within the potential scope of English traditional art.

In describing the components of Kitson's own work – sketchbooks, watercolour cards, and painted sketches and exhibition paintings – and reviewing their subject matter, one can appreciate the artistic approach he adopted to these subjects. This is obviously inadequate and only represents an initial attempt to assess his considerable and very varied output effectively. But it should be sufficient to establish the significance of R.H. Kitson as an artist in his own right, and not only as the friend and patron of other artists.

It is not easy to assess Kitson's work in relation to his contemporary painters in watercolours because relatively few of the wide range of these artists have been publicly exhibited in recent years or published in colour at any time. Kitson played no part and took no obvious interest in the Modern Movement. Like Brangwyn, one may assume that Picasso disgusted him. His playful spirit was left to caricature and the garden stuccoes once the pre-Great War carnival spirit wore off. He was very attracted by and collected some of the painters of the New English Art Club, both oils and watercolours. But he does not seem to have been much involved with the societies of artists in watercolours etc. with which Cecil Hunt was closely associated.⁹⁷ He did not collect much of their work with the exception of Harry Becker and the Nash brothers. And, with a few exceptions, he did not amass the sort of collection acquired by Cecil Hunt through the swaps and gifts of fellow artists.⁹⁸ So this complicates the task of comparison. With hindsight it is easy to consider Robert Kitson's work as that of an artistic 'loner'. But in fact many of his watercolours were publicly exhibited in company with the work of other artists. And even if relatively few were sold, except in 1925, they were reviewed in relation to other contemporary pictures in the tradition of British watercolour painting.

7.158 Kitson's example may have encouraged but probably did little to influence the capable lady artists of Leeds with whom he and his maiden sister Beatrice were associated. Ethel Mallinson came out with Beatrice to stay at *Casa Cuseni*. Nance Pflaum, the other secretary of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, also came to stay in Sicily accompanying his cousin's wife, Ina Kitson Clark, their club's President, with whose husband Robert Kitson toured the battlegrounds of the Great War in 1920.⁹⁹ He was an artist who enjoyed the company of other artists and was also the host and sketching companion and in some cases pupil, of East, Brangwyn and Sir George Clausen, as well as Cecil Hunt. But he developed a pronounced style and boldly presented manner of his own, which is due for recognition.

Chapter 8 The world of art in Leeds and the development of Leeds City Art Gallery to the Great War

8.1 Civic pride and private patronage: the foundation of the City Art Gallery's collection

As already recounted in Chapter 1, Leeds was quite late in implementing the permissive parliamentary acts of 1850 and 1855 that allowed rates to be raised for the provision of local amenities by the municipal corporation. It had no city art gallery until 1888. That it got one then was due to the persistence of Colonel T. Walter Harding (1843–1927), who chaired the committee that established it and, even when no longer a council member, was invited to continue as chair until he left Leeds for Madingley Hall in 1904.¹ Harding had a mission to bring beauty to the general population and founding donations to the art gallery included three oil paintings from his own collection and four from that of his father, including Lady Butler's *Scotland for Ever*, a long-running favourite for exhibitions elsewhere as well as commercial reproduction.²

The art gallery itself was not, however, an imposing building or civic showplace.

8.1 Built behind the properties fronting the Headrow east of Brodrick's Town Hall, it was an extension of Corson's municipal offices and public library of 1876–84. Although the design was by W.H. Thorp, an established local architect and artist whose light and

8.2 colourfully decorated Medical School of 1894 was to add a notable neighbour to Sir Gilbert Scott's General Infirmary, sufficient funds were lacking to provide an effective building.³ In its first century of use, there have been several attempts to rebuild or

8.3 abandon it. Access was achieved through a long corridor laid out as a sculpture gallery with casts from the defunct Yorkshire Fine Art Society to which other such

to collections were subsequently added. Apart from the bifurcating staircase, the

8.5 gallery's main feature was a galleried central palm court, decorated with Burmantofts faience and designs for ceramic mosaics, which was to be in demand as a lecture hall as well as an exhibition space. The building also housed the commercial and technical library and the news room with its own access from the side streets behind Park Lane.⁴

The Art Gallery cost £10,000 to build and £800 *per annum* was allocated from the penny rate previously exclusively devoted to the public library. There was no purchasing grant but until 1899 some money remained in the Jubilee Fund, to which the public had subscribed for this and other worthy causes like the General Infirmary, and this could be spent on works for the permanent collection. Under the *Museums and Gymnasiums' Act* of 1891, permission was given to local authorities for a penny

rate to be levied to support the gallery but Leeds City Council made no use of it for nearly half a century.⁵ It seems appropriate that Leeds' mayor in 1887–8 should have been the skinflint Archie Scarr (1827–1904), an old-style Liberal maverick who made his fortune off a greengrocery market stall but was never given a council committee to chair. W.T. Harding, by contrast, commanded the Volunteers as well as Tower Works, chaired a council committee and was later elected Lord Mayor and alderman even without regaining a seat on the council. It was Scarr's proposal for a fountain that had prompted Harding's adoption of the City Square project.⁶

The lack of any purchasing grant was always felt but the solution was hoped to lie in popular special exhibition charges. In its first printed annual report, of 1892, the sub-committee argued that

The future of the Gallery will depend very much on the success of the special exhibitions, which are necessarily attended by great labour and expense. If they are well supported by the people, they should clear their expense and leave a substantial surplus to swell the picture purchasing and maintenance funds.

It is hoped that ere long the Gallery will be worthily filled by gifts and bequests, and by profits of the exhibitions. Meanwhile, thanks partly to recent gifts, the town already possesses many important pictures, and other objects of art. It will be seen, however, that while the corporation has provided buildings, the Art Gallery and Museum will be largely dependent on the public spirit of the people of Leeds and district, for gifts, loans or bequests of suitable works.⁷

The first curator, George Birkett, (1888–1911) came from managing a London art dealer's. He knew Ruskin and some of the Pre-Raphaelite painters and his Bohemian manners were coupled with respect for his judgement of contemporary art as well as old masters and his capacity for meticulously researched catalogues.⁸ He drew on the expertise and enthusiasm of the non-council members to help in the selection of works for the annual Spring Exhibitions, for example in 1904 sending the deputy Chairman, W.H. Thorp (the gallery's architect and member of many arts associations in Leeds), with Messrs. E. Bissington and R.H. Kitson (a newly co-opted member) to visit current exhibitions at Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham to select works for the next one at Leeds.⁹ These exhibitions were based on what had not already sold at the previous Royal Academy's Summer exhibition and were the epitome of established artistic canons. 75,000 attended the first of these exhibitions of modern artists. Seven oils and one water colour were bought in 1891. Perhaps in deference to Harding's approval of Herkomer's works, the city paid £1,000 for his *Back to life* of 1895.¹⁰

No doubt this association with the Royal Academy stimulated private patrons to follow suit and in 1891 Sir James Kitson presented the R.A.'s picture of the year, Sir Frederick Leighton's *The Return of Persephone*.¹¹ In 1900 he gave a bust of Cardinal

8.9 Manning, presumably to commemorate his statesmanlike intervention in the London Dock Strike, and in 1903 Calderon's enigmatic and sentimental historical painting of a girl-queen's procession, *Her Most High, Noble and Puissant Grace*, which had first been exhibited in 1866.¹²

8.10 The primary top-lit, ground floor gallery opposite today's public entrance, the Queen's Room, provides a good impression of the sorts of work visitors would have seen in the early years, although some are more recent acquisitions. They were substantial contemporary pictures by established Royal Academicians and some other artists like Lady Butler. Although there were many types of subject, they generally had a didactic or improving message. Lessons to be learnt from Classical antiquity and the Bible hung beside examples of mythical or historical chivalry and heroism drawn from knightly sagas, the early church in England, Tudor and Stuart history, the wars against France and in the Empire and pastoral landscapes of idyllic Britain. All were provided with extensive descriptive labels by the curator as has once again become a widespread practice.¹³ The popularity of several of these pictures is evidenced by the continuing demand for and recurring income received from copyright reproduction fees charged to a wide range of commercial manufacturers who wished to use these images on their packets or promotional printing. Some continued in such demand until after the Second World War. These were Lord Leighton's *Return of Persephone*, presented by Sir James Kitson in 1891, Lady Butler's *Scotland for Ever* of 1881, presented from his collection by Colonel Harding in 1888, Arthur Hacker's *The Temptation of Sir Percival* bought in 1895, and J.W. Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott*, also bought in 1895.¹⁴

8.11 to Unlike Manchester City Art Gallery, Leeds opened too late to receive any Pre-Raphaelite works.¹⁵ From the beginning of its collecting, however, one notices some new work in painting that can parallel Harding's patronage of the New Sculpture in the city. In 1890, they decided to buy Henry Scott Tuke's *The Bathers*, a bright and freshly coloured *plein air* painting by one of the French-trained English artists who had chosen a studio in the west county.¹⁶ The subject of a little group of nude boys playfully bathing recalls some of Thomas Sutcliffe's photographic subjects at Whitby, which later figured in exhibitions at the Leeds Art Club, as well as Gleeson-White's reproduction of von Gloeden's ephebes of Taormina in the first number of *The Studio* in 1893. It appears to have been painted within a few months of the artist becoming a founding member of the New English Art Club on 4 January 1886.

8.14 New forms of English art are also in evidence with the negotiations that began in 1895 with Alfred East to try and buy his oil painting *The Golden Valley*.¹⁷ East had begun work as a sales representative for his brother's shoe business in Kettering and, although he had earned a reputation for innovative painting after his time in Glasgow and with some of the Barbizon painters in France, he remained a keen businessman.

7.13
7.14

Offered £250, East refused anything less than £400 on the grounds that the picture had been in the centre of the R.A., had place of honour in the international exhibition in Munich and had been reproduced in the German Art Journal.¹⁸ He declined to send it to Leeds as there was more chance of selling it in London and 'an increasing demand for good work on the continent' e.g. Venice, Munich and Brussels. But he accepted the committee's proposal to view it in his studio. Then he proposed to substitute *The Haunt of Ancient Peace*, only accepting the £250 offered in June 1897, requesting that the price should not be made public as 'I think the sacrifice a large one, very much larger than many of my friends who have pictures in your gallery'. Then he proposed a new frame and that the picture should go to a prearranged exhibition. Leeds got it in July 1897.¹⁹ The significance of this is the apparent fame such an English landscape artist with French connections could hold in the '90s, the international position that East held, which was to be of great importance for Brangwyn and therefore Leeds at the Venetian exhibitions ten years later, and for his encouragement of Robert Kitson, who collected East's work, emulated his drawing and was probably introduced to Brangwyn by him. It should also be noted that Leeds only paid the price it offered.

8.2 Exhibitions, loans and the Lady Patronesses

In view of the ways in which both Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall have been used by Leeds City Art Galleries as country house museums and collections in the years since the First and Second World Wars respectively, it is easy to assume a close connection between the arts in the city and the landed Yorkshire aristocrats and gentry who possessed fine collections. And indeed at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Gotts of Armley involved people like the Fawkes of Farnley in their exhibitions to encourage the arts in Leeds.²⁰ But, with the exception of loans to the inaugural and some subsequent exhibitions, the involvement of these families in the cultural institutions of Victorian and Edwardian Leeds seems to have been as slight as was their involvement in its city politics and for the same reasons.²¹ Although they might admit metropolitan political figures, like W.E. and Herbert Gladstone, to become candidates for their parliamentary seats, Leeds city men ran the place and were proud to 'own' their city institutions. This was as true of the Infirmary, the University and the Art Gallery as it was of the City Council and the Parish Church. But what Leeds lacked, until Lord Brotherton gave the great library to the university, was a predominant industrial or commercial magnate able and willing to disburse really substantial sums for such purposes. With the notable exception of Colonel Harding, whose capability seems to have been as much in conceiving and organizing as in financing prominent public works, Leeds relied on groups of well-to-do enthusiasts doing their bit and it is within this context that the role of members of the

Kitson family can be seen as significant as was the role of others to whom less attention will be paid here.

Leeds Art Gallery had relatively few pictures to display as a permanent collection. For several decades it was far more significant as an exhibition gallery. The curator, Birkett, was familiar with the practice of other major provincial galleries, like Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, which effectively kept on display many of the works that had failed to sell at the Royal Academy in the previous summer. Sometimes the gallery bought or was presented with one of these works. But, more commonly one presumes, private citizens might buy them for their own collections. The arrangement of these exhibitions took most of the curator's time, if the letter files provide an appropriate guide, as did requests to borrow some of the most popular pictures in the permanent collection such as Lady Butler's *Scotland for Ever*. But it is also apparent that these shows did not sustain the initial rate of attendance so that admission fees were discontinued and opening hours widened to make the gallery more accessible.

Two other major sources of exhibits were the didactic decorative arts and crafts showcases sent on loan by the Victorian and Albert Museum's Circulation Department, a significant part of that institution's educational service until the expenditure cuts of the 1980s, and rather similar long loans from the collections of public figures, notably the case of ivories from W.E. Gladstone, the Liberal's Grand Old Man and Premier, father of one of Leeds' M.P.s, with a stalwart local ally in Sir James Kitson (later Lord Airedale), and an exotic collection of artifacts given to the Prince of Wales on his Indian tour.²² In 1889–90 Sir Charles Eastlake sent up a loan of drawings and watercolours from J.M.W. Turner's bequest to the National Gallery, but was displeased at the manner of their unaccompanied return by goods train to London.²³

From the correspondence files it is not clear whether the exhibitions that Birkett mounted with loans from local collections were primarily thematic or intended just to display what was considered fine art or newly acquired work in private collections. They certainly do not appear to have had any monographic or art-historical intent. But they provided, alongside the triennial Musical Festivals, one of the annual cultural events of Leeds City's season. At this time municipal, like national, politics and business was a man's world. So was the administration of the city and of the art gallery. But if a woman's place was in running the home, there were some parallels in public life. The art gallery's public exhibitions provided one such opportunity. It had become customary for the major annual exhibitions to open with a *conversazione*, which incorporated refreshments and a musical interlude. These were arranged by the Lady Patronesses of the gallery. In addition, teas or other refreshments were made available on certain days by the leading café caterers in the city, *Powolnys*. While not

8.15 exactly providing 'an ace caff with a museum attached', this was clearly intended to make the gallery a nice place to visit on a day in town to view the art and take one's friends, civilising a rather barren civic amenity. These arrangements were based on those which for at least twelve years had opened the Leeds Fine Arts Club's annual exhibitions at the Philosophical Hall.²⁴

From the Art Gallery Sub-committee's *Annual Reports* one can trace the origin of the Lady Patronesses to 1898-9. The *Annual Report* of 1900 refers to an increase in the numbers attending the Spring Exhibition from 20,094 to 20,553 and attributes it to Harding's activities as Lord Mayor and 'to the Lady Patronesses, who, at his invitation, interested themselves in the sale of tickets to their friends, and in the establishment of a social gathering with music and afternoon tea, on the Wednesdays of each month' of an exhibition. They had also 'subscribed £100 for the purchase of a suitable work'. This was an oil by G.C. Haite (1855-1924) of *Fruit and Sunshine*.²⁵ The patronesses were an invited membership drawn from Leeds city elite. Mrs Harding may have started them in her husband's mayoral year but by 1903 those most actively responsible were his sister, Miss Harding, and Ina Kitson Clark.

8.16 Ina Kitson Clark had become a leading member of many Leeds organizations by the early years of this century of which three types may be mentioned now.²⁷ She came to play a commanding role in the Yorkshire Ladies' Council for Education as Hon. Secretary from 1905-1926, which became particularly concerned with training young women for a wider range of jobs than teaching and nursing, and from this founded the Babies' Welcome Association, which played an extensive part in providing the sort of education for young mothers now professionalized as Health Visiting. With her husband she was a staunch supporter of Leeds Parish Church and, at *Meanwoodside*, founded her own women's institute with a small hall and a tiny stage where her own religious plays and pageants were produced. Although small in scale it seems to have been her response to the predominance of non-conformity in local chapels and the Meanwood Institute itself. Unlike most of the Kitsons who were Liberals and often Unitarians, Edwin Kitson Clark and his wife were Anglicans and Conservatives.

8.17 A third sphere of activity was the arts. Ina Kitson Clark became an active and
8.18 productive member of the well established Leeds Fine Arts Club. There is scarcely one art or craft that she did not practise and exhibit over the next fifty years. Her ability in drawing was marked although in several fields her technical expertise may have exceeded her inventiveness in design. Unfortunately there is too little reproduced or accessible in order to hazard an assessment. However she carried the Club through until its virtual refounding in the 1950s. And she became an active member of the Lady Patronesses of the City Art Gallery. Although the weeding and reclassifying of correspondence at the City Art Gallery makes any conventional

historical account of this body difficult, there is a thick sheaf of correspondence relating to the Hon. Secretary's running battle with the curator over the role and activities of these ladies in 1909 with some references to 1903–4.²⁸

Whatever his intention, Birkett had miscalculated both the persistence and resourcefulness of leading ladies in Leeds like Mrs Kitson Clark, as well as the ramifications of a family like the Kitsons for turning things on. By 1909, he was growing old and sickly and probably seeking a quieter life, having held the curator's post for twenty years with no purchasing grant and inadequate premises. But he had already had a brush with Sir James Kitson in 1900, who wrote on the 29th November from Gledhow Hall,

... you told me that you could not call to see the picture as you were on holiday, and I therefore suggested that you need not come specially to see me until your return. It was not for me to hunt you up to look at the picture that I proposed to loan or give to the Fine Art Gallery. The matter rested with you.

If you ask me I think you *could* have done something more in this matter. My works at Monk Bridge are only ten minutes away from the Town Hall, and it would have been very easy for you to come down and give me a call.

However, it is of no importance to me, — the picture has been given to someone else.²⁹

Vice-Chancellor Bodington found the governors and Council Committee of Leeds University tended to treat him and his staff like employees of the works they directed. As a municipal employee, Birkett must have been doubly at risk with such big-wigs on the City Council as well. He must have passed the affair to his Chairman and Harding elicited further information from Kitson at the Reform Club that 'probably the picture referred to is my *Forget me not* by Sir J.E. Millais. I have only just got it home and located and I would rather excuse myself parting with it just now'.³⁰ Three years later he presented Calderon's large history painting, so the imperious old magnate still retained some interest in the art gallery.

8.9

The capacity of the Kitsons to turn things off, as well as to make them happen, seems exemplified in the experience of Mr Penrose Green, the Conservative who succeeded the Liberal F.J. Kitson as Lord Mayor. In August 1910 he proposed an autumn loan exhibition to coincide with a congress of Chambers of Commerce and the Leeds Musical Festival. This does not appear to have been taken up by the curator or the sub-committee but was simply his own idea. He would be lending pictures and was writing 'to a few leading citizens inviting them to co-operate with me in the matter'. Although the Hon. Edward Wood (later Lord Halifax) accepted, as did Sam Wilson, the Barrans and Mrs Sam Ingham, the Kitsons did not. Lord Airedale was quite explicit 'I have only a few pictures, which I require for the decoration of my

house, and particularly so at this period and at the time of the Musical Festival, when I am having friends to stay with me'. His friend and political rival Lord Allerton said he had 'none worthy to be exhibited'. Robert Kitson refused because his few pictures had 'been so much at the Gallery as to be rather stale there', and he had only been able to get his chief picture *The Rajah's Birthday* home at all by refusing to lend it to Toronto. But he proposed that the Lord Mayor should redecorate the galleries 'a nice neutral greyish colour' instead of the 'dreadful dull red'. F.J. Kitson, Penrose-Green's predecessor in office, said he could not help as he had none and had not gone on for picture collecting. Several others declined because of redecorating or absence from home. But it looks as though the Leeds Liberals may have been taking a stand, the Kitsons being particularly unco-operative.³¹

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It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the interest and activity of local collectors and enthusiasts for art in the gallery's affairs at this time. Robert Kitson's first donation was in 1893 when he presented one of Brangwyn's etchings of *The Hannibal*.³² Reference has already been made to his many commissions of work from Frank Brangwyn but it is equally apparent that he played an important role in bringing Brangwyn's other work into the public eye, as well as that of Alfred East, who had already established his place in the annual exhibitions. In 1900–1901 Kitson lent an oil by East and in January 1903, he wrote from the *San Domenico Hotel* in Taormina, offering to lend the small picture he had just purchased from Brangwyn to the Spring Exhibition.³³ This was *Leeks*.³⁴ Ethel Kitson added a water colour by East at her brother's request a month later and Roland Barran lent an East as well.³⁵

5.8
In that year, 1903–4, Robert Kitson was co-opted onto the Art Gallery Sub-Committee. He lent some more prints and, in 1905–6, Brangwyn's etchings for exhibition. He was involved in easing the arrangements in Venice for Sam Wilson's purchase of Brangwyn's exhibition panels for the Leeds Art Gallery and, after buying *The Rajah's Birthday*, wrote to the curator from Cornwall in August 1908 about a letter the latter had received from Brangwyn concerning the delivery of etchings and 'the Elephants from the New Gallery' and a watercolour 'which I dare say you will find a good place for'.³⁶ He presented an etching by Corot, and several other prints and drawings as well as Venetian table glass were lent or presented to the art gallery. The pattern of Robert Kitson's many subsequent loans, presentations and works sent on approval for purchase by the gallery was therefore well established before war broke out.

5.24
8.27a
Brangwyn's *The Venetian Funeral* was bought by the city in 1906, just after Sam Wilson's presentation of the Venetian panels to hang in the West Room.³⁸ It achieved great international success and was in fact in Venice when war broke out in 1914. It had been requested for the 10th International Exhibition in 1912 when two galleries were to be devoted entirely to Brangwyn, but it appears to have actually

been sent for the 1914 exhibition, spending the first part of the war in the Palazzo Pesaro before all the British Pavilion exhibits were removed to Rome at the request of the British Embassy in 1917. After the war, they were eventually returned to Venice and in July 1920 Leeds received it back in company with F.H. Fulford's *Il Doge di Venezia*.³⁹ Acclaimed abroad and called to execute several major decorative commissions in London, it was only in Leeds that the full range of Brangwyn's artistic versatility was manifest. Robert Kitson's and Sam Wilson's involvement in the art gallery assured that.

8.3 Local art clubs in Leeds and the City Art Gallery

R.J. Morris has clearly outlined the significance and form of committee-structured voluntary and other associations in mid-nineteenth century Leeds for the maintenance of the upper middle class in running the city, or bourgeois hegemony. Although those associations which were important may have changed, and municipal and other statutory agencies like the School Board had joined them, their form and membership seems to have continued right into this century. What is even more significant is the extent to which the same people's names reappear. In the cultural, educational and charitable fields these are often the wives, sisters and daughters of those men prominent in local industry and politics and themselves governors of the Yorkshire College or the General Infirmary Board.⁴⁰

In charting the development of the City Art Gallery first, its pre-eminence may seem exaggerated because it was so dependent on the collecting patrons and artistic interests of those who wished to use it. Birkett's dispute with the Lady Patronesses is a good example of this and so is the difficulty Lord Mayor Penrose Green had in forming a loan exhibition during the time of a business congress and the music festival. But it must also be appreciated that local art societies and their like were quite small organizations, even though the exhibitions, lectures and demonstrations they arranged were often designed to draw in members of a wider public, for which the Municipal Art Gallery or the Philosophical Hall were suitable venues.

The leading professional association in the arts field in Leeds was the Leeds Architectural Society, founded in 1876 with George Corson (1829–1910) as its first president and W.H. Thorp its first Hon. Secretary (refounded as the Leeds and Yorkshire Architectural Society in 1897–9).⁴¹ Thorp's extensive activities in the art world of Leeds have already been indicated in Chapter 4 and more will follow in Sections 8.4 and 8.5 and Chapter 11. And this is also the case with Francis Bedford and Sydney Kitson. Bedford was both Hon. Treasurer and Secretary in the 1890s during the early years of their practice and the travelling studentship endowed by his brother James, an industrialist and city councillor who sat on the School of Art's committee of the Leeds Institute for Arts and Sciences, is still awarded. Sydney

Kitson was its president in 1910–12 when he also sat *ex officio* on the R.I.B.A. council and was first co-opted onto the City Art Gallery's sub-committee. Papers and illustrated lectures were regularly given by members to the society and some of their own art as well as architectural work exhibited. But it was quite a small professional association.

8.20 Other associations of artists, like journalists, were more convivial than professionally studious or artistically genteel. Two such were the Savage Club that coalesced around a jobbing artist and dealer, who arranged summer sketching trips by bicycle of young men to produce work for his saleroom, and the Leeds Studio Club of which 'Kester' J. Dodgson, the caricaturist of *The Yorkshire Post* was a long-standing member.⁴² They were the sorts of artists' associations of which Phil May, himself of Leeds origin and an irrepressible *bon viveur*, would have approved and in which he played too full a part in Chelsea and on supposedly sketching trips to Normandy with Frank Brangwyn and other artists. After May died in 1903 a memorial committee was established and in 1909 placed a plaque on his home in Leeds, formed a collection of drawings presented in an exhibition by the Leeds Art Collection Fund, which were finally given to the City Art Gallery in 1921, and founded a scholarship in May's name at the Leeds School of Art.⁴³ Sydney Kitson was a member of the committee.

Given the large numbers of people employed in artistic work in the city, illustrators in its substantial printing industry and newspapers, sculptors and modellers in Burmantofts ceramics, architectural draughtsmen, school teachers and staff of the School of Art and technical colleges, one might expect quite substantial associations or academies but this is not so. In 1898 the Yorkshire Union of Artists held the first of many subsequent annual exhibitions in the Leeds City Art Gallery. But it is not clear how works were submitted or selected and the union does not appear to have had the corporate existence of some of the smaller clubs that constituted it.⁴⁴

Two such clubs exemplify what the closely knit elite could achieve in the arts as well as what, by contrast, they could not. One is the Leeds Fine Arts Club, one of several associations in Leeds in which women played a leading or sole role and which still flourishes in the city. The other is the Leeds Arts Club, a much more *avant garde*, and culturally cosmopolitan but effectively male-run association, which like most of its male counterparts, has long since died out. In Section 8.4 attention will be given to the organization of a substantial Arts and Crafts Exhibition, with both the philosophy and products of which the two clubs were closely interested.

8.15 The Leeds Fine Arts Club was founded in 1874, but with the exception of the Rule Book of 1891 and five programmes for the annual *conversazione* and exhibition, sometimes including a list of work exhibited, its formal records begin in November 1900 with the 256th meeting.⁴⁵ For the purposes of following the role of the Kitson

family in the fine arts and architecture of Leeds this is appropriate, because previous generations had been more interested in music. But it does mean that the volume that would correspond to the foundation of The Little Owl is missing. Nevertheless one notes Miss Lucy Heaton and Mr Eddison among the earliest recorded members and recalls this other, ladies', society which began its formal meetings with long readings from Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, that incorporated his influential championship of J.M.W. Turner's art. Although no Kitsons were among the 28 members in 1892, one does find members of several families whose participation remained active for many years such as, the Greenwoods and the Willsons, as well as other people who were to become committee members and lecturers of the later Leeds Arts Club, Herbert Thompson the art critic of *The Yorkshire Post*, and A.J. Sanders, subsequently a friend of Frank Rutter and a porcelain collector. Honorary artist members included Frank Dean (1865–1946), who had by then settled at Harpendon in Hertfordshire, and Ernest Sichel (1862–1941), the established Bradford artist who regularly exhibited at the R.A.⁴⁶

The 1891 *Rule Book* may incorporate revisions, as did its successors in 1930, 1948 and 1961, but had a long period in force. Its primary objective was clear, and quite different from the philosophical and appreciative but less frequently artistically-productive aims of its later near namesake: 'to have for its object the development of a practical study of the Fine Arts'. The club was to consist of 25 resident working members, six non-working members, six honorary members and an unlimited number of non-resident members. These categories are instructive because they usually distinguished between different categories of artist at that time. The working resident members from time to time included professional artists but some of these were professional architects like W.H. Thorp and F.W. Bedford. The body of working members were mainly gifted amateurs, sometimes fully trained but not needing to live off their art. By contrast the honorary members were usually established artists who exhibited regularly in London as well as locally, and those holding posts in art education, like Frank Dean and later C.H. Flower who had headed the Leeds School of Art, or the curatorship of the City Art Gallery, like Frank Rutter after 1912. Non-working members were usually close friends and relatives of members, who acted as hostesses or helped with the club's arrangements. Non-resident members normally included a few of those who had once lived in Leeds and Ilkley, from which most members were drawn, and retained regular links with Leeds. Mrs Talbot and Robert Kitson were to be such. But some of these were elected to honorary membership as were some long-serving local working members.

The club was to elect its art critic annually. At this time there was one, Mr Flower, the principal of the Leeds School of Art, but in due course it was found difficult to retain the services of one artist and several were invited to different meetings to

criticise the work members brought along. During Rutter's years in Leeds, these were often contemporary artists who were visiting from London or even from the continent. Membership was obtained by winning votes for diploma works that had been submitted for consideration. The club was, in this sense, a local academy and a body of accomplished artists, amateur and professional. It was not a collection of art appreciators or those who just enjoyed drawing and it should be sharply distinguished from a modern N.A.D.F.A.S. or evening class in art, of which the latter certainly also then existed in Leeds.

In addition to the usual rules for voting, officers and an annual meeting, the rules also specified the forms of club meetings. These were to be monthly on Thursdays 'at the houses of members in turn ... to commence at 6.30 and close at 10.30. Criticisms to commence at 7 and end at 8 o'clock. Drawing from model, 8-9.30. Refreshments to consist of tea and coffee, biscuits, & co., on arrival, and *a simple and inexpensive supper* at 9.30'.⁴⁷ Although this seems to presuppose a Leeds membership, several members came from Ilkley, so trains or carriages must have been needed. Meetings were presumably held in the evenings to permit the participation of working gentlemen, which the club always obtained. But the scale and timing presupposes either large houses or the devotion of the household to the club's activities.⁴⁸

8.23 Finally, the rules encouraged 'the range of studies to be as extensive as possible', listing eighteen different media including needlework, 'a living model to be provided at each meeting, if possible, from which rapid studies are to be made', and 'during the summer months picnics to take place at intervals for the purpose of sketching from nature'. Ethel Mallinson, a keen landscape painter and a dab-hand at capturing telling events in local life, often arranged these outings to Bolton Abbey, Ilkley and elsewhere, requiring the use of local trains and a frequent victim of 'inclement weather'. But when the Kitson Clarks moved to *Meanwoodside* in 1903 this provided an appropriate locale, as did the grounds of *Shadwell Grange* until Elaine Barran's death in 1982.

8.15 There was 'a *conversazione* to be held from time to time as the funds of the club permit, at which works produced by members shall be exhibited'. The *conversazione* of 1888 had an extensive musical programme, to which George Tetley and Herbert Thompson contributed a duet on the piano, and one presumes that this was the subsequent form of musical recital organized by the Lady Patronesses at the Spring Exhibitions at the City Art Gallery, which are known to have included Sydney Kitson's sister Eva Swayne and her husband, the vicar of St Aidan's, who were leading members of the Tetley dominated Leeds Subscription Concert Society, a significant link with the parallel social world of music in the city. The refreshments were also provided by Powolny's tearooms.⁴⁹

The years from 1901 to 1915 can be seen as ones within which members of the Kitson family and some of their closest friends made their mark as local artists and came to shape the club's activities. In June 1901 subscriptions were collected for a silver rose-bowl to present to Mr Flower, the retiring critic, and Gilbert Foster was invited to succeed him. On 27th July Ethel Mallinson and Mr Greenwood, another Ilkley resident who was the Hon. Treasurer, proposed Robert Kitson for membership, and on 21st November Ina Kitson Clark was unanimously elected a member. In the following May, Ethel Mallinson was elected to the council. Some years earlier she had enrolled as a part-time student in life-classes at the Yorkshire College.⁵⁰ Louisa Barran was also re-elected to the membership, which in 1902 numbered 32 including the Art Critic.⁵¹

In 1903 the current President, Mr Willson, died and Mrs Fenwick, a non-working member and secretary of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education was elected in his place. The *Conversazione* was cancelled. By the beginning of 1905 club members had fallen to 19 and the high proportion of Ilkley members presented difficulties for meetings held in Leeds, where too few members had homes available.⁵² In October Robert Kitson, Louisa Barran and Ethel Mallinson were elected to the Club's Council but Herbert Thompson resigned. Perhaps he found the new Leeds Arts Club more dynamic or congenial. The secretary proposed the use of Powolny's Rooms or the Ladies' Club 'if absolutely necessary', and in 1906 the club decided not to have one critic but to invite different artists to different meetings. In the following year no-one turned up for the picnic sketching at Collingham Bridge and both Ina Kitson Clark and Robert Kitson failed to invite critics. Numbers had fallen to 15 by the end of 1908 and several, probably ageing, ladies had resigned from the club or office on its Council.

It is possible that the rise of the Leeds Arts Club affected interest in the L.F.A.C., but some like A.J. Sanders were active in both. But it may have been one of those critical periods in any organization at which one generation was fading out without many new recruits. There was no obvious departure of male members from what had always been a predominantly ladies' art club but potential new male members may have found the other club a more stimulating forum for discussing ideas.

Nevertheless within the next few years the L.F.A.C. took on new life and activity again. In November 1908 Ethel Mallinson began her long period as Secretary, only to be succeeded by Miss Nance Pflaum in 1948, the latter having been proposed as a member in 1909. That summer Robert Kitson is recorded several times as having brought along a large number of sketches of Sicilian and Italian subjects, which culminated in a group of the Messina earthquake in 1910. These were the years of his sketching trips with Frank Brangwyn and the latter's visits to the new *Casa Cuseni*. During the same years Miss Elaine Barran joined her mother, Mrs Henry Barran, being elected as a working member in 1912. She was later to become both Chairman

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and Hon. Secretary following Nance Pflaum after the Second World War. Beatrice Kitson, a close friend of Ethel Mallinson as well as Robert's sister, started regularly attending meetings and sat as the model again. When Mrs Fenwick died in 1912, the club elected A.J. Sanders as President and Ina Kitson Clark as his vice president. But as he refused to accept the senior post they swapped and she embarked on a presidency of nearly forty years.

The year 1911–12 has already been indicated as most significant for the development of the arts in Leeds due to the effect of both Sadler's and Rutter's appointments.⁵³ Although Sadler was a keen but self-deprecating sketcher in water colours, he does not seem to have become a member. But Ina Kitson Clark proposed the new curator for honorary membership in October 1912 and he first attended a meeting at A.J. Sanders', one of his friends in Leeds and a Leeds Art Club member. Members gave £5 to the new Leeds Art Collections Fund. In 1913 Sydney Kitson, recently President of the Leeds and Yorkshire Architectural Society and a newly co-opted member of the Art Gallery Sub-Committee, was invited to be the critic at a meeting at the Ladies' Club and his wife accompanied him. In July Robert Kitson showed his watercolours of Kairouan with Ethel Mallinson's of Taormina at Mrs Barran's meeting at *Shadwell Grange*, and the following month at Elmet his Sicilian friend Don Carlo Siligato showed some of his own sketches. It seems to have been a happy period in which Kitson's life and artistic work in Sicily and Leeds were most closely integrated.

8.26

What Rutter made of the L.F.A.C. and its art is unrecorded, but there is no reason to suppose that his subsequent disdain for the Leeds art world was as marked at the time. He regularly attended the club's meetings, usually with his wife, and probably helped to engage their critics during the early years of the war, sometimes when he had them as house guests. Charles Ginner came in July and Mr Ludovici in November of 1914, Albert Rothenstein in February and 'the Anglo-Parisian painter Mr Ferguson' in March of 1915. One wonders what impact they had on members' work. But their presence indicates that Rutter's activities were not restricted to the City Art Gallery and the Leeds Arts Club. Owing to Ethel Mallinson's illness and probably her war work, L.F.A. Club minute entries became brief and cease in October 1916 only to restart under Ina Kitson's Clark's presidential signature in October 1920. On the day Ginner came as critic Robert Kitson had brought along five or six watercolours, including one depicting a large archway with figures in Kairouan, two of Sicilian marionettes and some smaller ones including a big white building in Kairouan.⁵⁴ These were the kinds of work he was to exhibit in London galleries, including the R.B.A., in the decade after the war, and their number and various sizes suggest his growing confidence as an artist.⁵⁵ But Italy's entry into the war broke the regularity

of his attendance in Leeds as well as that of the club's activities as the years of conflict dragged on.

In the almost complete absence of any illustrations of the work exhibited, with the exception of a few of Ethel Mallinson's landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales, some of Ina Kitson Clark's pencil portraits and watercolours, and the many watercolours by Robert Kitson, one hesitates to attempt an assessment of the club's work at this time. For many years the majority of members worked in watercolours and drawing, providing yet another local example to parallel those at a national level of the interweaving of professional and accomplished part-time artists drawn from a relatively homogenous social stratum. If Robert Kitson was a bird of passage but a regular exhibitor, the club was maintained by the careful organization of maiden ladies like Ethel Mallinson, supported by Beatrice Kitson as a hostess but non-working member, and the forceful drive of Ina Kitson Clark.

8.4 The Arts and Crafts Exhibitions: a case of co-operation

From the earliest years of the City Art Gallery it acted as host to a variety of exhibitions organized by local organizations. There was a persistent and pervasive interest in the Arts and Crafts Movement and in its products. To some, such as the members of the Leeds Arts Club, it was the most practical aspect of a general challenge to the liberal establishment of industrial capitalism. To others, such as Robert and Sydney Kitson, it probably presented good sense and tasteful design in furnishing and architecture. And to yet others, like Ina Kitson Clark, it may have been an opportunity to encourage the community in practical craft activity and socially useful design and decoration.

8.27b For several years from 1891 the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education arranged an Arts and Crafts Exhibition. The programme for that of 1900, with its characteristically *art nouveau* figures and foliage, is particularly informative. Whilst the list of patrons includes most of the local titled aristocrats, the M.P.s, Jackson, Balfour and Sir James Kitson, and the knighted industrialists, Barran and Stephenson, the Executive Committee was largely drawn from the members of the Leeds elite, who, with their husbands, also took a prominent part in other Leeds cultural associations; the Yorkshire College, the Little Owl, the Leeds and Yorkshire Society of Architects, the Leeds Fine Arts Club, the City Art Gallery Sub-committee, and the Lady Patronesses of the City Art Gallery. Only Emily Ford was to be a future member of the Leeds Arts Club. Three were Kitsons — Mrs Kitson Clark, Robert and Sydney Kitson, and a fourth was Albert Kitson's sister-in-law and his father's neighbour, Mrs Edward Schunck. The general committee drew in even more including one of the Cliffs, Miss Emily Kitson, Mrs J. Hawthorn Kitson and Mrs F.J. Kitson, and Sydney's partner F.W. Bedford.⁵⁶

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The exhibition was arranged in the two sections, in a wide range of arts and handicrafts, the first a competition between schools and classes mainly from the West and North Ridings of Yorkshire, the second contributed by 'the best known Professional and Amateur Art-craftsmen and women of the day' including C.R. Ashbee, Walter Crane, Charles Conder, the Gaskins, William de Morgan, May Morris, Harold Rathbone, Audrey Trevelyan, C.F.A. Voysey, and others. Four public lectures and demonstrations were laid on, one being on 'The life and work of William Morris' by W.R. Lethaby, of the Art Workers' Guild and the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and another, on 'Methods of book illustration' by Mrs Kitson Clark. With the help of some London printers, the latter amassed a set of illustrative reproductions so that she also referred to new methods of photographic reproduction.⁵⁷ The finely tooled, leather-bound visitors' books for *Hillside* and Elmet Hall may have come from this or one of the subsequent exhibitions.

Probably on the strength of these exhibitions and the formation of a local affiliate of the national Arts and Crafts Exhibitions Society, an informal committee meeting was held in the autumn of 1903 with the object of considering the advisability of holding an Exhibition of Arts and Crafts. The minutes of this, in Robert Kitson's hand, are in the City Art Gallery's letter files.⁵⁹ A new member of the Art Gallery's Subcommittee, he chaired the meeting of eighteen people. Tom Steele formed the impression that the exhibition was jointly organized by the Leeds Arts Club but, with the exception of J.A. Sanders, the only other L.A. Club members at this initial meeting were W.H. Thorp who was already deputy chairman of the Art Gallery Committee and a member of most other Leeds cultural associations, and Herbert Thompson, *The Yorkshire Post* art critic who was also a member of the L.F.A.C. Indeed this meeting specifically requested the Art Gallery Committee to 'hold the exhibition on their own responsibility' and that it 'should appoint a consultative committee embodying representatives from the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, the Committee of Patronesses of the City Art Gallery, the Council of the Yorkshire College, the School of Art Committee, the Leeds and Yorkshire Architectural Society, the Yorkshire Union of Artists and others'. Perhaps the Leeds Arts Club participated in this committee. If so, it would have been one of several.⁶⁰

It was proposed that the exhibition should start a week before and run through the Leeds Musical Festival for at least six weeks, that it should be open by day and occasionally in the evening and that a special feature should be a loan exhibition of Old Leeds Ware.⁶¹ There was both a general and executive committee and members took responsibility for different sections.⁶² In July 1904, Sydney Kitson requested twenty application forms for his Section 9.⁶³ Work was requested from artists under the umbrella of the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions Society and people established in the movement such as C.R. Ashbee consented to supply 'a characteristic exhibit, either in

architecture or the crafts'.⁶⁴ By this time Frank Brangwyn was in close touch with the City Art Gallery, particularly through Robert Kitson who had just begun to buy his oil paintings. Sam Wilson had tried to buy one of his pictures at Leeds, only to find it was already owned by another of Brangwyn's patrons, (Sir) T.L. Devitt, through whom the artist obtained the commission to decorate the Skinners' livery hall in the City of London.⁶⁵ The curator's file includes a letter from Brangwyn, forwarded by Kitson, 'I enclose you a few names of men who do good work perhaps you have already asked them to exhibit at Leeds. Did you write to Bing and Mier Grafe in Paris? I forget when I saw you to ask you if you thought of going to Montreuil in August. I hope so'.⁶⁶ The attached list of names is missing but Kitson sent a further list from Montreuil in August while he was with Brangwyn of 'people who are extra or whom I especially know about'. Nelson Dawson, Anning Bell, Brangwyn, Ramsden-Carr, Stirling Lee (with Selwyn Image crossed out).⁶⁷ Anning Bell had already offered to send some of his work as early as 5 February 1904, so the list may have been a reiteration.

The exhibition was held from September to November 1904. Robert Kitson stayed in Leeds at least until the public lecture given by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson who lectured on the history and aims of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the art gallery's central court on October 15th. Steele records this lecture as part of the Leeds Arts Club's programme and Holbrook Jackson gave the vote of thanks, but notice of it was given to the Art Gallery sub-committee on 12th October who placed it in the advertisement for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition.⁶⁸ Colonel Harding was just ending his 18 years as chairman of the sub-committee and W.H. Thorp chaired the meeting as befitted a leading member of both sponsoring organizations. The Lady Mayoress, Mrs Curren-Briggs, who had been involved in the initial meeting, and Robert Kitson, who had chaired it, spoke in support of Jackson's vote of thanks. Cobden-Sanderson gave Kitson a signed copy of the book of essays on the movement by William Morris and others that he had printed which was kept at *Casa Cuseni*.⁶⁹

Writing in 1907 Holbrook Jackson recalled 'how respectable Leeds at first held back fearing our revolutionary ideas, then gradually came forward reassured by the excellence of our exhibitions; and how in turn many of these people joined the club and became revolutionaries themselves'.⁷⁰ But, as indicated by the exhibitions sponsored by the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, the support of leading figures in the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Art Workers' Guild, like Lethaby and Ashbee, was already well established by 1904. The difference in that year was that the Art Gallery Sub-Committee took a leading role in sponsoring the formal collaboration of so many local associations which together constituted a significant part of the Leeds art world. That an Arts and Crafts Exhibition should have been capable of drawing active participation from so many is indicative of the great and varied appeal of the movement

and its ideas at the turn of the century. If the members of the Leeds Arts Club stood by its political and philosophical ideas, when others were probably more attracted by its aesthetics and participatory craft ethics, one should not ignore the potential impact of these ideals on the domestic social organization in the homes of this generation of the Leeds elite, which Ashbee noted on his visit to Colonel Shaw-Hellier in Taormina in 1908.⁷¹

8.5 New ideas and forms of art and the impact of Sir Michael Sadler and Frank Rutter on their appreciation in Leeds

If the Leeds Fine Arts Club can be seen as a way in which those involved in the arts in the city set about producing art, and the City Art Gallery could achieve collaboration in the service of the Arts and Crafts Movement, one cannot deny the significant role of the Leeds Arts Club in the general development of a forum for the arts in Leeds and subsequently in the metropolis. Although life classes were held and members' work was exhibited, the Club was not so much devoted to the production of art works as to the discussion and dissemination of new ideas in art, culture and political economy.

2.6 The manner of the Club's existence and the sorts of topic discussed at its meetings go to show the extent to which the established Leeds elite had won the struggle to retain control of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society earlier in the century and thereby paved the way for its subsequent fossilization and marginal role as a local forum for ideas. In 1890 the society sold its library to the new Yorkshire College and its museum to the city, retaining its premises with the Philosophical Hall in Park Row.

8.30 Edwin Kitson Clark, with a few others, tried to revive its programme of public lectures and short courses. He wrote to all sorts of celebrated people, like Arthur Selous the hunter and explorer and Dr Edward Wilson of the Antarctic,⁷² to get interesting lectures for the Society and got local speakers to put together short series on geography with lantern slides of their trips abroad, but they offered little compared to the university courses arranged by the extension departments and the Workers' Educational Association, or the controversial debates at the Leeds Arts Club. Even the Society's role in providing a venue for women to sit the Cambridge Local Examinations, in parallel with the facilities offered to men by the Mechanics Institute, was superseded by the Yorkshire College. Edwin Kitson Clark in effect charted the society's decline in the history he published to commemorate its centenary in 1923.

8.31 The Leeds Arts Club owed its existence to the charismatic energy of a Yorkshire school teacher in Harehills, Alfred Orage (1873–1934), who had been engaged by the Leeds School Board in 1893, joined the Independent Labour Party in 1894 and the Theosophical Society in 1896 under the combined influence of Edward Carpenter's

socialist mysticism and Annie Besant's transcendentalism. Orage was supported by the organization and philosophical commitment of several leading members, especially Holbrook Jackson (d.1948), a small-scale manufacturer of lace and free-lance journalist who subsequently published one of the first critical reviews of the cultural milieu of *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913) in London.⁷³

It is the social context of the Leeds Art Club and the relatively eclectic nature of its programme that is of particular interest here. In contrast to the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society which was periodically relaunched but had lost its mark, the Little Owl which was very select, and the L.F.A.C. which was primarily a sketching club, the Leeds Arts Club put current debates at the front of its agenda and its leading members espoused a cause whose message they sought to put across. This was basically the Nietzschean thesis of a new type of man, and woman, for the new age, a heroic age rather than one devoted to simple rationalism, capitalist materialism or socialist collectivism.

Records seem to exist only of the Leeds Arts Club's committee members and programmes of events with some press coverage of them.⁷⁴ But these are enough to indicate that they were drawn from a variety of school teachers, small businessmen, architects, university staff including the Liberal Anglican chaplain and Walter Frere (1863–1938) of the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield which built a hostel for arts students in the new university, and the established local artist of Impressionism, Mark Senior, whose influence on Sam Wilson's collection has already been discussed in Chapter 5. Prominent women included the artist, Emily Ford, and her sister Isabella (1855–1925), who had been an inattentive owlet and an extramural student at the Yorkshire College before launching into the campaign for socialism and women's rights.⁷⁵ The club's programme encompassed contemporary literature and drama, such as Ibsen's and new Irish plays, and was to branch into a separate society of Playgoers who produced the new plays in the Albert Hall of the Mechanics' Institute. But it also called in nationally renowned authors and critics for its public lecture series. Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), whose move north had originally been associated with his work for the Oxford University Delegacy extension courses in the region, lectured on socialism and his conception of a new sexuality and gender which accorded with the ideas of sexual liberation espoused by several members.⁷⁶ And George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) exasperated the city fathers and Leeds patriots by remarking on the filth of a city worthy only of a conflagration.⁷⁷ It was a theme to which Professor Cohen, of the university and the L.F.A.C., returned in his calculation of the extent and impact of smoke pollution in Leeds.⁷⁸

Although the club did have some rooms in Park Lane and later near the university in No.8 Blenheim Terrace, its more popular lectures were usually given in larger premises, which might entail joint sponsorship, for example by the Philosophical and

Literary Society. So it would be mistaken to see its activities as being beyond the pale and worthy of expulsion by the Leeds elite as had been the case with socialist clubs sharing premises with the mechanics' institute sixty or more years earlier. This socially as well as culturally eclectic role of the Leeds Arts Club is particularly apparent in the arrangements for and types of art it exhibited.⁷⁹

Not surprisingly a focal point of interest were the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris and the production of works according to arts-and-crafts principles. Just as the Little Owl had begun with readings from Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, so the Leeds Art Club took up his social theories, in particular that of the guilds. Penty's book *The Restoration of the Guild System* provided the basis for Guild Socialism, principles adopted by another member, Tom Heron, father of Patrick and brother of a long-term member of the L.F.A.C., when he set up his company *Cresta Silks* on guild socialist principles after the Great War.⁸⁰ In 1903 the club arranged an exhibition of contemporary hand-painted books including The Dove's Press edition of the Bible with which Morris and Cobden Sanderson were directly associated. On the 15th October in the following year, Cobden Sanderson came to speak on the movement during the exhibition of Arts and Crafts held at the City Art Gallery, a major collaborative achievement between the coterie of local arts associations described in the previous section. He came again to speak and open an exhibition in the Bradford Club in December, 1911.⁸¹

In March, 1905, W.A. Jones organized an exhibition in the club's rooms of sketches by contemporary artists drawn from the *plein air* school who had formed the core of the New English Art Club, probably using the opportunities presented by loans from the collections of Sam Wilson and Charles Rothenstein (later Rutherston) of Bradford, of work by Clausen, Lavery, Scott, Steer and Priestman. Sam Wilson bought two of Orpen's watercolours.⁸² Spruce and Herbert Thompson, the *Yorkshire Post's* art critic both gave talks during its showing. A year later Montague Fordham, the Director of the *Arts and Crafts Gallery* in London, lectured on the Arts and Crafts Movement during the annual exhibition of Yorkshire Union of Artists at the City Art Gallery. And in February 1906 the club arranged an exhibition by Ruskin's legatee, the Guild of St George. It is difficult to detect exactly who was involved in organizing what because the climate of cultural principles and artistic interests was a shared one. There was also a keen interest in the revival of printed illustrations in books on which Ina Kitson Clark had already lectured in 1900. In 1905 Oliver Onions (1873–1961) came to talk on 'Modern English Black and White Art' to the club, not long after the death of Phil May, the outstanding genius in that art of penmanship.⁸³ After the departure of Orage and Holbrook Jackson for London, their views were firmly re-expressed by the new Secretary R.E. Wilkinson in 1909 who stated that 'the Club values no enthusiasm for either Art or Philosophy which does not consciously react

8.39 upon the ugliness, stupidity and chaos of modern civilization'.⁸⁴ That year the Club's exhibition was devoted to the work of Muirhead Bone (1876–1953), much of it from the collection of Charles Rothenstein (Rutherton).

8.33 From 1911 that enthusiasm was imported into Leeds with the catalytic appointment of Professor Michael Sadler to the Vice-Chancellorship of the university, followed by that of Frank Rutter as curator of the City Arts Gallery in 1912 following Birkett's death in June 1911. Both were already established leaders of public education in different fields and had been brought together by their interest in new forms of art from the continent of Europe. This therefore marked a significant change in the focus on artistic models which influenced local artists. All of these easily meshed with the sorts of ideas as well as artistic enthusiasm current in the Leeds Arts Club, of which Sadler and Rutter became influential members for the next decade and which soon died out after Sadler's departure for Oxford in 1923. The impact of these two men on the institutional life of Leeds as well as on the arts in the city was not only important in itself but established ways in which local enthusiasts, of less experience and charismatic vigour like the Kitsons, were to continue and consolidate.⁸⁵

Sadler was from 1886 a keen landscape sketcher and was particularly enthusiastic about 12th and 13th century architecture, such as J.S. Cotman's Normandy. In 1893 he appreciated London exhibitions of work by Burne-Jones and H.B. Brabazon, two artists whose drawings Robert Kitson also collected and presented to the City Art Gallery many years later. But in 1897 Sadler was remarking on the ways in which British arts and crafts were being taken up, published and developed in Germany.⁸⁶ In his memoir of his father, Michael Sadleir (1888–1957) provides two vignettes of Sadler which indicate the nature and importance of art in his life. 'He was never trained as an artist, and remained all his life an unashamed and enraptured amateur. It is doubtful whether he ever enjoyed anything so much as painting on a camp-stool *devant le motif*, and sloshing away in whatsoever was the style of the moment.'⁸⁷ In troubled and depressing times such as those following his resignation, he was 'driven by spiritual distress into an extreme of illogicality', buying pictures on impulse and in his letters describing actual landscapes through the eyes of the painters he admired.⁸⁸

In 1909 Sadler's wife was very ill but he went to a conference in Holland and a holiday with his son. There the Mesdag gallery in the Hague acted as a kind of *kindergarten*, 'transforming a conventional admirer of Raphael and Leonardo and a modest buyer of old English water-colours into an adventurous champion of contemporary art and a picture-collector of tireless and experimental enthusiasm'.⁸⁹ At E.J. Van Wisselingh's gallery in Amsterdam he bought a painting of Tunis by Mari Bauer, a late impressionist with oriental interests, the first of many which he bought

on impulse but which his wife disliked. In 1910 he went to Paris and looked up the Impressionists in the Luxembourg and the Barbizon School in the Louvre and D.S. MacColl introduced Sadler to Wilson Steer, Augustus John and other members of the N.E.A.C., some of whose work he bought at Robert Ross's Carfax Gallery. Robert Kitson had taken a similar London path a few years earlier. The significant difference in artistic receptiveness between Kitson and Sadler is well exemplified by the events in 1911 which brought Sadler in touch with Frank Rutter.⁹⁰

8.35 Rutter not only supported Durand-Ruel's exhibition of Impressionist paintings,
8.37 but Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibitions at the Grafton Galleries, publishing *Revelation in Art* in 1911 in critical praise of Cezanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh, and calling in *The New Age* and *Art News* for experimental art to be taken seriously. Michael Sadleir brought his father to the Allied Artists' Association in 1911 where the former bought a series of woodcuts by Kandinsky. The two of them took advantage of a continental holiday in 1912 to visit the artist at home in Murnau and Sadler bought several of his pictures which Roger Fry borrowed to exhibit in the Doré gallery in 1913, and which the West Riding vorticist, Wadsworth, took up for acclaim in 1914.⁹¹ Sadler's appointment to Leeds followed the City Art Gallery's purchase of William Orpen's *The Red Scarf*.⁹² Rutter was impressed and, feeling the need for a steady income now that he had married, applied for the curatorship.⁹³ His application was certainly contested. Brangwyn and Robert Kitson favoured a very different candidate and some, like the Hon. Secretary of the Yorkshire Photographic Society simply put themselves forward.⁹⁴ But Rutter took up his post on 1 June 1912.

Within a few weeks Rutter closed the gallery in order to replace the maroon boarding with coarse-textured hessian on the walls, a redecoration Robert Kitson had tried to press on the Lord Mayor in 1910, and removed Birkett's gilded descriptive tablets from works exhibited. Finding there was no purchasing fund and that works were more likely to enter the collections through their association with local politicians than their artistic worth, Rutter had by 26th July arranged for Sadler to call a preliminary meeting at University House that led to the inaugural meeting of the Leeds Art Collections Fund on 11th November 1912, at which he took the chair. Sadler had been impressed by a scheme he observed at Mannheim, which arranged both for subscriptions with which works of art could be bought and for local loans.⁹⁵ At the university he used his own collections for this purpose and Charles Rutherston (Rothenstein) was to give his own collection to Manchester City Art Gallery with the intention of works being lent from it so that private citizens could enjoy art in their own homes. Rutter, in 1927, described his aim as being to organize a body of private subscribers because it was easier to smuggle really good things into the gallery if they were presented.⁹⁶

It is interesting to note those who constituted the handful of Leeds art-lovers and subscribed to the following objects of the L.A.C.F.:

- 1 To raise by subscription and donations a fund for the purchase of Works of Art to be held by the Society for exhibition and to be available for ultimate presentation to the City of Leeds.
- 2 To encourage Private Donors to offer gifts to the Society and to afford expert advice and guidance as to the nature of the gifts which would be most acceptable.
- 3 To organize from time to time loan exhibitions of Works of Art.⁹⁷

In the first three years of the L.A.C.F., until the war when it became dormant until a deliberate post-war revival, the membership was steadily expanded along several predictable lines. The Hon. Edward Wood (later Lord Halifax) was invited to preside but no other local aristocrats were enrolled. And with the exception of the Lord Mayor, Colonel Sir Edward Brotherton, and C.F. Tetley, who were also on the University Council, local Conservatives like Penrose Green and Curren Briggs were absent. No fewer than nine Kitsons joined, including Robert and Sydney who were both on the advisory committee, Ina Kitson Clark, Beatrice and her mother, F.J. Kitson, ex Lord-Mayor, and his mother, the new Lord Airedale who was a vice-president and his sister Hilda. The only comparable family were the Willsons, but most of them lived in the same household. Long term servants of the arts in Leeds, such as Colonel Harding, Herbert Thompson, Sam Wilson, W.H. Thorp and A.J. Sanders appear, the latter being the first Hon. Treasurer. So do three members of the Barran family, of whom two were actively involved in the Leeds Fine Arts Club, as were several already listed above with Professor Cohen, Haywood Rider of the School of Art, and the Greenwoods. Several additional local collectors, who were to present their collections to the City Art Gallery were Charles Roberts, J.R. Fritch, Herbert Hepworth, with the relatively young Norman Lupton, and F.J. Fulford, some of whom were also co-opted onto the Art Gallery Sub-Committee like Robert Kitson.⁹⁸

Two of Phil May's relatives joined and were no doubt involved in the Memorial Exhibition of May's work which the L.A.C.F. sponsored in 1914, the posters for which led to Rutter's reprimand from the City Councillors for unauthorized expenditure. And the cost of Edward Gordon Craig's exhibition of stage designs and models etc. was underwritten by Sadler, Fulford and Sam Wilson.⁹⁹ A.M. Daniel, who lectured on the purposes of such a Fund, was a friend of Sydney Kitson in Scarborough, a collector of contemporary art and lender to Leeds Arts Club exhibitions, and future Director of the National Gallery.¹⁰⁰

Two specific aims of the policy were to build up a Black and White Section and another of decorative furniture, and appropriately relevant purchases were made in 1914, although a special presentation was made by the L.A.C.F. when it purchased a panel portrait by Frans Pourbus from a private Belgian collection to raise funds for

refugees, 300 of whom were temporarily accommodated in the gallery. Subscribers to this special fund were mainly several Kitsons, Barrans, Luptons, Ryders, Frank Gott, Sadler and his wife's Harvey family. By the time the L.A.C.F. was revived after the war and a retrospective exhibition held of the items obtained through it, the pattern is clear, as is Sadler's role in supporting it. There were three oil paintings, excepting that by Pourbus, ten watercolours of which Sadler presented three, thirty black and white drawings, etchings and lithographs of which Sadler presented four, three woodcuts by Gordon Craig which had just been bought, three sculptures, and five pieces of furniture, one of which had been presented by Robert Kitson and another, a Venetian table bought in Rome in 1921, had been selected and arranged by him. In 1914 the L.A.C.F. bought prints by Nevinson and John Nash and a watercolour of *Poole Park* by J.H. Hay. Four portrait drawings by William Rothenstein were added in the following year through the N.A.C.F. to the lithographic portraits of Thomas Hardy and Alphonse Legros already bought by the L.A.C.F.¹⁰¹ So that by 1915 when the businessman Arthur Bilbrough left his bequest to buy works for the permanent collection, and 1917 when A.G. Lupton presented a print to encourage the establishment of a print room,¹⁰² a start had already been made, despite the fact that all the galleries on the ground floor had been allocated to the offices of the Food Control Committee until 1920, and Rutter had resigned after disputes with the councillors over unauthorized expenditure and the selection of pictures for the permanent collection.

There were many further ways in which Rutter's and Sadler's interests and activities interlocked; in the reception of British and foreign artists in Leeds and their programmes of activity; in the programmes of lectures on art and music at the University, the Leeds Art Club and the City Art Gallery; Rutter's teaching for Arthur Greenwood of the W.E.A., of which Sadler was President until his Liberal rather than Socialist stand on the Leeds Municipal Workers' Strike in 1913; and the loan of Sadler's collection or its availability to view at his home in *Buckingham House*, Headingley Lane, a house he chose because of its available wall space.¹⁰³

At the City Art Gallery in October 1912 the Yorkshire Union of Artist exhibition included groups of paintings by William Rothenstein and the late Joseph Crawhall, who had lived for many years at Brandsby but is thought of as a Scottish artist. And in the following month the loss of the Leeds orchestra in the *Titanic* with its conductor Wallace Hartley was commemorated by the presentation of Cayley Robinson's *The Outward Bound*.¹⁰⁴ The following year opened with an exhibition of London Underground posters arranged by Frank Pick, and an exhibition including another of William Rothenstein's pictures sent by the artist's brother. The major exhibitions were, however, the memorial show of Phil May's work in black and white, and the first substantial loan exhibition of work by John Constable which was opened by the

8.41 Director of the National Gallery, C.J. Holmes (1868–1936).¹⁰⁵ 1914 had a successful Spring exhibition at which the Lord Mayor, E.A. Brotherton bought five works by Paul Nash, Lady Scott and Albert Rothenstein, and Norman Lupton bought a bronze by Mervyn Lawrence.¹⁰⁶ Exhibitions were held of Japanese colour prints and another of the work of Lucien Pissarro and his father but thereafter because of the war no special exhibitions were arranged although galleries were made available to different groups. In 1916 a special exhibition in aid of the Serbian allies was arranged with the V. and A. of sculpture by Mestrovic although the city council called off the official opening at the last minute through distaste at the work being shown.¹⁰⁷ With the cessation of lectures and then the use of most of the gallery by the Food Control Office as the war wore on, Rutter had to look elsewhere, but he did manage to obtain the loan of paintings by J.M.W. Turner and Whistler from the National Gallery.¹⁰⁸

As the president of the Leeds Arts Club, Rutter had other opportunities not only for his interests but for the development of artistic ideas in Leeds. Thistlewood, Bill Oliver and Tom Steele have all pointed out the fundamental difference between Rutter's formalistic approach to abstract modernism in art, with which one may associate Cézanne and Cubism, and the more romantic expressionist art that appealed to Sadler.¹⁰⁹ Sadler perceived similarities between some of Ruskin's ideas and those of Nietzsche. Club meetings were often held in Sadler's home, surrounded by examples in his collection, in which members would discuss the latest editorial comment in *The New Age* and Rutter would take issue with Sadler's expressionist views. Sadler provided a commentary on those of his own pictures which were on view in the University entrance hall in *The Gryphon* and he arranged public lectures on art and music at the University. Lawrence Binyon came to talk on the arts of China and Japan, Walter Sickert on 'New Wine' and the Revd. W.H. Frere D.D., of Mirfield and a regular Leeds Arts Club speaker, on 'The art of listening to music'.¹¹⁰

8.40 Rutter's aesthetic hypothesis was that of 'significant form', stressing the importance of pattern and abstract design. One can see why the early works of J.S. Cotman appealed to him, forming a continuing delight in this aspect of the Leeds City Art Gallery's post-war collection and the work of Sydney Kitson.¹¹¹ In the Summer of 1914 Paul Nash came to Leeds and Bradford, probably mainly to see the collections of Sadler and Charles Rothenstein, after a visit to his friend in Carnforth, the poet Gordon Bottomley. His brother John also visited and at this or some later time had works collected by both Sadler and Robert Kitson. So did Ginner, and Gilman, the former completing sketches of the *University Buildings* in 1916. And Sadler invited John Currie to Leeds after being introduced to him by his son. Currie's nervous and ill-prepared lecture was a fiasco and his life was spiralling down into the disaster that culminated in his murder of his wife and suicide. But Sadler considered his work

important even if he judged Sidney Schiff's letter of praise at such a purchase and proposal for meeting Sadler 'impertinent'.¹¹²

To young artists in Leeds Sadler devoted considerable attention, in particular Jacob Kramer, Bruce Turner and Herbert Read, each of whom took advantage of the opportunities offered by the Leeds Arts Club. Sadler's initiative in founding Departments of Russian and Spanish brought Dr Penzol to the university. Long a member of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, Penzol was also a friend of Juan Gris and through this Turner came to know Cubist art. T.E. Hulme's series of articles in *The New Age* introduced Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Bomberg, Nevinson, Wadsworth and William Roberts to these young men and the more expressionist forms of Italian Futurism and Vorticism were immediately influential.

8.42 Sadler supported the young Jewish emigré, Jacob Kramer, buying some of his pictures and advancing him money in 1911, and persevering, despite the disappointing results of a portrait commission, to encourage the reproduction of Kramer's work in *Colour* and his departure to the Slade School with a grant from the Jewish Educational Aid Society. In 1916 he interpreted Kramer's work to a local audience at the Leeds School of Art Exhibition which began the regular exhibition of the artist's work in Leeds and Bradford. Kramer first exhibited with The London Group in 1913 and Rutter wrote in praise of his *Death of my Father* in the Group's 1916 exhibition and bought the picture. In 1918 the Leeds Arts Club exhibited his work on the eve of Kramer's enlistment. But Kramer never fitted into the Bloomsbury Group or Roger Fry's
8.33 interest in Cubism, unlike his contemporary Mark Gertler, who also painted Sadler's portrait.¹¹³

What Sadler, and Kramer in his art, heralded in Leeds was Expressionism. Sadler lectured to the W.E.A. in 1913 'where there is force, there is beauty' and he saw artists as visionaries prophesying the Great War in October of that year. His son translated Kandinsky's writings which Kramer and Bruce Turner took up in their work.¹¹⁴ When some local artists objected to some of this new work, others, like Ernest Forbes and Frank Dean, who regularly acted as critic for the Leeds Fine Arts Club, wrote encouragingly of such new directions and contributed their own work to the following exhibition of the Leeds Arts Club in 1914. But for the outbreak of war Kandinsky would himself have visited Leeds later that year.¹¹⁵

Sadler's activities were of course primarily devoted to the development of the university and, after nine months visiting local authorities and businessmen with the university secretary, he established direct links with local industrialists and professional men in a regular luncheon club that met from 1913–1922. In 1918 the City Council was itself challenged by the foundation of a Leeds Civic Society by Sadler, W.H. Thorp, Professor Moorman and the Vicar of Leeds, as well as men like Edwin

Kitson Clark and F.M. Lupton, who sounded forth on the city-beautiful and homes for heroes.¹¹⁶

8.34

One of his greatest influences within the university, which also directly affected the future development of aesthetic ideas and the understanding of modern art in Britain, was on the career of Herbert Read. A Leeds undergraduate, Read encountered contemporary art and modernist ideas in Sadler's collection and the discussions at the Leeds Arts Club which he joined in 1912 at the age of 19. From the trenches he corresponded with Kramer and Sadler, and came to write poetry for and participate in editing *The New Age* when he was demobilised and settled in London. Read saw Kramer as the expressionist that the artist felt himself to be and drew a broad distinction, in *New Age* Nietzschean terms, between Apollonian classic abstraction and the undisciplined energy of Dionysian romanticism.¹¹⁷

But Sadler shared with Frank Rutter a concern for art in industry. Reference has already been made to the revival of hand printed books and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society as well as Ina Kitson Clark's interest in techniques of illustrative printing and the Leeds Art Club's exhibition of J.E. Bedford's collection of early printed books. In 1913, the City Art Gallery held an exhibition of new colour-printing processes including a large set of prints from Hanfstaengl, a German gallery and publisher. Sadler was a sponsor and Leeds Technical Printing School staff were also involved. When the exhibition ended Frank Rutter was on holiday and left its dismantling to an assistant, Pearson. This man seems to have been grossly incompetent but probably not unscrupulous. When a substantial bill arrived from the London agent late in 1916 for items never returned and the Government was insisting an impounding enemy goods not returned by a certain date, the City Council and sub-committee expected Rutter to clear it up. A lot was found at the Printing School to which several firms had donated their exhibits, and more in a basement cupboard of which the clerk denied all knowledge.¹¹⁸

From what remains of the files, it looks as though this episode of maladministration contributed to the final row over Rutter's purchase of two pictures, one by Pissarro, which he was ordered to take back to London in person by Alderman Willey during this period and to which he referred in his autobiography.¹¹⁹ He described his resignation as 'suicide', the only alternative for a self-respecting curator being 'murder' and he never forgave Leeds this experience. He had kept Aitken, the Director of the Tate Gallery, informed and the latter commiserated with him about 'the unsatisfactory state at Leeds'.¹²⁰

Sadler's later years in Leeds were also surrounded with controversy specifically related to his artistic projects.¹²¹ Like many of his contemporaries, Sadler was deeply distressed by the loss of youth in the war and eager to commemorate them and help to put things right for those who survived them. Both of his projects were directly

related to this but their conception dated well before Sadler's return from India. In 1909 his friend D.S. MacColl had called for the decorative use of wall-space in public buildings for mural painting. In 1916 H.A.L. Fisher proposed that William Rothenstein should come to Sheffield to lecture and establish a chair in Civic Art in order to encourage the redevelopment of the provinces as artistic centres. In order to convince the university authorities that this was appropriate Fisher arranged for him to lecture to the Technical School of Art.¹²²

On his return from India, Sadler helped to found the Civic Society in Leeds. He was also impressed by the exhibition of war artists' work that he saw in London with which Rothenstein had also been associated. At the time the proposal was to hang these in a Hall of Memory, although what eventuated was the collection of art in the new Imperial War Museum housed in the central block of Smirke's ex-Bedlam hospital. In February 1920 Sadler put forward his scheme for a set of murals in the blank panels of the Victoria Hall and the entrance hall of Leeds Town Hall. The artists would be chosen by a panel and the designs submitted for approval by Rothenstein, who had just returned to London on his appointment by H.A.L. Fisher to direct the Royal College of Art. Sadler put up £200 to commission the initial designs which could then be presented to the City Council for consideration. It was a bold and imaginative proposal but it was doomed to failure because the artists were ill-assorted and uncoordinated.¹²³

When Sadler decided to call it a day on 8th October 1921 he wrote to Kramer, and the other artists

I have now, for the first time, had an opportunity of seeing together the designs which you and others have prepared for the proposed decoration of Leeds Town Hall. While greatly admiring many of the designs, and not least your own, I am clear that the designs, taken as a group, are discordant with one another and would not be suitable for collective decoration. In these circumstances I regret to say that I am not prepared to recommend them to Leeds City Council for acceptance.

Sadler had commissioned the designs and offered them to the British Museum Print Room, but they remained rolled up in his store until his son presented them to the City Art Gallery after his death. Stanley Spencer's design, which had already been rejected, was bought and presented by the L.A.C.F. in 1973.¹²⁴

This outcome was disappointing enough but it had also become a *cause célèbre* when *The Yorkshire Post* published the designs with its own assessment of them. Rutherston's and Jowett's designs were acceptable but the rest were derided. Mark Senior, one of the Leeds Art Club's founders, a regular exhibitor at the R.A. and the artist who helped Sam Wilson to form the collection he had just bequeathed to the City Art Gallery, had already in May 1920 taken the occasion of Kramer's exhibition at the Club to write to the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. Senior was unrestrained in his

criticism of 'nightmare crudities' and 'artistic Bolsheviks' which 'must not be allowed to disfigure the Leeds Town Hall'.¹²⁵ Quite apart from the appropriateness of this sort of modern art for the Town Hall and the capacity of these artists to work on such a scale with the model of Ford Madox Brown at Manchester for comparison, there remains Sadler's criticism, which Thistlewood perceptively interprets as based in the inherent difference between the romantic expressionist art of those like Kramer and the very different abstraction of those painting like Paul Nash.¹²⁶ For such reasons the project was therefore artistically as well as organizationally flawed. But, after his outspoken advocacy of civic patronage for decorative art, Rothenstein's failure to provide and achieve effective co-ordination of the project's designs must be considered a contributory factor.¹²⁷

8.44 It was in 1916 that Sadler initiated what became his last major brush with public opinion on art in Leeds before he left for University College, Oxford in 1923 — the design for the war memorial to be erected at the university itself. In the summer of 1916, Eric Gill collaborated with Charles Holden in submitting an entry for the Civic Arts Association's competition for a large war memorial to L.C.C. employees killed in the war, for erection in Knott's new County Hall. It was given second place because it did not follow the conditions, being a free-standing figure group in bronze.¹²⁸

8.45 Charles Rutherston (Rothenstein) bought the designs but Sadler commissioned Gill, in 1917, to carve a memorial in relief of the same subject, chosen by the artist, of 'Christ driving out the money changers from the Temple'. In 1919 Gill published a pamphlet on *Riches* with the design as an engraved illustration,¹²⁹ but it seems that the project did not get under way until 1921, when Sadler wrote to expedite it. It was paid for from a legacy of £1,000 from Miss Frances Cross in 1917 to Sadler for his work at the university and was therefore a personal commission.¹³⁰ Models for the figure of Christ of 1922 show little change in the composition, but the finished work was radically different. Gill made his condemnation of fashionable ladies, businessmen and moneylenders much more explicit by presenting them in contemporary dress.

8.46
8.47 Sadler and Gill were certainly in agreement on this 'Sermon in stone' but readers of *The Yorkshire Post*, *The Yorkshire Evening Post* and *The Leeds Mercury* were not. It must have been taken as a judgement on war-profiteering and the business community of the city and some have subsequently read more salacious undertones into its critique although few, if any, perceived such at the time. Sadler publicly praised Gill's design and workmanship and the Bishop of Ripon dedicated the memorial on 1st June 1923.

But Gill exacerbated the controversy by publishing a pamphlet on *A war memorial*, in which he made his own intentions only too clear. When Michael Sadleir researched his father's papers for his memoir, he found a note made by Sadler at the

time of Gill's death in 1940 "A vain poseur" a tiresome writer. He departed egregiously (without telling me until it was too late) from the agreed design without consulting me'.¹³¹ Seeing that the stones were despatched for erection at the university when Sadler happened to be away in Canada, it is possible that he was unaware of the change in costume from the original design, and the pamphlet only fuelled the Leeds' fire which had been ignited by the earlier pamphlet on *Riches* when Gill sent it to the Press without consulting Sadler.¹³²

In achieving one of his most public commissions, Sadler, the tireless Liberal and impulsive art lover, had in his final months in Leeds become embroiled in the same sorts of controversies that had compromised his political and moral position in 1913. On that occasion he had made available the services of university students who wished to maintain local services in the Leeds Municipal Worker's strike, thereby earning the ire of Socialist opinion and being asked to resign from the presidency of the local W.E.A. But he had also upheld the rights of these university teachers to profess public dissent on economic matters against the demand for them to be disciplined in the local press.¹³³ Freedom of action and freedom of speech were liberal and university principles of central importance to Sadler.

8.6 Conclusion

This review of aspects of the artistic life of Leeds in the first twenty years of this century, and the first thirty years of the City Art Gallery, indicates several things. One is the low level of funding allocated to both official art and the public collections. Apart from a relatively small number of improving works in the permanent collection, the City Art Gallery was a venue for exhibitions of academic art, the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions Society and some established London institutions, local clubs of artists, and in the first twenty years or so of the century collaboration with the Leeds Arts Club.

There were several intersecting spheres of artistic and more general cultural or intellectual activity. The Little Owl and the Yorkshire College, subsequently the University of Leeds, and the W.E.A.; the Leeds Fine Arts Club, the Savage Club, the Studio Club, the Yorkshire Union of Artists, and the Leeds and Yorkshire Architectural Society; the Leeds Arts Club; the Leeds Art Collections Fund; the City Art Gallery Sub-Committee of the City Council, and the Lady Patronesses of the gallery; The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, the Thoresby Society etc. Some consisted primarily of artists, others of connoisseurs and collectors, others of local politicians and proselytisers, and yet others of genteel ladies and/or university staff. But throughout most of them one tends to find at least some of the same people. W.H. Thorp, Colonel W.T. Harding, R.H. Kitson, S.D. Kitson, Edwin and Ina Kitson Clark, Professor J.B. Cohen, Mark Senior, Frank Dean and, after 1911, Sir Michael

Sadler and Frank Rutter. But with the exception of some active initiators, like Sadler and Rutter, or members of the Leeds Arts Club, or some commissioners of art, like Colonel Harding, Sam Wilson and Robert Kitson, it is often difficult to determine who played a key role in any enterprise due to lack of appropriate records and recollections.

In terms of public taste, it is apparent that Walter Harding laid great emphasis on the new sculptors and Brock, Drury and Frampton were all commissioned to produce the bronzes for commemorating the Queen's Jubilee and for City Square. When a War Memorial was under consideration after the Great War, Harding's view was sought and he proposed H.C. Fehr to execute the design. Similarly the group of commissions of work by Frank Brangwyn resulted from the specific interest of R.H. Kitson and Sam Wilson. But it is doubtful if Leeds' interest in art would have been taken further than the New English Art Club, the Newlyn School and probably those we now term the Scottish Colourists, without the active intervention of Sadler and Rutter. And it was to be more than a decade after their departure before a similar focus was again laid on contemporary art.

Both these men brought to Leeds a knowledge and appreciation of art far more extensive than the London art world. Not only in Paris but in Holland, Germany and elsewhere in Europe radical changes were under way and the collections and connections of Sadler, Rutter and their friends, such as Augustus Daniel, brought both new artists and works of art to Leeds where the Leeds Arts Club provided a forum for their reception as well as a sponsor for exhibiting their work. With many of these artists, it must be said, the Kitsons had relatively little to do at this time although they became more receptive to the Nash's work by the 1930s. Although Sadler retained some interest in the gallery's collection after his departure for Oxford, his substantial collection of contemporary British and other art was primarily given to the university to hang in the departments and halls of residence he had done so much to develop and expand. Frank Rutter was not replaced as curator for several years and the City Librarian assumed responsibility for running the gallery under the Sub-Committee. The development of the City Art Gallery was left to others and the Kitsons' most significant influence on, and direct involvement in it was about to begin.

Chapter 9 The post-war development of Leeds City Art Gallery and the Kitson's role in it

9.1 An introduction to institutions, individuals and the collection of works of art

In writing any history which brings together continuing institutions, the lives and careers of people, and the creation and fate of objects, in this case an art gallery and local clubs; collectors, donors and curators; and pictures, prints, furniture and sculpture, one encounters the dilemma of what to stress and where to draw the line. In previous chapters we have seen how R.H. Kitson's and Sam Wilson's patronage of Frank Brangwyn led to the exhibition and permanent display of his work at Leeds, how the clubs and associations in which several members of the Kitson family were active played a direct part in the form and types of exhibitions at the City Art Gallery, and the role of the Leeds Arts Club, especially during the leadership and encouragement of Frank Rutter and Sir Michael Sadler, who formed and explored new directions in the collection and display of contemporary art.

During the fourteen years after Rutter's resignation, the City Art Gallery saw three curator/directors come and go, following a six-year period with no one in post.¹ Each new curator made an initial impact and the gallery was redecorated and rehung according to different principles and preferences each time. While each of these men, Solomon Kaines Smith, Frank Lambert and Dr. John Rothenstein, had distinct preferences for particular contemporary artists, only the first came with interests and a collecting policy that directly meshed with the coterie of Leeds connoisseurs closely involved with the City Art Gallery. The opportunity provided by Alfred Bilbrough's bequest in 1915 permitted the first formulation of a specific policy after the war, although several aims had already been proposed at the formation of the L.A.C.F. in 1912. In 1921 the sub-committee proposed 'to form a historic series of watercolour drawings' with the use of the bequest.² From that year began the almost annual presentation and loans of watercolours, drawings and prints by British artists from Robert Kitson, followed by Sydney Kitson, Sadler, Elaine Barran and others, as well as the direction of the Leeds Art Collections Fund to the same end. Indeed one assumes that Kaines Smith's appointment was intended to further this policy.

That such a policy was formulated, initially without a curator, and reinforced by this appointment, must be seen in parallel with the longer time-span exemplified by the lives of the artists and collectors who endorsed it. Indeed it could be said to have reached full fruition only with the deaths of Norman and Agnes Lupton in the early 1950s, whose carefully chosen collection of supreme works then came to join the vast

study collection of J.S. Cotman's drawings and watercolours amassed between 1923 and 1937 by Sydney Kitson during his research into the artist's life and work, and the wide-ranging collection of prints and drawings presented by Robert Kitson which culminated in his final large donation in 1945. The purposes behind each of these collections was quite different, although arising from shared interests, orientations and practical artistic concerns. Nevertheless, some of the primary examples of works of this kind in the art gallery were actually bought by it, or given by other, often richer, people. Because of their origins and continuing links with Leeds and its art gallery, the Kitsons' point of focus continued until their deaths, far longer than the periods spent in office by any single curator.

From the City Art Gallery's viewpoint, one might say that the collection of British watercolours, prints and drawings, once formulated as a policy for the use of the Bilbrough bequest, took on its own momentum. Oil paintings and the decorative arts were a different matter, requiring respectively considerably greater funds and an appropriate setting for their display. Rutter's and Sadler's exploration of the *avant garde* in continental art was never repeated in local collecting and it is notable that, whereas Sadler's direct, and indirect L.A.C.F., presentations to the City Art Gallery were usually in furtherance of the collection of watercolours and drawings, what he distributed around and then gave to the University was far more wide-ranging in form and expressionist taste. Although directors Lambert and Rothenstein gave away and cleared out the plaster casts, it was Kaines Smith alone who oversaw any major extension when two new galleries were built to display Sam Wilson's collection, bequeathed in 1918 and opened in October 1925.³ And this, of course, reinforced the holdings of works by those influenced by the French Barbizon and *plein air* schools, and the New English Art Club at the turn of the century and before the war, the work of Brangwyn, Clausen, Steer, Orpen and Gilbert, with Sir George Clausen, a friend of Wilson and Robert Kitson acting as adviser to the Trustees.⁴

Because the Kitsons played little part in it, the formation of the collection of oil paintings is not central to this study. But of course it was important to the City Art Gallery. After the first decade of purchases from the Jubilee Fund to which reference was made in Chapter 8, much depended on the happenstance of local donations, often bequests, of which Frank Rutter was particularly scathing.⁵ Even purchases from the fund provided by Col. Harding after his retirement by the sub-committee were always referred to him for approval and this continued with his son after the death of the colonel whose bequest augmented it. But with the use of this fund, a bequest by W.H. Wood, the L.A.C.F. and private donations, a collection of modern British paintings was slowly built up during the directorships of Lambert, Rothenstein and especially Philip Hendy.

4.110 Hendy was fortunate in finding H.M.Hepworth (1871–1942), already co-opted onto the sub-committee and its Deputy Chairman from 1931, when he proposed that the City Art Gallery should build up a collection of British oil paintings from the eighteenth century onwards.⁶ But even though he gave the largest donation so far received by Leeds from a living private collection, it included works by well established artists. Paintings by new artists such as Stanley Spencer and Christopher Wood had to be purchased. But Hendy, like Rothenstein, had his own extensive contacts upon which to draw for exhibitions of contemporary British painting, in his case with Oxford where he was Slade Professor from 1936, the Bloomsbury group, Dartington with whose administrator he collaborated and met his second wife, and the National Gallery from whom he obtained loans and the services of their chief restorer Helmut Ruhemann.⁷ Hendy also took up the association with Robert and Sydney Kitson who had less connection with his two short-staying predecessors.

9.1 When the inadequacies of the City Art Gallery were more fully revealed by the creation of the Headrow Gardens in place of the commercial properties concealing it, Hendy put all his efforts into getting support for Procter's design for the new gallery which would have been built on top of the library and ranged around its bookstack in a manner not unlike the Graves Art Gallery in Sheffield. When this failed to attract local funds, especially on the outbreak of the Second World War, he abandoned the building and gave his attention to Temple Newsam. The home of the late Mrs Meynell-Ingram, which had been inherited by Lord Halifax, had been bought by the city with a pillar of protective grounds when much of the estate was leased out for mining in 1922.

7.110 It was taken in hand, and repaired by Sydney Kitson who wrote its first guide book, and visited by 76,438 visitors in 1927–28. A decade later Temple Newsam was put under Hendy's direction and the opportunity of creating a museum of decorative arts in a country house was realisable. What the L.A.C.F. had begun, and Robert Kitson had continued by presenting embroideries and other textiles as well as seventeenth and eighteenth century English and Venetian glass and ceramics from the Middle East, was augmented by several other substantial purchases and donations of Old Leeds Creamware and other items which could not easily be displayed at the City Art Gallery. It was also a fitting place to hang the few old masters that the art gallery possessed but many rooms were broken up by display cabinets and the redecoration necessary for the hanging of modern British paintings and the functional laying of cork panels over the old floorboards. Although little of this has any relation to the house as now arranged in the 1990's, with so much more furniture, some of it bought back for its original sites, and the transfer of the Halifax heirlooms, it should be noted that as early as 1938–9 an exhibition was mounted for two months which included the Long Gallery furniture offered for sale by Lord Halifax.⁸

From this overview, it can be seen that the primary focus of this chapter will be on the highly successful, and in some respects remarkable, policy and practice of forming a collection of English watercolours, prints and drawings. The Kitsons, with others, were particularly active in furthering this end and their interest in the work of John Sell Cotman forms a specific parallel thread in this realization of the gallery's policy to which Chapter 10 is devoted. It provides a vivid picture of the intricate network linking research in art history, collecting and dealing, exhibitions and critical taste, the practice of art, and the formation of public collections. The third strand in their involvement in the arts in Leeds was in their own artwork which is outlined in Chapter 11. The Kitsons and some of their closest friends maintained the Leeds Fine Arts Club throughout the period, when the club became more closely involved in the official events at the City Art Gallery where its annual exhibitions were now held and more closely associated with the gallery's directors than had been the case at the beginning of the century. Even when these Kitsons no longer lived in Leeds, the City Art Gallery, Temple Newsam and the Leeds Fine Arts Club remained a central focus for their artistic activities. Kinship, cultural interests and their social position in the city retained their commitment and, as the locomotive orders dried up and the business that had brought the family to its prominent position slumped, the arts were their chief beneficiary. Chapters 9–11 therefore form a whole to which the discussion of Robert Kitson's own work in Chapter 7 may be added.

It may be argued that an art gallery or museum has several relatively distinct functions to perform although some may not attempt them all and others may not attend to all of them equally at the same time. These are the establishment of a permanent collection and its conservation; devising, arranging and presenting exhibitions; undertaking research and scholarship in the arts; and the encouragement of contemporary artists and their work. From the previous chapter, it can be seen how these different functions were developed in the first thirty years of the City Art Gallery's existence and the role of key people, several of whom were members of the Kitson family although at this stage they were more often active collaborators and supporters rather than prime movers. Indeed what one notices during this period up to the Great War, is the extent to which the three Kitsons involved with the fine arts in Leeds were involved in their own creative art work and in the actual commissioning of work. The Arts and Crafts Exhibitions, the Brangwyn commissions, the buildings designed by *Bedford and Kitson*, and the activities of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, were only in the case of the exhibitions closely linked to the operation of the City Art Gallery's programme. Robert Kitson presented some items, but his activity was devoted more to the lending of his own works, such as those by Brangwyn, and the encouragement of contemporary art by its exhibition in Leeds, until Sadler and Rutter launched the Leeds Art Collections Fund and the time-span to be covered by works in

the public collection was reconceived. He then began to play the role described in this chapter.

After the war, the situation had significantly changed. During the long period without a curator, and then with the active support of the new one, Kaines Smith, the City Art Gallery's Sub-Committee implemented its policy of collecting English watercolours, drawings and black-and-white work. With this Robert Kitson became closely identified through what became his almost annual presentation of works by contemporary artists. However, it would give a completely false impression of the gallery's activities or the development of its collections, particularly under subsequent directors, to imply that he was the primary or deciding influence on these. Indeed it is the particularity of his role that is of interest because it indicates his own artistic interests so clearly. Owing to his residence abroad and annual visits to Leeds only in the later summer months, Robert Kitson had nothing to do with the arrangement of special exhibitions at the gallery, but they were a significant feature of the staff's work which is therefore underplayed here, as will be many of the other presentations and purchases during the period. The account of the gallery's development in this chapter will therefore only be partial but not restricted to the Kitson's involvement which can best be understood in a wider context.

The general policy to collect English watercolours and drawings not only meshed naturally with Robert Kitson's own collecting interests and his work as an artist, but the all-consuming attention given by Sydney Kitson to the collection of works and scholarly pursuit of information on the life and work of John Sell Cotman. Having had to give up the practice of architecture after the war, primarily owing to serious illness, Sydney, much encouraged by Robert with whom he corresponded at length, devoted the last fourteen years of his life to this and most of his enormous collection of Cotman's works eventually came to Leeds. Both he and Robert Kitson also gave some of Cotman's works to the gallery over the years and encouraged others to do so, and supported the purchase of such works. Of course this was in line with the gallery's policy of building up a collection of English watercolours and drawings. But it was far more than this. Although little research was then undertaken by gallery staff, Kitson's study probably represents the major scholarly contribution to art history emanating from the Leeds art world of this time, with the major exception of the quite different contribution being made by Herbert Read to the understanding and appreciation of modern art, Sadler's other great interest which was not shared by the Kitsons at least until Hendy's arrival at the City Art Gallery in 1934.⁹

9.2 A collection policy for the development of Leeds City Art Gallery

Alfred Bilbrough's bequest of £5,000 in 1915 was to have important consequences, but there was little sign of them during the Great War. Frank Rutter had resigned in 1917 and the City Art Gallery was left in the charge of the City Librarian T. W. Hand. *General Gordon's last stand by*, G. W. Joy, presented by the Conservative Party leader John Gordon J. P., Lord Mayor 1899–1900, maintained the permanent collection's tradition of memorable pictures with a message.¹⁰ It is of interest that Abel Torcy, in an article published in the *Studio* in 1916/17 on 'Modern Art in Leeds', should have referred to the gallery as 'not at all worthy of a city whose commerce and industry have given it a place among the first in the kingdom'.¹¹ He singled out the Sadler collection, the Brangwyns in the Fulford Collection at Headingley Castle, some of which were stranded in Italy for the duration of the war, and Alfred Gilbert's fireplace as the most notable item in the collection of Sam Wilson, who had also been responsible for the Brangwyn panels from Venice now installed in the City Art Gallery.

It was for Brangwyn's work that Leeds was now renowned in the field of contemporary British art. Kitson's commission of the mosaics at St. Aidan's had been dedicated in 1916 and his loan of *The Rajah's Birthday* continued for several years, when it was not on loan to special exhibitions elsewhere. Torcy remarked that 'every foreigner who takes an interest in English art is astonished that here in his own country homage is not paid to him as one of the two authentic geniuses of contemporary art — the other being the French sculptor, Auguste Rodin'.¹² But he went on to list Sam Wilson's works by George Sauter, William Orpen's *The Spanish woman*,¹³ Buxton Knight, Mark Senior the Leeds Impressionist, Le Sidaner, the landscapes of Mark Fisher and Bertram Priestman A.R.A., some of whose relatives were members of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, G. W. Lambert, James Pryde and Edward Stott, and works by Wilson Steer, whose watercolours were also of great interest to Robert Kitson. Sam Wilson died in 1918 leaving his collection and £1,000 to house it in one room. He, like F. H. Fulford, Charles Roberts and Robert Kitson were co-opted advisory members of the sub-committee. But it was to be seven years before the collection was to be on public view in the City Art Gallery. Charles Roberts lent his Barbizon paintings in 1919 and they remained on view into the following year.¹⁴

8.43 However much Mark Senior hated them, Jacob Kramer's expressionist oil paintings were soon admitted to the permanent collection, *A Japanese Maiden* being presented by F.H. Fulford in 1918 and two religious subjects by the Leeds Jewish Community in 1920.¹⁵ In the same year there were special exhibitions of work by members of the Royal Society of Painter Etchers, of the late Sir Alfred East, R.A. and

of the late Napier Hemy, R.A., all of them of particular interest to Robert Kitson, who collected works of the first two, had learnt to sketch and paint with Alfred East and had corresponded with Brangwyn about Hemy, the latter's first mentor in sketching from the banks of the Thames.¹⁶ The interest of the Sub-Committee in contemporary British Art is quite clear, but should be distinguished from what has come to be termed Modern Art of which Sadler was a pioneer enthusiast and collector in his desire to encourage young artists.

An interest in English landscape painting had received a great boost in 1913 with the first major loan exhibition of John Constable's work since the artist's death that Rutter organised with the support of the Directors of the National Gallery, Sir Charles Holroyd and of the National Portrait Gallery, C.J. Holmes.¹⁷ In addition the National Gallery had lent paintings by Turner and Whistler for extended exhibition in 1915. Robert Kitson regularly acquired etchings and other prints. He had bought an etching by Brangwyn to present to the gallery as early as 1893, and three by Whistler in 1907.¹⁸ And Lady Holroyd had considered Leeds an appropriate gallery to which to present a group of etchings by her late husband in 1918. So the presentation by Leeds University's Pro-Chancellor A.G. Lupton of an engraving in 1917 in the hope that it would encourage the foundation of a print room would not have found the sub-committee antipathetic. In 1920 Lupton presented a group of nine engravings by Turner, which he had bought at Agnew's and Alderman Willey wrote to ask Hand to arrange delivery on 13th July.¹⁹ In the same month the sub-committee chairman was in touch with Sadler about a group of seventeen selected etchings and drawings he intended to make to the permanent collection, which included several drawings by Alexander and John Robert Cozens. But the gallery's inability to form its own collection was stressed: 'much useful development is impossible in consequence of the limited income at the disposal of the committee. If the money were forthcoming the work in the Art Gallery might be extended in the direction of giving practical recognition to the importance of art, as applied to local industry, and in other ways'.²⁰

In the following year, 1921–22, the sub-committee formally launched the watercolour collection scheme with the purchase of Cotman's watercolour of *Pont Aber Glaslyn (Beddgelleirt Bridge)*, a Brabazon and three others.²¹ Some attempt was also made to revive the Leeds Art Collections Fund. Sadler gave a further watercolour by Alexander Cozens through the Fund and Robert Kitson arranged for it to purchase a gilded Venetian baroque table with a marble top, which he selected in Rome.²² In addition Kitson gave a watercolour *In The Black Country* by Cecil Hunt, an etching by East and a watercolour by Hugh Carter.²³ Sadler's influential activities also led to the exhibition of the designs for the Town Hall murals, which the *Annual Report* inaccurately described as 'competitive' as well as attracting 'considerable interest' without further comment.²⁴ Two years before, the gallery had exhibited the

War Memorial designs and sketches arranged by the new Leeds Civic Society in which Sadler and Edwin Kitson Clark played a founding part. But the illustrations in the report stress the characteristics of the permanent collection of oil paintings: Atkinson Grimshaw, and Leighton, Herkomer, East and Brangwyn rather than such forays into modern English art as the projected mural designs.

The new scheme bore fruit in 1922 when the art gallery was reopened after extensive cleaning and redecoration by a team of unemployed workmen. In the autumn there was a loan exhibition of oils, watercolours and drawings as well as a significant section on Chinese Art. Sadler encouraged Alderman Willey to arrange a set of four lectures in the gallery. One was given by Herbert Thompson, the art critic of *The Yorkshire Post* and past member of both the L.F.A. Club and the Leeds Arts Club, on 'The rise and development of water colour painting' and another by Lawrence Binyon, the Keeper of Prints and Drawings at The British Museum.²⁵ Seeing that the exhibition was arranged without a curator in post, one can see the powerful enthusiasm and significant connections of those active in the world of the arts in Leeds, which were formed before the Great War and continued through the subsequent one, of which some directors made full use.²⁶

Robert Kitson took the opportunity of a visit to Scotland sketching with Cecil Hunt, to call on D.Y. Cameron (1865–1945)

With whom I had a good talk about our affairs and plans, he has promised to let us have several watercolours to choose from when he comes back from his time in the hills, he will treat us well being keen on our scheme and considering that other painters will be very willing to help.

I asked him to advise us as to whom we should try and he said there are not so many first rate watercolour painters now but must [include] Clausen, Holmes, Steer, Orpen, Brangwyn, Sargent, McCall of the living men.²⁷

Several of the specific pictures that Kitson had referred to were bought for the gallery in the next few years as well as other works by artists Cameron had suggested including Brangwyn, Cameron, Clausen, Holmes, Steer, Strang and Sargent.²⁸

The appointment of Solomon Kaines Smith to the long vacant curatorship from the first of January 1924 was appropriate for furthering the sub-committee's scheme. A Cambridge man, who came from lecturing in art and archaeology at Magdalene College, and had written books on John Crome as well as Wright of Derby, his interests easily meshed with those of the Kitsons. He became a long-standing member of the Leeds Fine Arts Club and exhibited watercolours in the Club's annual exhibitions. He corresponded with Sydney Kitson about Cotman's work and published a little book on the artist for a series edited by Lawrence Binyon.²⁹ In 1924 and 1925 Robert Kitson and Cecil Hunt were formally authorised by the sub-

committee to select works to be sent up on approval from Barbizon House and the
9.6 Beaux Art Galleries in London with purchases from the Bilbrough bequest in mind.³⁰
9.8 At its meeting on 21st August 1924 the sub-committee decided to buy two of
Robert Kitson's own watercolours, *A Street in Kairouan* and *The Mayor announcing*
7.9 *the taking of Trieste to the People of Taormina*, the former a new picture and the
latter one he had first sketched at the end of the Great War and subsequently worked
7.10 up in several larger watercolours.³¹ These were the only works of his actually bought
for the gallery and the period marks a high point in the appreciation of his art in
watercolours which were to be exhibited in the following year at the *Fine Art Society*
in Bond Street, where both Brangwyn's and Walcot's etchings and watercolours were
regularly shown. In 1925 the Bilbrough bequest was used to buy watercolours but
thereafter its use is seldom referred to because the fund was virtually expended and
such works could only be acquired through loans and presentations, to which further
reference will be made.³²

9.3 The direction of the City Art Gallery by Kaines Smith to implement the policy

Kaines Smith's appointment brought active direction to the City Art Gallery, recognised by his redesignation as such in 1926. His own conception of his role was concisely put in a letter of 1st November 1926 to Frank Leney, Curator of the Castle Museum at Norwich who was to lecture on the subject to the Museum's Association.

1 The Curator's point of view must not be governed by his personal likes and dislikes. He must present all aspects of art to the public from the educational and historical point of view. The sole basis of his judgement in selecting works for a public gallery must be their artistic excellence, each in its own kind and degree.

2 If he has, as you have at Norwich, a local school really worthy of attention, he should endeavour to have a really representative collection of the works of that school, and if he can supplement it by works of a like character from other contemporary schools so as to show the relation of the local school to the art of the outside world it will be all to the good.

3 His aim is not only to provide material for the specialist student, but also to awake and keep awake public interest of a less instructive kind. From the point of view of the Curator, the Art Gallery is not so much a collection of works of art as a stimulus, or even an irritant, to keep public interest in art alive.³³

Frank Rutter, whose conception of the role was very different, worked off his rancour against Leeds by needling his successor. In December 1924 he wrote asking for the return of a lithograph by Matisse which he had left on loan. 'I am sure you won't like it, and I don't suppose any people in Leeds are enthusiastic about post-impressionist art, so as I do want it and have promised to lend it shortly to an exhibition the time has come when I must claim it again'.³⁴ In the following

September he published an article in *The Sunday Times* on 'Art at Leeds' which the deputy chairman of the sub-committee sent to Kaines Smith declaring that 'With the faintest of faint praise, [it] attempts to damn our gallery'...

He writes of the Gallery as he left it, and to this extent there may be some justification for his stricture. Writing from some metropolitan fastness in the spirit of "we are the people and wisdom dieth with us" the only suggestion he has to make is that we should increase our representation of Brangwyn. He never mentions the Bilborough [*sic*] bequest, not the Wilson bequest, nor even the bequest of his friend the late A. J. Sanders. He attributes gifts to Mr Sam Wilson that the latter did not make. He scorns the watercolours without having seen them, and in mentioning popular pictures, he only refers to Persephone, and makes no reference to the Scots Greys, and other considerable works of the same order... Apparently, his idea of a Public Art Gallery in the provinces is a place for the connoisseur, and [he] seems to forget that its primary function is to present some sort of representative display for the education and enlightenment of the citizens. He speaks of what a curator has to learn from the municipal mind, but it does not seem to occur to him that a strong curator will direct and control that mind ... I hope you will warn him.³⁵

Kaines Smith tried to do so, and when *The Sunday Times* omitted the relevant section from its publication, he wrote again that Rutter had never entered the gallery since he left eight years before and was therefore 'not qualified either to act as a guide to our collection or to criticize our policy in its formation ... nor is Mr Rutter entitled to presume that the collection which he tells us he found, and left, in a condition of a heterogeneous miscellany of oddments of the past is still mostly of no better description'.³⁶

9.1 Kaines Smith's was disappointed that Temple Newsam, which had been expected to come into the realm of the City Art Gallery after its purchase from Lord Halifax by the City Corporation in 1922, was in fact placed under its own sub-committee chaired by the veteran Conservative alderman Sir Charles Wilson (1859–1930) until it was more formally taken on in 1927 by which time Kaines Smith was departing for Birmingham.³⁷ One assumes that it was anticipated that the house would become the focal point for the decorative arts collection that was also being formed with the help of the L.A.C.F. A.J. Sanders had left the gallery his pictures, porcelain and furniture and, over the years, Robert Kitson presented several items of baroque furniture, Venetian, German and English glass (e.g. in 1923 and 1924), Persian and middle eastern ceramics and glass (e.g. in 1927), and a variety of embroidered and other textiles and costumes. Sydney Kitson was more actively involved with the house itself because he supervised the repair of the textual balustrade and repointed the building in 1927, he also wrote the first guide to the house in the same year which sold 8,565 copies to the 76,438 who visited the house that year. Sixteen family portraits were given by Viscount Halifax (1839–1934), which prefigured the more substantial heirloom loans of 1948 which have subsequently become permanent.³⁸

More significant for the City Art Gallery was Kaines Smith's supervision of the extension built to house Sam Wilson's bequest of 1918.³⁹ Treasury loan sanction was refused in 1924, but arrangements went ahead to build what was possible and by July 1925 the trustees of estate 'have now acquiesced in all our arrangements for the fitting and decoration of the Wilson building'.⁴⁰ Kaines Smith had dealt with Mark Senior for business purposes but with Sir George Clausen for the selection of Fortuny damask for the wall hangings, which were made in Venice, and the inscription in Trajan lettering to be placed on the staircase wall. Following the opening of the new wing in October the London Committee (of Trustees) on the bequest was abandoned.

Kaines Smith took advantage of this to contradict Frank Rutter's *Sunday Times* article, by sending a copy of the Wilson Catalogue to *The Illustrated London News* accompanied by a set of photographs of some of the items to be seen in it. Ironically of course such a major development in the display of a new part of the permanent collection reflected the relatively advanced taste of some collectors in Leeds belonging to the previous generation. So had the formal presentation of all the 54 works of the Leeds Art Collections Fund which were exhibited and handed over in December 1924 and included the oil paintings by Lucien Pissarro, Arthur Melville and Mancini which had been at the Gallery since 1913-14.⁴² That year the Director devoted his annual series of lectures to various aspects of the permanent collection and his forecast for the gallery, and the L.A.C.F. was over-ambitiously relaunched in the hope of raising capital from the enrolment of up to 1000 life members.⁴³ But a glance at the subscription list indicates that relatively little can have been raised through the L.A.C.F.. Although Sir Gervase Beckett gave £100 in response to the appeal launched in *The Yorkshire Post*, the members were relatively few and generally drawn from the same ranks of members as before with fewer Kitsons but a stronger enrollment from Leeds Fine Arts Club members, with whom Robert Kitson was in touch.⁴⁴

9.4 Contemporary British watercolours, prints and drawings at Leeds

Because Leeds City Art Gallery had no purchasing fund and paid a lower salary to its Director than other large cities there was a high turnover of directors between the wars. Kaines Smith resigned in July 1927 to become Keeper of the City Museum and Art Gallery at Birmingham.⁴⁵ The new director, Frank Lambert, was the first with museum experience, having held previous appointments at the Guildhall Museum in London and at Stoke-on-Trent. But he also left after less than five years in post at the end of 1931 to direct the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.⁴⁶ As usual with the coming of a new director, the gallery was redecorated, but as T.W. Hand had retired there was also a new librarian, who abolished entry charges and provided more open

access for school children. The Sam Wilson galleries were redecorated and rearranged in consultation with Sir George Clausen and the Trustees and the Venetian damask replaced by wallpaper. In 1931 Mrs Wilson died leaving £1,000 for the further maintenance of this gallery. Lambert had many of the plaster castes removed from the sculpture gallery, still the means of access to the City Art Gallery from the City Library, and presented them to various local art schools and other such institutions.⁴⁷

8.5
9.12
9.14
8.42

During Lambert's directorship, the gallery began receiving works from the Contemporary Art Society which the latter bought and then offered to public galleries throughout the country. In 1927 these were an oil and a watercolour by Duncan Grant, in 1928 an oil by William Roberts and in 1931 an oil by Jack Butler Yeats.⁴⁸ In 1931 he arranged for the exhibition of Jacob Epstein's controversial sculpture of *Genesis*, a monumental pregnant woman, in the Sam Wilson extension to which the public were admitted at 6d each, and accepted the L.A.C.F.'s gift of Epstein's bronze head of *Jacob Kramer*.⁴⁹

Kaines Smith had instituted a series of lectures during the winter months, many of which he himself gave. But in 1926–7 Roger Fry, S.P.B. Mais and John Drinkwater came to speak during the British Art Exhibition. In Lambert's time lecturers included Sir Robert Witt and Edmund Blunden, both known to Sydney Kitson through his Cotman research, and in 1930–31 there was some rapprochement with figures from Leeds' past *avant-garde*. Frank Rutter returned to lecture on 'Contemporary British Art' and Herbert Read, who had just taken up the Chair in Art History at Edinburgh University, on 'The Meaning of Art'. Other lectures were given by Mortimer Wheeler, with whom Sydney's daughter Elisabeth had undertaken work as an archaeologist, and the poet Walter de la Mare, and ten by Lambert himself.⁵⁰ One notes here also the director's reconnection with some of the more explicitly 'modern' trends in British art in which for a decade there had been little obvious interest at the gallery.⁵¹

The growing status of the watercolours, prints and drawings collection was reflected in a loan exhibition of modern British watercolours, which Sir George Clausen R.A. opened in the autumn of 1930 before its passage to Canada for exhibition there. What steadily continued throughout these years was the presentation of watercolours, drawings and prints by Robert Kitson and others, as well as exhibitions that drew on the strengths of the gallery's collection and the artists in which its patrons were especially interested. In 1926–7 Elaine Barran gave a watercolour by William Callow, Robert Kitson one by Wilson Steer through the L.A.C.F., and Sydney Kitson a watercolour by Lewis Fry, with whom he was in touch to study his collection of Cotmans.⁵² In the following year the gallery's programme included exhibitions of etchings by Brangwyn, and by Sir Frank Holroyd, a memorial exhibition of work by Mark Senior, Sam Wilson's artist, adviser and trustee; and an

exhibition of British woodcuts and engravings.⁵² In 1928–29 Robert Kitson added
Turner's etching of the *Crypt of Kirkstall Abbey* for his *Liber Studiorum* to follow a
9.9 Brabazon watercolour *On the Rhine (after Turner)* which he had presented in the
previous year with two contemporary landscape watercolours by East and William
Jowett.⁵³ With Hepworth and Norman and Agnes Lupton, he also collaborated to buy
9.13 J.R. Cozens' watercolour of *Castel Gandolfo and Lake Albano* for the gallery.⁵⁴

What one primarily sees is an artist-collector of works that most appealed to him,
probably with the policy of the City Art Gallery always in the back of his mind. He and
Sydney had helped to formulate that policy on the sub-committee and Kaines Smith
had been appointed to further it. They continued to implement it irrespective of the
particular interests of subsequent directors, although none were opposed to the
presentation of such works, and Cecil Hunt supported them. In 1929–30 Hunt
presented two of his own drawings, Robert a Rowlandson drawing, and Sydney an
Edward Lear of a Greek church like those he had studied on Mylos thirty-three years
9.17 earlier.⁵⁵ Robert also presented a watercolour by Harry Becker, several of whose
to works he acquired at his last exhibition with Brangwyn's encouragement.

9.19 Not surprisingly the free flow of works which Robert and Sydney Kitson
presented and lent to the gallery and had sent up on approval from various dealers
occasionally led to confusion. One such incident occurred during the interregnum
between Lambert's departure in 1931 and the summer of 1932 when John Rothenstein
took up the post of Director. In January 1931 Robert wrote to Alderman Leigh:

I have received news of, and thanks for, a gift of a picture by Dunlop, which
unfortunately I did not present at all, but only said to the Redfern people that
they might send it to the Gallery where I thought Lambert would be pleased to
have it on loan for a time, I hope you will understand and see that it is a
mistake. I shall hope to continue my occasional gifts to the Gallery when I am
at home.

The other Dunlop of mine they also seem to have sent to the Gallery by
mistake. It can go or stay as you like, to my sister.

9.15 Leigh replied that the minute referring to *The Green Necklace* had been altered
from gift to loan and that Miss Kitson had called for the other picture but left it for a
short time as it was on exhibition.⁵⁶ The latter Josephine is clearly the picture from
Robert Kitson's collection that moved with his sister after the war and remains in the
family. It was one of the few oil paintings, other than Brangwyns, that Kitson ever
bought. The other, presumably went back to the Redfern Gallery, because it was not,
as the *Annual Report* recorded, on loan from him.⁵⁷ The Gallery did buy another new
portrait by R.O. Dunlop, *Melita*, that year and Mrs Blanche Leigh lent two more by
the same artist for exhibition with this as well as the two which had been received via
Kitson.⁵⁸

1931 and 1932 were both years in which substantial collections of prints and drawings were added to the permanent collection. In memory of his late wife, Sir Michael Sadler gave a representative group of drawings to the Cannon Hall Art Gallery at her birthplace, Barnsley, and asked C.F. Bell and Sydney Kitson to select Cotmans for the Ashmolean and Leeds respectively.⁵⁹ This enhanced but did not radically change the nature of the existing collection which was traditionally reinforced by the bequest in 1932 of thirty-two engravings after the works of Turner and Girtin collected by Professor J.B. Cohen, one-time deputy president of the Leeds Fine Arts Club.⁶⁰ Robert Kitson added a watercolour of an *Encampment, Tangier* by Brabazon and an etching of a *Guitar player* by Manet, one of the few relatively contemporary works by a foreign artist that he ever presented.⁶¹

9.5 A short-lived transformation

The appointment of Dr John Rothenstein, who had published books on the artists of the '90s, and on French nineteenth century art and came with his American wife from an academic post in the U.S.A., was a deliberate attempt to break out of the established mould. Professor W.G. Constable, of the Courtauld Institute, had recommended him to Liverpool and then Leeds, after Lambert got the previous post.⁶² He was appointed but, in the wake of the Depression, received an immediate salary cut of 10 per cent which he was told, orally, would be restored a year later. In *Summer's Lease* Rothenstein refers to a small collection of excellent watercolours by Cotman, Turner, Camille Pissarro, the Sandby brothers and Sargent and a big group of drawings by Phil May. 'It is a curious fact about British provincial art galleries that the water colours are always conspicuously superior to the oil paintings — a fact that has long puzzled me and for which I can offer no explanation.'⁶³ In view of the established policy of the gallery's Sub-Committee, the lack of any purchasing grant from the city, the relative lack of very wealthy patrons and the lack of taste for modern art in any case, as well as the English penchant for watercolours, which will be further considered in the next chapter, several explanations seem easy to hand. So one is not surprised to find a general lack of affinity between John Rothenstein and those surrounding him, with the exception of his father's friend, Sir Gervase Beckett, from whom he soon borrowed an oil painting by Stubbs to exhibit, and who was co-opted onto the City Art Gallery's Sub-Committee, as well as J.C. Procter, who was subsequently to design a new Art Gallery and Central Library and *Hyde Crook*, the Lupton's home for retirement and studio in Dorset.⁶⁴

9.29
9.30

Faced with the dilapidation of the gallery, from which plaster fell and smashed an outstanding example of renaissance glass borrowed from the V. and A., yet another restoration was undertaken. The remaining casts were broken up, many Victorian oil paintings were put into store, several never to reappear, and paintings by Reynolds,

Ribera, Turner and Constable put on view.⁶⁵ William Rothenstein lent several works for exhibition and John himself presented several oils, prints and drawings by artists from the Royal College of Art who had been his contemporaries; Grace English, Silvia Baker and in particular Albert Houthuesen.⁶⁶ Significantly all of these were figure drawings and none were landscapes. Purchases from the Harding and Bilbrough Funds included an oil of *Sicilian Puppets* by Barnett Freedman and watercolours and drawings by Walter Crane and D.G. Rossetti as well as Gilbert Spencer, Edward Ardizzone, Houthuesen, and the *Tythe Barn, Abbotsbury* by Girtin,⁶⁷ representing both figure and landscape subjects which may have been more appealing to the tastes of the Sub-Committee.

The reopening of the gallery, appropriately by Professor Constable, with its rehangng was considered 'A transformation' by *The Times* and *The Yorkshire Post* in July 1933.⁶⁸ But the writing was on the wall for Rothenstein, whose salary was not restored and who was told, when he complained that this had been promised by Alderman Leigh the previous Chairman, that 'You forgot to get us to put anything in writing'.⁶⁹ He sent in his resignation in October and was soon approached by Alderman J.G. Graves with a view to taking up the appointment in Sheffield that would coincide with the new art gallery he had built for that city. Robert Kitson was very distressed at the way things had turned out, having, Mary Kitson Clark said, 'spent a lot of time on him'. In December he wrote from Taormina

First of all to tell you how sorry I am about all this and your departure, especially as it seems a pity from every point of view not to have stayed on a bit more in the hope of things coming out better, but I suppose the immediate possibility of an improved position was not easily to be put aside as these places are not very common.

Well I hope you will like it and flourish there. I do not know anything of Sheffield but will try and come over next year and see you there.

I have been terribly disappointed not to have heard more of the Tristram show. I thought it was to have been of international importance especially at this moment just before the British Show, I think you ought to have managed at any rate one article in *The Times* and some photographs.

I see you have got a Spenser [*sic*] from the Contemporary what is it and is it good enough? I imagine you had the choice to a certain extent. I have asked my sister to send you the 'Café Interior' you asked for if you should still want it. How did you like my glass?

I should very much like a line some time and to hear of your doings.

Tanti Saluti to you and La Signora.⁷⁰

Kitson's letter is of interest because it indicates how concerned he was for the gallery, how much Rothenstein had appealed to him, the approval he sought for his own tastes but the doubts he had about contemporary painters like Gilbert Spencer. But it also indicates how out of touch he could be. Rothenstein replied that he had

‘resigned purely on a matter of principle’ for the reasons already given. But he was ‘amazed’ at the ‘non-success of the Tristram show’, because it had been the very reverse with a column on the leader page of *The Times* by M.R. James and published photographs, many visitors from all parts of the country and the suggestion that it should ‘form part of the British exhibition at Burlington House. ... Your glass is splendid and has been greatly admired. Personally I like the Spencer. It was one of about eight things which I told the Contemporary Art Society that I thought would be acceptable to our committee.’⁷¹

Rothenstein brought in the kind of contemporary British art he admired by loan-exhibitions of work by John Currie and Augustus John which Sadler had given to *Lyddon Hall*, by Stanley Spencer and Gwen John from Mrs Redman-King, also of the University, and by Matthew Smith and Charles Ginner from Jacob Kramer.⁷² No wonder the press pronounced his effect on the gallery ‘a transformation’! But Rothenstein’s time was also marked by a series of exhibitions of local artists of earlier generations, which drew on both the permanent collection and loans from the Leeds district. Joseph and John D. Rhodes, C.H. Schwanfelder and Phil May were all the subject of special shows in 1932–33, as was Ernest Sichel, the Bradford artist still at work and a Council member of the Leeds Fine Arts Club. Edwin Kitson-Clark lent his watercolour by Joseph Rhodes of *The Skyrack Oak* in Headingley, a historic landmark. And Ina Kitson Clark lent some military items to an exhibition of historic costumes as well as a carpet she had designed which had been worked by members of Meanwood Women’s Institute.⁷³ As will be described in Chapter 11, John Rothenstein had been warmly received into the Leeds Fine Arts Club and his American wife became a Little Owl. They dined at *Meanwoodside* and the Kitson Clarks were as mortified by their protégé’s disdainful dismissal of Leeds in his lecture and article of 1944 as they were distressed by the nature of his resignation in 1933. Sydney was less personally involved but wrote with feeling to Robert ‘Leeds is not the right atmosphere for such exotics. Lambert was the right amalgam’.⁷⁴ Sir Gervase Beckett resigned with Rothenstein, but not before the other heir to the Beckett estate at Meanwood, Sir Hickman Bacon, had presented his portrait of *The Rt. Hon. Sir John Beckett Bart* by Sir Thomas Lawrence P.R.A., a counterpart to his portraits of those other Leeds magnates, the Gotts of Armley, which have not remained in the district.⁷⁵

9.6 A change in policy and its systematic implementation

Philip Hendy came to the directorship in March 1934 with much more experience of public art galleries, the Wallace in London and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He maintained close links with the National Gallery, of which he ultimately became director after the Second World War, and had the satisfaction of the years as Slade

Professor at Oxford from 1936, which kept him active in the academic field outside Leeds, as well as, incidentally, in easy reach of Sydney Kitson, who had to resign from the City Art Gallery Sub-Committee in 1934 owing to a worsening of his ill-health and his determination to complete his study of Cotman, which he wrote at his house in Kidlington.

In his first *Annual Report* for 1934–5, Hendy pointed out that the ‘annually more astounding’ figures of visitors to the art gallery, an increase of 15,554 in one year to 215,320, were equal to half those of the National Gallery itself, 521,000. And yet

To satisfy this proved and growing demand the Corporation continue to contribute nothing but the maintenance of the building and the staff. The history of the City Art Gallery lies therefore in the future rather than in the past. The people are acquiring leisure. Public education is acquiring a more cultural aim. The Gallery offers a magnificent opportunity to municipal enterprise or to private benefaction .⁷⁶

Having cast this challenge, he put forward a new policy for purchases. The Bilbrough bequest had been used to create a collection from the historical series of British watercolour painters and when this fund was exhausted it had become the main preoccupation of the use of the £12,500 given and bequeathed by Harding in 1925 and 1927,

The finest examples of the work of the great watercolourists are still needed. Important works by Girtin and Turner, especially, are lacking. There are not enough by Cotman. But the Gallery’s collection of watercolours is now so great as to give a misleading conception of the history even of British painting. An attempt must be made to enlarge and systematize the present haphazard collection of oils. British painting begins to be represented only when there are oil paintings by Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Constable, Crome and Cotman. The income from the Harding Funds for the year amounted to £480. To form within a generation a collection of oil paintings in any way comparable to that of the watercolours demands an annual expenditure of at least £1,000. Meanwhile the Sub-Committee can but formulate a policy and begin to execute it with what means exist, trusting that the evident movement of the times must sooner or later somehow find satisfaction. ⁷⁷

4.42 John Rothenstein had initiated this reorientation by bringing the old masters out of
4.108 store and purchasing contemporary oil paintings as well as exhibiting them through
to extensive loans. But he had not stayed long enough to carry any policy through.
4.111 Hendy had just over a decade to do so, although half of it was constrained by the
Second World War. And he had the full support of H.M. Hepworth, a co-opted
member and deputy chairman of the City Art Gallery Sub-Committee from 1931 until
his death, aged 71, in 1942. A contemporary of Robert and Sydney Kitson, whose
architectural practice had designed several houses on the land that the Hepworths had
bought and developed in North Hill Road including his own residence, he led the firm
founded by his father in 1884, a pioneer in the sale of ready-made clothing from a chain
of high street shops.⁷⁸ Hepworth had collected the works of the New English Art Club

and Royal Academicians of like mind and helped to launch the gallery's new policy with a major gift of twenty-five pictures.⁷⁹

9.22 Within his first year as director Hendy held two exhibitions of modern painters, primarily British, and used the accumulation of several years of the Harding Fund to buy Constable's *Vale of Dedham*, and the L.A.C.F. to present Cotman's *On the banks of the Yare*, which Sydney Kitson had spotted in London.⁸⁰ From these exhibitions, the gallery also bought paintings by Walter Greaves, Spencer Gore, John Aldridge and a portrait by Harold Gilman to represent the Camden Town Group.⁸¹ Both the Cotman and the Constable were cleaned before they went on show in Leeds by Helmut Ruhemann, who had recently arrived in England and was to become the National Gallery's chief restorer.⁸²

From the beginning Robert Kitson seems to have established a cordial relationship with Hendy whose official diary records the dates he would be with the Hunts in London as well as in Leeds and he dined at *Stonegates* as well as with the 'Bidder Clarkes' as Hendy chose to enter them.⁸³ It seems that Robert Kitson met Hendy and visited some of the private London galleries with him but a letter addressed to him at Sydney's Kidlington address could equally have been meant for the latter because of its main reference to the Cotman purchase, as well as the Constable which they had probably seen together with Hepworth. Whichever was intended, Hendy wrote 'I enjoyed our time in London immensely, especially when I found that we were all three in so close agreement about what is wanted for the Gallery'.⁸⁴

So much does Robert Kitson seem to have been in tune with Hendy's ideas that he bought a watercolour drawing by Augustus John for the gallery on their visit. On receiving it in Leeds Hendy wrote to him. 'Your John watercolour is far more beautiful than I had remembered it. It will certainly be one of the greatest features of our collection.' It was titled *The Nixie*. 'The Leicester Galleries had the title "The Penitent", but I don't think there is anything about the naked lady's figure to suggest penitence. She is surely rather disturbing to the slender ones'. And he offered 'to have it yourself to enjoy, until you go away'.⁸⁵

Kitson obviously felt able to establish relations with Hendy on a more personal basis than some of his predecessors and wrote in the following January from Tunisia expecting to be provided personally with local news of how he was getting on rather than relying on the monthly notes. He wanted to hear whether Hendy had been moved to acquire 'the great Sickert from the Beaux Art. It seems immensely desirable and a marvellous thing for a gallery and at the same time very cheap indeed very cheap as Sickert goes, because no doubt it is only for a gallery. I do think we ought to aim at it.' He also asked after a Crome, which may be the one presented by S. Smith in 1935.⁸⁶ But the main purpose of his letter was to announce that Brangwyn

wanted to offer his superb Persian ceramic collection. Kitson suggested that 'a few pots would be desirable and with Hepworth's money we can acquire such things'.⁸⁷

He missed Hendy that summer, 1935, as the director was on holiday in Venice but he wrote in August to congratulate him on his acquisitions and

a really impressive show from which I am sure we shall go steadily on to the fulfilment of your desires *Speriamo*.

The chief difficulty seems want of space as it is really not very encouraging to would be donors that their gifts may most likely not be hung: unless of course you continuously change the exhibits which you probably do not want to do for more than one reason.

9.25 You will probably find or shortly receive a parcel addressed to me including drawings by Bomberg, Gertler and W. Lewis and an oil by Gertler. The drawings are the gift of S. Schiff, 37 Porchester Terrace, and the oil of Behrend, who lent you the S. Spencer last autumn. I hope you will like them and see that they are suitably thanked. They may both be useful later. ⁸⁸

Although he was not collecting such works himself, one can see that Robert Kitson was doing his utmost to further the new policy of acquiring contemporary British pictures for the gallery. How keen Hendy was for this attention is unclear. Behrend's Gertler does not appear to have entered the collection but Schiff's drawings did.⁸⁹

In the case of Brangwyn's pots Hendy may simply have ignored the suggestion. The gallery had already been given fine examples of such work which Kitson may have acquired in Alexandria or Cairo, or by 'swaps' with Brangwyn. In the event he seems to have left any approach too late, because by the time he wrote in 1942 asking if the artist had any drawings for the St Aidan's mosaics, they had already been dispersed to other collections in Europe, England and the Dominions and even the actual cartoons, offered in Lambert's time, had gone to Bruges.⁹⁰ One also notes the absence of Robert Kitson's from Hendy's official engagement diaries for the rest of his time in Leeds until the negotiations for Sydney Kitson's Cotmans were underway. Perhaps he found their postal communications and Kitson's summer visits quite sufficient without seeking to increase them.

Although he presented a fine Cotman watercolour and another by De Wint in 1936,⁹¹ there seems to have been a marked reduction in Robert Kitson's gifts to the gallery in the decade after 1934, until his major and final one in 1945. But he continued to seek further acquisitions for the permanent collection in other ways. This impression may be illusory because he may have contributed to L.A.C.F. funds to further the policy of acquiring the much more costly oil paintings.⁹² Robert had been seriously ill in 1930 and was particularly hopeful for future bequests from accessible private collections to the gallery. In 1935 he wrote from the Athenaeum believing that he had persuaded 'A.E. Anderson to befriend us instead of the Whitworth with his

9.24 Girtin'.⁹³ Although this did not materialize, Anderson did present watercolours by Gainsborough and M.A. Rooker.⁹⁴ And in 1938 Kitson put Hendy on to the offer of a portrait by Christopher Wood, which had been left with his friend and Taormina neighbour, Bobbie Pratt Barlow, by an American James Lounsbery, who had given it to him when he left Sicily.⁹⁵ Hendy went to London, where Pratt-Barlow had left it for sale with the *Fine Art Society*, liked it and wired to Taormina to accept the offer.⁹⁶ He was particularly pleased to acquire an early work by Wood to add to the four later works recently acquired by the gallery.⁹⁷

9.26 1936 was of considerable importance to Hendy because of his Oxford appointment, which was to last ten years. He was not cooped up in Leeds but able to cultivate the wider and more influential cultural circles that Kenneth Clark had exploited with such success at the Ashmolean.⁹⁸ Robert Kitson wrote to congratulate him on his 'Sladship' and Sydney Kitson was actually able to travel in to hear the lectures.⁹⁹ Up in Leeds Hendy's links with Dartington brought loans from Leonard Elmhirst.¹⁰⁰ Edward Garnett and Edward Marsh also lent paintings. But the core of Leeds patrons and well wishers continued.¹⁰¹ A.E. Anderson continued to present watercolours and J.L. Behrend a painting by John Nash.¹⁰² Sir Gervase Beckett gave an oil by Richard Wilson, *The Tiber*.¹⁰³ Sadler gave one from his collection by John Currie, *Galway Peasants*.¹⁰⁴ A drawing of *Cromer* by John Constable was presented by Sydney Kitson. F.H. Fulford gave a watercolour of *Wharfedale from Addingham* by Ethel Mallinson in 1936 and in the following year the architect H.S. Chorley, of the practice that had built the Kitson's Airedale foundry and Elmet Hall, presented both *Les Grands Andelys* by Ethel Mallinson and Robert Kitson's large watercolour, *Courtyard in Morocco*.¹⁰⁶ Once again, as so often, one is impressed by the fact that, with the exception of a few of the big names in British art, these were the only examples of the work by many artists, past and contemporary, ever to be presented to or bought by the gallery. It was a period of great artistic sensitivity and munificence amongst a few local citizens.

9.7 Hendy's apparent success in placing matters on a sound structural and financial basis for development

Any further discussion of acquisitions and exhibitions really belongs to a general history of the City Art Gallery in Hendy's time with the exception of the bequest of Sydney Kitson's vast collection of Cotmans 1937, and Robert Kitson's final presentation of 1945, but these belong to chapters 10 and 12. In these years, however, three major developments took place which were to transform the operation of the gallery for the subsequent generation. So successful and convincing had Hendy been that, in 1937, the City Council provided the first annual purchasing grant of £600. Added to the Harding Fund's income and the recent £500 bequest of Sir Gervase

Beckett, this provided £1,500 to spend annually. In the first year Hendy was wise enough to buy Crome's *Mousehold Heath*, and a watercolour by Constable.¹⁰⁷ 'The modern pictures purchased are scarcely more conservative' — Sickert's *New Bedford* and *Laundry Shop, Dieppe*, and four oils by Whistler's disciple, Walter Greaves. 'The most modern oil purchased, Derain's *Barges on the Thames* (of 1911), is certainly striking enough in design and colour'.¹⁰⁸ No-one could say the money was mis-spent and Robert Kitson, in particular, had pressed for the purchase of the Sickert.¹⁰⁹ He had had one of his works sent up to the gallery the year before, which Hendy had admired. The L.A.C.F. subscriptions were also used to buy *Juliet and the Nurse* 'which Lord Balniel called the finest work of Sickert's second Spring' (that is his use of squared-up press and theatrical photographs), when he opened the exhibition of Recent Acquisitions in December 1937.¹¹⁰

12.1 The second major development, which came to nothing because of a Conservative economy drive and then the war but which, as a large model, Hendy kept before the public until his departure for London in 1945, was Ernest Procter's design for the new City Art Gallery and Library in 1938. The existing gallery was still approached through the library and Police Offices in Calverley Street although it now actually fronted the new Headrow Gardens. 'Such a building, which was never intended to be seen, cannot long remain as it is at present, an almost sordid anti-climax to the dignity of the Headrow.' The permanent collection and temporary exhibitions needed additional space and Hendy sought the stripped, modernist aesthetic as a functional ideal.

It should be emphasized here that a sumptuous building is not what is needed. The functions of an art gallery are precisely those which the extreme simplicity of the modern style is best fitted to score; the interior must be as adaptable as possible to frequent changes of exhibits; plainness is the only background suitable for every type of art. There should be no carving or salient architectural features to compete or interfere with the exhibits. Where expenditure is needed is upon the supply of clean air, good light and comfortable seating for the visitors and upon adequate working facilities for the staff.¹¹¹

Procter's design was not unlike the new Graves Art Gallery in Sheffield to which Rothenstein had gone, with naturally toplit galleries in a square around a central shaft, but in Leeds' case around the library's bookstack.

The third development in the role of the Director and his staff came with his direct assumption of responsibility for Temple Newsam Mansion in 1937, after the retirement of the housekeeper since 1922, Mrs C.A. Pawson, whose husband had assisted Sydney Kitson in the many subsequent revised editions of the guidebook. A substantial exhibition 'fulfilled for two months the function which the Sub-Committee would like it to fulfil permanently, that of a museum of the decorative arts, showing the craftsmanship of past centuries against a harmonious background such as the Art

9.31 Gallery cannot provide'. The furniture of the Long Gallery was offered for sale by Lord Halifax, the Blue Drawing Room furnished by F.H. Fulford from his collection at Headingley Castle and forty-five pieces lent by Sir William Burrell.¹¹²

Robert Kitson was sympathetic to Hendy's aims for Temple Newsam, but he had clear ideas of how a fine house should look which he had implemented in his own *Casa Cuseni*, which had no wardrobes but built-in hanging-cupboards and drawers behind substantial single doors.

I think it a good idea to spend money for Temple Newsam but I think that the decorative value of the rooms should be one of their chief considerations, so that things like corner cabinets which are really destructive of the architectural feeling of a room are not very suitable.¹¹³

9.16 He also asked Hendy to send down the four works by J.D. Innes and Derwent Lees that he had at *Stonegates* as well as the two on loan to the gallery so that the *Redfern Gallery* could include them in a London show.

Hendy's reply gave little ground on the furnishing of Temple Newsam but indicates how closely he was prepared to cooperate with his co-opted Sub-Committee members.

The kind of Matthew Smith I am looking for is an early one. I think he was much (the) best in the early days when he was not so boisterous and intent on finishing every picture in two or three hours. I have one landscape here which I think is good, but Hepworth doesn't like it, so I am trying to find another. ... The Sickert [*The New Bedford*] which you and Hepworth found in London grows better and better. At Temple Newsam things are going very well. Fulford is giving some quite lovely things to fill the Blue Drawing Room, and I think our redecorations will be quite nice. I don't think you would disapprove of a corner cupboard if you knew where it was to go. It is a case of using it to give architectural character.¹¹⁴

A subsequent generation of conservators has execrated Hendy for stripping the flock wall paper off to provide a suitable background for modern pictures, for laying cork tiles on the floors and erecting little display cabinets in several rooms. But the concept of a country house museum was relatively new at that time and Hendy was more concerned to display the disparate decorative collections available already than to restore the mansion to any supposed original form. As the war years wore on, he virtually abandoned the old City Art Gallery, which was at great risk of bombing raids and anyway required again for wartime uses, and set up his offices in Temple Newsam where, among other significant exhibitions, he arranged a memorial retrospective of Walter Sickert's work in 1942 attended by 36,900 visitors.¹¹⁵

9.8 Conclusion — The Kitson's role in the general development of the City Art Gallery between the wars

From the foregoing it can be seen that Robert and Sydney Kitson, as members of the Sub-Committee, and as donors and as scouts for appropriate works, took an active part in the formulation of the policy, determined during the period after the Great War when there was no curator in post, to build up 'a historic collection' of English watercolours, prints and drawings. Of course they were not alone in this, and important presentations were made by others, often on an initially much larger scale, like Sadler's in 1921/23. Throughout the periods in office of three directors, Robert Kitson maintained a regular series of gifts, which, with those of Sydney Kitson in his lifetime, sought to further the implementation of this policy, which Kaines Smith in particular was appointed to pursue. Their specific contribution to the Cotman collection will be discussed in relation to their wider range of interests in his work in the next chapter.

As he and his contemporary connoisseurs and collectors grew older, it is also apparent that Robert Kitson, by then well established like Sydney Kitson in the London art world as well as Leeds, and with a wide range of connections formed through his travels and gallery going, was an enthusiastic and determined, if sometimes over confident, judge and selector of both works of art and potential donors. In Philip Hendy, who had the confidence of his local deputy-chairman, H.M. Hepworth, he found a director with a vision of developments and the capacity to carry them through the City Council as well as into actual practice. Although he had not shared Rothenstein's appreciation of some of the contemporary painters, and must have felt the same about some of Hendy's tastes, he sought donors like Schiff, Behrend and Pratt Barlow for modern works and A.E. Anderson to give early English watercolours which he also contributed himself.

Others in his circle, like Elaine Barran and her father, Henry, and other members of old Leeds families, like Sir Gervase Beckett and Sir Hickman Bacon, were in a position to present significant oil paintings to the collection, and of course some, such as Sam Wilson, Charles Roberts and H.M. Hepworth, gave complete collections to transform its holdings. But for Robert Kitson his collecting and the support he gave to the City Art Gallery was part of his artistic life and one of the focal points of his peripatetic existence. While one can see that the City Art Gallery would probably have followed a somewhat similar course without his involvement, and one cannot therefore restrict consideration to his role alone, it is difficult to envisage some of the strength and variety in its collections without him. And to ignore his role in the City Art Gallery would preclude any understanding of the sorts of forces that drove him and

committed him to a form of public service which fulfilled his artistic loves, collecting impulses, and aesthetic discrimination.

Chapter 10 *Cotmania* — Sydney and Robert Kitson's quest for the life and works of John Sell Cotman

10.1 The form and intensity of *Cotmania* in the Kitsons

10.5 Since the decision of the Leeds City Art Gallery Sub Committee in 1920 to apply the Bilbrough bequest of 1915 to the establishment of an historic range of English watercolours, one can see the likely hands of both Robert and Sydney Kitson in furthering the policy. Sydney's first catalogues of Robert's collection of Cotmans in
10.8 1927 included a drawing of *Felmingham Church, Norfolk*, of 1817, which he had bought at *Walker's Galleries* in 1922, the same year as Leeds' first purchase of a Cotman watercolour, the early c.1801 *Pont Aber Glaslyn*.¹ Sadler reinforced this by his choice,
10.1 in 1921, of a selection of 25 works, including Cotman's drawing *The Brick Kilns* of the same period, which were presented when he left Leeds in 1923.² Meanwhile Sydney
10.2 had moved his family to Ladbroke Square with the expectation of developing a London-based practice. But nothing materialized, not least because in 1923 Sydney suffered the first of a series of severe haemorrhages resulting from tuberculosis probably contracted during the war.³

During Sydney's illness in 1923 his daughters saw Paul Oppé's special *Studio* number, *The Watercolour Drawings of John Sell Cotman*. This essay, with its many illustrations largely drawn from the works exhibited in the Tate Gallery exhibition of 1922, marked a new beginning for the study of Cotman and the appreciation of his work, which had received little attention since the exhibitions arranged by James Reeve in 1888 at Norwich and London, and Lawrence Binyon's 1897 review of the large part of Reeve's collection that was bought by the British Museum in 1902. Little could Elisabeth and Barbara Kitson have realised where their gift would lead their father when what they all termed his 'Cotmania' took hold. The culminating publication in 1937 of what is still the definitive biography of the artist as well as the
10.4 formation of the most comprehensive study collection of Cotman's work, which Sydney bequeathed to Leeds City Art Gallery, mark two more substantial contributions of the Kitsons to the arts.⁴

It would be unproductive to relate much of what Sydney discovered about the artist for that is already in his biography, and pointless to try to recount the growth of his collection which is published in Leeds' concise catalogue and listed in his own.⁵ But the actual process of his quest for Cotman is a dramatic saga in its own right. As a chronicle it would overwhelm a single chapter and be too various and inchoate in subject matter. Over the years 1926-1937 Sydney was in close touch with a large number of people, usually in person though sometimes only by correspondence. These

Allocated to Leeds:

Allocated to other Galleries (inc. unsure)

Medium — — —>	Allocated to Leeds:										Allocated to other Galleries (inc. unsure)								Overall Total
	Source ↓	Oil	Watercolour	Paste and watercolour	Pencil, wash, mono, sepia	Sepia (alone)	Pencil (alone)	Charcoal or chalk	Pen and Ink/wash	Sub total	Oil	Watercolour	Paste and watercolour	Pencil, wash, mono, sepia	Sepia (alone)	Pencil (alone)	Charcoal or chalk	Pen and Ink/wash	
Dealers	1	14	2	6	4	221	2	4	254	2	37	2	25	20	33	0	10	129	383
Agnew, London ^b	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	4	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	7
Boswell, Norwich	-	4	-	2	1	197	-	-	200	1	3	-	1	1	2	-	-	8	212
Bowden, London	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Brown, Oulton Broad	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
Cotman Gal. Birmingham ^d	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	5
Cotswold Gal. London ^e	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Colnaghi, London	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	2 ^f	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Coop, Norwich ^g	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3
Hunt, Books. Norwich	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Junk Shop, London	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	1 ^h	-	-	-	-	1	1
S.G. Leek, Southwold	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Mace/Nurse, Norwich ⁱ	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Matthews & Brook, Bradford	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Meatyrd, London ^j	-	2	2?	-	1	3	-	1	9	-	4	2?	-	-	1	-	-	7	16
Gooden & Fox, London	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Independant, London ^k	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Nightingale, Norwich	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5	5
Palser, London ^d	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Persons, London	-	-	-	1	-	10	-	-	11	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	12
Paterson's Gal. London ^l	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	9	4	-	-	-	13	14
Neild, ? ^m	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	10	-	2	5	3	-	10	30	30
Parker Gal. London	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Spencer, London	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	12
Squire's Gal., London	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	5	5	1	-	-	11	11
Rowley Gal., London	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Walker's, London ⁿ	-	2	-	1	-	3	-	1?	7	-	12	-	5	1	15	-	-	33	40
Auctioneers ^o	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	0	5	0	1	2	1	0	0	9	13
Christie's	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	4	6
Foster's	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Sotheby's	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	4	6
Collectors ^p	0	1	0	1	0	14	2	1	19	0	4	0	5	4	1	0	0	14	33
Rev. E.H. Eland	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
L.G. Duke ^q	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	4	4
Mrs K. Braithwaite	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Randall Davies	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	11
Tom Girton ^r	-	1?	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1?	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
E.W. Clayton ^s	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Edward Marsh ^t	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	2
Oliver, London	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Paul Oppé ^u	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Mrs H.V. Shepherd	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Victor Rienaecker ^v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Gen. Sir Henry Wilson	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	2
R.H. Kitson ^x	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	4
Cotman fam. & Norwich cols.	0	2	0	1	3	396	0	3	405	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6	411
Misses Bulwer	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Henry A. Bulwer	-	1	-	1	1	9	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	12
J.S. Cotman, Reading	-	-	-	-	1	49	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	50
A. Batchelor (Ex Reeve) ^y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	3
Muskett-Orfeur ^z	-	-	-	-	-	338	-	-	338	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4	342
Mrs Jacobson	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
W.H. Parr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1
Total	1	18	2	8	7	636	5	9	686	2	46	2	31	26	41	0	10	158	844

Table 10.2 S.D.Kitson's Catalogue of his Cotman Collection
by year of acquisition and medium of work.

Year of acquisition	Medium used in work as percentages								Total number	% of total
	Oil	Watercolour	Paste and watercolour	Pencil and wash, monochrome and mixed inc. sepia	Sepia only	Pencil only	Charcoal or chalk	Pen and ink/wash		
1923	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
1924	-	3.3	-	2.4	-	-	-	-	3	0.3
1925	-	-	-	4.9	-	1.2	-	-	10	1.2
1926	-	13.1	-	12.2	11.8	29.3	20.0	5.0	218	25.8
1927	50.0	3.3	-	7.3	20.6	1.9	20.0	5.0	28	3.3
1928	50.0	11.5	-	-	8.8	51.8	-	-	363	43.0
1929	-	23.0	-	26.8	17.6	0.6	-	50.0	45	5.3
1930	-	11.5	-	2.4	5.9	0.9	20.0	25.0*	22	2.6
1931	-	8.2	-	4.9	2.9	0.1	-	-	9	1.0
1932	-	3.3	-	4.9	5.9	7.8	40.0	10.0 ⁺	63	7.5
1933	-	6.6	100.0	12.2	14.7	1.8	-	-	28	3.3
1934	-	4.9	-	19.5	2.9	3.8	-	5.0	39	4.6
1935	-	8.2	-	2.4	-	0.1	-	-	7	0.8
1936	-	1.6	-	-	2.9	-	-	-	2	0.2
1937	-	1.6	-	-	5.9	0.4	-	-	6	0.7
Total number	2	61	2	41	34	679	5	20	844	100.0

* includes 3 manuscripts by John Sell Cotman given by Arthur Batchelor (ex Reeve collection)

⁺ includes a Diminishing Glass used in Cotman's Norwich art school

Table 10.3 S.D.Kitson's Catalogue of his Cotman Collection
by year of acquisition and medium of work

Year of acquisition	Medium used in work as percentages								Total number
	Oil	Watercolour	Paste and watercolour	Pencil and wash, monochrome and mixed inc. sepia	Sepia only	Pencil only	Charcoal or chalk	Pen and ink/wash	
1923	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	-	-	1
1924	-	66.7	-	33.3	-	-	-	-	3
1925	-	-	-	20.0	-	80.0	-	-	10
1926	-	3.7	-	2.3	1.8	91.3	0.5	0.5	218
1927	3.6	7.1	-	10.7	25.0	46.4	3.6	3.6	28
1928	0.3	1.9	-	-	0.8	97.0	-	-	363
1929	-	3.1	-	2.4	13.3	8.9	-	22.2	45
1930	-	31.8	-	4.5	9.0	27.3	4.5	22.7*	22
1931	-	55.6	-	22.2	11.1	11.1	-	-	9
1932	-	3.2	-	3.2	3.2	84.1	3.2	3.2 [†]	63
1933	-	14.3	7.1	17.9	17.9	42.9	-	-	28
1934	-	7.7	-	20.5	2.6	66.7	-	2.6	39
1935	-	71.4	-	14.3	-	14.3	-	-	7
1936	-	50.0	-	-	50.0	-	-	-	2
1937	-	16.7	-	-	33.3	50.0	-	-	6
Total number	2	61	2	41	34	679	5	20	844
% of total	0.2	7.2	0.2	4.9	4.0	80.5	0.6	2.4	100

* includes 3 manuscripts by John Sell Cotman given by Arthur Batchelor (ex Reeve collection)

† includes a Diminishing Glass used in Cotman's Norwich art school

were drawn from several categories of Cotman connections, some of whom formed a closely intertwined set of overlocking networks, whereas others were relatively specifically associated with Sydney for some single Cotman work or piece of information. The scale of his collection and the wide range of its provenance are outlined in Tables 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3.⁶

A loose assessment of the scale of his encounters between 1926 and 1937 amounts to the following: about 20 members of John Sell Cotman's own family descendants as well as those of his patrons in Yorkshire, Norfolk and London; at least 25 dealers, mainly in London, but some in Norwich, Birmingham and Bradford as well as the London auction houses; no fewer than 51 owners of Cotman's work including many who had inherited them from the artist's few early admirers as well as more recent private collectors and connoisseurs, several of whom became Sydney's closest friends and associates; and an equally large number of 53 museums, art galleries and exhibition societies with whose directors and keepers he often established a close collaboration and working relationship. Their letters of comment and appreciation as well as their reception of Sydney's book indicate how he engulfed them in his enthusiasm and courteous attention.

This chapter therefore aims to provide some analysis of the methods adopted by Sydney in searching out Cotman's work as well as biographical information and the forms that this took within the network that he built up or mobilised to assist in his purpose, for he was an able social entrepreneur.

10.2 The appeal of John Sell Cotman's work to the Kitsons

That Cotman's work should have appealed so much to Robert and Sydney Kitson is readily understandable because of the artist's concern with the art of architecture as well as the structure of natural forms in landscape. After the Tate exhibition of 1922 and the subsequent illustration of many of the exhibits in Oppé's *Studio* number, art critics appreciative of modern trends in contemporary art, and especially Frank Rutter in *The Sunday Times* and several journals, took up Cotman's early work and compared its patterned treatment of landscape features with the work of Cezanne or Paul Nash. From 1930 Sydney's *Cotmania* journals include cuttings from Rutter's newspaper articles referring to Cotman and by this time both he and Robert were buying watercolours by Nash.⁷ In his little book of 1926 Kaines Smith had also noted this aspect of Cotman's art, to the annoyance of the collector and artist L.G. Fry who wrote to Sydney that he was 'sure that Cotman was not always absorbed in this and took a great delight in solidity and the third dimension'.⁸

As a Yorkshireman, Sydney was obviously proud of Cotman's links with the county and pleased that his stays at Brandsby and elsewhere should have been so happy and so productive. He drew a direct parallel between Cotman's patronage by

the Cholmeleys and the places kept for Turner at Farnley Hall and Girtin at Harewood House.⁹ But the association was closer still because, in his drawings and *Miscellaneous Etchings*, Cotman had presented striking images of some of the great monuments of the county, the ruined abbeys of Rievaulx, Byland and Kirkstall, the latter on the edge of Leeds and a focus of architectural, antiquarian and artistic attention from at least five members of the Kitson family since the 1890s.¹⁰

Cotman, with the sustained and powerful inducement of his patron Dawson Turner who had a speculative interest in the origins of Anglo Saxon and Norman architecture, devoted an even longer period of his life to the antiquities of Norfolk and Normandy.¹¹ One of Sydney's closest friends, the Headmaster of Haileybury, F.B. Malim, had a house in Southwold where he often stayed. And Robert sketched in the artists' colony at Walberswick on some of his summer visits to England, which enabled him to see his nieces at St. Felix's School. So they were both familiar with East Anglia. But it was Cotman, not Constable, to whose work they became so attached and it was a Norfolk subject, *Felmingham Church*, and the *Turnip Stealer* from Palser's in 1924, that were the first Cotmans that Robert acquired.¹² They both came to see more of Norfolk during Sydney's convalescence at Mundesley sanatorium on the east coast in 1924. After 1926, when so much of the Bulwer collection was exhibited at *Walker's Galleries* and both of them had bought several of the fine Norfolk drawings, Sydney's visits to Norfolk, sometimes accompanied by Robert, became regular and more frequent but dictated by his quest for Cotman.¹³

10.5
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Normandy was the site of Robert's earliest surviving sketchbook of 1903, when he was drawing trees and landscape in the free manner of Alfred East, and he subsequently went sketching with Frank Brangwyn around Montreuil.¹⁴ The port of Dieppe was of course a haven of British artists, like Sickert, associated with the New English Art Club, whose work Robert collected. Edwin Kitson Clark had spent much of the Great War at Honfleur and his wife's sister, Minnie Porter (née Bidder), gave them several drawings from her husband's collection before it was dispersed, including a monochrome wash of the *Entrance to Le Havre*.¹⁵ Sydney spent some time in France at the end of the Great War in 1918-19, but first had the opportunity to explore the district in September 1926 with F.B. Malim.¹⁶ By this time Sydney was following Cotman and sketched the castles and churches delineated in his drawings and prints.

The point is not that Cotman had done views of places they knew, but that he had an antiquarian interest with which Sydney was in sympathy and an artistic interest in architecture as subject matter that appealed to Robert. Unlike so many artists, writers and connoisseurs for whom Cotman's later work was a monument to drudgery under the thumb of Dawson Turner, this retained an interest and attraction to the Kitsons who were much more sympathetic to his work as a whole and therefore in every period of his life.

10.3 Sydney and Robert Kitson and Cotman

As already discussed, apart from his friends Cecil and Phyllis Hunt, and his two sisters, Robert's closest enduring companions were Ina Kitson Clark and Sydney, with whom he shared so many interests and activities in the Leeds Fine Arts Club, the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions, and the development of the City Art Gallery.¹⁷ Sydney spent much of 1924 convalescing but his sketchbooks indicate that he spent some time in France and with the family at Bredon in Gloucestershire. Much of the following year he seems to have spent in France, with a spring visit to Lenno and the Alps over the Little St Bernard to Chamonix where Robert joined them, finding it so cold that he wrapped himself in newspaper under his jacket.¹⁸ Robert's *Sketchbook No. 49* has little to show for it apart from a note of the address of Arthur Batchelor and the dealer, Boswell, in Norwich.¹⁹ During these years Sydney was proposing prospective watercolours to Kaines Smith by Varley, Turner and Cotman and J.M.W. Turner's *Christ Church Hall, Oxford* was bought from *Agnew's* for Leeds.²⁰

In 1926 Sydney and his family resettled at Kidlington in *Thornbury House*, a tall building that he characterized as 'Queen Anne in front and Mary-Anne behind'. By then he was set on the quest for Cotman. He had been advised to leave London for cleaner air, but Oxford was not far away. By the end of the year he was taking drawings into the Ashmolean for C F Bell's opinion and the following year was in touch with Sir Michael Sadler to see his Cotmans.²¹ In February before they moved to Kidlington he visited Florence and Assisi with Elisabeth and his wife, proceeding south to Sicily where Robert took him on a long drive to Noto and other hill towns which they sketched.²² That summer they both formed substantial collections of Cotman's work from the Bulwer Sale at *Walker's*. Robert appears to have acquired 50, many of them chalk drawings from Cotman's last tour sketching the landscape of Norfolk, and in September he bought the *West Front of Croyland Abbey* for 36 guineas, although Sydney decided not to buy its pair of the *East End of Howden Church* for 30 guineas.²³

By the end of 1926, Sydney had been back to Trinity and wrote to tell Robert of his watercolour of *El Djem* which was hanging in the college guest room with the others by C.A. Hunt, Martin Hardie and two other past members that Sydney had presented.²⁴ The following spring he selected two Cotman drawings for Robert of *Dunalbin Castle* and *Glastonbury* at Patersons Gallery and paid a visit to *Stonegates* on 27 March where he listed his collection of Cotmans and drew small sketches of 5 of them, using a soft pencil and a much freer line than in his own architectural sketches.²⁵ For each item he recorded the subject, any inscriptions, medium and type of paper or support, dimensions with height before width and any known provenance or exhibition catalogue number. In July Robert accompanied him to Cambridge and Norwich, during

7.149
7.150

which he sketched at Felbrigg, Trunch, Castle Rising and Wymondham.²⁶ Norman Lupton joined them to visit R J Colman's collection at *Crown Point* before they went up to Sir Hickman Bacon's collection at Thonock.²⁷ In the summer of 1927 Sydney went on a Mediterranean cruise but in October he used a trip to his sister in Harlech as a means of searching out some of the sites of Cotman's Welsh tour drawings, identifying Tan-y-Bwlch and Pont Dol-y-Moch for the first time.²⁸

Sydney's daughters recalled Robert's summer visits with pleasure because they would talk for hours about Cotman and it made their father happy. Sydney reciprocated by offering to arrange for Robert to see private collections, such as Mrs Merivale's Townes which he had seen in Oxford, Lewis Fry's collection, and by reserving drawings by Cotman that he thought Robert would like to buy such as one at *Agnew's* for £130 in February 1928.²⁹ As his own discernment developed Sydney was annoyed at the way in which others could take advantage of Robert's impetuous enthusiasm and foist bogus oil paintings onto him under the name of J.S. Cotman.³⁰ He was particularly critical of *Matthews and Brooke* of Bradford who seemed to buy up any Cotmans that had not sold in London and did this in 1928 when they sold an oil to Leeds, as well as in 1935 on the recommendation of the Bowes Museum Director.³¹ Both works were discredited by Sydney.

On Robert's summer visit to Kidlington in 1928 they went together to visit Sadler and see his collection, maintaining the Leeds connection.³² In June 1928 he bought *The Red Cloak* and *The Overgrown Well* at the Cotswold Gallery and in 1929 went to Christie's with Sydney.³³ In June 1933 they went to Sotheby's together to view the late Mr Justice McCardie's collection before its sale.³⁴ But Robert was just as interested in the work of contemporary British artists and helping Leeds to acquire these and he certainly lacked Sydney's singular dedication to collecting Cotmans.

10.6 For Sydney, Robert's Cotman collection was of continuous interest. He took the Keeper of the National Gallery, Isherwood Kay, another Cotman researcher, to view it in October 1929, when *The West End of Croyland* was considered the best.³⁵ In the following January, Sydney returned to study the 50 chalk and charcoal sketches that Robert had at *Stonegates*. And at the end of October 1930 he was back again to show the collection to Paul Oppé, who had invited Robert as well as Sydney round for dinner in 1928.³⁶ He reported that Oppé had 'liked' (i.e. considered autograph J.S. Cotman) *The Red Cloak* but not *The Turnip Stealer*, although he himself liked it very much.³⁷

10.13

Robert's collection was a useful additional point of reference for Sydney's research and in 1931 he borrowed and returned various works for study and photographing.³⁸ In 1928 he identified a Cotman in Sir Montague Pollock's collection as a copy of the sepia wash drawing in Robert's and in the following year noted a version of his drawing of *Glastonbury* in the Holiday collection.³⁹ After his visit with Oppé in 1930 he referred specifically to Robert's study for a watercolour of *Gunton*

10.21 *Park*, and he reproduced his Cotman drawing of *Upton Church* as the frontispiece of an
10.19 *R.I.B.A. Journal* that year.⁴⁰ At the end of 1933 he sent out typed transcripts of
10.22 Cotman's letters as well as a copy of his Walpole Society article on the Dawson
Turner portrait albums, perhaps as a peace offering for 'snatching the *Normandy
Church Tower* from under your nose in Devon', probably on a visit to Norman Lupton
although this cannot be documented from the *Cotmania* journals.⁴¹

This last incident exemplifies the lively rivalry that, at least from Sydney's point
of view, characterized his relations with close friends among the collectors and dealers
in Cotman's works. Both the *Cotmania* journals and his letters to Robert are full of
incidents exemplifying this entrepreneurial spirit of keen competition. Once his illness
had worsened and he had resigned from the R.I.B.A. secretaryship in 1934, Sydney
devoted much of his time to his book although he remained a member of the Rural
District Council and a J.P.⁴² Only two letters to Robert survive from the following four
years. Others could have been lost but there is a corresponding lack of reference to
him in the *Cotmania* journals. Robert continued to visit Kidlington each summer
however, and in January 1935 he joined Sydney in the south of France.⁴³ Robert's
7.29 *Sketchbook No. 64* of 1934 includes sketches of Kidlington and *No.66* of 1935 includes
7.87b more of Vence and Mentone. Several of these became the basis for monochrome
7.88 wash drawings in which Robert directly emulated the technique adopted by Cotman in
so many of his Norfolk and Normandy watercolours.⁴⁴ Although this was not to
become a regular feature of Robert's painting, one can see how influential this
attention to Cotman had been and how he and Sydney would have shared their
observations and experience of the artist's work.

After his book was published Sydney privately acknowledged to Ethel that 'I owe
my interest in Cotman in the first place to Bob, tho' it would have been difficult to
acknowledge such indebtedness in my book. I never thought of it until after the book
was finished, otherwise I should have dedicated it to him'.⁴⁵ And in his last letter to
'Roberto' of 25 May 1937, he apologised for this omission offering the excuse that 'I
don't see how I could have done this, as it would not have interested the public'.⁴⁶
Nevertheless, his many long letters to Robert and their hours talking, viewing and
sketching together reinforce the impression of his importance to Sydney's quest for
Cotman. Even this last letter recounts his gratification at Robert selling a picture to
10.50 the King of Sweden, and his pleasure at acquiring a lovely Cotman of *Rievaulx*, 'very
Japanesy', although he confided that he could not survive another haemorrhage like
the one he had just suffered which had been as severe as the one at Gibraltar in
1935.⁴⁶

10.4 Contacting the descendants of Cotman's family and patrons

In order to establish the information on Cotman's life as well as the full range of his work it was essential to find the people with whose quite recent ancestors the artist had been on close terms, some of them his relatives, others the descendants of his few patrons and friends and the auctioneers, booksellers and subsequent admirers of his work in Norwich.

The executive committee of the Tate exhibition in 1922 had included three from Norwich, Frank Leney of the Castle Museum, R.J. Colman a major collector who will be referred to in section 6, and Arthur Batchelor who wrote on *Cotman's Diary* in 1924. When Isherwood Kay was publishing Cotman's letters to Dawson Turner in the *Walpole Society Journals* of 1925/6 and 1926/7, Batchelor published a newspaper article on Cotman's trips to Normandy. Sydney stuck the cutting in the first *Cotmania* journal and in October 1927 he visited Batchelor twice, the beginning of a fruitful association over the following decade.⁴⁷

Batchelor took Sydney to see a descendant of Captain Hicks who had married the sister of Cotman's wife and had an oil painting.⁴⁸ He also had a note of an address (H. Orfeur) which led to a collection bought from Charles Muskett, the bookseller who published eight of Cotman's etchings in 1846.⁴⁹ In 1929 he took Sydney to see one of several watercolours he was subsequently to find in different collections of *The Abbatial House of St Ouen, Rouen* which Cotman had probably taken from a print, and he introduced him to the niece of Joseph Geldart, who had bought watercolours from Cotman including some based on the Rev. James Bulwer's sketches in the Iberian Peninsula.⁵⁰ Batchelor may also have introduced him to Mrs Bolingbroke, the widow of the Secretary of the Norwich Art Circle which had held the 1888 Cotman exhibition organised by Reeve.⁵¹

Batchelor had the entrée to *Crown Point*, where R.J. Colman kept his collection, and in 1929 and again in 1932 was involved in Sydney's visits which ultimately led to his work on the catalogue of the collection.⁵² Batchelor attributed several of Colman's drawing to Geldart, one of the many who copied Cotman's drawings.⁵³ He also wrote to tell Sydney of the Cotman collection at the Free Library in Norwich, 24 of which he subsequently listed.⁵⁴ In 1932 he accompanied Sydney to Great Yarmouth where they identified various sites associated with Dawson Turner and Cotman as well as the 1814 Victory Festival for which the artist had made commemorative etchings.⁵⁵

10.24 *Walker's Gallery* probably put Sydney in touch with the Misses Bulwer who lived at Uckfield near Dorking, because the 1926 sale had included many from the collection of their brother who lived in Vancouver. On his first visit in 1928 Sydney listed their 10 Cotmans including *The Harvest Field*, exhibited in Norwich in 1810,⁵⁶ which was to excite his imagination for some time. He also tried to sort out a dispute that had

arisen between Walker and their brother as a result of one of the Kitsons, presumably Robert, judging some of the Cotmans to be copies by other hands. ⁵⁷ Later that month he took three of Misses Bulwer's drawings to Lawrence Binyon for his opinion. ⁵⁸ A year later he was back with them again and made a sketch of *The Harvest Field* with the hopeful questions 'Is the house Rokeby Park?' 'Is the central figure Morrilt?' 'Is one of the group on the left J S C?' and in 1930 he bought it from them.⁵⁹ Oppé had liked the watercolour and wrote of the owners with affection as 'the spiritual aunts' but Robert Kitson did not care for it, perhaps because of the rather formal group of figures in the foreground. ⁶⁰ To Sydney these were of considerable interest, not only because of the wishful identification which persisted in the published biography but as an example of Cotman's attempt to win approval by adopting more formal landscape compositions. ⁶² Two years later he obtained a small drawing for the main group of figures in a sheet of 'scraps' from one of Cotman's descendants, which may have been taken from work by Raphael or Poussin possibly from a classical source.⁶³ Isherwood Kay, however, considered the picture 'a failure'.⁶⁴

10.25 to 10.28 Sydney's introduction to Cotman's Yorkshire patrons was initiated by chance and coincidence. At the Royal Academy summer exhibition in 1928 he happened to meet Stanley Pearson, a client for whom he had carried out alterations at Melmerby Hall in 1912 and subsequently at Brandsby Hall.⁶⁵ He confirmed that the inscription 'Cottey' could still be seen on a tree in the park and in October introduced Sydney to the direct descendant of Cotman's Cholmeley patrons. ⁶⁶ Hugh Fairfax-Cholmeley (1864-1940) then lived nearby at Swathgill, having sold Brandsby in 1912 and adopted socialist principles for the distribution of his landed estate. He showed Sydney Mrs Cholmeley's diary and other papers as well as pencil portraits of the family by Cotman and a large and strikingly painted watercolour of *Byland Abbey* of about 1808-9, based on a drawing dated 7th September 1803 which he and Norman Lupton were to see on their Cotman tour of 1929. ⁶⁷ Sydney formed the impression that the picture had probably been a wedding present to the younger Francis Cholmeley, Cotman's friend, in August 1809 and Oppé, who had seen it at the Tate exhibition, concurred with this.⁶⁸

10.29 By contrast, Sydney's visits to Major Morrilt at Rokeby in 1928 and 1929 were disappointing because there were no records of Cotman and he could not identify the site of *The Harvest Field*, although he persisted with his theory. On the other hand he had a good look around the Greta Valley and sketched the Scotsman's Stone from different points of view as well as the famous bridge over the River Greta.⁶⁹

10.30 It took Sydney much longer to get in touch with Dawson Turner's descendants, perhaps because Isherwood Kay had already published many of their Cotman letters and was himself planning to write a book on Cotman. Sydney's first recorded meeting with one of several descendants of Turner's daughter and son-in-law, Sir Francis and Lady Palgrave, Geoffrey Barker, was fortuitous. ⁷⁰ It was at a general meeting of the

Walpole Society in 1929 and he told Sydney about the collapse of Dawson Turner's marriage and the expulsion of their family from the banking partnership with the Gurneys.⁷¹ But it was not until 1931 that he went with F.B. Malim to Barker's house at Hatfield and listed 6 works by J.S. Cotman, 7 portraits in oils and a watercolour by Varley of a subject similar to one by P.S. Munn in Sydney's own collection. In 1933 he went again and borrowed a sepia wash drawing of *Mortain* for photography.⁷²

Following the first visit he arranged to call on the granddaughter of Lady Palgrave at Felixstowe, some of whose Cotmans he had already seen at an exhibition in Yarmouth in 1927.⁷³ He listed 7 Cotman watercolours and sepias as well as 22 drawings mounted by the British Museum. In due course Kay passed over the Cotman letters to Sydney and both he and Mrs Barker authorised him to publish quotations from them in the biography.⁷⁴ At his suggestion she presented them to the British Museum, for which A.M. Hind thanked him in December 1936.⁷⁵ She also presented a scrap book of Cotman's drawings on the arrival of which Sir Charles Peers, a trustee, informed Sydney the following February.⁷⁶ When the Cotman biography was published Mrs Barker took offence at the reference to the nature of Dawson Turner's family relationships.⁷⁷ However no similar criticism was received from the other descendants of Dawson Turner, Mrs Paul Waterhouse, to whom he was introduced in Oxford, or Mrs Woodward of Malvern Link, who was only sorry he had not reproduced her watercolour and paste of the *Harbour of Honfleur*.⁷⁸ Sydney's last recorded purchase of a Cotman drawing, *A Thames boat*, in May 1937 came from yet another descendant of Dawson Turner, Miss Jacobson, through another daughter who was married to the Bishop of Chester.⁷⁹

10.31 Although Sydney found a few interesting oil paintings and other relics with some descendants of Cotman's in-laws in Norfolk, and Graham Cotman sent him an impression of the seal of the artist's father in 1927,⁸⁰ he only traced the most useful descendants fortuitously. In 1929 the Rochester and West Kent Art Society's exhibition included 3 watercolours and an oil by Cotman lent by a J.S. Cotman of Chatham, and in 1930 the medical student son lent his late father's collection to the
10.33 Norwich Castle Museum for five years, after which Sydney called on Graham Cotman again to see the oil of a *Boy playing marbles*, subsequently presented to the
10.34 Museum.⁸¹ Sydney listed 20 items of which 12 were starred as of especial quality, one of which was an early version of the *Windmills* in the Littlewood collection shown at the Tate in 1922.⁸²

The second contemporary John Sell Cotman introduced himself. Calling with his wife in December 1931 but finding Sydney out, he wrote asking to come again.⁸³ Sydney went over to Reading the following August and noted the oil of Mrs J.S. Cotman, returning a fortnight later to list the 82 drawings in the collection.⁸⁴ An F.C.A. and member of the Vintners' Company of London, Cotman's namesake and

Sydney got on well. In October he swapped a sheet of Cotman 'scraps' including the drawing of a group of figures that was used in *The Harvest Field* and two pencil portraits for one that Sydney had of a young girl whom Cotman thought was J.J. Cotman's wife who had brought him up. And in November Sydney took over a self-portrait drawing by J.J. Cotman which he swapped for 7 J.S. Cotman scraps and a continental drawing probably after one of Harriott's sketches.⁸⁵

From these accounts, as well as their general appreciation of his book, we can see how easily Sydney established relations with his informants and how successfully he established relations fruitful to them as well as himself and others who were interested in Cotman's work. He usually relied on personal introductions through others in the Cotman circle, but also on his own circle of friends in Oxford, London and Yorkshire. As was to be the case with many private owners of Cotman's work, elderly ladies were commonly the extant curators but sometimes he found a man he could do business with like John Sell Cotman F.C.A.

10.5 Dealing with the Dealers

10.35 There were 845 catalogued items in Sydney's Cotman collection when he died as well as works by related artists such as P.S. Munn and others that he and members of the family acquired because they liked them. Substantial numbers of drawings were bought in groups directly from a few descendants of early collectors such as James Bulwer and Charles Muskett but much of his collection and even more of his sighting and study of Cotman's work as well as its copies, fakes and pupils' drawings was undertaken at the London auction houses and watercolour dealers in the capital and the provinces. Every year after 1926, Sydney cut out the Cotman items from sale and exhibition catalogues and stuck them into his *Cotmania* journals, often with comments on their provenance, price or association with other works he knew. But he also made fuller notes of his own visits and the comments of his collector friends on what they had seen or experienced. His journals therefore provide a commentary on the commercial world of English watercolours between the two world wars.

10.36 From these journals one can see that Sydney had dealings with at least 27
10.32 dealers and auction houses. With some, such as *Brown and Phillips* in 1926, Hartley, and *Paterson's* in 1927, his dealings seem to have been limited to specific items that had already surfaced in the sales of the Bulwer and Porter collections.⁸⁶ But they added significantly to his and Robert's collections by including the *Croyland*, and *Norfolk plough* drawings which had been the basis for Cotman's etchings.⁸⁷ In 1928 he bought the *Font at Shoreham Church* from W.T. Spencer which Cotman had drawn while awaiting better weather to cross the channel to Normandy in 1817 and in 1930 Norman Lupton took him round again to buy 'four rather interesting drawings'.⁸⁸ He returned a month later to examine a large number from P.S. Munn's summer tour of

1802, to which he was to relate several undated Cotman drawings of Wales and Shropshire and therefore the possibility of a second Welsh tour.⁸⁹ Sometimes Sydney was led elsewhere by the machinations of the art market such as in 1934 when White's collection was sold at Christie's and Parsons of Brompton Road had paid Meatyard, Sydney's usual dealer, to stand down so that he could obtain the drawing of *A font* that Sydney subsequently bought.⁹⁰

10.9

Provincial dealers were not a major source for Sydney, but some produced significant items. G.D. Thomson of the *Cotman Gallery* in Birmingham had the drawing in 1928 which had been in the Tate exhibition as *Wharfedale and Bolton Abbey*. Sydney had identified the site as *Tan-y-Bwlch* in North Wales the year before.⁹¹ He dated the drawing to the 1820s and wrote to Martin Hardie at the V. and A. of his identification of the subject as well as Cotman's presumed sketching tour of 1802. A year later he identified a brightly coloured watercolour in Sir Hickman Bacon's collection as deriving from it.⁹² In May 1929 Thomson called, while Victor Rienaecker happened to be visiting, with a watercolour that Cotman had presented to W.H. Harriott, a confirmation of the close relationship between the artist and another of his amateur artist patrons whose sketches were the basis for Cotman's watercolours of the Rhineland.⁹³ Later that year he bought a sepia of *The Castle at Alençon* from Thomson.⁹⁴

Boswell's of Norwich was not only a potential source of Cotmans that came onto the local art market but also a means of contacting East Anglian collectors. Sydney would go over when he was staying at Southwold with the Malims and in February, 1927, he bought a late paste study *Road to the Hills* with four other Cotmans.⁹⁵ He wrote to Robert about this and they returned in July to see two oil portraits of J.J. Cotman's wife and son.⁹⁶ At this time he was still not confident of his attributions and in July that year took a *Sill life* round to Arthur Batchelor who approved of it. *Boswell*, who bought for Colman, was also the source of the two Crome drawings of Tintern Abbey that were to be of subsequent use to Sydney and three watercolours of Spanish soldiers.⁹⁷

Matthews and Brooke's of Bradford were a different matter. As the nearest dealers to Leeds who regularly bought in London, they had close business links with the City Art Gallery and Robert called there on his summer visits to Leeds. During Kaines Smith's time when the watercolour collection policy was underway they could be quite a nuisance by sending large numbers of works on approval and Sydney was dubious of their attributions to Cotman. But in 1925 they were the source for Leeds City Art Gallery of the drawing of a *Normandy Timber Waggon* and in 1929 the watercolour of *Buildwas Abbey* about which Robert wrote to Sydney.⁹⁸ In 1931 he suggested that they send Sydney two drawings, one of which the latter considered to be by another hand and made a note that he considered Spens 'a better sort of man'.⁹⁹

Sydney's closest dealings were with W. Palser, whose King Street business had begun in the eighteenth century, with Augustus Walker in Bond Street through whom the Bulwer Collection was sold in 1926 and subsequent years, Percy M. Turner who bought for R.J. Colman and was an adviser to the Norwich Castle Museum, F.R. Meatyard with whom by the 1930s Sydney left his bids for Sotheby's and Christie's, and in these later years Bernard Milling of *Squire's Gallery* in Baker street who had been an army friend of L.G. Duke.. But the nature of the relationship he developed with them varied considerably.

10.37 It was from Palser that Leeds had bought *The Ploughed Field* in 1922 ¹⁰⁰, and in
10.38 1924 Robert Kitson bought *The Turnip Stealer* and the *Man reading in front of a ruin*,
10.13 both of which were queried in later years by Oppé and Sydney respectively. Palser
10.22 clearly had 'an expensive face' and liked his liquor, which was the source of some amusement to Lupton and Sydney in the salerooms. Palser's technique with the latter seems to have been to buttonhole him then and take him off to see a Cotman, in 1928 to see a Welsh landscape of 1803 upon which acquisition Rienaecker wrote to congratulate Sydney, in 1929 to see four Cotmans owned by Palser and 'a friend' who turned out to be the dealer P.M. Turner, and in 1930 to see the wash drawing *Brecon Bridge* which he bought.¹⁰¹

But it was with Walker's Gallery that Sydney established one of his longest relationships. It began with the sale of much of the Rev. James Bulwer's collection from his descendant in Vancouver in June 1926 for which C.F. Bell prepared the catalogue. Bulwer had commissioned Cotman to prepare drawings of the antiquities of Somerset to compliment Savage's publication on Carhampton. He had bought the bulk of his Norfolk drawings when they were sold after the publication of Cotman's book of etchings. And he had both provided sketches of his tour of the Iberian peninsula and Madeira for Cotman to use as a basis for his own works and taken the artist on his final sketching trips around Norfolk in 1841.¹⁰² The collection therefore provided an unparalleled opportunity to establish Cotman's style, techniques and subjects throughout much of his middle and later years and therefore to differentiate his original work from the many drawing copies produced by other members of his family and pupils. Many of the Cotmans that Sydney acquired from others had also come from Walker's sale as did *The West Door, St Nicholas, Kings Lynn*, which Leeds City Art Gallery acquired in 1926.¹⁰³

Augustus Walker obviously came to respect Sydney's opinion quickly because in May 1927 he sent him ten of the Bulwer Cotmans that Bell had weeded out for his second opinion and passed either these or Robert's views on to Bulwer asking for some more drawings to replace them. ¹⁰⁴ In 1929 Walker asked Sydney to write an article for his quarterly catalogue and later in the year had what Sydney termed the 'Norwich Cathedral Triptych' of wash drawings on view.¹⁰⁵

10.39 But if Sydney was free with his information he was prepared to drive a hard bargain and reap the rewards for his favours. In July 1934 he called into Christie's and met Sir Alec Martin in his shirt sleeves sorting out pictures in the store.¹⁰⁶ He had the upright oil now called *On the River Yare* which had been bought in at 120 guineas in March.¹⁰⁷ Oppé had seen it and Sydney advised Leeds to buy it which was effected that month through the Leeds Art Collections Fund. Martin also showed him two of Lady Powell's Cotmans which had come to her from her aunt, Lady Worsley, having been given them by her husband in 1897. They were coming up for sale later in the month, a drawing of *Harlech* and another Sydney identified as *Dolgelly* although it seems then to have been called *On the Wharfe*.¹⁰⁸ They were therefore associated with Cotman's Welsh sketching tour in which Sydney had a close interest and with the collection at Hovingham that did not appear in the Cholmeley papers but had already been the source of one of the best watercolours in his own collection. When Sydney failed to secure them at Christie's he went round to Walker and finally talked him into letting him have them as the '6.5 train' was about to leave for Oxford with the offer of £10 to release them. The problem was that Walker had bought them in partnership with another dealer and Whitehead had a buyer for the *Harlech* drawing. The situation was not resolved until early August when Walker finally gave in on the strength of their long association.¹⁰⁹ Sydney kept the *Harlech* drawing. He had already given a watercolour of the same subject by Cornelius Varley to his sister Eva Swayne. But *Dolgelly* was presented to the Fitzwilliam for which he received profuse thanks from the Director, Sydney Cockerell.¹¹⁰

10.58 In 1935 Sydney secured the purchase of two drawings that Walker had acquired
10.59 from the sale of Heath Hall, near Wakefield, one of them being a watercolour of the same *View of the Ouse, Humber and Trent from Welton, Yorkshire*, that he had just seen at Pietermaritzburg where 'seen in the clear light of its South African resting-place, it seems to be an abstract vision of England'¹¹¹ On the strength of this and Sydney's realization of how ill he had become, Mr and Mrs Walker received an invitation, rarely offered to his dealers, to come to tea and see the collection their stock had done so much to create.¹¹²

Sydney's relations with Percy Turner of the *Independent Gallery* were quite different. An established authority on the Norwich School and coopted onto the Castle Museum's committee, his advice was sought by Sydney in 1927 and 1928 when he attributed one drawing to Geldart and did not approve of *In Norwich Cathedral 1828* which Sydney had just bought.¹¹³ He lunched with Sydney in 1928 and in 1932 invited him to come with Sadler to his home at Gerrards Cross to see his views by Crome and Cotman. Two days later Turner acquired *The Fall of the Salune at Mortain* from *Squire's Gallery* with the Colman collection in mind. Sydney invited him to lunch the

next week and offered him the two Cromes of *Tintern Abbey*, that he had actually acquired from Boswell in Norwich, in exchange for the Cotman.¹¹⁴

Probably because of Turner's close association with the Castle Museum and Colman's collection, Sydney's bidding went through Meatyard and Norman Lupton sent him a caricature of the latter in triumph over the prostrate Turner after competitive bidding for a Crome in the Heseltine sale at Sotheby's in 1934.¹¹⁵

10.40 F.R. Meatyard, of Museum Street, seems to have been an astute dealer without the scholarship of Turner or A.J. Finberg. Sydney was buying from him at least as early as 1926 when he acquired a *Study of Trees* from a collection in Budapest but his first appearance in *Cotmania* is in 1930 when Sydney acquired *Cow Castle* through him.¹¹⁶ Meatyard also secured a fine drawing of *Boats on the Sarthe near Alençon* from the Bellingham Smith collection in 1931 and at the end of 1933 told Sydney of Bowden's purchase of *Near Brandsby* from Sutton Palmer's sale.¹¹⁷ Sydney bought it for 7½ guineas and it was used as the colour frontispiece in his Cotman biography.

10.41 Meatyard's greatest saleroom coup on Sydney's behalf was on 20 July 1932, it is best described in the words of those involved in securing it for him. Norman Lupton telegrammed him immediately after the sale 'worth coming up at once as others will to hear of it. We cannot buy at present. It is ex-Hovingham junk lot 109' and he compared it to his sister's *Brignall Banks on the Greta, Yorkshire*.¹¹⁸ Oppé wrote in more detail:

10.44 A superb Cotman — Barnard Castle — wide open landscape, blues and greens not quite finished was anon in a lot at Sotheby's today. I went up to £50 with you or Norman in mind — Norman being without my knowledge standing behind me all the time! It was bought by Meatyard acting thro' the clerk so that I didn't know that he was bidding and he said that he didn't know I was. Go and see the drawing and buy it ...: Not signed. Inscribed Barnard Castle at back and I should say done shortly after the visit, like H. Bacon's large Greta.

Sydney telegrammed Meatyard at once who replied 'I am holding the Cotman drawing, which is a real "stunner", awaiting your call.' He went to London the following day and bought it for £85, one of the finest watercolours he ever acquired and quite unknown to the art world since its exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1806, the last time Cotman exhibited there. Like Lady Powell's pair of watercolours, it had come from the Worsley's collection at Hovingham but in rather mysterious circumstances, as 'A parcel containing watercolours and other drawings, chiefly by artists of the English School etc. *A parcel!*' as Sydney recorded, which accompanied 62 lots of old master drawings.¹¹⁹

At the auction when the parcel had fallen to the clerk, Oppé, Duke, Crook, Milling and Lupton all darted after Meatyard to find out what was in it. Hence the urgency if Sydney was to acquire the picture.¹²⁰ A year later S.E. Harrison, who had already identified several of Cotman's sites around Barnard Castle for Sydney, sent him a

large-scale map-cutting indicating exactly the site on Toller Hill from which Cotman had viewed the scene and such is the name it now carries.¹²¹

10.45 In July 1936 similar events might have been repeated. Christie's were selling *A lake scene with trees* that Oppé already knew as 'the Edinburgh *Shady Pool*' and proposed would be worth £65 to Sydney. Lupton indentified it not quite accurately as the 'Greta-Tees meeting of waters' and sent him the catalogue page inscribed 'Rather faded but quite lovely — I'm building dam it!' for Hyde Crook was under construction.¹²² Meatyard telegraphed to say it had realized £230 and the *Morning Post* stated that Gooden and Fox had secured it for £241/10s. Sydney was probably outbid by his own success, with Frank Rutter, in bringing Cotman's work into the public eye.¹²³

10.47 The only other dealer with whom Sydney had considerable contact, apart from A.J. Finberg to whom reference will be made in a later section, was Bernard Milling of *Squires Gallery* in Baker Street. The first reference in *Cotmania* appears in 1932 when he found that P.M. Turner had just acquired what he was intending to buy and swapped his Cromes for the Cotman.¹²⁴ The following spring he bought four of the five drawings from the Walter Gurney collection, the fifth, of *Domfront*, having already been taken by Martin Hardie.¹²⁵

10.48 In 1934, he leapt at the opportunity of acquiring *Howden Church East End* for £19. This finished drawing, the pair to Robert's *Crowland Abbey West End* at *Walker's* in 1926, had been in Rienaecker's collection and Sydney knew it had cost him 30 guineas at the Leicester Galleries.¹²⁶ It had been one of the subjects in Cotman's first edition of *Miscellaneous Etchings*. He was still adding to his collection in October 1936 when he bought the strikingly delineated wash drawing of *Blakeney Church and Wiveton Hall* which had also been at *Walker's* in 1926.¹²⁷

The records Sydney kept of his dealings in the *Cotmania* journals reveal a collector well known to and on good terms with the trade who had an eye for bargains and was prepared to pay the market-rate for Cotmans that were available. He was always keen to see what came to view because this was how he developed his knowledge and trained his eye to discriminate between the different techniques and styles of Cotman's long artistic life and those of his family, pupils and more recent wishful attributors. He therefore frequented the auction houses, Sotheby's and Christie's, and occasionally Foster's of Pall Mall after Oppé told him about three of Cotman's earliest watercolours including that of *West Humble, Surrey* which Sydney secured for his collection in 1931.¹²⁸ But more commonly he relied on a dealer like Meatyard bidding for him, or went round to inspect what they had secured from a sale.

Although it was in the salerooms that some of his most exciting experiences occurred because of hopes raised and sometimes dashed, the competitive transactions involved in persuading dealers to let him have works that others expected to buy and

his use of swaps indicate his own entrepreneurial capabilities. He was also willing to offer his own increasing knowledge and to seek the opinion of those, like Percy Turner, who were established authorities. But he always looked the works over critically before making an offer for them.¹²⁹

10.6 The close network of connoisseurs and the wide range of English watercolour owners and collectors

From the previous section one gets an impression of the tightly knit professional world of the dealers, often acting in partnership or even paying each other to stand down from bidding in order to reduce the competition that could stack up prices, but also bidding against each other when a particularly fine work came up for which they could see a ready market. Dealers acting for rich clients like Colman or Cook could easily outstrip connoisseur collectors like Oppé and Sydney Kitson, who were seeking quality or exemplary works but knew the market and could bide their time. But the latter formed another coterie of *cognoscenti*, sometimes operating with and sometimes against the dealers just as they could act for or in friendly rivalry with each other. At the end of July 1931, Oppé wrote to tell Sydney of a 'parcel' at Sotheby's that he noticed contained a Cotman of *Barmouth with Cader Idris*, larger than a signed one in Leonard Duke's collection of 1801. But there was 'nothing doing ... Already Meatyard, Thompson and several of the vultures had gathered for the impending corpse'.¹³⁰ By the time lot 110 came up 'still more jackals, hyaenas and scavenger beetles had gathered together — positively all of them including Palser — and the drawing had fallen to Thompson for £32. I believe Sotheby's positively omit to catalogue such drawings in order to attract the groundlings'. All of them, however, formed the inner circle of the world of watercolours with the museum men and scholars who will be considered in section 10.7.

When he came to write the epilogue to his biography, Sydney perceptively noted that

About the middle of the nineteenth century a new class of picture buyer came into prominence. The English manufacturers, staunch Protestants by tradition, instinctively mistrusted the seemingly popish tendencies of the Italian School, and they demanded works by deceased native artists for their own collections of Old Masters. Cotman was a name known to the dealers as a member of the Norwich School of painters, and the demand for pictures by Crome, its founder, was rising at each succeeding auction sale — a demand that was met by a supply often from doubtful sources. But so little had Cotman been appreciated in his lifetime and in the twenty years after his death that no one had thought it worth while to forge his work.¹³¹

Coming from just such a background, Sydney was really part of that social stratum and it is quite apparent that, with remarkably few exceptions, the sorts of people he encountered in his quest for Cotman were gentlefolk from that secure class of

professionals, civil servants, established artists, schoolmasters and academics, clergy, military men and lesser landed gentry, their widows and daughters. With the exception of Sir Hickman Bacon at Thonoch, who was anyway one of the two heirs of the Becketts of Meanwood in Leeds, and R.J. Colman, who was the primary contemporary collector of Cotman's works and to whose collection he had ready access through Arthur Batchelor in Norwich, Sydney's encounters with the most wealthy were few and sometimes uncongenial and he never seems to have wished to search the collections of peers of the realm for stray Cotmans, nor even that of the Worsleys at Hovingham from which he knew several Cotmans had emanated, and where he would have found quite an interesting collection.¹³²

It is easy to draw the conclusion that, because the Kitsons formed a cultured part of the dominant industrial and professional elite of Leeds, they were equally accepted in English society at large. But Sydney's hopes for professional fame and fortune in London had been dashed and it was in fact through his honorary work for the R.I.B.A. from 1928–34 and the meritorious respect that he won in his quest for Cotman that he acquired the affection and esteem of his fellows. Even if they seem so affluent and secure to us today, even this third generation of Kitsons had to make their social way in the world. That Sydney could collect so many Cotmans was no doubt due to the success of Tetley's Brewery and its chain of tied public houses. But when his Kidlington neighbour and Fellow of All Souls, Lionel Curtis, invited him to dinner at the college, he was surprised to hear Sydney talking of having been to Trinity, Cambridge and remarked 'Oh, you were at Cambridge. I didn't know you went anywhere!'. It was probably this provincial reputation that explains the loyalty that both he and Robert retained for Leeds, their hometown, and their respect for roots in a place they aimed to improve and civilize but not abandon.

Not surprisingly, the close-knit circle of Cotman connoisseurs was quite small and although the number of private collections Sydney went to view was very large — virtually anyone with a Cotman to whom he could gain entrée — he seldom needed to go more than once or twice. These few comprised Paul Oppé, Norman Lupton, Leonard Duke, Randall Davies, Sir Michael Sadler, and R.J. Colman and his wife. Reference will also be made to some of the other collectors that Sydney visited either in connection with some of those key figures or because of the significance of their Cotmans to his research.

By far the most important Cotmaniac to Sydney was Paul Oppé, a senior civil servant in the Board of Education, whose lucid and scholarly writing on English watercolours had been applied to Cotman's work, including his oil paintings, in the special number of the *The Studio* in the year after the Tate exhibition of 1922. Sydney first wrote to him to follow up an article in the *O.W.S. Club* and find out more about the fermented-paste medium used in a lot of Cotman's later work. The source turned out

10.49 to be a sculptor, the late Derwent Wood, whose mother as a girl was a recipient of the colourful toy cut-outs, like the *Knight on horseback*, that Cotman made for his friend, the amateur artist and surgical instrument maker J.H. Maw.¹³³ Sydney went to dine with Oppé in Chelsea at the beginning of 1928 and formed an artistic friendship based on critical respect which persisted until his death. They not only corresponded regularly but Oppé came to stay with one or more of his family twice a year or more.¹³⁴ Like many of his contemporaries he was especially enamoured of Cotman's early work and helped Sydney research into the early years of the Drawing Society.¹³⁵ By the time he went to dine in June that same year with Robert, Sydney felt confident enough to reattribute one of Oppé's Drawing Society drawings from Girtin to Cotman and noted another that corresponded in subject to one at the Misses Bulwer's. Oppé encouraged Sydney to pursue the possibility of Cotman not only having toured Wales with P.S. Munn, but also having joined up with Girtin at Sir George Beaumont's summer sketching party and gone sketching with him,¹³⁶ a theory never proved and now less plausible owing to the redating of some of Girtin's drawings. He also shared Sydney's appreciation of *The Harvest Field*.¹³⁷

It says a lot for their mutual respect and affection that this survived what was for Sydney a lasting disappointment. On 7th December 1928 he wrote to Robert for Christmas:

10.51 The other day there was the loveliest early Cotman — "the door of the Refectory, Rievaulx Abbey — Aug: 7 1803" — up at Christie's — large (12½ x 9) perfect draughtsmanship and coloured with "Greta" tints; very slapdash — a perfect momentary record of divine inspiration — like the best of Japanese drawings only better. Oppé and I both spotted it. I told him I was prepared to go to £50. He persuaded me that we should not compete, but toss for its possession. There was no other bid and Agnew got it for 4 guineas! Oppé and I tossed and I lost. It was lot I. Palser had tarried for a final glass of lemonade and came in at lot 6. I understand his language at the desk of the auctioneer's clerk, when he heard what it had gone for, was unprecedented. ¹³⁸

10.44 Even six years later Sydney noted 'Oppé's *Rievaulx Abbey*' in a show at Agnew's with regret.¹³⁹ His awareness of that loss may have encouraged Oppé, with Lupton, to ensure that Sydney secured the *Barnard Castle from Toller Hill* in 1932.

After his own visit to Thonock, Oppé sent Sydney his views of the five Cotmans he had seen and of their owner. 'Old Sir H.B. was quiet and charming. I had a splendid walk on Sunday morning and it was amusing to go with him to see his purchases at Lincoln in the afternoon.'¹⁴⁰ In view of this it is unsurprising that he should not have neglected critical comments on Sydney's writing on Cotman, when others simply lavished praise. This stemmed from a different assessment of Cotman's character, which he obviously considered weak and prone to the influence of others who were not always his artistic peers, such as 'the prettiness of P.S. Munn'.¹⁴¹ In 1930 he provided a personal review of Sydney's monograph in the

O.W.S. Club indicating unsupported suppositions and questioning his reference to the 'explicable ignoring of Cotman's work';

Surely your own article indicates that he wasn't entirely ignored but goes far to explain why he was ignored to the extent that he was. But these are only my pencilled marginalia! They don't affect your actual contribution which is very great. I congratulate you on this first instalment of your outputting. I shall not desist from stirring you to put out more .

This was praise indeed and it was Oppé whom Sydney asked to read through his complete manuscript of the biography for Oxford University Press in 1935. Although he did not feel Dawson Turner had been maligned he did consider Cotman never gave the public the chance to appreciate his work or that it was 'too good to be popular'.¹⁴² In March 1936 he got his notes and points together and sent Sydney eleven foolscap pages of comment.¹⁴³ Although the latter did not adopt all his 81 suggested amendments, it is a measure of Oppé's knowledge and his respect for his views that Sydney adopted as many as he rejected and made a specific note of his response or action to all but 15 of them. Apart from matters of fact, for which Sydney usually had the evidence, and passages requiring linguistic or other clarification, Oppé discouraged him from letting surmise grow to fact and remained critical of his assessment of Dawson Turner's dominance, when Cotman so obviously had a passionate enthusiasm for archaeology in the hope of the fame that still eluded him. It was a criticism to which he returned in his *London Mercury* review in 1937 as well as his Cotman centenary article in 1942. Oppé had little interest in modern art, unlike Sydney who kept Rutter's articles, and suggested omitting any reference to modern French painters and schools of art although Sydney retained some. But it is obvious that he was as impressed by the book as by its author.

10.43 Norman Lupton (1875-1953) was very different in character but also became a
10.42 good friend. An engineer with a West Riding firm of *Joshua Buckton*, he retired and settled with his sister Agnes in Dorset, where they built a modern house, designed by Ernest Procter who was also to design the projected new Leeds City Art Gallery and Library.¹⁴⁴ In 1927 Lupton accompanied Sydney and Robert on their first visit to the Colman collection at Crown Point and that winter Sydney went to stay at Chalmington where he noted five Cotmans and especially that now called *Brignall Banks on the Greta*, 'one of the great Cotmans' as he noted in 1930.¹⁴⁵ When he saw the drawing upon which this watercolour was based in 1928 he bought it from Herbert Orfeur and gave it to Lupton.¹⁴⁶ The latter had a reputation for fast cars and impulsive activity, which is borne out by his exclamatory notes and telegrams to Sydney about saleroom opportunities. Oppé remarked that 'Norman is back after an hour or so at Venice and 15 minutes at Bergamo' and Sydney told Robert he had made 'a dash to Genoa and back in his car, to see a shrub'.¹⁴⁷ So he awaited their first Cotmanian tour with some

apprehension. Lupton picked him up in his Chrysler in September 1929 and they motored through Wales following the routes apparently taken by Girtin and Cotman with the help of photographs of their drawings.¹⁴⁸

10.46 Lupton, like Oppé, played an important part in keeping Sydney informed of what was on the art market as well as in helping him to acquire some of his best Cotmans. If he spotted an interesting Cotman in a private collection he would let him know, such as a 'brilliant canary château' he had seen with two others in Devon, which Sydney identified as the *Abbatial House of St Ouen, Rouen*, a remarkably flamboyant Gothic building that had caught Cotman's eye in a print.¹⁴⁹ More versions of the same subject were bequeathed to the V. and A. through the N.A.C.F. from the Powell bequest, and formed the last Christie's Saleroom entry in Sydney's *Cotmania* records¹⁵⁰. In the autumn of 1930 they spent several days at Thonock going through all 500 drawings in the Bacon Collection.¹⁵¹ Lupton expanded Sydney's appreciation and knowledge of early English watercolours, such as the similarity of Towne's series of Lake District drawings to the work of J.R. Cozens. He noted that 'his collection is becoming very interesting and valuable' and it was to form another, and in sheer quality the finest, of the great collections formed and presented to Leeds City Art Gallery by this group of friends.

10.8 Yet another had been presented by Sir Michael Sadler when he left Leeds in 1923. All the Kitsons had liked him and he had involved them in his various artistic and university enterprises in Leeds as outlined in Chapter 8.. They did not lose contact. In 1927 Sydney dined at University College and Sadler showed him ten Cotmans he had in his picture store, adding four more in the Master's Lodgings a week later.¹⁵² The next summer he went again with Robert and in the autumn Sadler wrote asking 'May I have the privilege of seeing your Cotmans? I am deeper in love with him than ever'. He 'came on Oct: 13, accompanied by a King Charles Spaniel, whose habits were deplorable — Sir M. was very appreciative ... I took him back to Oxford, where he lent me his "Helmsley Woods"'. Sadler liked Sydney's sepia of *Lime Kilns* even better than the watercolour he had given to Leeds in 1923. Sydney returned to look at his collection in 1930, especially the Cotmans and three 'very good Thirtles'.¹⁵³

10.52 Sadler dealt with P.M. Turner and, when the latter came to see his collection in 1929, Sadler swapped a Signac for a Cotman of *Domfront* that Turner wanted to sell to Colman.¹⁵⁴ In 1932 he probably took Sydney over to visit Turner in Gerrards Cross. Sydney did several things for him, designing plaques for the Oxford Preservation Trust including one to be placed on J.H. Newman's house of study at Littlemore.¹⁵⁵ He was also invited to select a Constable, Cotman and Steer from Sadler's collection for him to present to Leeds City Art Gallery in memory of Lady Sadler who had died a month before.¹⁵⁶

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The other private collector with whom Sydney was on close personal terms was Leonard Duke (1890–1971).¹⁵⁷ Sydney met him at Tom Girtin's in 1928 and a couple of months later was invited to dine. 'His collection is most carefully selected and full of quality.'¹⁵⁸ That winter Duke came to stay but, unlike the Oppés, this was not repeated until Sydney's dying days when, having invited him to come and see a 'window in Rievaulx' he had just bought at Squire's Gallery, he brought it over and swapped it for a *Study of a Barn* by Crome.¹⁵⁹ *The Doorway of the Abbot's Hall, Rievaulx Abbey* elicited Sydney's last, delighted, letter to Robert.¹⁶⁰ It was almost as good as the one he had lost in the toss-up with Oppé.

The Wall Street crash and the slump in auction prices made English watercolours and drawings even more available and affordable to those with a ready or more secure income. On 14th December 1929, Sydney wrote to Robert:

Leonard Duke tells me that never have the less important drawings of old masters and early English artists been cheaper at auction; that the dealers are frightened by the stock exchange crisis and the threat of the next budget and refuse to increase their stock, and the Banks will not lend them any more money for purchases. The really first rate things will always command a value. If I see anything I think you would like, shall I have a go at it for you? 161

10.8 With his easy access and assiduous attention to the salerooms, Duke was in a good position to put him in touch with what was available and as a result Sydney obtained information on very early Cotmans several times: a watercolour and a drawing of Wales in 1929, and on Lady Powell's collection which included a watercolour of *The Ouse at York* of 1803 that might be related to one Sydney had recently acquired from Boswell.¹⁶² In 1933 Duke wrote to say that he had a P.S. Munn of Coalbrook which was the same subject as the watercolour Sadler had given to Leeds as *The Brick Kilns* and Sydney's drawing of the same.¹⁶³ When he dined with Sydney and the collector F.F. Madan in 1931, he took them home to see Cotman's *Barmouth Sands*, the Sotheby's sale of which had been the topic of Oppé's acid comment on dealers. Sydney judged it the 'best early Cotman I know'.¹⁶⁴

Although he saw many more Cotmans in the collections that were dispersed by the salerooms, or exhibited in private or public galleries, Sydney made full use of his relations, friends, dealers and other connections to see any that came to his or their notice in other private collections. Sir Hickman Bacon had lent to the Tate exhibition in 1922 and had links with Leeds. Lewis Fry (1860–1933) was another lender and a Royal West of England Academician, who had inherited Cotmans originally collected by the Saffron Walden banker, Francis Gibson. Sydney gave one of Fry's own watercolours to Leeds City Art Gallery in 1926.¹⁶⁵ Fry disapproved of the assimilation of Cotman into contemporary art criticism as a maker of patterns. With Duke, Sir Edward Marsh and others, some of his watercolours were damaged in the

10.44 Tate gallery flood of 1928. When he went to see Fry's collection in 1932, Sydney noted that his large Greta Cotman had lost its yellow, but Fry didn't seem to notice. Oppé saw Sydney's *Barnard Castle from Toller Hill* as a fitting replacement in the Cotman canon.¹⁶⁶

When he sought Marsh's Cotman of *York Watertower* to compare with his own, Sydney found it being treated for flood damage at the British Museum.¹⁶⁷ Marsh sent his regards and gave permission for it to be photographed for Sydney, and in 1930 invited him to dine and showed him his flat full of pictures.¹⁶⁸ The Cotman had come from the collection of Percy Horne who had emigrated to Florence and left his great Renaissance collection to that city. It was Marsh to whom the R.I.B.A. Council turned to purchase one of Cotman's earliest Drawing Society drawings to present to Sydney on his retirement from the post of Honorary Secretary in 1934. He provided it for sale from his own collection. Isherwood Kay had only recently taken Sydney to see the most informative collection of Drawing Society drawings which had descended to J.H. Barnes from one of its amateur artist members, J.S. Hayward, including a draft of its rules in P.S. Munn's hand.¹⁶⁹

10.42 Some private collections emerged under much more fortuitous circumstances. On his death bed James Reeve had given Arthur Batchelor an address but he had done nothing with it. He passed it to Sydney who eventually received a reply from Herbert Orfeur a retired schoolmaster in Bournemouth whom he and Winnie went to see from the Luptons in 1927 and 1931. On his first visit Sydney noted eight Cotmans that had come to Orfeur whose father had bought them from Charles Muskett, the Norwich bookseller who had bought a lot at Cotman's sale in 1843.¹⁷⁰ The following June Sydney bought 341 drawings from this collection of which no reference is made in *Cotmania*.¹⁷¹ Orfeur had come to stay, travelling by motorbike, in May, and he came again in 1929 and twice in 1932.¹⁷² From this source came the drawing which Sydney gave Norman Lupton to accompany his water-colour of *Brignall Banks on the River Greta*.

Stranger still was the story of Horace Porter's collection, which had been dispersed in the Red Cross Sale, to raise money to buy comforts for the beleaguered troops driven back by the German advance in 1918.¹⁷³ They were mainly but not all of Normandy subjects. Sydney would have known at least three which Porter and his widow Minnie (née Bidder) had given the Kitson Clarks, of *Selby Abbey*, dating from Cotman's last tour with the Cholmeleys when he probably called at Heath Hall too, an elevation of the Church tower at Harfleur, for which Ina had designed a commemorative window, and *The Entrance to the Harbour, Havre*, familiar to those like E.K. who had crossed to France with troops.¹⁷⁴ They had originally been bought from John Britton, the Norfolk antiquarian, by Samuel Angell (1800–66) an architect whose youthful collecting exploits had included an attempt to make off with some of

the Metopes from Selinunte to Malta.¹⁷⁵ On retiring he left a large cupboard in the Russell Square house of the practice where his partner and successor, Porter's father, continued to live. When Horace Porter succeeded the ownership of the cupboard was clarified and his possession was found to contain a collection of 60 Cotman sepias, but although Sydney visited both Mrs Porter and her sister-in-law, he only found two more in the family.¹⁷⁶ Many of the rest he mopped up over the years and thirteen were among the architectural Cotmans bequeathed in 1939 to the R.I.B.A.¹⁷⁷

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The ladies of Oxford provided further opportunity for viewing Cotmans.¹⁷⁸ In East Anglia, he often relied on F.B. Malim, with whom he stayed at Southwold, or his godson Christopher to take him around, and the connoisseur Randall Davies and his wife became added to their number.¹⁷⁹ Other collectors sought out Sydney like the Cotmans of Reading. Sir Montague Pollack wrote to him in 1928 at the suggestion of Wilson Steer asking to come to see his Cotmans and had him round to see his two, one a copy of a sepia wash drawing in Robert's collection.¹⁸⁰ F.F. Madan's collection had come to Sydney's notice when he referred to Sir Robert Witt's photographic catalogue in 1930 and noted the drawing of an aquaduct with proportions that differed from the well-known watercolour, supposedly of Chirk, which had been at the V. and A. since 1892. Madan came to see Sydney's collection a year later and stayed 3¹/₂ hours, and later dined with him in London when they went to view Duke's collection.¹⁸¹ Any collection of Cotman's work was worth Sydney's attention and he was generous in the invitations he gave to undergraduates at Oxford who were introduced to him.¹⁸² Sydney also called on John Witt then up at New College to see the nine Cotman drawings he had been given by Sir Charles Holmes, then Director of the National Gallery.¹⁸³

By far the largest other private collection was, of course, R.J. Colman's at *Crown Point* near Norwich. Colman (1861–1946) had inherited the Norwich School collection already formed by his father J.J. Colman to which he added further oils and watercolour drawings with an emphasis on Cotman's work. At Sotheby's in 1925 he acquired the Theobald collection that had been formed from the part of Reeve's collection that had not been bought by the British Museum. And he bought the residue of the Bulwer collection from Walker's in 1936. Throughout the period of Sydney's quest he was buying Cotmans, from Palser and P.M. Turner in particular. Reference has already been made to the way in which Colman left it to Arthur Batchelor or the butler to show Sydney round, usually accompanied by one or more Cotman enthusiasts in his circle of friends, and in 1930 Sydney took R.I.B.A. members on a guided tour during their annual conference in Norwich.¹⁸⁴

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Sydney also had successful dealings with P.M. Turner, sometimes swapping other works for Cotmans the latter had acquired with Colman in mind. He was also offered pictures Colman had turned down, such as a huge early Cotman of *Fountains*

Abbey in 1934, when Turner arranged to bring over the first volume of the *Crown Point* catalogue with 'the loveliest photographs by S.W. Newbery'.¹⁸⁵ Although there is no record of personal communications from Colman himself, Sydney became steadily more involved in the production of this catalogue, especially after the advent of S. Kennedy North who subjected the watercolours to a cleaning process that the connoisseurs dreaded but in fact came to approve when they were unveiled at a press release on 18 September 1936.¹⁸⁶ Sydney had arranged the hanging of these in chronological order. He was asked to contribute a sketch of Cotman's life to the catalogue for which the entries had been prepared by Mrs Colman, who sought his opinions and so admired his style of writing that she asked him to write the whole essay on the Norwich School and in particular the 134 Cotmans in the collection, to follow a brief introduction by her husband.¹⁸⁷ Methodical to the end, Sydney wrote this while awaiting the proofs of his own book, although Kennedy North's illness and subsequent death and then the war delayed the de luxe catalogue's private publication until 1942.

10.7 Scholars, museum men and British public collections of drawings and watercolours

Andrew Wilton has stressed the interaction between gifted amateurs, professional painters and their artistic friends and patrons of which the Kitsons provide just one most apt example.¹⁸⁸ But this should be extended to include several of the connoisseurs, collectors, museum curators and scholars during the formative period when so many public collections were formed and the history of British watercolour development outlined in the first half of this century. Reference has already been made to Paul Oppé's writing to which should be added that of another great collector/author Iolo Williams, with whom Sydney had no recorded association. Both Lawrence Binyon and Martin Hardie, at the British Museum and the V. and A. respectively, were of the same generation. They brought in the one case a poetic appreciation coupled with a wide knowledge of oriental art, much of it in watercolour, and in the other the practical experience of a successful artist in watercolours, to their public collecting and writing. Hardie was primarily responsible after his appointment in 1921 for building the National Collection of Watercolours and Drawings on the foundations laid in the nineteenth century by Sheepshanks' bequest and, after his retirement in 1935, embarked on the systematisation of his critical approach in a series of lectures at the Art Workers' Guild in 1896, and the magisterial set of illustrated volumes published after his death as *Watercolour Painting in Britain*.¹⁸⁹

It says much for Sydney Kitson's ability as well as persistence that he won not only the scholarly respect of such authorities but that his opinions were increasingly sought by several of them as his knowledge and confidence developed. None of them was short on criticism where they felt it warranted as their reviews of his biography of

Cotman demonstrate but, equally, all of them gave unstinted praise to his achievement. The *Cotmania* journals reveal the extent of Sydney's acceptance by, association and, occasionally, collaboration with these scholars and curators. Because the available records date from 1926 it should not be presumed that Sydney had not known or been in touch with any of them before, although they do not appear to have been established friends like Sir Charles Peers, F.B. Malim or H.M. Fletcher.¹⁹⁰

In the first three years of the *Cotmania* journals and Sydney's letters to Robert, one can see an uncertain collector taking his purchases to established authorities for their opinion. In 1926 and 1927 he took an early Cotman and then other drawings to Kaines Smith and then to C.F. Bell at the Ashmolean.¹⁹¹ Bell had sifted through the Bulwer collection for the Walker's. In the following years he assessed a watercolour Sydney had acquired from a Vicar in Surrey to be a modern fake and another not to be an authentic J.S. Cotman.¹⁹² By 1929 Sydney felt confident enough to date those he saw at Mrs Bickmore's in Oxford to 1802 or 1807 rather than 1812 as Bell had opined and the end of that year brought the latter's praise for his monographic article in the *O.W.S. Club* and regret that it had not been published in *The Walpole Society*.¹⁹³

It was the same with Lawrence Binyon at the British Museum Print Room. He had first written on the Cotmans acquired from the Reeve collection in 1897 and subsequently published widely on early English watercolours and had been a member of the executive committee of the Tate's Cotman exhibition. He helped Sydney to obtain comparative material from Sir Edward Marsh in 1928 and he was taken three of the Bulwer watercolours for his opinion.¹⁹⁴ In 1931 Binyon approved *In Norwich Cathedral 1828* that P.M. Turner had rejected.¹⁹⁵ In 1933 he came over to *Thornbury House* to see Sydney's collection and stayed two hours giving his opinions.¹⁹⁶ When he retired later that year he had already prepared the typescript of a new book on *Early English Watercolours* and sent the proofs of the Cotman chapter to Sydney for him to check. The latter recommended the book to Robert.¹⁹⁷

Sydney did a lot of his basic research at the British Museum which not only had Reeve's collection of Cotmans but several volumes of Dawson Turner's own collection of grangerized volumes and the Bourdon prints in which he found the pronounced horizontal building lines and pyramids that Cotman used in his classical landscapes.¹⁹⁸ Sydney remained on good terms with both A.M. Hind, Campbell Dodgson's successor, and the young Edward Croft Murray, who in 1936 sent on a group of Cotman drawings that he had been sent by the National Portrait Gallery and commented on the British Museum references in the proofs of Sydney's biography.¹⁹⁹

Sir Henry Hake and his wife were, or became, close friends of the Kitsons. They came to stay most years from 1929 and in 1935 Hake came three times during which Sydney probably arranged for him to act as executor for the distribution of his

collection. As Director of the National Portrait Gallery he had a direct interest in portraits of Cotman and his family.²⁰⁰ He considered the Cotman portrait drawing of his son, which Sydney swapped with J.S. Cotman of Reading 'a distinguished drawing', and got him up to see the portrait of Mrs J.S. Cotman after having it cleaned.²⁰¹ Sydney gave the N.P.G. photographs of drawings of J.P. Bidder, Ina Kitson Clark's grandfather, and Cotman and was drawn into correspondence about another crayon portrait drawing that both the N.P.G. and Norwich had turned down.²⁰² In 1932 he was invited to the British Museum, to be joined by C.F. Bell as well as Binyon. 'Hake brought from the N.P.G. a sepia portrait of a very worried looking man, framed in an oval ... signed H.B. Love 1830', which they compared to the Love portrait in the British Museum and others.²⁰³

10.56

With Isherwood Kay at the National Gallery, Sydney had what amounts to professional collaboration. Kay had already published Mrs Barker's collection of letters to Dawson Turner from Normandy in 1925–7.²⁰⁴ He was planning to write a book on Cotman and come to stay and see Sydney's collection in the spring of 1929. Sydney lent him all the data he had already compiled but his head was not turned by Kay's elegant charm.

Isherwood Kay is a very nice fellow, with a genuine love of pictures, but I can't help feeling he would be better placed at Austin Reed's than in the National Gallery. I have lent him all my data and catalogues about Cotman, and I do hope his book will come out soon. But it won't be the final word: it will be much more in the nature of a guide to dealers as to what is genuine and what is not — and I don't think they want collectors to know too much.²⁰⁵

Although Kay did appeal in a letter to *The Times* for information on Cotman's oils, this was a part of his work that Sydney seems to have dropped, after finding in the Witt reference library, how many had gone to America.²⁰⁶ Nothing came of the book especially after Kay's appointment as Keeper and Secretary of the National Gallery by the new Director in 1934.²⁰⁷ And it was he who passed on material to Sydney for his book in the form of Mrs Barker's letters.

They collaborated both by correspondence and when visiting each other. In 1929
10.29 Kay lunched with Sydney in Leeds and saw the 'Brandsby Byland', questioned the attribution of one of the Leeds oils to Cotman, and went to view Robert's collection at *Stonegates*.²⁰⁸ He put Sydney in touch with a pencil portrait of Cotman of 1841,²⁰⁹ sent him photographs of the Cotmans that Sir Henry Wilson wished to sell in 1931, took him to see the important Drawing Society drawings from J.G. Haywood's collection in 1932, and asked his opinion of some Cotman drawings offered to the V. and A. later that year which they considered not good enough for a national collection. When he came to stay, he gave his opinions on items in Sydney's collection and accompanied him on several visits to private collections, such as Kirtlington Park in

1933.²¹⁰ When Binyon's book was published, his review in 1934 saw it as following the tradition of Sidney Colvin and a corrective to Ruskin. By contrast his review of Sydney's biography was full of rather general praise and a list of several dating and other errors.²¹¹

10.44 Sir Charles Holmes, Kay's Director at the National Gallery, had been interested in the work of Cotman and Crome as early as 1906. He had chaired the Tate exhibition committee in 1922 and Sydney tracked down the drawings he had given John Witt to his rooms in New College. In his correspondence with him, Holmes suggested Bourdon as the likely source of Cotman's classical models but although he could see the likelihood of Chinese influence on his technique he could not see Alexander as a direct source because of the complete lack of such traits in that artist's work.²¹² With his contemporary at the V. and A., Sir Martin Hardie, himself a Trinity man (1895–8) and an artist, Sydney established a useful relationship.²¹³ Sydney identified several of the drawings at the V. and A. as works derived from Cotman's Welsh tours. He was rather proud when Hardie asked to borrow *Barnard Castle from Toller Hill* as well as two monochromes for the winter exhibition of *British Art* at the Royal Academy in 1934.²¹⁴

10.47 One invitation led to another and that spring Sydney was invited to lecture on Cotman at the Art Workers Guild with F.L. Griggs, the etcher, in the chair, after which Professor Constable showed 40 slides of the artist's works.²¹⁵ He was then asked to give his opinions on the dates of the 30 Cotmans included in the Courtauld Institute's de luxe edition of the R.A. catalogue. In the autumn Hardie sent Sydney the text that was to accompany the reproduction of his Cotman of *Domfront* by the *Vasari Society*, for him to check and send on to the editor.²¹⁶ In 1935, on the eve of retirement, Hardie replied to Sydney's questions about the likely influence of other artists such as Joshua Cristall by stressing his belief that Cotman turned to the use of bright colours in order to vie with Turner, a view he repeated in his posthumous book.²¹⁷

From the foregoing one can see the extent to which Sydney's knowledge and views were respected in the professional world of watercolour study and collection well before the publication of his biography. Although his own self-confidence as a connoisseur was established by 1929, the publication of his 40 page monograph in the *O.W.S. Club* that winter was what established his reputation in this competitive and critical field. This is borne out by A.J. Finberg's response on 26 February 1930:

It has only one glaring and conspicuous fault; it is too short. ... it is written by a plain sensible Englishman. ... When you think of the pretentious tosh and all the one-sided and ill-balanced judgements to which we are accustomed, you can perhaps form some idea of the pleasure it gives me to come into contact with a sane mind. ... But I want more. I know you have got heaps of valuable material which you haven't yet used. You must do a full dress life of Cotman.

... If only you'll go on writing I'll promise not to call you *Mr Kitson* in the future.²¹⁸

10.58 In the course of his quest Sydney Kitson both gathered information from
10.59 catalogues and paid viewing and listing visits to many art galleries and museums, especially Norwich Castle Museum, where exhibitions were held and Cotmans passed for inspection although they owned few of them until after the late Mayor Southall's bequest in 1946. Bradford Art Gallery had 25; Christ Church, Ipswich, 16; the Whitworth Institute, Manchester; Birmingham and Newcastle Art Galleries and the National Gallery of Scotland yet more. Ernest Musgrave replied with information on the Smyths of Heath Hall, Wakefield, hoping to secure Sydney's pair for the town but understood when told they were destined for Leeds to which he himself returned as director in 1945.²¹⁹ But Sydney's association with these galleries was as sources for his research, like the many exhibitions of private collections held at the Tate Gallery and various provincial art associations.

Sydney obviously developed an affection for the Ashmolean, however, which was comparable to that he had for the Fitzwilliam at Cambridge. He did quite a lot with Victor Rienaecker to which reference has already been made. Before he ever became an Assistant Keeper of Fine Art at the Museum in 1928, Rienaecker had formed a good collection of watercolours. When he was forced to sell in 1932 several went to form J.G. Wright's new collection and Sydney later acquired his *Howden Church East End*, which he had failed to buy at *Walker's* in 1926. He also wrote to Robert on 9 February 1932 saying that he and Sadler were backing Rienaecker's application for the vacant directorship at Leeds, which John Rothenstein was to win.²²⁰

4.190 The Ashmolean lent Cotmans to the exhibitions he helped to arrange such as that at the Oxford Arts Club in 1928. He was sorry to see Kenneth Clark depart for the National Gallery and clearly delighted to be photographed with both the Clarks and their predecessors, Sir Augustus and Lady Daniel, old Scarborough friends of Sydney, when they attended the opening of the new R.I.B.A. headquarters in November 1934.²²¹ But he was astounded when Carl Parker, one of the world's most eminent and severe authorities on old master drawings, called with his wife to see his
10.40 collection and stayed from 4.00 till 10.00 pm. Parker considered the drawing of a *Dead Christ*, which Sydney had thought possibly by Poussin, was probably by the Italian Testa and he presented it to the Ashmolean as such a few months later.²²² Sydney had already given them two of Cotman's etchings after drawings already in their collection and, after he died, the Ashmolean received *Near Brandsby*, the Greta period watercolour he had used as the colour frontispiece for his book.²²³ The Fitzwilliam had already been presented with *Dolgelly* in 1934. Sydney had inspected their four Cotmans in 1927, one of which P.M. Turner had attributed to J. Geldart, and was on

good terms with the director Sir Sydney Cockerell.²²⁴ He must have taken to his new assistant, Jack Goodison, who came from Leeds, as they corresponded and Goodison came to stay three times between 1933 and 1935.²²⁵

10.8 Sydney Kitson's aesthetic approach to Cotman's work and the reception of *The life of John Sell Cotman*

A measure of any book is the extent to which it addresses the questions of its own era as well as passing the subsequent tests of time. On both accounts Sydney's biography has been highly successful. As Robert Kitson remarked to Hendy during the wrangles between the museums to obtain the bulk of Sydney's collection for research purposes, surely he had already done that in his book.²²⁶ That it was reproduced by another publisher in 1982 and has been kept in print by Norwich Castle Museum indicates its lasting value. In this chapter a prime concern has been to follow the ways in which Sydney Kitson went about his research and what this reveals about the English world of watercolours at that time. In addition to his diligence in searching out Cotman's works, he was equally intent on finding and examining the letters and other means of documenting not only when and where the artist created them but what he was thinking and intending at the time. Sydney was therefore concerned to account for what Cotman produced and why he used the techniques he did and not simply to provide a list of securely attested works.

To achieve this end he planned to write a full biography of Cotman, on the lines that Finberg had encouraged, and not the sort of art book that was primarily pictorial, like the 1923 *Studio* number, with a scholarly essay as an introduction. Right at the end of his life, Kennedy North suggested that the editor of *The Studio* ask if he would take over a new special number but, like its first intended author Frank Rutter, Sydney died too soon to do so.²²⁷ The selection of items for plates would have been interesting. For his own book Sydney, unusually, required many illustrations in order to reinforce the essentially artistic and well documented emphasis of the biography. It was intended to reveal and explain Cotman as an artist, to which his psychology as well as his economic and social surroundings were keys.²²⁸

That Sydney did not come up with the particular forms of subject-imbibed historicism advocated by Andrew Hemingway or the deconstructive ideas of Lewis Johnson is not very surprising for to have done so would have required a superhumanly anachronistic clairvoyance.²²⁹ But to imply that he had no idea of the concept of association in the historical significance of Cotman's subject matter is misleading. Although it cannot be asserted that Sydney's own post-Gothic revival and Neoclassical approach to architecture and antiquities was the same as that of Cotman and his patron Dawson Turner, he was quite aware of their views from their own writings in letters and publications on the subject. His description of the

Yarmouth festival and of the Whigs standing for election, who were included in the pencil portraits, indicate that he was familiar with the political content of the artist's work.²³⁰ From his own background in Leeds locomotive manufacturing and the politics of his own and his wife's parents, Sydney was in a good position to impart insight when he wrote of the paradox represented by a town like Norwich, with a declining economy reduced still further by the Napoleonic blockade, having a Society of Artists too numerous for such an economy within which, in 1806, Cotman tried to launch his rather superior type of school.²³¹

More pertinent are the criticisms that this generation of art historians were strongly influenced by some of the prevailing tenets of art criticism then current, and that Kitson in particular suffered from the romantic perception of the artist as a downtrodden genius as hero. In view of the sorts of criticisms raised by reviewers of his book soon after its publication, it is worth considering Sydney's own expressions of aesthetic opinion and evaluation of Cotman's work as well as his assessment of the artist's status in relation to his few predominant patrons because Sydney was quite free with his opinions on both.

Like Martin Hardie, Sydney became aware that Roger Fry himself had no particular opinion of Cotman's work and certainly did not claim it as a precursor of modernism.²³² 'Significant form' as taken up by Clive Bell is something he never referred to as such. The person who seems to have established this climate of critical opinion and specifically singled out Cotman's early work in this regard was Frank Rutter. Sydney had come onto the City Art Gallery Subcommittee just as Sadler and Rutter came to Leeds and would have been aware of the contemporary art to which they were referring. From 1930 his *Cotmania* journals have many cuttings from Rutter's writings in *Art Work*, *The Antique Collector*, *The Illustrated London News*, and anonymous cuttings from *The Artist* emanate from Rutter or someone of like mind. In 1930 Rutter specifically compared Cotman's work to that of Roger Fry and usually singled it out for special mention in his regular reviews of the summer exhibitions of English watercolours, encouraging 'good English' rather than 'bad foreign' pictures at the time of the *Fine Art Society's* retrospective exhibition of the work of Sutton Palmer, himself a keen collector of Cotman.²³³ In 1936 Rutter was preparing to write for *The Studio* on Cotman and published at least four related articles, placing the artist on a level with Constable and Turner and drawing parallels with the art of Cézanne.²³⁴ After a close view of so many works at *Crown Point* on the Press day he became exclamatory, heralding Cotman's collage and his work as anticipating not only Cézanne but Futurists and Surrealists, and he devoted an *Illustrated London News* feature to the drawings Kennedy North had found in the backings of some of Colman's watercolours.²³⁵

Such championing of Cotman must have gratified Sydney and, although some of his correspondents denied the analysis of Cotman as a 'pattern maker', he followed this line and felt moved like Robert to buy works by Paul as well as John Nash, his less 'modern' brother. Although the concept of 'significant form' etc was formulated by Fry and disseminated by Clive Bell, it is most likely Rutter's regular columns as art critic of *The Sunday Times* and other journals that were of more direct influence on this generation of collectors and perhaps the museum curators as well.²³⁶ When he commented on the text before it went to press Oppé suggested 'personally I shd never mention Cezanne' and Sydney omitted him.²³⁷ However, in referring to a group of oil paintings by Cotman of trees of 1826, Sydney insisted on retaining a reference to the artist 'anticipating the pointillism of Camille Pissarro, and perhaps surpassing it because Cotman's touch was less mechanical and sophisticated'.²³⁸ Oppé had connected this technique with Seurat but could not see anything in 'Cotman's method which wasn't already in Turner' and that 'Cotman's violent works only seemed to people "crumbs off Turner's table"'. In rejecting this comment Sydney referred to Sir Charles Holmes's writing on *The National Gallery*.²³⁹ He drew on Holmes again in referring to the likely influence of Poussin and Bourdon on Cotman's 'classical' compositions but wrote of *On the Banks of the Yare* as almost 'in anticipation of the manner of William Nicholson and James Pryde'.²⁴⁰

10.39

In addition to such published sources, most of Sydney's aesthetic and evaluative criteria and ideas came from the close circle of people with whom he spent so many hours looking at and talking about Cotman's life and work. Quite apart from the current expression of art criticism, one is impressed by the frequent discussion of Cotman's painting techniques and especially those that led to what Sydney with his contemporaries saw as his great advance in, and contribution to, watercolour painting. Sydney was surrounded by artists who were themselves the continuation of a living tradition and interacting directly with its works. Not only Robert Kitson and Cecil Hunt, but Sir Charles Holmes and Sir Martin Hardie were active artists in watercolours. Hardie was also a proficient etcher and in his posthumous book corrected much of Sydney's reference to soft ground and other etching techniques.²⁴¹ But with the latter's far more numerous references to methods of painting, Hardie only disputed the possibility of Cotman having being able to achieve so much rubbing and washing off very wet paper when out in the field sketching directly from nature.²⁴² Sydney had taken full note of the significance of Francis Cholmeley's advice to Cotman when he produced his *Miscellaneous Etchings* to study how Piranesi had finished his skies, and of Cotman's response which led Dawson Turner to obtain a volume of Piranesi's works to which he could refer.²⁴³ Sydney specifically noted the manner in which Cotman drew his subjects so as to fill the plates to the edge,

following Piranesi, also a characteristic of Brangwyn's work, which Robert's large exhibited watercolours shared.²⁴⁴

Sydney's interest in trying to establish Cotman's possible association with Girtin lay in his concern to chart his contribution to the change from the traditional methods of underpainting tones in the topographical use of watercolour to the translucent exploitation of the medium's potentialities.²⁴⁵ Like the artist-scholars he no doubt shared their interest in the development of watercolour as an independent art form. And his references to the 'patterned harmony' in the watercolour of *Brandsby July 16, 1805*, and Cotman's 'craft of pattern making' as seen in the monochrome of *Horses drinking* indicates his adoption of contemporary critical concepts.²⁴⁶ But he saw this as a persistent characteristic of Cotman's art, reappearing in his more picturesque Normandy landscapes which Sydney found to be a genre the artist tried to develop in parallel with his antiquarian commissions for Dawson Turner.²⁴⁷ Of *Domfront* and *Mortain*, drawn in 'The Wales of France', he considered that Cotman's 'pattern sense remains the same' as in his early Drawing Society compositions but with an 'advanced technique and maturity of handling'. *The Birmingham Post* reviewed Cotman as having a 'New vision of nature, 100 years ahead of their time'.²⁴⁸

Although he had no particular interest in or knowledge of oriental art, Sydney was probably most influenced by Lawrence Binyon in seeking some Chinese models for these methods. William Alexander (1767-1816) proved no answer, but Cotman is now known to have owned a collection of Chinese drawings of figures and landscapes. Oppé took this up in his later review of the *Brandsby Byland* at Norwich in 1945 and Sydney referred to the 'Japanesy' effect of the *Window of Rievaulx Abbey* he had just acquired from Leonard Duke in his last letter to Robert in May, 1937, as he had in describing the one he lost to Oppé in 1929.²⁴⁹ No doubt from Binyon also came Sydney's willingness to adopt literary terms such as 'lyrical' and the 'poetic charm' of the soft-ground etchings of 1838 after earlier drawings.²⁵⁰ In his *Apollo* review, Binyon stressed Cotman's 'design-pattern-structure' — 'almost the first of the Cubists'.²⁵¹

Sydney was quite confident enough to assert his own judgements, considering *Costessey Park, Norwich*, which had come from Orfeur's collection, 'among the most lovely of all Cotman's renderings of landscape' and Cotman's last chalk drawings of 1841, of which Robert had a substantial number, as 'the most purposeful studies done from nature ever produced by a landscape painter'.²⁵² This is most obvious in his evaluation of Cotman's rendering of architecture. Although quite prepared to set aside the many etchings that more closely corresponded to hard-line engravings than the work of later painter-etchers, Sydney gave great attention to Cotman's architectural pencil, chalk and monochrome wash drawings, which formed the bulk of his collection.²⁵³ He wrote of him having 'learnt tree anatomy' on his three visits to

Brandsby.²⁵⁴ And of the Castle Acre series of drawings of 1804, which he and Robert had themselves sketched in 1927, he wrote 'the detail is drawn with the knowledge of an architect and the added insight of a poet, since the buildings seem to grow out of the ground and to be intimately connected with the soil from which they spring'.²⁵⁵ He contrasted Dawson Turner's antiquarianism with Cotman's depiction of the *Ambulatory of Norwich Cathedral* 'rendering architecture with an artist's eye'.²⁵⁶ This is reflected in Iolo Williams' review in *Country Life* of Cotman with the 'eyes of sculptor and architect'.²⁵⁷

Even in the faithful rendering of architecture, however, Sydney drew a line. Careful as he was to describe Cotman's use of the *Camera Lucida* in Normandy, he did not care for his use of it in recording the 'lace-like details' of the *Palais de Justice, Rouen*.²⁵⁸ Unlike Francis Bedford, Sydney's own drawings suggest little facility in drawing Gothic tracery and the flamboyant extravagance of the *Abbatial House of St Ouen, Rouen* would scarcely have appealed to his own taste.²⁵⁹ Cotman was, however, fascinated by this and wrote of Caen that 'the curious churches here are not beautiful, and the beautiful ones are not considered curious' — curious here meaning worthy of study for their Norman associations.²⁶⁰

Sydney has been criticised for furthering the romantic myth of the artist as a downtrodden hero. And indeed it was in precisely these terms that Adrian Bury, for many years editor of the *O.W.S. Club*, acclaimed the biography in *The Connoisseur* and Cotman as a 'thwarted genius' and 'eternal poet'.²⁶¹ In *The Artist* the reviewer saw it as an 'indictment of a social system' and hoped that there was now 'room for a wider view' of artists.²⁶² Closer to the book, *The Listener* referred to the artist as 'frustrated by poverty, worry and illness'. Sydney had summarized his characterization in the perception of the 1818 portrait etching of Cotman by Mrs Dawson Turner as 'the face of a dreamer and a thinker, with a brooding suggestion of sadness and disappointment'.²⁶³ And he saw *A Dismasted Brig* as a 'symbol of his own seemingly wrecked life'.²⁶⁴

More significantly, Paul Oppé repeatedly disputed Sydney's apparent willingness to accept Cotman on the artist's own terms as expressed in his letters. Far from forcing Cotman into a romantic mould, Sydney had accepted his letters at face value and not stood outside his only too expressive sources. Oppé obviously considered Cotman, through his depressive character, to have been his own worst enemy, and seems to have been critical of the artist for not sticking to his Greta period technique, irrespective of the fact that this work did not sell and may have cost him his failure to obtain election to the Old Watercolour Society. Cotman had several devoted patrons and admirers from his youth onwards. Ever hatching hopeful schemes that required capital investment and lacked a certain return, whether in oil painting, print publishing, or teaching, Cotman needed Dawson Turner to sort out his financial affairs and give

him realistic advice. That he aped J.M.W. Turner but still couldn't get the public to buy his pictures was an ill-founded ambition that his domestic life-style could not afford. Although he accepted that Sydney had 'not maligned Dawson Turner', Oppé remained critical.²⁶⁵

When Cotman's centenary came up in 1942, Binyon, Oppé and Hardie each contributed to the special number of *The Burlington Magazine* on Cotman's work, his patrons and his methods, each of the latter pair revising and adding to Sydney Kitson's biography. But, allowing for inevitable amendments, such as Holcomb's revision of the Yorkshire visits owing to the availability of more Cholmeley documents, and the redating and reattribution of works through re-evaluation, *The Life of John Sell Cotman* retains its place as definitive rather than introductory. Sydney was able to present a secure and convincing account that linked the events in the lives of Cotman, his family and patrons with the widely varied range of his output, and his artistic methods with the different uses to which he put his subject matter, coming back to his earlier drawings in different ways in later years. In providing such an integrated monograph, he provided what Sir Henry Hake applauded as 'a human story' without 'subjective criticism or moralising', or 'high falutin writing'.²⁶⁶ And it directly tied the two types of documentary sources together, the available letters and archives and the artist's works themselves, extensively illustrated throughout the text.

That the book was published at all was, however, due to Sydney's own resourcefulness. It was initially accepted by Oxford University Press at the beginning of 1936 and, after A.P. Norrington had required Sydney to put up £400 to guarantee its publication, Sir Humphrey Milford wrote to say he would be 'proud to publish' it on 2nd May.²⁶⁷ And yet within ten days Norrington was questioning the number of proposed illustrations and doubting the financial viability of the publication.²⁶⁸ Oppé had acted as 'reader' and continued to support the enterprise but Sydney turned within the month to Sir Geoffrey Faber, perhaps on the recommendation of Sir Montague Pollock who offered to do the index that November.²⁶⁹ Estimates were obtained for 1000 copies at £25 each with 96 pages of illustrations. Sydney contributed £250 to the production costs and a further £19.10.0 for the colour frontispiece *Near Brandsby*.²⁷⁰ It was finally published in April, after a delay for Easter, three months before Sydney died on 1st July 1937 after a final convalescent visit to Blakeney in North Norfolk, having lived to receive many appreciative letters but before most of the reviews which were published some months later.

Chapter 11 Ina Kitson Clark and the Leeds Fine Arts Club between the Wars¹

11.1 The Kitson Clark's art for the Great War

Quite what occurred within the Leeds Fine Arts Club during the latter part of the First World War is unclear because no minutes were kept between October 1916 and October 1920. But, from the numbering of meetings in those years, 382nd on 13 October 1916 and 386th on 22 July 1921, one assumes that the club's activities were disbanded during the second half of the war as were those of the City Art Gallery, the ground floor of which was given over to the Food Control Office until 1920. From the contents of bundles of papers in the Kitson Clark collection at the West Yorkshire Archives, some of the other activities of Ina and Edwin during the war indicate their likely preoccupations, most of which however dated from at least the beginning of this century: the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, the Leeds Babies' Welcome Association from 1908, the Education Committee, the War Economy Campaign Committee, the Leeds Women's War Employment Committee (Industrial), the Meanwood Nursing Association from 1911, and a wide range of church activities.

8.17 Ina had founded the Meanwood Women's Institute for which a small meeting room with a stage was built near the road at the entrance at *Meanwoodside*. She wrote sacred plays for the children to enact there. But it is obvious that a great deal of her time, like that of Beatrice Kitson and Ethel Mallinson was taken up with social and war work for the duration. Her husband was even more directly involved although not as he had expected. Edwin Kitson Clark had been commissioned into the 3rd Volunteer Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment as early as April 1891 and regularly went to camp under canvas. In September 1909 he was seconded for duty to Leeds University O.T.C., which he commanded at ceremonial parades at university functions, and in April 1913 he was promoted Lieutenant Colonel and officer commanding the 8th Battalion. They were actually in camp when war broke out and he was embodied for service on 5 August 1914 and expected to lead the battalion to the front. However he was thrown from his horse in training exercises and broke a leg which prevented his immediate mobilization. When he did cross to France it was to be Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General and Commandant of the Regiment's Base Camp at Honfleur in May 1915.²

By the end of the year E.K. and his wife were collaborating on a potentially significant project. On 11 December 1915, E.K. described the explosion of the Belgian Powder Store that severely damaged St Martin's church at Harfleur and stopped production at the adjacent Schneider works. 'The west doors of the church were

11.5

thrown into it, many of the windows have lost their glass and stone tracery.' The Kitson Clarks had visions of contributing to the restoration as a gesture of solidarity with the allies. By October 1917, it is clear what they had in mind, for in the midst of her meetings at the West Riding Ladies' Club in connection with the Babies' Welcome Association and the Juvenile Advisory Committee, Ina wrote with reference to a visit from Robert Anning Bell (1863–1933), a regular exhibitor at the previous Leeds Arts and Crafts exhibitions with whom she had been in touch about the window.³

A fortnight later Ina reported no receipt of Bell's expected letter and presumably got on with the design herself, because there is a photograph of the new window with a press cutting on 'A Yorkshire Memorial at Harfleur 1919' for which Mrs Kitson Clark's design was due to arrive on 4 November, with the comment 'Who would have said six years ago that, owing to the explosion of a Belgian ammunition store, stained glass pictures of Leeds Towns hall and the spire of St Martin would be brought into adjacent panels of the Church at Harfleur'.⁴ For some years at the turn of the century E.K. had been interested in recording the mediaeval stained glass of Yorkshire and seems to have continued to collect photographs with the help of his daughter, Mary, after the war. So the design may have been jointly produced.⁵

The design is of four lights with three superimposed motives set in plain glass. At the top oak apples and vine leaves flank a rose and a fleur de lys. In the centre are four naturalistically depicted figures of a Tommy, St George of England, St Joan of France and a Poilu. And beneath them the arms of Leeds, and a roundel view of Leeds, then a roundel view of Harfleur and the Arms of Harfleur. Its purpose is defined in the inscription. 'Lieut-Colonel E. Kitson Clark, O.C. the Base depot, Harfleur, of the 49th West Riding of Yorkshire Division of the British Expeditionary Force, erected this window to the glory of God and in memory of the French and English soldiers who in the Great War of 1914–1918 fought side by side, and by their glorious courage and untiring faith rid the world of a great tyranny.'

11.2
to
11.4

The design was received in an Anglo-French ceremony with bands on 7 November 1919. By then E.K. had transferred to the Territorial Force Reserve and had been demobilized to return to the Airedale Foundry and take charge of the production of tanks that had gone awry in his absence. He continued to supply military intelligence with reports on the morale of his labour force as he had done from the base depot.⁶ But he noted on Ina's design 'The offer was made — It would only be accepted if the French designers redrew it and the matter went no further'. He had already written and published a history of Harfleur based on his own local researches in 1916. The episode does, however, exemplify the ways in which Ina Kitson Clark would rise to any occasion requiring art or craft, a versatility demonstrated in the

exhibition of her work assembled for her artistic jubilee during the Second World War.⁷

11.2 The organization of the Club between the Wars

11.6 When the Leeds Fine Arts Club re-convened in 1920 the treasurer of many years, Henry Greenwood had recently died and Mrs Grosvenor Talbot and Beatrice Kitson had just been called to the Bench as J.P.s, an event recaptured in Ethel Mallinson's biographical calendar in the following year. William Rothenstein was invited to lecture to the club and Jacob Kramer acted as critic.⁸ A subcommittee was appointed to plan the club's exhibition in January 1921 under the presidency of A.J. Sanders with Miss Nance Pflaum as secretary. This is the first L.F.A. Club exhibition recorded in the Sub-Committee's Annual Reports as taking place within the City Art Gallery, which had previously held and continued to hold those of the Yorkshire Union of Artists. 131 items were exhibited including several family portrait drawings by Ina Kitson Clark, a *Knight in Armour* (possibly the design for St George in the Harfleur window), and a watercolour of a *Temple at Girgente*, resulting from a recent visit to Robert Kitson, who was now an honorary member and exhibited several watercolours.⁹ In August Kitson 'showed a large amount of work, chiefly done in Kairouan, Cairo, Cefalu and up the Nile' at a meeting held at *Allerton House*, to which he had recently moved with his mother and sister after the post-war sale of Elmet Hall. Emily Ford (1851–1930) was the critic on that occasion.¹⁰

Unfortunately there is another long gap in the minute book of the L.F.A. Club from 1921 until its council meeting in October 1925. From other sources it can be seen that Ina Kitson Clark had been seriously ill and out of action for some time. On 1 August 1925 *The Yorkshire Weekly Post* published an article on her activities, focussing in particular on her role as Hon. Secretary of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council Education, from which she was resigning after sixteen years to take up the position of Chairman of Committee, while she continued as President of the Leeds Babies' Welcome Association, founded from the Y.L.C.E. in 1908 but by now a separate organization. She was commended as 'the best woman speaker in Leeds' and presented with an illuminated address of thanks inscribed with the names of 89 appreciative subscribers. Of the four male signatories one, Henry Barran, spoke and made their formal presentation of an 'Italian chest, made I think about 1788, and of these pieces of sculpture by Mr Sichel'.¹¹ Three years later in 1928 the University Pro-Chancellor, Colonel C.H. Tetley, formally conferred on her the honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws.¹²

1925 was quite a significant year for the organization of the L.F.A. Club. At the October Council meeting Professor J.B. Cohen was nominated as Vice-President. He had recently retired as the University's first Professor of Organic Chemistry from

1904–1924 and may have hoped to bring greater regularity into the running of the Club's affairs.¹³ But most of his proposals were not accepted because they 'would entirely alter the character of the club'. Above all the predominant ladies seem to have been successful in keeping Club meetings on their territory, by holding them at the West Riding Ladies' Club in Park Row or the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education in Blenheim Terrace and most of the Art Meetings continued to be held at their private homes. Professor Cohen had retired to Coniston, where he occasionally hosted sketching meetings, and more regularity would obviously have suited him, but he resigned from the Vice-Presidency in 1928 having been repeatedly outvoted, although some of the Club's rules were changed and attempts made to get an annual timetable which proved unworkable.¹⁴ At the same time the secretary, Ethel Mallinson, begged to resign after seventeen years, 'but was instantly squashed and told she might have an assistant secretary — Miss Nance Pflaum'. The arrangement continued until Miss Mallinson's retirement in 1948, when she expected to move south, and Nance Pflaum continued as sole secretary.¹⁵

At the A.G.M. on 21 November 1925, there were twenty-four working members, seven of them men, and two non resident, one of whom was Talbot Griffiths, the schoolmaster nephew of Lord Airedale who subsequently wrote his unpublished biography. The honorary members included the elderly members of the Willson family and the retired Hon. Secretary Miss Walker as well as Frank Dean (1865–1947), the Treasurer and regular critic who published his drawings of Yorkshire places in the Press, the Director of the Leeds School of Art Harold Holden (b.1885), Robert Kitson, and Solomon Kaines-Smith, the new Curator of the City Art Gallery. Kaines-Smith seems to have integrated easily into this Leeds art world, exhibited his watercolours at the Club's annual exhibitions, and continued as an honorary member for several years after he left for Birmingham, returning to open the annual exhibition in 1935. The Club had called for members to design posters on the subject of *Leeds* and 11 were shown at the meeting.

At the exhibition in July 1925, 78 works were shown by twenty-three of the members, twelve of whom hung four or more works, almost all of them watercolours except the sculpture by Ernest Sichel (1864–1941), oil paintings by Ethel Heron and Mary Hunter (1878–1936), a new member, and etchings by W.S. Cameron. In her reminiscences Ethel Mallinson recorded the 440th meeting of the Club and the lack of jewellery and embroidery now submitted for exhibition. The Club was in fact set on the course it was to retain until after the Second World War, with the subject matter for its exhibited works largely drawn from foreign and north country landscape and architecture. This seems closely in tune with the current policy of the City Art Gallery to build a collection of English watercolours and drawings as well as the activity of Robert and Sydney Kitson in their own collecting as well as in advising on art gallery

acquisitions. The wife of Sydney's brother-in-law, Harold Tetley, had recently become a member of the Club. In November 1925 Kaines-Smith wrote to *The Yorkshire Evening Post* of the poster scheme authorised by the Art Gallery (Sub-) Committee to advertise the 'City in a setting of beauty' in the stations along the railway from London to Newcastle.¹⁶

Similar relationships do not seem to have been established with any of the subsequent directors of the City Art Gallery, although they continued to host the Club's annual exhibitions and its preliminary meetings in their office. Lambert was on the hanging committee and the Council but not a working Club member. He viewed the expansion in the number of works exhibited, 106 pictures in 1928 and 119 in 1929, with some concern and in 1930 proposed a ceiling of 100 works which would permit the provision of the West Room of the City Art Gallery for the annual exhibitions on a regular basis. To this end he also proposed that members should submit up to four works of which one must be hung, whereas Professor Cohen had previously suggested three and Ernest Sichel six of which five could be rejected.¹⁷

11.3 A critical assessment of the Club members' exhibited work

In the absence of illustrations apart from some press cuttings of the President's work it is very difficult to form an independent assessment of the works submitted but Herbert Thompson wrote quite an extensive descriptive account of the annual exhibitions in *The Yorkshire Post* each year and selected several specific examples for critical review. Given Thompson's experience of the Leeds Art Club before the war and his long association with the arts in Leeds, his critical reviews, although always mild and encouraging, do have a potentially extensive comparative depth to add to any personal likes and dislikes. In 1927, Thompson assessed the stature of the Club.

A mere glance around the room gives one the immediate impression of a standard exceptionally high for the amateurs who form the bulk of the members, and a closer examination reveals the fact that while at least two of these amateurs show a degree of accomplishment which would hold its own in any exhibition, the average is perhaps higher than at any time for at any rate forty years past. He went on to review many members' works of which four are particularly relevant here.

Mr R.H. Kitson's vigorous style is illustrated by several drawings, one of bathers in an Indian river is very broad in handling and strong in colour, and another of a temple exterior has a background of distant landscape that is well done. A high degree of refinement is seen in the beautiful drawings of Miss Elaine Barran; all are good, and the subtle quality of her draughtsmanship is seen to advantage in the writhing forms of some olive trees, and in the trees in a drawing, apparently of Kensington Palace. A drawing of Arundel, with the great bulk of the Roman Catholic Church dominating the town, is noteworthy for the way in which the houses are drawn individually, yet are seen as mass.

- 11.8 Of Miss Ethel Mallinson's brilliantly clever drawings two strike one
11.9 particularly: one of an old public house by a quay is rich in colour and assured in

execution; the other, of the Wharfe Valley seen from the park at Farnley, unites the freedom of a sketch with the carefully planned design of a considered composition; everything in it is absolutely right, yet it has the sense of spontaneity that is one of the greatest charms in watercolour.

Mrs E.K. Clark, the President of the Club, has some very careful drawings of the interiors of Italian churches, of which the simplest is the best, and most successful of all is one of a bit of ancient Rome in which the sense of space is well realised.

It was this last, *On the Coelian Hill, Rome*, that was illustrated.¹⁸

In 1930, Thompson formed a similar general impression but made the added point of work which stands the test of distance, and holds its own as a piece of decoration. This, it may be pointed out, is a more difficult feat than the meticulous imitation of nature, which seems to be the aim of so many, though, indeed, even this is not often realised ... Ina Kitson Clark is at her best in *Aire and Calder Canal*, and this drawing, and Elaine Barran's oil painting, *Leeds Wharf*, — her most successful picture by the way — shows what unexpected glimpses of the picturesque Leeds can afford. The latter is an example of how mere repetition of a form may result in an impressive effect

... Ethel Mallinson is always clever, but this time she is not at her happiest, with the striking exception of *The Pig Market*, a strong and most effective drawing. R.H. Kitson's vigorous style is seen in a Venetian subject, in which vivid sunlight is most happily suggested. His *Benares* is a charming little picture.¹⁹

From the nature of his criticism, one can see that Herbert Thompson felt awkward about the judgement of works that were, overall, uneven in quality but at times of a professional standard of expertise that justified serious critical attention. His method was to single out specific works for commendation, which inferred or incorporated more negative comments on other work by the same artist relating to the use of colour, composition, draughtsmanship, and the emotional appeal of the picture as a whole. He made his position explicit in 1933:

It is, I must confess, a rather embarrassing task to do even-handed justice to an exhibition of the works of people of whom the large majority practice art as a hobby, and this is made no easier by the fact that some of them run their hobby as thoroughly as even a golf or tennis enthusiast.

To one who has followed the history of the Leeds Fine Arts Club from its youth upwards, the task is made no easier by the advance its members have made in proficiency, till some of them occasionally show work which would hold its own anywhere. The only drawback to this state of affairs is that one finds a few members who, in their desire to avoid the stigma of amateurism, affect the ease which only comes with experience, and in their attempt to run before they can walk, come to grief.

There are, as I have said, a few works which would pass muster in any surroundings. At the risk of being judged invidious I may pick out a few which seem to me to have exceptional distinction.²⁰

Thompson adopted a more critical tone in reviewing the work shown by the same four artists as above, amongst many others. But, as in all comment of this kind, one may be left with a clearer impression of the values of the critic than the works assessed.

Ethel M. Mallinson has an inborn sense of form which makes her hastiest draughtsmanship expressive, indeed her facility in this respect is her greatest danger, but when she allies it to the pictorial sense and the beauty of colour shown in *Dunbarr* she can silence adverse criticism ...

11.10 ... If the power shown in some parts of R.H. Kitson's drawings were better
11.11 sustained they would have an effect of completeness which is sometimes lacking. The fountain in *The Grey Fountain* is very beautifully drawn, but all the parts of the drawing are not quite in tone with each other. *Nefta* is strong, especially in the admirable group of figures.' ... 'Two of the strongest members of the club are not adequately represented, Elaine Barran's deft draughtsmanship is seen in *Grande Place, Montreuil* but it is rather thin in effect

... In *The Abbey, Holy Island*, Ina Kitson Clark is at her best, the outline of the nearer architecture is perhaps a little over-accentuated but the distant portion is most happily done. In *The Listeners, Westminster Abbey*, she has attempted an almost impossible task.

11.12 At the risk of overstressing the role of certain members, this continuity of
11.13 reference may help to give an indication of how their work was reviewed over a period. Their work also represents the club's most common type and subject matter, landscape sketches in watercolour. In 1931 the Club reached one of its peaks in membership with thirty-six overall, eighteen women and eighteen men, of whom six were honorary members. Douglas Andrews (1886-1944) replaced Harold Holden as head of the Leeds College of Art. By this time Elinor Lupton, another collector of watercolours and friend of Beatrice Kitson, had also joined and in the following year so did Francis Wall, one of the few outside the family circle whom Robert Kitson invited to *Casa Cuseni*, although he never took up the offer. He became one of the artists regularly asked to act as critic at the art meetings as well as Frank Dean and Rowland Hill (b.1873).²¹ At the end of 1931, Edwin Kitson Clark was invited to open the annual exhibition 'at which he gave a most excellent dissertation on drawing from the earliest times. There were no sales but the exhibition had been well attended.'²²

For all his acid remarks about his 'official post in purgatory' the new director of the City Art Gallery in 1932, Dr John Rothenstein, seems to have got on well with the Leeds Fine Arts Club. At the A.G.M. in November 1932 it was reported that he had 'already showed interest in the work of the Club and was anxious to help wherever possible'. He acted as critic at Professor Cohen's meeting that October and on three further meetings in 1933. After the opening of the annual exhibition by the M.P. for Central Leeds, R.D. Denman, in November that year, Rothenstein 'declared that this year's exhibition, with its character and sincerity, made last year's almost

characterless by comparison. The advance shown since last year was extraordinary'. Mary Kitson Clark remembered Robert Kitson 'took a lot of trouble over him' and her father invited him home many times. So it is not surprising that at the Club's Council meeting in November 1933 'The President expressed the deep regret of the Club on the resignation of Dr Rothenstein'.²³ Like Frank Lambert, the next director, Philip Hendy, although an honorary member on the Club's Council, does not seem to become so involved in the Club's artistic activities although he did act as critic at Elaine Barran's Art Meeting in July 1934.²⁴

11.4 The Club's plateau of achievement

By November 1934 the Club had forty-one members. There were thirteen meetings that year including the Annual Exhibition, of which six were held at private homes. With the exception of the January meeting at Nance Pflaum's where John Rothenstein was the critic, the latter were all in the spring and summer months with Frank Dean as critic at both Elinor Lupton's and Beatrice Kitson's meetings, Heaton Cooper (b.1903) the Lake District water-colour painter at Professor Cohen's meeting at Coniston, and no critic at Ina Kitson Clark's at *Meanwoodside*. That year Señor Penzol, who painted landscapes in oils, succeeded to the position on the Club's Council vacated by the resignation of Ernest Forbes (exhib. 1911–1939) who had applied for but failed to get the post of Director at the City Art Gallery.²⁵

Although Thompson's assessment of the works exhibited continued much as before, one gets the feeling from the minutes and the press cuttings of a regular pattern of activities with little change in the Club's ageing council members. For all their awareness of what was new in English art at the turn of the century, the course they now followed had a life of its own, close to much that had become traditional in this country but quite detached from the sort of work being done by current members of the Royal College of Art and in London, with which Rothenstein and Hendy were very familiar. The L.F.A. Club maintained its character as a nice, genteel, even lady-like association of gifted part-time artists with the involvement of several professionals as members and critics as well as honorary members by virtue of their position in the official art posts of the city.²⁶

Jacob Kramer was one of the only prominent local artists whose work reflected new artistic ideas and John Rothenstein recorded both the esteem in which his earlier work was held and the tolerant respect accorded to his unreliable behaviour. Rothenstein recounts the role of the First City Luncheon Bar, run by Lupton Whitelock, a flautist in the Leeds Symphony Orchestra, as the resort of the city's 'diminutive bohemia' and 'favoured by many members of staff of *The Yorkshire Post*, which therefore had an influence in the whole county'. It was here that the Leeds Art Club had petered out ten years before, becoming a convivial luncheon club rather than

its previously spiritual force for social change. And it was here that Rothenstein met Mons. John O'Connor, of St Cuthbert's Bradford, the friend of Eric Gill and G.K. Chesterton, Francis Watson, the novelist and art critic who helped an Indian Rajah form a collection of Henry Moore's sculpture, and Charles Murray (1894–1954), a painter of northern and Russian subjects, which he induced the City Art Gallery's sub-committee to buy in 1933.²⁷

Seeing this situation in the visual arts, which was by no means peculiar to Leeds, one cannot but be impressed by the impact made by Rutter and Sadler on the Leeds art world before the First World War, because they had actually brought artists like Ginner and Ferguson to Leeds where they had acted as critics at L.F.A. Club meetings. Now even the local artists who had been critics were departing. A. Reginald Smith (1871–1934), one of the Grassington circle of artists, and Professor Cohen both died in 1934. Mary Hunter, a student of Stanhope Forbes and a portrait painter, died in 1936 and the Club members bought and presented one of her watercolour drawings, *The Young Draughtsman*, to the City Art Gallery.²⁸ The Gallery held a retrospective exhibition of Ernest Sichel's work in 1933, but given his advanced age of 92, he could be seen as more representative of the professional artistic life of Mark Senior's generation.²⁹ In 1935 Kaines Smith came back to open the Annual Exhibition. But in 1936 Sir Michael Sadler himself returned to perform the task, and was photographed with Señor Penzol and a radiant Ina Kitson Clark in front of her oriental screen.

11.14

In his speech Sadler referred to the vitality and power of the work of young artists, some from Yorkshire, with which he lived. He would have seen what Rothenstein and Hendy had done to transform the sorts of work hung in the gallery, with so much more contemporary British art.

Often he is prophet and pioneer. What he offers, when it is most original, is generally about twenty years in advance of general public acceptance ... But each new manifestation of art, however revolutionary it may seem to our eyes, is about one-half or two thirds rooted in tradition. This is a comfort to those who are alarmed at the novelty of its patterns, of its emphasis, of its technique. Every critical period of change in economic structure of our society and in the psychological tendencies of our race is accompanied by great unsettlements in the conventional ideas of beauty ... The growing interest in art is a sign of some reaction against excessive regard to intellectualism ... in our efforts after truth we need not only intellectual exactitude, perspicacity and logic but also the glow of emotion and the thrust of physical desire.

In his enthusiasm for what was new, and the tenor of his romantic expressionism, Sadler remained as he had been those many years before but he tempered this with an understanding of his audience and their traditional, but not in the specific sense academic, art.³⁰

11.15 A year later Herbert Thompson, the art critic of *The Yorkshire Post* opened the Annual Exhibition and at the A.G.M. Beatrice Kitson and Elinor Lupton proposed that 'at least three meetings a year either a model or a subject be provided and that the members should work as well as have criticism'. This was carried unanimously and Miss Lupton offered to arranged a model for the next meeting at her home, *Beechwood* in Roundhay. However Elaine Barran's proposal to serve tea at the opening was rejected as 'it was unnecessary and would involve too great an expense'. The days of the Lady Patronesses' *conversazione* were long gone.³¹

With the exception of John Rothenstein's appointment to direct the Tate Gallery, and the death of Ernest Sichel in 1941, the only minute book record during the Second World War is of the exhibition of the Club at the City Art Gallery to commemorate Ina Kitson Clark's jubilee of twenty-five years as President and fifty years of active work in painting and the arts. She was then 78. A summary of the media used for the 85 items shown indicates the range of her artistic endeavour: black and white, watercolour, pastel, chalk, gesso, pencil, oil, alabaster, appliqué, tempera, and the embroidered banners of the Leeds Parish Church branch of the Mothers' Union, and of Meanwood Women's Institute. The places depicted in her pictures indicate the extent of her sketching visits to Italy, several of which were in the company and as a guest of Robert Kitson, who is remembered as talking to her easily and at length about their shared interest in and love of art: *Torcello and Venice* 1902, *Girgenti and Taormina* 1913, *Assisi and Volterra* 1924, *Siracusa and the Tiber* 1925, *Rome and Etna* 1926, *Casa Cuseni, Taormina* 1929, *Malta* 1930 and *Neapolitan Puppets* 1933. Several came from the collection of the Hon. Hilda Kitson, one of Lord Airedale's daughters who remained in Leeds till her death.³²

The decision to hold this exhibition was taken because of the lack of other available work and the state of affairs in wartime. One was held in 1944 but not the following year.³³ By 1945 several members had lapsed and Frank Dean retired as Treasurer, but regular meetings continued nearly every month, including several with costumed models: Beatrice Kitson, the first woman to be Lord Mayor of Leeds, Señor Penzol in Spanish costume on the point of retirement to Asturias in Spain, and another academic in hood and gown.

11.5 The call for change from the city's art officials

11.16 Then in November 1945, Ernest Musgrave was appointed to succeed Philip Hendy who had replaced Sir Kenneth Clark at the National Gallery. He was a local man, who had first been appointed as a gallery attendant in 1925 by Kaines Smith, who sent him to the tailors with a sample of the blue serge from which his uniform was to be made up.³⁴ He had run the gallery during the sometimes long periods between directorial appointments. At the time of Hendy's appointment to Leeds he had been

appointed to Wakefield but had now come home. The City Art Gallery was closed for redecoration but reopened in time for the first L.F.A. Club exhibition for several years from December 14th to 4th January, 1946–7. Beatrice Kitson was invited to open it and there were memorial groups of work by Frank Dean and Douglas Andrews. Sichel had died in 1941. So the council of the club had changed considerably. Pullée had succeeded Andrews as Director of Leeds College of Art and to his position in the Club. Señor Penzol had been replaced by Colonel Spottiswoode Cameron, the City Engineer.³⁵ But the work of club members remained much the same, except for Mrs Pullée's examples of the Modern Movement. W.T. (Bill) Oliver, who had succeeded Herbert Thompson on *The Yorkshire Post* and became a Club member in 1947 wrote

If most of the other work is traditional, it represents a sound tradition and shows both skill and a sense of enjoyment. Mr R.H. Kitson's *My Carob Tree* is a rich and satisfying composition; and his *Wharfedale*, with its glowing river, completely captures the spirit of the valley on a dark day ... Miss E.M. Mallinson's fairground is a vivid piece of illustration ... In *Portrait of H. Halloway Esq.* Mrs Ina Kitson Clark shows once more her gift for recording character.³⁶

By the following year the same sort of show was much more critically received by the Leeds City officials in the Club. Musgrave, who was even more dismissive of the standard of work shown at the first revived exhibition of The Yorkshire Union of Artists, used the occasion presented by the second number of his new *Leeds Arts Calendar* in the winter of 1947 to make his position quite plain and is worth extensive quotation.

A visit to the annual exhibition of the Leeds Fine Arts Club, opened by Major the Rt. Hon. J. Milner M.P. on November 15th, could not be described as a particularly stimulating experience. There is the usual amount of competent, but singularly uninspired, work with which we have become familiar over a period of years. This criticism does not apply only to the Leeds Club, it could, unfortunately, be applied to Arts Clubs generally. It may well be that the self-imposed restrictions of a club tend towards a uniformity of outlook and standard of accomplishment. One might wish to see an extension of membership in order to admit a leavening of new blood, new ideals, and new standards, to revive the lost spirit, enthusiasm and true artistic endeavour which brought the clubs into being. Painting for fun has its purpose, but so much talent as one sees in this exhibition should certainly be used for greater artistic expression. There are exceptions which well repay one for the visit. This year, too, is included a memorial group of watercolours by the late Robert Hawthorn Kitson (1873–1947), whose interest in the Club, in the Art Gallery and the arts generally was a source of inspiration to all who knew him. His accomplishments as a watercolourist have been widely recognized.

Musgrave followed up this public criticism with a call for changes in the Club in order to enlarge its borders.³⁸ Colonel Cameron, now Treasurer, considered that the person chosen to open the annual exhibition 'should be one who could speak with

authority on the subject of art — not one who merely spoke well but knew nothing about painting’ ‘ Mr Pullée suggested a junior club to train members for full or associate membership later’. Musgrave argued that the standard of work was lower than in the past and that new life was needed

Otherwise he feared that a rival club might be started which would still further lower the membership of the L.F.A.C. A club which would be more progressive and lively. He did not consider that there was room in for two such clubs in a city the size of Leeds and he suggested the scope of the L.F.A.C. should be enlarged so as to represent (every strata of art in Leeds and district) (crossed out and initialled by Ina Kitson Clark in March 1948) and that the activities of the club should be extended. He would be very sorry to see a club that had been in existence so long, relegated to a secondary place.³⁹

He offered the support of the Art Gallery committee and the Leeds Arts Calendar in helping the Club to enlarge its borders. York Art Club had 150 members. There was an ‘excellent club at Huddersfield’ and ‘good numbers’ at Bradford. Ina Kitson Clark asked what the first step should be and it was proposed that the rule requiring new members to know two of the existing members should be altered and a call for applications should be advertized. Elaine Barran seconded the motion. A special general meeting was called for 6th March 1948.

It appears that this was the first time that any members had seriously proposed to change the social character of the Club since Professor Cohen had moved the abolition of hospitality and art meetings in each others’ houses in 1930. On that occasion it had been resisted. This time it was proposed by the *ex officio* members of the Club’s Council who were prepared to make their criticism public. The changes proposed would obviously mark the end of the era dominated by the families of the Leeds industrial elite in yet another local art institution. Ina Kitson Clark put it that ‘our club had been a collection of friends who agreed to meet once a month for criticism, and an annual Exhibition had been held in the City Art Gallery’ and called for suggestions. Musgrave ‘said there was a general feeling that the Club did not justify its name, as it is not representative of Art in Leeds. He would like to suggest an extension of its activities and membership’.

At the special general meeting several different models for club enlargement were considered. One was that of Glasgow, with lay members, professionals and amateurs — a set of distinctions strongly disapproved by Ina Kitson Clark on the grounds that ‘a good picture was a good picture and a bad one bad whoever painted it and should be judged purely on its merits’. Another, proposed by the Director of Leeds College of Art and the Treasurer, the City Engineer, envisaged three classes of membership, one of which would consist of junior members aged 18–20, all able to exhibit subject to a selection committee. But they felt the L.A.C.F. catered for art lovers who were not painters etc. and that the L.F.A. Club should not be open to such people. A third

envisaged much more open membership with a lower class of associate members whose work would have to be submitted for selection. But Elaine Barran and others had experience of such systems failing elsewhere. Musgrave proposed a wider range of club activities with working meetings as well as lectures in addition to meetings for criticism, and was prepared to offer a room at the City Art Gallery if such changes were adopted. A special committee was appointed to redraft the Club's Rules.⁴⁰

11.17 The Hon. Secretary, Ethel Mallinson, then submitted her resignation 'as she is going to live in the south'. Nance Pflaum continued as sole secretary. The ageing core of Kitsons and their close friends was breaking up. Elinor Lupton had retired in 1947. Robert Kitson had died. Beatrice Kitson resigned in 1949, having also left Leeds to move south. But Ina Kitson Clark remained as President. Although the membership was extended to a second class of associate members under 21, and the ex-officio position of the Directors of the Leeds College of Art and the Leeds City Art Gallery secured as Vice-Presidents, new members still had to apply through two club members and then submit at least three recent examples of original work to any ordinary Club meeting. An Arts Council visiting lecturer was invited to address the Club at a meeting in the City Art Gallery open to non-members and a visit to Tetley's Brewery arranged to see new murals which had been painted in it. Mr Pullée was elected to chair the committee of the club, previously the council, and ran its business meetings instead of the President.⁴¹

It was probably expected that Ina Kitson Clark would now retire but she did not. So the leadership of the Club remained a matter of dispute. At the A.G.M. in February 1949, she and Musgrave received an equal number of votes for the office of President so a postal ballot was arranged. But by the time of the next committee meeting in March, Dr Kitson Clark had informed the Hon. Secretary of her resignation from the office of President which Musgrave then accepted. She was elected a Vice-President and Musgrave and Elaine Barran proposed to collect subscriptions for a retirement presentation. Ethel Mallinson had been similarly recognized the year before with such an election and the presentation of books, although in that case life membership was substituted for offer of a vice-presidency at Dr Kitson Clark's suggestion.⁴²

Once out of office, there seems to have been no further rancour. Ina Kitson Clark continued to hold Spring meetings, with a model as well as a critic, at *Meanwoodside*, just as Elaine Barran continued to hold a July meeting with something of a garden party at *Shadwell Grange* each year. But almost all other meetings took the form of criticism meetings at the Yorkshire Ladies Council of Education in Blenheim Terrace, with the annual exhibition usually held at the City Art Gallery when building work was not underway. In 1953 Ina Kitson Clark was unable to contribute to the exhibition and Elaine Barran recorded 'we miss her vital personality both in herself and in her work

— her spirited and characteristic portraits and her fearless adventures into new media'.⁴³ She died the following year and a group of her portraits and drawings were exhibited in the Club's Annual Exhibition from 4th December–2nd January 1954–55. Her heirs sold *Meanwoodside* to the Leeds Corporation, who demolished the house and made a public park and sportsfield of the grounds. But several of her portrait drawings, Cotman drawings and Cotman copies, and the painted door of the pianola roll cupboard that formed part of the classical mythological mural in the alcoves and fireplace of the drawing room, passed to her children and descendants.⁴⁴

11.6 Conclusion: Accomplished and serious artists from a select social circle

The Leeds Fine Arts Club, for the whole of the period reviewed which coincides with the active involvement of Robert Kitson, Ina Kitson Clark, Ethel Mallinson and her close friend Beatrice Kitson and the latter's other friend and one-time neighbour Elinor Lupton, was an active, art-working club. It never numbered more than forty during these fifty years and was often somewhat smaller. Membership was always therefore rather select in both a social and an artistic sense. A few members painted in oils and a few painted portraits. But most were landscape water-colour painters. The Club always included a range of accomplished artists, some of whom were accepted as professional artists in Leeds and exhibited at the Royal Academy, the R.B.A. and elsewhere. But with the decline of the provinces as places where artists could make a living, the role of art officials became more influential, particularly the Directors of the Leeds College of Art and of the City Art Gallery. How important the local press was to the Club is difficult to assess but the role of *The Yorkshire Post*, in particular, in publishing critical and descriptive notices and keeping local art activities before the public, cannot be underestimated. Both Herbert Thompson and then Bill Oliver were active members of the Club and spent a working lifetime with the newspaper.

At the beginning of the century some members were active practitioners of various crafts, but by the First World War it was a club for painters and draughtsmen, with the exception of Ernest Sichel, who regularly exhibited sculpture. With the parallel membership that several of its members had with the Leeds Arts Club before the Great War, and the active participation of several of the City Art Gallery's directors in the Club's affairs, the L.F.A. Club held an occasionally lively place in the city's artistic activities. But, with the exception of a few lectures and occasional visits arranged to see collections of works of art or new murals etc., it was not a forum for the discussion of new ideas in art or social philosophy, nor indeed for the fostering of 'good taste' and decorative art appreciation. It was a serious club for the production and critical evaluation of the members' own work. A few, like Ina Kitson Clark, were

willing to turn their hand to almost anything and exhibit the result. Most, like Robert Kitson, worked within a well-tryed field which they developed and to a varying extent perfected. And for such members their art work received their full time and attention.

Of course members came and went, but the very small number of office holders throughout these fifty years, and the regularity with which the same members exhibited their work gave the Club's work a characteristic, if limited, set of features by which its reputation was made, sustained, and then, due to the Second World War and declining capacities as well as the unchanging form of its production, partially lost. One is impressed by the extent to which the members devoted themselves to their art and one can see why they rejected the title of amateurs. Most, but not all, were relatively well-to-do people who did not need to live by sales, but they were professionally trained, attentive to criticism and serious in the time they gave to this kind of work. They were a significant facet of the local art world of Leeds.

Chapter 12 All good things come to an end

12.1 *Kitson and Co. Ltd* in receivership and death of E.K.C.

In considering the various contributions of the Kitsons to the Arts in the first half of this century, the main focus has been laid on several members of one generation, the 'children of the sun' who had the means, the social position, the education and the cultural nous to create a place for themselves as well as the production and presentation of art and architecture in Leeds and elsewhere. Although theirs was the first generation to feel the social and economic impact of two world wars, in the aftermath of the first one the only major casualty was the family firm itself.

Kitson and Co. Ltd had been managed during Lord Airedale's many years in Liberal Party politics under the sturdy but iron hand of T.P. Reay who died in 1912 just after his employer.¹ But the attempts of Edwin Kitson Clark and his brother-in-law Maurice Bidder (d.1934) to revive the fortunes of the firm proved unsuccessful. In part this may have been due to under capitalization. When the new Chairman, Lord Airedale's son Edward Christian, died at the age of 47 at the beginning of 1922, the company followed the custom of buying out his widow and dependants just when new investment was needed to reorientate the works after its wartime production. Kitson Clark had already had to seek release from the army to return to sort out delays in the production of tanks. Robert Kitson stood by the family firm but with little financial benefit. Attempts were made to diversify production to tractors and metal presses, but E.K. staked its future on the research and development of the Kitson-Still locomotive, using a diesel engine to create steam power.² The prototype performed well on the L.N.E.R. but, with no orders, the project was stillborn. And the production of spare parts for previous customers could not sustain the enterprise.

Kitson and Co. called in the Official Receiver in 1934.³ and in 1937 E.K. wrote to tell Robert that *Kitsons* as they had known it was no more. It had been taken over by the merchant bankers Kinloch and Co. who provided the resources for it to carry on in business under new management.⁴ Although E.K. remained on the board, he was suffering from heart disease and his primary activity was writing his account of 'a firm and its folk by one of them', published at its centenary. In fact, owing to the excess capacity in the trade, the Locomotive Manufacturers' Association bought out the goodwill and drawings which went to another Hunslet firm and eventually to Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mill, The works were sold to *MacLarens* for other manufacturing and finally demolished in the mid 1980's.⁵

Like his wife, E.K. soldiered on into the Second World War, keeping alive the names but seldom the substance of various civic clubs and associations of which he

had for so long been a member until his own death in April 1943. And he entered into correspondence with William Temple, then Archbishop of York and a Christian Socialist, in defence of the profit motive in British industry which he published as 'War Aims' in 1941.⁶ The Conversation Club, of which he had been a member for 47 years and Hon. Secretary for 19, held only three more meetings.⁷ The Curfew Club, which he had joined in 1893, foundered in 1941.⁸ That March, the City Museum, on whose City Council sub-committee he had sat for so many years, was destroyed by enemy action.

2.6 Although many items were rescued from the debris, this direct hit also heralded the end of the Leeds Philosophical Hall in which the museum collections had been formed. The site was sold for redevelopment in 1966 and most of the collections have remained in store ever since.⁹

12.2 The distribution of Sydney Kitson's bequest

When Sydney Kitson died within a few months of the triumphant publication of his life of John Sell Cotman, he left instructions with his executor Sir Henry Hake, the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, outlining his general intentions for his vast collection of Cotmans, as well as works by other artists. With Sydney's daughters who also knew his expressed wishes, Robert Kitson was closely involved with the deliberations and an advocate for their implementation i.e. placement in the permanent collection of Leeds City Art Gallery.

Hake obviously sympathised with the claims of the South Kensington Museum to have formed the National Collection of Watercolours and to be the appropriate recipient of the study collection. By September, 1937, he had ruled out both the British Museum and the Courtauld Institute. After he went to Paris to discuss the disposal of the Cotmans with Robert, the latter wrote to Philip Hendy.

I fear that we are not going to have our way as much as we should wish. He is so thoroughly a museum man that his almost only interest in them seems to be historical..... he thinks that finished things are only notes in continuation and seems to take little interest in their aesthetic or emotional value .¹⁰

Robert did not mind the loss of Sydney's research notes and photographs because he considered the latter had already achieved 'a first rate piece of biography' and that there was not enough to make a new volume. But as it looked as if Hake was only

10.44 sure of the allocation of *Barnard Castle from Toller Hill* to Leeds, he made a claim for at least 'the aesthetically interesting ones' as well, declaring it:

contrary to Sydney's wishes to lock them up in S.Kensington because they may be connected with their preparatory notes..... Apparently he (Hake) wrote a suggestion about all this to Sydney who did not accept it, but gave a number of instructions to Miss Kitson who has these I think and believes that he wanted Leeds to have the major part. She has promised to express this .¹¹

Thus forewarned, Hendy set out to captivate Hake when he came to Leeds and
10.40 wrote at length to keep Robert informed. He claimed almost everything, even *Near
Brandsby* which he knew Sydney had promised to the Ashmolean, and the 'decorative
section, i.e. the study collection. And he felt that Hake had been impressed by his
argument in favour of provincial galleries as 'the centre of the study of Art, from a local
point of view,' which had stimulated the idea of a regular research studentship.¹²

Hendy's primary aim was to get 'the maximum quantity of the really good water
colours for this collection' but a studentship 'would give the scholarly aspect which is
at present rather sadly lacking' and

'although my idea of training a young man is to refuse to give him any
assistance whatever, I talked gaily of all I was doing to train young
Hulton in the right path... Luckily the training of young scholars is the
biggest bee of all in Hake's cast-iron bonnet.'¹³

Hendy took advantage of his regular visits to Oxford to deliver the Slade lectures
to seek Sadler's advice and Robert sent copies of his letter and another report to
Elisabeth Kitson to engage her support. His single-minded devotion to the cause of
Leeds City Art Gallery probably left him unperturbed by Hendy's willingness to do
down the Ashmolean. So he was distressed when she reacted against 'what she
called the greed of Leeds.'¹⁴ But Sadler proposed an approach to Harold Tetley for
the money to endow the studentship. As Sydney's brother-in-law, Pro-Chancellor of
the University and Chairman of the family firm, he offered to donate £200 annually for
ten years, thus initiating a direct teaching link between the gallery and the university
which was revived after the war and has led to many short publications in the *Leeds
Arts Calendar*.¹⁵

A condition of Tetley's gift was that 'sufficient of the Sydney Kitson collection is
handed over to the Art Gallery to satisfy me, and that the conditions of the
studentship are such as will satisfy the Vice-Chancellor of the University.'¹⁶ Hake
12.1 came up to Leeds in March on the day that the model of Procter's new art gallery etc.
was delivered and was taken to Temple Newsam in which the City Art Gallery was
planning its first exhibition after tea at *Tetley's Brewery*. When he returned in
November he attended the Leeds Fine Art Club's annual exhibition.¹⁷ But he had
already been to Kidlington to load up and bring the Kitson collection to London to
await the provision of appropriate accessible accommodation for it in Leeds after 'a
recognisable inventory' had been drawn up for its initial deposit for ten years.¹⁸

What eventuated was almost the opposite of what Kitson and Hendy had feared
the year before. The study collection of Cotman's drawings and prints came to Leeds
10.4 with most of Sydney's research apparatus.¹⁹ Some other papers were filed at South
Kensington. But although Leeds did receive the great watercolours of *Barnard Castle*
10.24 *from Toller Hill* and *The Harvest Field*, most of these were allocated to other

galleries. The Ashmolean got *Near Brandsby* and the Fitzwilliam *Dolgelly* as had always been Sydney's intention, and the V. and A. acquired 19 watercolours and drawings by Cotman as well as significant works by associated artists, notably the group of watercolours by Paul Sandby Munn. 61 works by Norwich School artists other than Cotman went to the Castle Museum at Norwich, who were likely to receive R.J. Colman's collection in due course. And the R.I.B.A. received 95 pencil and wash drawings of architectural subjects all of which were sold to Paul Mellon in 1970. But 12.3 80 more works, including drawings by old masters and some of Cotman's other English contemporaries, were also deposited at Leeds.²⁰

The V. and A. made another attempt to acquire the Kitson collection when its future was reviewed in 1949 but in the event only a little was redistributed. Pencil sketches related to works already in their collections were taken by Norwich Castle Museum and the British Museum, which had probably been previously ruled out because it already had so many from the Reeve Collection of Cotmans. In a definitive letter to the Director of the V. and A. Sir Henry Hake wrote 'Leeds will enjoy what now remains with them for ever.'²¹ A small but significant selection of works by 10.50 Cotman and other artists, including 20th century watercolours, was retained by Sydney's daughters for their own home and subsequently presented to the Cecil Higgins Museum and Art Gallery in Bedford on the advice of Edward Croft-Murray.²²

12.3 Robert Kitson's final efforts to enhance the holdings of Leeds City Art Galleries and his wartime exile in England

In addition to the acquisition of Sydney's collection and the soliciting of presentations from A. E. Anderson, Robert Pratt Barlow and Sydney Schiff to which reference was made in Chapter 9, Robert Kitson continued to donate works that he had acquired himself, often with the gallery in mind. And he kept a look-out for other sources of appropriate works that he admired to enhance the holdings of watercolours or further Hendy's policy of forming a parallel collection representing British painters in oils. Charles Roberts had presented 19 of his Barbizon school paintings in 1937, after serving 27 years on the sub-committee, with several conditions.²³ The Kitsons never appear to have made such stipulations.

By the autumn of 1937 the political situation in Italy was darkening. 'Don Roberto' didn't care for the German tourists who had overrun Taormina.²⁴ He had no liking for Mussolini and when the Phelps were invited with him to dances or receptions held by the Fascist mayor for the benefit of the Home for the Aged Poor, they declined to go. But it was assumed that Italy not Germany was the stronger power until the Austrian *Anschluss*. Robert hoped it would lead to more friendly relations between Italy and Britain for the sake of the Tyrol.²⁵ He wrote to Hendy

about the 'feeble exhibitions' of work by local young men 'meant to trap the visitor' but had enjoyed seeing Christopher Wood's work at the Venetian *Biennale*, although he had got his tickets to leave Italy in case of war.²⁶ The Munich Agreement raised his hopes, which rested on his observations of local peoples' desire for peace and dislike of the Axis. But they were misplaced and when Mussolini took Italy into the war in 1940, Robert's plans to leave for Malta were frustrated by the loss of his passport. On arrival at the Phelps in May he wrote to Daphne who was herself stranded in the United States, describing how he had got out to Switzerland with Bobby Pratt Barlow and so on to Paris and, because of the closure of the Channel Ports, over by plane on one of the last flights before the fall of France.²⁷

Although it is difficult to establish his activities during the war, probably because there was less need for correspondence living in England, Robert certainly kept on the move. He managed to keep in touch with Taormina and in 1942 received news that *Casa Cuseni* was all right as well as of Carlo Wood's death. Cecil Hunt kept him informed on the London art market and sent him an invitation to the R. A. Private View in 1942. Hunt had presented one of his Sicilian watercolours to the South Kensington Museum and enjoyed hanging the R.W.S. annual exhibitions, although he and his wife spent much of their time getting their Devon farm into higher agricultural production.²⁸ Robert helped Beatrice put up the blackout but got little use of the car which she drove out herself very little to help the war effort. The British weather often prevented him sketching in his accustomed style out-of-doors as it did on a rainy trip to Burnsall in the autumn of 1943. Nevertheless he noted that 'One sees how Yorkshire made the Cotmans of the fine watercolour period. It is full of fine patterns and wonderfully suggestive if one was capable of doing it.'²⁹ He spent part of the war in Wales, visiting Harlech in 1942 and spent at least the winter of 1944 in the Imperial

7.151 Hotel at Tenby where he'd sketched the cliffs and the leafless countryside and wrote
12.5 to suggest meeting Hendy at the Athanaeum, where he was probably staying when he
12.6 sketched Piccadilly Circus and Waterloo Place in wartime.

7.81 Robert did what he could to help collect works by Wilson Steer for the
retrospective exhibition in Leeds in 1944. He lent his own watercolours and
suggested others such as those just acquired by Norman Lupton at the Steer sale, as
12.7 well as one owned by Mrs. Swayne, Sydney's sister in Harlech, 'an important
watercolour of *Nôtre Dame*, different from the usual lot. She might lend it if she still
has the case it went in.'³⁰ This, like the similarly commemorative exhibition of
Sickert's work, was one of the significant shows of contemporary English art that
Hendy mounted at Temple Newsam during the War with the encouragement of Sir
Kenneth Clark at the National Gallery.

The Steer exhibition also led Robert to consider the future prospects for the City Art Gallery about which Hendy was despondent. H. M. Hepworth had died in 1942

and his position as Hon. Treasurer of the Leeds Art Collections Fund proved difficult to fill. Amongst others, Robert suggested Elaine Barran, who was actually soon to begin her many years of senior office for the Leeds Fine Arts Club. It was members of the Arnold family of writers and publishers who were to maintain the L.A.C.F. for the next half of the century.³¹

'I tried to buy another beauty in memory of the taking of Sicily but it went. Sir Michael (Sadler) has a number I think and probably early ones among them. I do not know if Sir Hickman Bacon has Steers. Norman Lupton has and it is good to keep in touch with him. You say that you have no more expectations. I think the Luptons' things will come to us also the Lady Mayoress's things very swagger and huge watercolours, not my idea quite but the two Turners fine and what of Hicky and all his things they must go somewhere. I shall hope to be at the meeting next week. You speak of a Turner, surely we can borrow Turners from the Tate. Rothenstein tells me there are many to be had.'

32

12.8 Of these the Lupton collection was indeed bequeathed to Leeds in 1952 and was
12.2 installed in the new print room and art library in the display and storage cabinets that John Procter had designed for *Hyde Crook* in Dorset.³² With this acquisition 499 early English and some later and contemporary watercolours of superb quality were added to the permanent collection which became one of the finest and most representative in Britain: Including four Cotman watercolours as well as the preparatory drawing Sydney had given them, the Luptons' collection even augmented the latter's collection where it had been weakened by the best watercolours being extracted for the V. and A. and other bequests in 1938.³⁴

9.31 With the outbreak of war, the collections in the old art gallery were moved to view and safe storage in Temple Newsam House and the premises handed over to the Baths and Property Committee.³⁵ Hendy had no intention of returning to it but kept Procter's model on public display in the vain hope of post-war reconstruction. The long Gallery furniture was bought by the N.A.C.F. and restored to Temple Newsam but unwanted pottery and 37 pictures were sent for sale at Christie's, 20 of the latter raising a mere £93. Sickert's *St Paul's by Night* was purchased through the Harding Fund.³⁶ By 1942 a series of exhibitions had been organised at Temple Newsam where attendances rose from 77,823 to 111,546. Hendy was particularly proud of the exhibition of works by Henry Moore, John Piper and Graham Sutherland which was opened by Sir Kenneth Clark who took it on to the National Gallery in London under the auspices of C.E.M.A.³⁷ This was followed by the major retrospective of Sickert's etchings and paintings which led to Ellen Heath's presentation of works by the artist in 1943.³⁸

The deaths of Hepworth, Kitson Clark and Frank Fulford in 1942–3 removed long-standing co-opted members of the committee, who made bequests to the art gallery

and Temple Newsam, and the second Lord Airedale presented 60 pieces of Leeds and Staffordshire pottery just before he died in 1944. Hepworth's bequest included two large watercolours by Cecil Hunt of *The Dolomites* and *Mohave Point, Grand Canyon*.³⁹ Sadler's death led to his son's presentation of the ill-fated designs for the Leeds Town Hall murals.⁴⁰ In 1944 Dr John Rothenstein, Herbert Read and Sir Osbert Sitwell came to open exhibitions. But at the end of the following year Hendy resigned the Directorship to take up that of the National Gallery.

Robert's personal contributions to the permanent collections were also effectively concluded in 1945 when he was planning to set out for Sicily again and his sister was preparing to leave *Stonegates* to set up house in Berkshire with her friend Miss E.G. Woodgate, who was retiring from the Civil Service. He made so substantial and varied a presentation that even in his final letter from Leeds, Hendy was unable to account for the receipt of all the items. It included an Italian 16th century terra-cotta Madonna and Child, a Venetian 16th century carved wooden head, Brangwyns's *Leeks*, 58 watercolours, prints and drawings and 57 pieces of old glass and ceramics. 'It really does all represent a very handsome gift as a climax to your long series of annual benefactions.'⁴¹

But it marked the end in another sense. Although apparently remaining a member of the sub-committee, the re-formed post-war Committee changed his status as a co-opted member. With the imminent need to appoint a new Director and Kitson's return to Sicily and departure from *Stonegates*, members felt he was unlikely to be able to attend more than once or twice a year, and they re-allocated the voting rights to a consultative member able to do so.⁴² Robert seems to have taken no offence and sent congratulations to Ernest Musgrave on his appointment. But he took exception to the Bonnard that had been purchased for £900 which might have been cheap in Paris but was little more than 'a rather charming piece of colour for a private house at £75.' And he asked after the frame of his terra-cotta Madonna which had been taken out of it, the *Rajah's Birthday* which he wished to retain and the Cotmans which he would probably leave to the gallery. Musgrave replied with a complete list of the 58 pictures and also referred to the *Green Necklace* by R.O. Dunlop as still being there.⁴⁴ In the event even the large Brangwyn was presented to Leeds although the Dunlop was not. The following October after Robert Kitson's return to Sicily, Leeds Art Collections Fund published a complete list of all the pictures as well as the Venetian, German and Netherlandish Glass he had presented which was sent to him when they went on display at Temple Newsam.⁴⁵ But no attempt seems to have been made to unpack and catalogue the copes and Italian textiles that he also donated. If the costumes and embroidery still at *Casa Cuseni* provides a reasonable guide, these items must be of fine quality and well worth an overdue display.

12.4 Beatrice Kitson's War

Although not a central figure in this account of the Kitsons and the Arts, Beatrice played an active part in the social and political affairs of Leeds. Her own *scrapbooks* provide some information until 1922. Thereafter the commentary provided by Ethel 12.9 Mallinson's watercoloured calendars provides something until Beatrice's papers on her mayoralty in the Second World War. Admitted to the Little Owl and a non-working member of the L.F.A.C., she became a correspondent of Mary Kingsley after the latter's visit to lecture in Leeds. A great-nephew said 'Auntie B was Leeds.'⁴⁶

By 1911 Beatrice was an elected member of the Leeds Board of Guardians and spoke on 'The advantages of women officers in connection with Poor Law Children' at the Yorkshire Poor Law Conference in Whitby. And it was as her guest in 1910 that Mary Dendy came to address the Yorkshire Association for the Permanent Care of the Feeble Minded on her *Farm Colonies*.⁴⁷ These were repeated at a 'drawing room' meeting in Ilkley the following April by Beatrice Kitson who then took the message to Middlesbrough.⁴⁸

Beatrice initially espoused the course of Liberalism traditional in her family and in 1915 was still following Asquith's party line against the enfranchisement of women. Unlike Ethel Phelps or the Ford Sisters, she was no prospective member of the Fabian Society or the Leeds Arts Club where her friend Ethel Mallinson exhibited her watercolours that year. She based her argument on the assumed differences between men and women and the revolutionary effect of the latter's average 'lack of wisdom' on the Constitution,⁴⁹ When she was re-elected to the Board of Guardians in 1913, Ethel Mallinson had been her agent and they both regularly took groups of city children out to the Holiday Home at Bolton Abbey or Ilkley for one or two weeks each summer. During the Great War Beatrice worked in the City's Food Stores, but she seems to have started in 1915 as a machine operative in the cartridge department of the Albion Works in Armley Road.

Standing for municipal office was quite consistent with her political stance and 12.10 Beatrice was a candidate for the Headingley Ward in 1919 when, as for the West 12.11 Ward in 1920, she represented the Leeds Women Citizen's League on a platform dedicated to 'A progressive Housing policy', increased opportunities for education, a cleaner city, recreation spaces, pure milk and a better tram service. Domestically convenient houses with gardens on the garden-city model were proposed rather than brick boxes or flats, in effect what was to be built at Meanwood rather than Quarry Hill.⁵⁰ She was a close runner-up. A few months before Beatrice was one of four 11.6 women appointed a Justice of the Peace.⁵¹ Thereafter she regularly sat on the Bench dealing especially with juvenile cases.

Apart from lending support to the National Government's candidate, R.D. Denman, in the General Election of 1931, Beatrice Kitson does not appear to have continued to play a part in Leeds party politics. She was on the Council of the Yorkshire Federation of Women's Institutes and President of the Meanwood Women's Institute, which Ina Kitson Clark had founded, and a member of the Soroptimists' Club. She also participated in the Church of England's Board of Moral Welfare and Leeds Parish Church. But it was an extraordinary turn of events that brought her to the apex of civic politics attained by four previous male members of her family.

During the War general and municipal elections were placed in abeyance and only bi-elections held to fill vacant seats. The vestigial Liberal presence of two members on the City Council was prolonged by this moratorium. On 9th November 1942 when their turn came round their nominee Councillor Arthur Clarke was duly elected but, after completing his acceptance speech, he suffered a heart attack, collapsed and died. Beatrice was told this news as she left the prison, so she understood the late night arrival of the Liberal leader with a delegation to invite her to be their Lord Mayor, an Independent with staunchly Liberal forbears whom all parties would support. After discussing it with Ethel Mallinson the next day, she decided to accept 'to carry on the family tradition' and side with 'all the many women who feel strongly that women should take an equal part in public affairs'.⁵²

By the end of the week she had Elinor Lupton's acceptance to be her Lady Mayoress and the formal election on 18th November was in time for the Civic Service to be held on the current Vicar of Leeds' last Sunday as incumbent. Beatrice was attentive to her appearance as Lord Mayor, accepting the robes cut down to fit her small figure but refusing the customary cocked hat because 'There has never been a Lord Mayor yet who didn't look foolish in that hat.'⁵³ A black tricorne was made to her design and she wore it for the civic portrait painted by Middleton Todd (1891-1967) and presented in 1944.⁵⁴

As Lord Mayor Beatrice attended or opened meetings of all sorts of local organizations, often on the occasion of official visits. Two of these were held at the City Art Gallery in its wartime function, a *Dig for Victory* exhibition of home-grown produce etc. and another of Utility Furniture organized by the Board of Trade, in March and May 1943. Towards the end of her year in office she opened the New Acquisitions Exhibition at Temple Newsam. All were recorded in the *Album*, as well as her only regret that she had not given much attention to the actual operation of the Council itself. After such a long period since elections had been held it tended to follow its own ways rather than relate to what local people thought. Her active public role had brought her in contact but she should have taken this back to the councillors themselves.

Beatrice Kitson's mayoralty coincided with the turn of the tide in the Second World War. *Wings for Victory* week in 1943 celebrated the total of nearly £7 million raised by Leeds, far exceeding the National Savings target of £5 million from the city. Government ministers, ladies of the Royal Family including the Princess Royal and the Duchess of Gloucester as head of the W.A.A.F., and senior officers of the R.A.F. joined the Lord Mayor to take the salutes and mark the amount reached on the huge indicator board erected on the steps of the Town Hall. For the Hawthorn Kitsons it was their finest hour, which the University of Leeds confirmed with an honorary LL.D. for Beatrice in 1944, with another on Elinor Lupton a year later for her services to
12.14 education.⁵⁵ Beatrice marked the year by presenting a watercolour of a *River Garden*
12.15 by Frances Hodgkins to the City Art Gallery.⁵⁶

For these Kitsons it was also their swansong in Leeds. As the War drew to its
12.18 close, Miss E.G. Woodgate, an old friend from Beatrice's youth, retired from the Civil Service.⁵⁷ She had spent part of every month at *Stonegates* since the beginning of 1944 but wanted to live further south. This seems to have coincided with the Phelps's decision to move from 'bomb alley' in Sussex to Eynsham a few miles west of Oxford. Robert himself spent much of 1945 trying to work out a way of getting back to Sicily. He was suffering from heart disease and pessimistic about his chances of surviving another English winter. No doubt their departure from *Stonegates* determined the timing of his final major presentation to the City Art Gallery.

12.5 Robert Kitson's return to Peace in Taormina

When Sicily fell, Robert established regular postal communication with his
7.17 *muratore* 'U Sordo' Bucalo. He had given the allies information on Sicily and tried,
12.19 without success, to save the ancient bridge over the Alcantara river from destruction.
Favourable reports of the survival of *Casa Cuseni*, and the rigours of the northern
winters, spurred on his attempts to get home somehow.⁵⁸ On 7 March 1945 the
Mayor of Taormina made a formal request to the English Authorities for Kitson's
12.20 return as President of the local Building Commission. As a result of the disastrous
bombardment of 9 July 1943, his presence was regarded as essential to the
reconstruction of the town with due regard to its characteristic remains from
antiquity.⁵⁹

Robert was planning to spend Christmas 1945 with the Phelps at Eynsham. But his sister Ethel died quietly in the night of a heart attack on 9th December, while he awaited his luggage and the allocation of currency with which to return to Sicily. He looked back and thanked Beatrice 'for all our happy time at *Stonegates*' and felt it 'all a sad break up?'⁶⁰ Nevertheless he set off as soon as the Foreign Office offered him a passage on a ship to Naples where, after kicking his heels for a week in some

discomfort, the transport officer allocated him a seat in an English reserved compartment in a train to the toe of Italy.⁶¹

By the end of January Robert was back at *Casa Cuseni*. Don Carlo met him from the Messina ferry in a hired car but the 'outlook' was 'not rosy'. His own car had been commandeered and was thought to have been removed to Athens during the Axis invasion of Greece, but the German High Command apparently left a sum on account as rent for their use of the villa. They had also installed wash basins in the bedrooms. All his staff was there to greet him but some, like the gardener Beneri, were too old or severely affected by deprivation. Maria had nearly starved. She had been the victim of informers and interrogation and banned from entering *Casa Cuseni* during its Axis occupation.

They had saved most of his things and more, such as the knives, were turning up. The ceramic bust of the *Blessed Monk* was said to have been hidden in one of the wells. Most of the pictures had been preserved but their glass had been stolen and
5.61 one had been shot. The Brangwyn dining room and its furniture were intact. But the glass in the front windows had been shattered in the allied bombardment and none was to be had so he asked Beatrice to send out a roll of cellophane as well as vegetable seeds and daily newspapers. In the meantime they transferred glass from the few back windows to some of the front rooms such as Robert's bedroom and the *Salotto* to make them habitable.

'I had a quite marvellous reception and have shaken hands or even been kissed in the Corso by practically the whole population who all almost without exception say I am younger than when I left. They on the contrary are much aged whiter and very bald and the young a very dark greenish colour'.⁶²

The view below *Casa Cuseni* consisted of ruins because the Allies had targeted the *Hotel San Domenico* in their raid as it was Kesselring's temporary H.Q. Robert described the devastation in his first letter to Beatrice. The buildings damaged
7.16 included the church in her Brangwyn watercolour, which had probably been bought at his exhibition in 1910 when she went to the Private View with Ethel Mallinson.

'Horrid stories of the bombing and unnecessary bombardment for days when there were no Germans and of the discipline of the Germans and then their sacking and now of the really shameful behaviour of our people drunken debauchery so that all respect of England is I fear gone for ever really dreadful.'⁶³

As shown in Chapter 7, Robert started sketching from the moment of his return –
12.21 the ruined buildings, the corso, and his own garden. By April 1946 he had started
12.22 work in the upper terrace leading to the *Piazza della Pace*, with the intention of commemorating the *Vittoria* and providing the sort of employment he had given local people before the war. But he had not got enough money and it simply could not last

long enough to make a difference anyway. But the settlement of the new Duca di Bronte, Lord Bridport, and his Duchessa nearby was useful company and he was looking forward to Pratt Barlow's return by plane from Cairo 'which will be a great thing for me and bathing soon to begin. I do not know whether I shall find the long walk rather too much, no chance of a car. I have made my claim for damages rather too modestly'.⁶⁴

Younger social life was also returning to Taormina, sometimes a bit too much for the ailing and ageing master of *Casa Cuseni*. Turiddu 'picked up' three Lieutenants from Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield in the road and showed them the garden so Robert felt obliged to invite them up. And when the 16 year old daughter of the schoolmaster at Castelmola fell in love with and got engaged to an English servicemen from Sowerby Bridge, Robert wrote to ask Beatrice if she could use her police and J.P. contacts to find out something about him and his family.⁶⁵ He particularly enjoyed the visits with Pratt Barlow to Mufarbi.

6.12 to pick mulberries most marvellous quantities of delicious fruit. One can only pick nude and so the trees were full to the tops of the branches with nude boys all running with juice and looking and perching like birds.⁶⁶

Some of the English General Staff were quite interesting. And the restoration of Castelmola meant that they could celebrate Robert's birthday party in the full moon on the threshing floor ...The town swarms with semi-clothed English mostly naval who seem to enjoy themselves and certainly keep the place alive. I cannot imagine what will happen when they go which presumably most of them will when peace is made. It appears however that the Navy would like to keep a place for leave from Malta. I do not know if that would be good for Taormina when the tourists return if they ever do.⁶⁷

6.1 Robert stayed at *Casa Cuseni* throughout 1946, selling his *Badia Vecchia* property to raise money to live on and fund the future restoration of the house when materials became available again. Harvesting the olives brought in ten people to labour all day. Taormina was picking up economically. A new Committee of Belle Arti was formed with an architect whom Robert described as 'distinguished' and 'rather bad' as its President and himself as 'Vice-President with complete control of the colour of all buildings new'.⁶⁸ He did his best to propose building sites that would not spoil the view of Mt. Etna and preserved the Corso. A large exhibition of his watercolours was 6.16 mounted in Catania and taken up by the British Council with the aim of exhibiting them 6.61 in Palermo.⁶⁹ The press reviews led to a local demand for these works as gifts or at 6.67 ridiculously low prices. Robert saw he could really 'get rid of lots of very good things' and the reduced prices would not be fair to previous buyers. But 'one does not like all one's rubbish being distributed. Don Carlo is prepared to dispose of anything – very awkward'. This, with the addition of his faked signature in works Robert did not consider up to the mark, led to their only major row.

During the war Robert had maintained his old friendship with Frank Brangwyn who was delighted to hear *Casa Cuseni* had survived. He assumed most of the contents would have been lost so Robert's return home brought the offer of Brangwyn's furniture designs for Pollard's exhibition of 1930 and some carpets if a way could be found to send them out. But the old artist declined the invitation to come out to stay because he was too infirm to leave his own house.⁷¹ The winter brought Christmas at Mufarbi, where Robert expected to revive his customary help with Pratt Barlow's children's party.⁷⁰ He lost seven of his almonds and the black Carob tree in a great gale and lamented the insensitive reconstruction of the *Carmine* stairs by Government engineers using standard formulae. But a series of congresses, including one of Sicilian Separatists, as well as the filming of Robert Hichens' novel *The Call of the Blood*, and the promise of large groups of English and American tourists gave grounds for hope. But the new Casino was twice closed down as illegal which provoked a general strike of which he disapproved.

The following summer, Robert resumed his pre-war custom of spending the latter part of the summer with his family and friends in England. He decided to take a flying boat from Augusta to Poole Harbour and then make for his sister near Newbury⁷³. He flew back to Italy early in September, stopping over in Rome where the Director of the *Eden Hotel* had kept him a room.⁷⁴ He returned to Taormina on the 15th September and Don Carlo met him by car from the station and drove him up the Corso where he greeted his friends. The next day he inspected the garden and took tea with Pratt Barlow, who had been to Venice to buy things for the house and to see friends, returning to write to Beatrice and talk to friends after dinner. But when Turiddù took him his hot water the following morning he found him dead.⁷⁵

Don Carlo contacted the British Consul in Palermo and, with his help, the local magistrate sealed the house until the arrival of Robert's heirs or their representative. Probably with the assistance of Pratt Barlow, he also arranged the funeral. Robert
12.23 Kitson was buried in the non-catholic cemetery in the presence of his Sicilian retainers
a to d and friends, a few English expatriates and the Deputy British Consul. Local boys carried the flowers before the bier which was covered with one of his blue-and-gold Moroccan bedspreads.⁷⁶

Brangwyn sent his condolences to Don Carlo and corresponded with Cecil Hunt
12.24 about the design and erection of a marble memorial slab under the loggia at *Casa Cuseni*.⁷⁷ But when Daphne Phelps came out in February 1948 to take charge, it was to collect what might be transported feasibly and sell the house and gardens. Her uncle had told her it would be impossible for her to afford to maintain it and the Bridports were interested in buying it instead of restoring the *Villa Falconara*. In the
12.25 event they backed out and bought another villa down the same road, and Miss Phelps, having lived out the most difficult first months, took the counsel of a trusted English

friend and decided to stay on. That *Casa Cuseni* and its gardens survive is due to her efforts and devotion. Their future, however, now seems as uncertain as it did in 1948.

Beatrice Kitson lived on at Brimpton for another eighteen years, caring for Miss Woodgate as she became incapacitated, but remaining the personification of Leeds to her great nephews and nieces. Supported by the renewed and frequent visits of her niece, Bridget Shirley, and Ethel Mallinson she lived only a few months beyond the death of her companion in 1965.⁷⁸ Her collection, like that of Ethel Phelps, then passed to her nephews and nieces in England who have enjoyed it ever since.

12.26 In Taormina the tourism which Robert Kitson had hoped would revive the fortunes
12.27 of the town has done so on a scale that has almost obliterated the almond and olive groves and the views he knew and loved. But the historic Corso remains largely intact thanks to his initial recommendations as President of The Building Commission. And the families of his retainers and craftsmen have found a place in the mass-tourist market. Don Carlo Siligato died in 1959 but his studio, originally that of Miss Wallace an English artist, is maintained as a souvenir shop. His son recovered the *Hotel Naumachie* and remodelled it to let as holiday apartments but the mouldering ruins of the partially-built *Casino* down the hill betray greater ambitions of the Siligatos that came to nothing.

Further down *Via Teatro Greco*, some of Gaetano Ragusa's descendants run another souvenir shop and have a contract for the provision of picture postcards with the grandson of Maria Nigri's brother whose family live just below *Casa Cuseni*.⁷⁹ The son of Salvatore Bucalo, Kitson's builder, retired from tour guiding to write a book of fanciful tales about the town,⁸⁰ and one of his odd-jobmen in the garden became the father of Mario Pinu, who runs a boutique in the Corso, lets villas on the coast, and is much in demand as a local go-between. Ciccio Rigono retired from the hotel business which is now run by his nephew but continued to paint effective watercolours in the form he had learnt from much practice with Flora Fernald and Robert Kitson. And Turiddù's grandson has revived the Taormina carnival with inventive designs almost a century after Kitson did the same with the introduction of lighting and his own Moroccan robes as well as the design of colourful costumes for the Magi in the Epiphany procession. An as yet unfinished highway has been named after Robert Kitson, a counterpart to the *Via Pirandello* at the other end of Taormina, leading into the *Piazza Goethe* above *Cuseni*.⁸¹

12.6 Civic pride, personal confidence, cultural achievement and the Kitson's place in the Arts of their time

James I Kitson built a mansion at Roundhay and was a major figure in the local politics of Leeds. His son Lord Airedale took up the national organization of the
4.96 Liberal Party and was a staunch supporter of the Gladstones. But he bought Gledhow

12.28 Hall, one of Carr's smaller Georgian country houses and Victorianised it. He bought
8.8 some of the most acclaimed pictures from the Royal Academy and presented them to
the new City Art Gallery or displayed them in his home.⁸² Both were Mayors of
Leeds and played an active role in the more significant charitable institutions of the
city such as the Musical Festival, the General Infirmary and the Yorkshire College.
But neither were patrons of the arts in a personal or public sense. Works of art and
architecture might embellish their style of life or proclaim their status but no more than
that.

With those of the third generation to whom this account has been devoted the
situation was quite different. Indeed one could say that art was their way of life.
While it is possible to argue that they were basically little different from their forbears
12.29 and that they simply followed a different aesthetic and therefore presented a different
style of life, such relatively begs the question. Why and how were they so different?
Were they just educated gentlemen and women who had lost their entrepreneurial
roots and flair and consumed what their generation had lost the stomach to create?

In a sense this was true but the argument is unsound. What would Sir James
have done if all the Kitsons had entered the family business? In the event the
Airedale Foundry could not even support E.K.'s brother-in-law at the London Office.
In no sense were they unenterprising, and their activities represented an economically
essential diversification of talent which was highly productive. Sydney, with his
brilliant partner Bedford, built up a successful and innovative architectural practice and
then, despite serious illness, built another reputation as a singularly specialised and
scholarly art collector and biographer. Robert indulged his inheritance in a highly
creative way, both in Sicily and in Leeds, as his own designer and as one of the most
appreciative patrons of Frank Brangwyn, then one of Britain's decorative artists most
acclaimed abroad. And, while his success as an artist cannot be compared with that of
his friend Cecil Hunt, the range and scale of his accomplishments in watercolours calls
for a new assessment.

Both Robert and Sydney made Leeds the beneficiary of their delight in and
commitment to the arts, despite the fact that so much of their lives was spent
elsewhere. This was primarily focussed on the City Art Gallery and the development
of its collections where they helped to form and realise the policy of building a
representative collection of English watercolours. They then supported subsequent
directors in their attempts to develop a parallel range of historic and contemporary oil
paintings as well as the display of decorative arts at Temple Newsam. Other
collectors and co-opted committee members were no less active in this respect and
often had greater resources to achieve their aims and interests but there is little
impression of competition. Some, like Sam Wilson and H.M. Hepworth, collected
works by the same contemporary artists as Robert Kitson. Others, like Charles

Roberts. A. J. Sanders and Frank Fulford directed their interests to the acquisition of quite different periods of art and types of object. Like Hepworth, Robert and Sydney made no stipulations in their presentations and bequests to Leeds and no special room was named after them or the Luptons.

Living all their working and married lives in Leeds, Ina and Edwin Kitson Clark were, like Beatrice Kitson, even more closely bound into the interlocking associational and institutional life of Leeds, especially for our purposes the Leeds Fine Arts Club, the Philosophical and Literary Society, the Thoresby Society and the Museum. But much of their activity lay in other fields such as Leeds Parish Church, educational and children's welfare work, the women's institute, the magistrate's courts, and the professional engineering institutes, to which little reference is appropriate here. Being so much less frequently in Leeds, Robert and Sydney had less day-to-day involvement in most of these, although they participated in public service elsewhere, the former with regard to the care of old people, young people's recreation and the conservation of the historic core and scenic views of Taormina, and the latter in his honorary work for the RIBA and as a J.P. and local councillor in Oxfordshire.

Although they were all enthusiastic followers of the Arts and Crafts Movement, this generation of Kitsons developed an ongoing interest in contemporary British art. But they were never in the *avant-gard*. For all their travel abroad and especial attraction to Italy and the Mediterranean, they were not converted to the modern art of Paris, Belgium and Germany like Sadler and Frank Rutter. Their orientation lay in the potential for development within the traditional arts and architecture of Britain and this both explains and reflects their own creative work as well as what they wished to collect.

John Sell Cotman's most innovative and acclaimed water-colours were executed in Yorkshire and his antiquarian interests in architectural recording were of equal interest to Sydney Kitson. Robert was particularly attracted to the 'aesthetic and emotional' qualities of his art, as he put it. But all his collecting was driven by his response to objects as an artist and the development of his tastes in the aesthetic that flowed from the New English Art Club. This is as apparent at *Casa Cuseni* as the work he presented over half a century to Leeds City Arts Gallery.

The Kitsons' contribution and commitment to the arts was not dissimilar from those like them in other British cities, such as Margaret Pilkington at The Whitworth Institute in Manchester, or even Helen Sutherland who gave such support to the Modern Movement in England in the North West. In his last years her uncle told Daphne Phelps that Henry Moore, John Piper and Graham Sutherland were the artists to watch. But Leeds is notable in having absorbed so many in the Arts from the same generation of one family with such relative distinction. Ethel Phelps praised Sydney for having restored some of the "now rather dim" Kitson prestige.⁸³ But it was a

characteristic of their creatively enterprising generation and their application of comfortable but not colossal resources to the public service of the arts in the provinces. In this way they exemplified what William Rothenstein advocated and Michael Sadler had put into practice. This generation of Kitsons put back what they appreciated their family had got out of Leeds.