



# Hard times: an episode in the life of the Belfast portrait painter Samuel Hawksett

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EILEEN BLACK

**S**ELDOME IN THE EARLIER ART HISTORY OF BELFAST DOES ONE COME ACROSS CORRESPONDENCE which sheds light on aspects of an artist's life, which adds flesh to the bones of a long-dead painter. One such collection of letters is to be found in the papers of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, held in the Public Record Office Northern Ireland. Written by Samuel Hawksett (1801-1859), the correspondence reveals the difficulties he experienced in receiving payment from the school for a portrait he had painted for it, and tells of his subsequent straitened financial circumstances. A sorry saga, the letters point to duplicity and meanness of spirit on the part of the school's managers, and show them to have been surprisingly hard-headed in their business dealings.

The foremost portrait painter in Belfast during the first half of the nineteenth century, Hawksett was a native of Cookstown, county Tyrone.<sup>1</sup> Little is known of his early life or training except that he had received instruction in the drawing school of the Academical Institution, established in 1814.<sup>2</sup> His teacher there was the fiery Italian, Gaetano Fabbrini, drawing master from 1814 until his dismissal in 1820.<sup>3</sup> Hawksett first came to notice in 1824, when a copy he painted of *St Catherine of Alexandria*, by Federico Barocci, was exhibited in the town's Commercial Buildings, to great acclaim in the local press.<sup>4</sup> During the second half of the 1820s, he spent lengthy periods in London, fulfilling professional engagements in the capital.<sup>5</sup> An exhibitor at the Royal Hibernian Academy between 1826 and 1834, his sitters included prominent local figures such as the Marchioness of Donegall, Revd Dr William Bruce, and shipowner Robert Langtry (Plate 1).<sup>6</sup>

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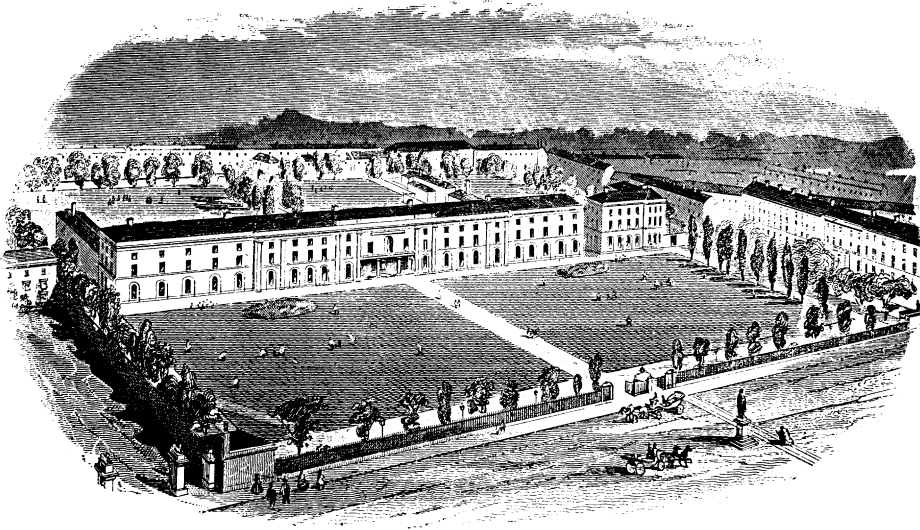
1 – *Samuel Hawksett, ROBERT LANGTRY* c.1743, oil on canvas, 131.5 x 101 cm  
(© Ulster Museum 2008; courtesy Trustees National Museums Northern Ireland)

As can be seen from the somewhat pedestrian quality of this latter work, Hawksett's abilities were limited and his sitters invariably have a stiff and rather lifeless appearance; they also had a rather unnatural look to their complexions. That his shortcomings were standard and not simply the result of 'off days' is clear from a decidedly scathing review in the *Belfast News-Letter* of 28th September 1838, worth quoting from at some length because of its relevance and insight:

Mr. Hawksett has a good number of portraits in the present exhibition [the Belfast Association of Artists, 1838]. The likenesses are all pretty correct, and we will do him the justice to say that they are all carefully and minutely finished; on a close examination, we are convinced, they must be the result of immense patience and labour; at the same time, we think that Mr. H. deals rather too much in white, brown and red cheeks, which give his pictures the appearance of too much mannerism. When you see one portrait of Mr. H.'s you see them all, that is to say, the same style of colouring that suits the commoner will do for the king, or *vice versa*. Now we are of opinion that it should be the study of the portrait painter to transfer to canvas the *complexion* of his sitter as faithfully as the *features* ... Perhaps Mr. Hawksett's most glaring fault lies in the attitudes; they are too stiff and formal.

Nevertheless, despite such shortcomings, Hawksett maintained a steady practice in Belfast until the mid-1840s.

During the 1830s he undertook two commissions for the Academical Institution (Plate 2), the foremost educational establishment in town at the time,



3 – *Samuel Hawksett*

JOSEPH STEVENSON

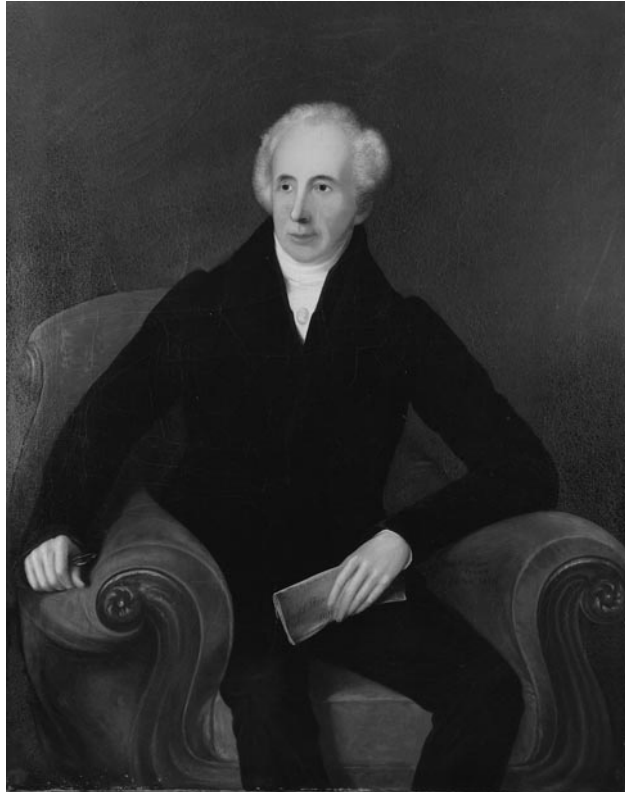
c.1837, oil on canvas, 129 x 102 cm

(© Ulster Museum, 2008; courtesy the Trustees of National Museums Northern Ireland)

opposite

2 – *THE ROYAL BELFAST  
ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION*

from an engraving (c.1855) in Joseph Fisher and John H. Robb, *THE BOOK OF THE ROYAL BELFAST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION CENTENARY VOLUME 1810-1910* (Belfast, 1913) and on the cover of John Jamieson, *THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL BELFAST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION 1810-1960* (Belfast, 1959)



namely, a portrait of King William IV (no longer at the school) and one of Joseph Stevenson, honorary secretary of the Institution.<sup>7</sup> The portrait of Stevenson (Plate 3), painted around 1836 and shown in the Belfast Association of Artists' exhibition of that year, displays all the stiffness of pose typical of Hawksett, and also the rather strange and unnaturalistic colouring referred to in the above *Belfast News-Letter* critique.<sup>8</sup> A version of the work, probably the prime original, is still at the school. Its commissioning and purchase by the Institution seems to have been a straightforward affair, unlike that of the portrait of the king.

IN THE WINTER OF 1831, THE BOARD OF MANAGERS AND BOARD OF VISITORS OF the Institution (the governing body, known as the Joint Boards), desiring William IV become patron of the school, requested Lord Belfast, Vice-Chamberlain of the Royal Household, to ask him if he would agree to this.<sup>9</sup> The king assented by mid-November, and commanded that the Institution add 'Royal' to its name.<sup>10</sup> The idea for the portrait – obviously intended to commemorate this king's patronage – was most probably raised at a general meeting of the school's propri-

etors on 22nd November following, although this cannot be corroborated either through the school's records or by press reports.<sup>11</sup> What is certain is that the proposal to commission the work was made by 20th December, as a letter from Lord Belfast to the Joint Boards makes clear. According to the noble lord,

he had taken the first opportunity to request his Majesty to allow his Portrait to be taken to be hung up in the Institution and that his Majesty had been graciously pleased to permit Mr. Hogshea [Hawksett] to copy the best of his Portraits for the Institution but his Majesty had not time to sit for that purpose.<sup>12</sup>

At a meeting of the Joint Boards in early January 1832, Hawksett was 'appointed to go to London to draw a Portrait of His Majesty and that his expense be paid by private subscription from the Members of the Board and others, not to exceed Sixty pounds'.<sup>13</sup>

By 27th May 1836 the portrait was almost finished, and Hawksett thereupon presented his bill to the Joint Boards. His somewhat lengthy letter of explanation makes interesting reading for the light it sheds on his own financial situation:

In placing my account before you, I think it right to present the reasons which have obliged me to go beyond the sum suggested by Dr. McDonnell [£60] as being the amount you were disposed to give for a portrait of His Majesty. I need not say that I have anxiously endeavoured to make the picture good, as I have spared neither time nor labour with that view, and as to expense, the following statement will speak for itself.

When I went first [to London] in 1832 for the purpose of painting the King's picture, I took of my own, ten pounds – £10.0.0 and borrowed from Dr. McDonnell – £20.13.0. When this sum was exhausted I returned home, untill [*sic*] I should be able to realize another supply three years afterwards, accordingly I set out with twentytwo pds. – £22.0.0. This having proved insufficient to enable me to produce a picture worthy of my commission and the facilities His Majesty was graciously pleased to grant me, I had recourse to a remittance of £15.0.0 more, through Mr. Molloy, this enabled me to produce the picture in your possession which has cost me as you may perceive in mean outlay sixtyseven pounds thirteen £67.13.0.

Therefore Gentlemen I am induced to hope you will consider it good value for one hundred pounds – £100.0.0.<sup>14</sup>

If Hawksett had hoped for a speedy settlement of his bill, he was to be sadly mistaken. After waiting another few months, his patience appears to have worn thin, and on 18th July 1836 he wrote again:

I beg leave most respectfully and earnestly to call your attention to my request of the 27th of May, believing that notwithstanding the multiplicity of your public business of late, you would have condescended to take some favourable notice of it before this, if you had for a moment imagined that my promises and arrangements for some time past with those to whom I am in debt, were made on the faith of that generous promptitude which characterized you towards Mr. Silo [the framer of the portrait], and which I am quite unconscious of having rendered myself undeserving of by any misconduct, on the contrary I am persuaded that the good feeling of the Gentlemen composing the Boards only requires to be touched by the information which I am unwillingly obliged to communicate. The truth is, I am this very week greatly pressed for money, and must cast myself entirely on your consideration...<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, payment was not to be forthcoming, despite the emotional overtones of this appeal. Nonetheless, despite his obvious disgruntlement with the situation, Hawksett exhibited the king's portrait, with that of Stevenson, at the Belfast Association of Artists' show later in the year.

The winter of 1837 saw him applying yet again for redress. However, the response from a meeting of the Joint Boards on 21st November was anything but hopeful: 'Resolved That the order for the Painting having been given not by the Joint Boards, but by certain individuals on their own Account – The Joint Boards can only refer Mr. Hawksett to the Persons by whom the Painting was ordered.'<sup>16</sup>

Not surprisingly, the matter continued to rumble on, with the next letter from Hawksett to the Boards being dated 17th July 1838:

I take the liberty of addressing you again on the subject of His late Majesty's Picture, for which I have not been able to obtain a settlement. Upon the receipt of your letter of Nov 22nd [the Joint Boards' response of 1837 above], with a copy of the Resolution of your Boards, I felt rather annoyed at the determination therein expressed, but upon reflection conceiving myself to have a just cause, I thought if I could only manage to submit the subject to your view in the same light as I was impressed by it myself, I would have every chance of being successful, as you would then see my reasons which would in some degree excuse my importunity.

At your request I waited on Doctor McDonnell the only *Surviving Member* of the *Board* from *whom* I received the order to paint the Picture, Doctors Tennent and McCleery, and William Tennent Esq being now deceased, and showed him your Resolution, at which he said, 'That although the Picture had not been ordered by the Board, with a condition that they should pay for it out of the Public money, yet, it was so *perfectly understood* to be a *transaction undertaken* for the advantage and *honour* of the

Institution, he could not suppose the Boards would ultimately fail in contriving some means of reimbursing [?] me, and he advised me to repeat my application, when he was sure my claim would at once be recognised.'

The plain statement of my case, is, that in 1832, the *then* Managers of your Royal Institution ... came forward and signed *their names* as a requisition to His Majesty, that I might obtain permission to paint *for them* His portrait. [There is no mention of this petition for the picture in the Joint Boards' minutes.] The liberty was granted in the most gracious and condescending manner, and the picture in Belfast in 1835, when I was requested ... to have it ready for *the* Lord Lieutenant's inspection in October. A suitable frame was ordered, and before His arrival punctually paid for, *both* were *shown to him* as the *Public property*, and no other idea was then entertained by any person. Some months after, I sent in my account, so low, that the most fastidious could not object, a Gentleman was appointed to receive the various Subscriptions, by whose order I recd 29£ of Subscriptions on the 28th Feby, 1836. Since which time I have made several respectful applications without effect, to the last of which I recd a Resolution the Boards or a few of them had come to [that of 21st November 1837], referring me to the 'person or persons who gave the order on their own account'. This greatly astonished me, the King being dead, and some of those most desirous of having it also deceased, believing as I did, that a succession of Managers did not imply the overthrow of all the wishes of their honourable predecessors, which this Resolution so far as it went effectually did. Supposing some mistake to exist, I now respectfully appeal to the good sense, and common justice, of the Joint Boards, for a speedy redress of my grievances on this subject. Trusting this appeal may not share the fate of my former applications.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of this, two members of the Joint Boards (James McCleery and Maurice Cross) were deputed to obtain information as to who had authorised the commissioning of the portrait.<sup>18</sup> The result of their enquiry, recorded in the Joint Boards' minutes of 21st August 1838, found that 'the order was not given by the Boards of the Institution; but by several Individuals in their private capacity'.<sup>19</sup> These findings must have caused Hawksett considerable dismay.

The situation must have pricked a few consciences, for in the following month a sum of money was collected and given to Hawksett.<sup>20</sup> The exact amount remains unknown; however, it was obviously not the £71 outstanding (he had already received £29 of the £100), as he continued to push for settlement.

In 1839 he tried a different approach, and placed his case before the proprietors of the school at their annual meeting on 2nd July. Though his letter of appeal is missing, a report of the proceedings in the local press contains a useful summary

of the meeting, and sheds light on what became of the painting:

Dr. Cooke [Revd Dr Henry Cooke, one of Hawksett's champions] ... read a letter from Mr. S. Hawksett, the artist, complaining, in terms apparently prompted by a keen sense of injury, that a picture of his late Majesty, Wm. IV, which he had been engaged to paint for the Institution, and in executing which he had incurred much expense, by a visit to London, etc., had been left on his hands for some years, and that his account remained unsettled.<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, he had reclaimed the portrait at some point, although it is not known when. It was certainly still at the school in early 1837 when the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* of 1st March commented upon it being there.

A long discussion then ensued amongst the proprietors as to whether the Joint Boards were liable for payment or not. The conclusion reached concurred with the Boards' findings of 1837 and 1838:

that highly respected friends of the Institution, some of whom were since dead, had designed the picture as a present ... and that the order had emanated from them. Under these circumstances, it was conceded, on all hands, that the Boards were not called on to settle Mr. Hawksett's claim out of the public funds; but, it was also admitted, that he had not been treated in fairness, and a subscription was opened, in the Hall [the school's Common Hall], to liquidate the amount due to him (about £100), to which almost every one present willingly contributed, though several felt themselves called on publicly to deny an assertion in Mr. Hawksett's letter, – that payment had been withheld by the Boards, because he had voted for Mr. Emerson Tennent [Conservative MP for Belfast], at the last election!<sup>22</sup>

This last charge, which smacks of paranoia on Hawksett's part, appears to have been met with some surprise, and led 'three or four of the leading officers of the Institution' to declare that 'they were, until then, totally ignorant of Mr. Hawksett's politics.'<sup>23</sup> (Hawksett is alluding to the fact that he had voted for James Emerson Tennent in the 1837 general election and not for the Liberal candidate James Gibson, a member of the Joint Boards. He seems to have thought that this prejudiced the Boards against him). The discussion of the subject ended at this point. Unfortunately, the sum of money collected in the Hall remains unknown.

In 1840, Hawksett approached the proprietors yet again, at their annual meeting on 7th July. As with 1839, his letter of appeal is missing. From newspaper coverage of the event, however, it would seem that after the meeting of 1839, W.J.C. Allen, a member of the Joint Boards, was 'pressed to set about collecting subscriptions; but, on going through the town, he found that people were unwilling to subscribe, until Mr. Hawksett should retract his offensive charges.'<sup>24</sup> What these



additional claims were is not recorded in the press coverage of the 1839 meeting, Hawksett's only reported accusation being that concerning Emerson Tennent.<sup>25</sup>

The proceedings of the meeting of 1840 make somewhat comical reading, as the discussion around the 'pictorial question' (to quote Revd Dr Henry Cooke) degenerated into a verbal sparring match between Cooke and Revd John Scott Porter, the school's honorary secretary.<sup>26</sup> Cooke, prior to reading Hawksett's letter, explained that he had altered some expressions in it and stated that

if any remained that might appear harsh, he ... would not hold himself accountable for them; but he hoped, the Proprietors would take into consideration that a person not accustomed to composition, was liable to use expressions that might imply more than was intended.<sup>27</sup>

Whatever about the intemperate tone of Hawksett's letter, his accusations were certainly thought-provoking. After recounting events surrounding the execution of the work, he claimed that the Joint Boards' loyalty to the king had declined after his death. He also complained of the shabby treatment he had received from the school, charged the Boards with breach of agreement, and threatened legal action if the picture was not paid for. For Cooke's part, he thought the money should be paid whether Hawksett had a legal claim or not, and expressed his willingness to subscribe another ten shillings.

A discussion then ensued on the history of the portrait's commissioning and the extent of the Boards' liability. In Porter's opinion, the Boards had nothing whatever to do with the matter. Cooke, however, declared that he understood there was in existence a 'memorial from [them], praying his Majesty to permit Mr. Hawksett to be permitted to take his portrait'.<sup>28</sup> Porter, however, denied that the Boards had ever made any such application and said he could find no trace of it in the records. Cooke then stated that he believed the money would have been paid if the king had lived longer. Porter responded by stating that when the king was alive, the Boards' answer was the same as it was now: 'that they were not liable for the price of the picture, and that they had never employed Mr. Hawksett to paint it.'<sup>29</sup> Cooke thereupon repeated his belief that the money would have been paid if the king had lived. By this stage, the atmosphere appears to have become quite heated, judging by Porter's rejoinder:

The Boards had certainly considered the picture as the property of the Institution, as it had been received as a present; but they never had paid, nor engaged to pay, one penny for it. Mr. Hawksett had shewn [*sic*] himself a very pertinacious and abusive individual. He had, moreover, contrived, under one pretence or other, to carry off the picture from the Institution; and it would be a more proper proceeding, if the Boards were to send a Constable

to look after him for having carried off their property, than that he should bring charges against them. For his ... part, he was not disposed to subscribe a penny to pay Mr. Hawksett.<sup>30</sup>

Cooke then suggested that the matter be submitted to a lawyer chosen by both sides, an idea which was quickly dropped because of the expense involved. Eventually, he undertook to have Hawksett 'withdraw his offensive letters of this year and last year, so that they might not be an obstruction to a subscription', and the subject was closed.<sup>31</sup> Hawksett agreed to this course of action in early August, and must surely have felt that the end was in sight.<sup>32</sup>

It was not to be. On 3rd August 1841, a full year after his hopes had been raised, he placed yet another letter before the proprietors at their annual meeting on that day. The content should come as no surprise:

Gentlemen,

It is first my duty to thank you which I do most cordially for the resolutions passed in my favour in 1839 and 1840 [not quite the case, as the Boards still denied liability], in consequence of my applications to you for the price of His Majesty's picture which I painted for the Royal Belfast Academical Institution in 1835. [Hawksett's memory is clearly shaky on this point, as the picture was commenced in 1832 and completed in 1836.]

But in the next place, in as much as no benefit has resulted to me, I am obliged once more to solicit your favourable consideration of the injury which such a delay of payment inflicts upon me.

When I learned that the letters which had been laid before you for me were withdrawn to make way for a settlement, I communicated to the Joint Boards my acquiescence in that measure respectfully expressing my desire to learn at what time the settlement consequent thereupon might be hoped for, as I believed that it was their duty to give effect to your determination.

I have received no reply from any quarter, no intimation that the measures which were to follow the withdrawal of my letters have been adopted, and I am therefore reluctantly compelled once more to place my claim for payment before you.<sup>33</sup>

As a result of this, W.J.C. Allen and another member of the Joint Boards, James Standfield, resolved at a Board meeting on 5th October following to try to raise more subscriptions.<sup>34</sup>

This further attempt was also unsuccessful, so Standfield reported to the proprietors' annual meeting of 5th July 1842.<sup>35</sup> This same meeting saw yet another letter from Hawksett read to the company. Though not reported in the press, the content was apparently the same as ever: when might he expect payment for the

portrait? Needless to say, the response was also the same as ever:

it was explained, that neither the Court [of proprietors] nor Boards had anything to do with the matter. Some individuals had interested themselves in it, and Mr. Hawksett had both the picture and part payment; and the Boards or Court were in no way responsible to him.’<sup>36</sup>

With that, the matter was finally closed, as far as the school was concerned.

Though there was no further reference to the painting in the school’s records, this was not the last to be heard of it. In June 1859, notices appeared in the *Northern Whig*, stating that the picture was to be raffled on 18th July at 52 Fountain Street for the benefit of Hawksett’s widow, with 150 tickets at £1 each.<sup>37</sup> That Mrs Hawksett was anxious to sell seems clear from one of the pieces, which stated that the king had sat to Hawksett at St James’s Palace – a claim at variance with Lord Belfast’s statement of December 1831, which had explained that the king had no time to sit.<sup>38</sup> Whether such ‘puffing up’ of the portrait was successful or not remains a mystery, as does the current location of the work.

NOT ONLY IS THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE PAINTING UNKNOWN, WHAT IT ACTUALLY looked like is something of a puzzle. Described in one of the above-mentioned *Northern Whig* raffle notices as being full-length and 9 x 6 feet (274.5 x 183 cm), press comments at the time of its showing at the Belfast Association of Artists in 1836 are somewhat confusing.<sup>39</sup> According to the *Belfast News-Letter* of 13th September, the work was ‘a successful imitation of Lawrence. The head is well painted, and placed on the shoulders with an air of great dignity. The draperies fall gracefully, and into rich folds – every thing is done with an eye to the best effect. It is in every respect a pleasing picture.’ However, the *Northern Whig* of a few days later was less specific, and described the painting as being ‘chiefly after Sir Thomas Lawrence’.<sup>40</sup> That the ‘draperies’ were actually a cloak of some kind is made plain by an amusing piece in the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* around the same time. Written in stage Irish, supposedly by one Darby Fegan of county Armagh to his wife Molly after a visit to the exhibition, his recollections went thus:

...a bit beyont him [a portrait of a black slave in chains by Arthur Joy] – would you believe it, Molly – there stood King William the Fourth, blessings on his good-natured countenance, as clever a lookin gentleman as you’d see of a summer’s day, and mighty clane dressed – he’d a cloak upon him would make our Jenny [his daughter] and you cloaks a-piece, and somethin over. Bill [the guide in the exhibition] tould me ... how the King sat for his picture,

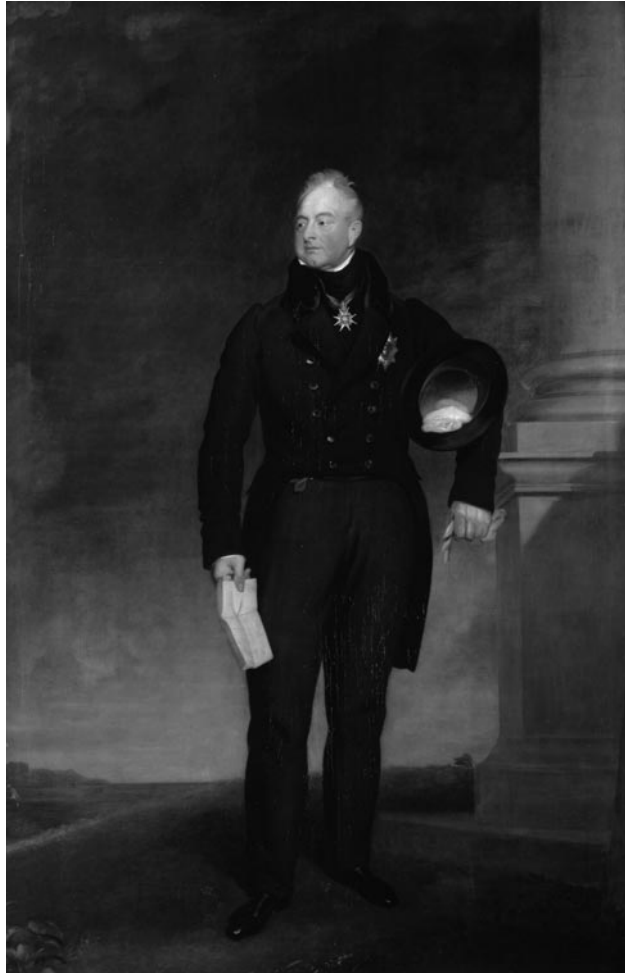
4 – *Sir Thomas Lawrence*  
*WILLIAM IV WHEN DUKE OF*  
*CLARENCE*  
*c.1827, oil on canvas,*  
*253.5 x 162 cm*

*overleaf*

5 – *Sir David Wilkie*  
*WILLIAM IV*  
*1832, oil on canvas,*  
*270.5 x 177 cm*

6 – *Sir Martin Archer Shee*  
*WILLIAM IV*  
*1833, oil on canvas,*  
*270.5 x 178 cm*

*(all The Royal Collection © 2008*  
*Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)*



till a handy little Belfast man drew him out in Lonnon. I suppose he ris when he was done ... I am tould here, his image is for the big school-house, in town ... where there's the best of learnin to be had...<sup>41</sup>

As if the above descriptions were not confusing enough, to add to the puzzle, Lawrence's portrait of the king in the Royal Collection shows him wearing a three-quarter-length coat and not in a cloak of any kind. Painted around 1827, the work depicts him not as monarch, but as Duke of Clarence (Plate 4).<sup>42</sup> However, two other full-length portraits in the Royal Collection show him both as king and in grandiose draperies: that by Sir David Wilkie of 1832 (Plate 5) and one by Sir Martin Archer Shee of 1833 (Plate 6).<sup>43</sup> Hawksett may have seen the Wilkie in 1832; he could certainly have seen both works at Windsor Castle on his second visit to London in





1835. He may perhaps have taken the pose and background of the Lawrence portrait and added the draperies of the Shee (the figure in which is closer to the Lawrence than that of the Wilkie). Though conjecture, this seems not impossible given that the portrait appears to have been something of a hybrid, judging from its description in the press.

INTERESTINGLY, IN 1837 THE SCHOOL ACQUIRED ANOTHER PORTRAIT, THAT OF THE Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Earl of Mulgrave, whose visit Hawksett referred to in his letter of 17th July 1838. The artist was the young Dublin portrait and subject painter Nicholas Joseph Crowley (1819-1857), who had been living in Belfast in 1835 and 1836. That the painting was an ‘official’ commission is clear from press reports of the Belfast Association of Artists’ show of 1837, in which the portrait was included. The *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* was loud in its praise: ‘we must admit that the proprietors of the Institution have every reason to congratulate themselves on the manner in which Mr. Crowley has fulfilled the honourable commission entrusted to him,’ whilst the *Northern Whig* declared: ‘The portrait of Earl Mulgrave displays great skill ... the painting is intended for the Royal Belfast Institution...’<sup>44</sup> Full length and showing the earl in the costume of Governor-General of Jamaica, standing in a landscape, the picture clearly had considerable merit. Unfortunately, the work is no longer at the school, which knows nothing of its whereabouts.<sup>45</sup> Whatever about the location of the painting – the fate of which is a somewhat bizarre parallel to that of the Hawksett portrait – a young artist in the early stages of his career might have been expected to charge for such a work. This Crowley declined to do, as is obvious from a letter he addressed to the Joint Boards on 19th December 1837:

Gentlemen,

In compliance with the request of Sixty Proprietors of the Institution, his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant has honoured me by sitting to me for his Portrait.

The picture is now finished. May I beg of you to accept it, as a proof of my high appreciation of the honour done me by soliciting me on this occasion...<sup>46</sup>

So delighted were the Joint Boards with the donation that they arranged for the chairman, secretary and treasurer to form a deputation to wait on Crowley and present him with a letter of thanks.<sup>47</sup>

Whilst Crowley’s admiration for the school was probably genuine and his altruism wholly sincere, there may have been another factor behind his generosity. He and Hawksett almost certainly knew each other well, for both had served on the

committee of the Belfast Association of Artists in 1836 – Crowley as secretary, Hawksett as treasurer. By the winter of 1837, Hawksett's problems in obtaining payment for the king's portrait – which he had certainly regarded as a commission – had become obvious. He may well have regaled Crowley with details of the situation. Crowley, wishing to avoid any possible unpleasantness, may have decided to take the easier option and present the portrait to the school. Whilst this is simply speculation, the thought is worth considering.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and the Public Record Office Northern Ireland for permission to quote from the school's records. My thanks also to the Royal Collection for the use of images, and to Lucie Strnadova for her assistance with this matter.

#### ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

<i>BCC</i>	<i>Belfast Commercial Chronicle</i>
<i>BNL</i>	<i>Belfast News-Letter</i>
<i>NW</i>	<i>Northern Whig</i>
PRONI	Public Record Office Northern Ireland

<sup>1</sup> According to the Burial Register of the New Burying Ground of the Belfast Charitable Society, Hawksett was born in Cookstown, county Tyrone, and was aged fifty-eight on his death on 9th February 1859. W.G. Strickland's *Dictionary of Irish Artists* (Dublin and London, 1913) incorrectly records his dates as 1776-1851. The name Hawksett is not known in the Cookstown area and may have been altered to Hogshaw, Hockshaw or Hockset, all of which were current in the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

<sup>2</sup> *BNL*, 9th December 1828. For information on early drawing schools in Belfast, see Eileen Black, *Art in Belfast 1760-1888: Art lovers or Philistines?* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2006) 15-21.



- <sup>3</sup> *BNL*, 27th January 1824.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 13th and 27th January 1824.
- <sup>5</sup> He is known to have been in London from late 1824 until the spring of 1825 (*BNL*, 5th November 1824) and from late 1828 to early 1829 (*ibid.*, 4th November 1828).
- <sup>6</sup> The portrait of the Marchioness of Donegall was exhibited at the RHA in 1826 (39). Langtry was the father-in-law of the famous actress and sometime mistress of Edward VII, Lillie Langtry. See Eileen Black, *A Catalogue of the Permanent Collection: 4: Irish Oil Paintings, 1831-1900* (Ulster Museum, Belfast, 1997) 27-29, for further details on Hawksett.
- <sup>7</sup> For information on the school, see Joseph R. Fisher and John H. Robb, *The Book of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution: Centenary Volume 1810-1910* (Belfast, 1913) and John Jamieson, *The History of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution 1810-1960* (Belfast, 1959).
- <sup>8</sup> There are three versions of the portrait – one in the school, one in the Ulster Museum and one in a private collection. Stevenson was honorary secretary from 1808 until his death on 13th January 1837.
- <sup>9</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/3A/1/4, Joint Boards' meeting of 15th November 1831. Lord Belfast was Vice-Chamberlain of the Royal Household from 1830 to 1834 and 1838 to 1841.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> There is no mention of the idea for the portrait in press coverage of the general meeting of proprietors on 22nd November 1831, namely, in the *BNL*, 25th November 1831, and *NW*, 24th November 1831. Those who subscribed five guineas to the school were known as proprietors and had the right to elect the administrative officers from amongst themselves. The Board of Managers and Board of Visitors were elected from proprietors who subscribed twenty guineas. For the administrative structure of the school, see Jamieson, *History of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution*.
- <sup>12</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/3A/1/4, Joint Boards' meeting of 20th December 1831.
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, Joint Boards' meeting of 3rd January 1832.
- <sup>14</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/7B/73/1. The author first saw Hawksett's letters in PRONI in 1978 and made transcripts of them. However, on rechecking them in 2008, the letter of 26th May 1836 had apparently gone missing. The quoted letter is therefore from a transcript. Regarding persons mentioned, Dr James McDonnell was a member of the Joint Boards. Joseph Molloy was drawing master at the Institution from 1830 to 1870, and is best known for his illustrations of the seats of local nobility and gentry, engraved and published by E.K. Proctor in his *Belfast Scenery in Thirty Views* (Belfast, 1832).
- <sup>15</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/7B/73/2. Modesto Silo & Sons, a local firm of carvers, gilders and picture frame-makers, supplied the frame for the portrait.
- <sup>16</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/3A/1/5, Joint Boards' meeting of 21st November 1837.
- <sup>17</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/7B/73/3. Dr Robert Tennent and Dr James McCleery were members of the Board of Managers. William Tennent was one of the proprietors.
- <sup>18</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/3A/1/5, Joint Boards' meeting of 17th July 1838.
- <sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, Joint Boards' meeting of 21st August 1838.
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, Joint Boards' meeting of 4th September 1838. The collection of this unspecified amount was made by Robert James Tennent.
- <sup>21</sup> *NW*, 4th July 1839.
- <sup>22</sup> *ibid.* James Emerson Tennent (1804-1869), politician and traveller, was elected Conservative MP for Belfast in December 1832. He and George Dunbar were defeated as Conservative can-

- didates for the town in the general election of August 1837 by the Liberals James Gibson and the Earl of Belfast. Gibson and the earl were unseated on petition in March 1838, and Emerson Tennent and Dunbar declared elected. Emerson Tennent was re-elected in 1841 but was unseated on petition. He regained his seat in 1842, and remained a member of the House of Commons until July 1845, when he received a knighthood. See B.M. Walker (ed.), *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978) and *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).
- <sup>23</sup> NW, 4th July 1839.
- <sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 9th July 1840. W.J.C. Allen was honorary secretary of the Institution from 1844 to 1877.
- <sup>25</sup> BNL, 5th July 1839; NW, 4th July 1839.
- <sup>26</sup> Revd John Scott Porter was honorary secretary of the Institution from 1837 to 1840.
- <sup>27</sup> NW, 9th July 1840.
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/7B/34/21, letter of 4th August 1840.
- <sup>33</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/7B/35/32, letter of 3rd August 1841. (This letter has an incorrect reference in the SCH 524 calendar, being catalogued as SCH 524/7B/35/31.)
- <sup>34</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/3A/1/5, Joint Boards' meeting of 5th October 1841.
- <sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, annual meeting of proprietors, 5th July 1842.
- <sup>36</sup> NW, 7th July 1842.
- <sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 9th and 10th June 1859. Hawksett married twice: Rachel, who died of cholera on 15th July 1849, and Mary Anne, who died of consumption on 25th April 1866 (Burial Register of the New Burying Ground of the Belfast Charitable Society).
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 10th June 1859.
- <sup>39</sup> NW, 9th June 1859 gives the dimensions of the portrait.
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 15th September 1836.
- <sup>41</sup> BCC, 17th September 1836.
- <sup>42</sup> Oliver Millar, *Later Georgian Pictures in the Royal Collection* (London, 1969) 62 (cat. no. 877), pl. 229.
- <sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 143 (cat. no. 1185), pl. 276 (Wilkie); 116 (cat. no. 1084), pl. 301 (Shee).
- <sup>44</sup> BCC, 20th September 1837; NW, 21st September 1837. The portrait was no. 22 in the Belfast Association of Artists' exhibition. According to the BCC of 1st March 1837, the earl was sitting to Crowley at that time.
- <sup>45</sup> Correspondence from Christopher Maitland, Royal Belfast Academical Institution (letter of 7th February 2008). The portrait was certainly at the school in 1888, when it was exhibited in the Belfast Free Public Library Opening Art Exhibition (13).
- <sup>46</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/7B/31/87. In 1838 the Joint Boards paid Crowley £32 10 0 for a frame for the Mulgrave portrait and other expenses relating to the picture; PRONI, SCH 524/3A/1/5, Joint Boards' meeting of 5 June 1838. Crowley may have ordered a new and better frame for the work since presenting it in 1837.
- <sup>47</sup> PRONI, SCH 524/3A/1/5, Joint Boards' meeting of 19th December 1837.