

Artist William Turner de Lond: his life and times

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T AN EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS 'BY THE ARTISTS AND AMATEURS OF LIMERICK' IN 1821, no less than 25 works were contributed by William Turner, far more than any other artist. His paintings were an eclectic mix of subjects, ranging from continental views to Irish urban scenes, religious images and military portraits. Turner struggled to sell his work, and two of his principal pictures, *The Chairing of Mr Spring Rice* (Plate 2) and *George IV's Grand Entry into Dublin* (Plate 3), he would eventually be compelled to sell to the Limerick Chamber of Commerce at a fraction of their value. In the decades that followed, the artist was quickly forgotten and many of his pictures lost. The Limerick librarian Robert Herbert, writing in 1945, could say nothing of the artist W. Turner, whom he dubbed 'the mysterious Mr Turner', other than he was not the famous English artist, Joseph Mallory William Turner, who never visited Ireland, nor the William Turner of Oxford, who usually worked in watercolours.²

Fortunately, in recent decades there has been a reawakening of interest in the art of William Turner. The revival began with the re-identification of his painting *The Market-place and Court-house at Ennis* in 1986 (Plate 6).³ The painting carried the signature 'William Turner de Lond, 1820', and appears to be the only one of his Irish works that is both signed and dated. The revival was greatly aided by the work of the late Desmond FitzGerald, Knight of Glin, who rediscovered and identified many more of Turner's paintings. This was followed by a programme of research and publication which culminated in the publishing in 2006 of *Painting Ireland: topographical views from Glin Castle*, ⁴ so that today Turner de Lond's Irish paintings are much better known. The purpose of this article is to broaden our knowledge of the man by investigating his years in Ireland, along with his periods in England and Scotland, so as to gain a greater appreciation of his creative talents, artistic achievements and legacy to posterity.

^{1 –} William Turner de Lond (1763-c.1833)
THE ARRIVAL OF THE MAIL COACH AT THE 'BLACK BULL', EDINBURGH c.1825, oil on canvas, 63 x 81.5 cm (detail, see page 87) (City Art Centre, Edinburgh)



2 – The Chairing of Mr Spring Rice 1820, oil on canvas (Limerick Chamber of Commerce)

ORIGINS

NFORTUNATELY, LITTLE IS KNOWN OF THE ARTIST'S ORIGINS. HE CLEARLY CAME FROM London and was familiar with the south-east of England. In his public notices he always referred to himself as William Turner of London, while in his paintings and, particularly, his prints he signed himself William Turner de Lond. He was a well-educated man, who appreciated classical antiquities and had knowledge of Latin. A competent and accomplished artist, Turner most likely received a professional training at one of the London art schools.

A William Turner of Shoreditch, London, who was born in 1763, entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1785 and exhibited twelve works at the Academy between the years 1787 and 1816.⁵ His paintings included a *View of Paris from the Louvre*, *Dover Castle*, *Rochester from Martello Lights* and *Portsmouth from Gosport*.⁶ Additionally, he exhibited three London paintings – *Wanstead House*, *Somerset House* and *The Guildhall*, along with four portraits.⁷ It has been suggested that this man could be the artist who subsequently became known as William Turner de Lond.⁸ This putative identification is based on the following: the life period of the two individuals approximately match, both came from London, and the genre of work in which they engaged is quite similar. Both produced views of the Continent, topographical urban scenes and portraits. Importantly, none of these paintings can be ascribed to the two other William Turners, who were active at

the same time, namely J.M.W. Turner and W. Turner of Oxford. However, it must be emphasised that, as yet, no direct connection has been established between Turner of Shoreditch and Turner de Lond.

William Turner was a coachbuilder, who operated a business at 129 Shoreditch, a premises sited opposite Shoreditch church in central London.9 He only engaged in art work as a part-time activity. In June 1799 Turner of Shoreditch opened a mechanised display entitled The Battle of the River Nile in a building called the Naumachia off Fleet Street. 'Naumachia', meaning a sea battle, was a venue with a name entirely appropriate for such a spectacle. The Battle of the Nile was a major naval engagement fought between the British and the French in August 1798. Turner's display consisted of three large scenes - the evening of the attack, a moonlit setting in which the French flagship L'Orient had been set on fire, and a view depicting the morning after the battle. These scenes, painted on huge canvases, were illuminated and could be moved as required. They were displayed on pieces of machinery 30ft long by 12ft high. The show lasted an hour-and-a-half, and the high point was the blowing up of L'Orient in the darkened theatre. Being a coachbuilder, Turner evidently had the wood and metal-working skills necessary for such a production. He was principally concerned with producing a realistic representation of the battle. Claiming to have overcome the temporal limitations inherent in painting by displaying the whole rather than a single moment of the battle, his use of the large scale provided greater accuracy and detail for the viewer. The production generated great interest, attracted large audiences, and lasted for more than a year; the theatre eventually closed its doors on 14th June 1800.10

Following the successful negotiation of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, London citizens were encouraged to celebrate the new peace by illuminating their properties. The illuminations consisted of appropriate scenes and images lit by a light source, usually lamps or lanterns. William Turner's illumination was particularly impressive and was commented upon in the newspapers:

Mr Turner, Coach-maker, opposite Shoreditch Church, exhibited a large transparency, 24 feet long, 12 high, representing Britannia triumphantly seated in a marine car drawn by sea horses; the British banner floating with the motto 'Hail Peace'; a distant view of the sea with a representation of the Battle of the Nile; the whole executed in a most spirited and masterly manner; in front of which are seen boats in motion rowing along and vessels passing on various tacks. The motion of the boats, ships and figures exceeds description.¹¹

Here again, the artist's concern with large scale and his mastery of the technique of realistic representation is observed. However, apart from occasional forays into the field of artistic endeavour, Turner continued in the coach-making business. He is first recorded at the Shoreditch address in 1792, 12 and remained there until at least 1816. 13 Turner advertised the sale of coaches regularly in the London newspapers, sometimes up to four or five times a year, as the following notice from 1804 demonstrates:

To be sold, a capital Modern Chariot, built seven months ago, and been but little used; the body patent yellow and black, the carriage black and yellow, with square

budget and barouche seat, lined with blue cloth and handsome lace; price 120 guineas. To be seen at Mr Turner's Coach-maker, opposite Shoreditch Church.¹⁴

Turner of Shoreditch was clearly knowledgeable about coaches; their design and colour, cloths and leathers, wheels and foot plates all concerned him. This is significant because practically all the known Irish and Scottish paintings of the artist William Turner de Lond carry multiple images of horse-drawn vehicles. These include, among others, coaches, carriages, wagons and common carts, which are acutely observed and expertly drawn. They are images that befit an individual who spent a working life building and decorating vehicles and had an in-depth knowledge of horse-drawn transport. This then is an early indication that Turner of Shoreditch and Turner de Lond may be one and the same person.

The year 1816 appears to have been pivotal in the life of William Turner of Shoreditch. It was the last year he exhibited work at the Royal Academy and the year he stopped advertising his horse-drawn vehicles in the London press. It was also the year the following advertisement appeared:

Now open in the Panoramic Building, Cook Street, Liverpool, the Grand Circular Panorama of the BATTLE OF WATERLOO, painted on a large scale by Mr William Turner of London, from drawings taken on the spot. Open every day from dawn to dusk. Admittance: 1s. Books descriptive of the battle, price six pence and tickets for the season five shillings.¹⁶

This was a new departure for the artist. He had left behind the business of coachbuilding and embarked on a new and speculative venture. The panorama was not anything as sophisticated as the display mounted by Turner at the Naumachia in 1799. Nevertheless, it was one of the most popular visual spectacles of the early nineteenth century. Viewers paid an entrance fee to see it, entering by way of a tunnel and staircase onto a raised platform in the centre of a circle, where they could see a very large painting that surrounded them on all sides, providing a 360-degree view. The platform restricted viewers from getting too close to the scenes portrayed, which were illuminated by hidden lighting from above. Panoramas depicted landscapes, city views and battle scenes, and had a distinctive and unusual effect: they made viewers feel they were virtually present at the scenes depicted.

Turner's choice of the Battle of Waterloo was apt for such a setting. By 1816 the Napoleonic wars had come to an end and Napoleon's downfall was the topic of everyday conversation. When the artist claimed that the drawings for the painting were 'taken on the spot', it probably means that he had access to military men who fought in the battle or to individuals who made sketches on the day. Creating such spectacles was expensive and labour-intensive, although, provided a panoramic facility was available, the canvases could be taken down and reused in other towns and cities.

There is good evidence that Turner travelled with his panoramas. In April and May 1817 'the great painting of the Battle of Waterloo by Mr William Turner of London' was redisplayed at Parker's Panorama in New Street, Birmingham. The By November of 1816 Turner had travelled from Liverpool to Birmingham. There he first exhibited a panorama



3 – GEORGE IV'S GRAND ENTRY INTO DUBLIN
1821, oil on canvas, 171 x 279 cm (National Gallery of Ireland)

called *The Battle of Algiers*, a work he subtitled 'Christianity delivered from infidel slavery by British valour'. ¹⁸ He claimed the scenes depicted covered a surface area of 3,000 superficial feet (a superficial foot was an old and little-used term for a square foot). It was precisely this terminology that W. Turner de Lond would later use when estimating the great size of his painting of George IV's royal procession at College Green, Dublin, in 1821. ¹⁹ *The Battle of Algiers* display continued in Parker's of Birmingham until the end of March 1817. ²⁰ However, William Turner does not appear to have remained in the panorama business for very long, because by 1820 he had moved to Scotland and had established himself in the city of Edinburgh.

EARLY PERIOD IN SCOTLAND

HE ARTIST APPEARS TO HAVE HAD EARLIER CONNECTIONS WITH SCOTLAND. For instance, in 1807, it was reported in Edinburgh that 'the able artist Mr Turner of London' was to engrave an original portrait of the Earl of Buchan. Lithography – that is, the engraving of images on flat stones – had been perfected in Germany in the 1790s and had only recently come to Britain. The process allowed the production of multiple copies of an image that could be sold to the general public at prices people could afford. During the years that followed, further notices appeared in the press. In 1810 Mr Turner of London made an 'excellent engraving of the esteemed, Dr Adam', which was based on a portrait by the noted Scottish artist, Sir Henry Raeburn.²² Similarly, the following year it was advertised that two mezzotinto prints from the paintings *Reading the Will* and *The Wedding* were to be engraved by Mr Turner of London in his best manner

and to be printed in colour by Mr Dickson, these 'being the two principal artists in the metropolis'. ²³ Clearly Turner was not in Scotland during these years, but it seems that the images were engraved in London and subsequently forwarded to Edinburgh for printing. A fine pencil-and-stump drawing titled *The Vegetable Market*, *Edinburgh*, which was recently sold at auction, is signed and dated 'W. Turner de Lond 1820' (Plate 4). ²⁴ The date confirms that Turner was in Scotland in 1820 and is the first recorded use of the appellation 'Turner de Lond', the form of his name that he would use in Ireland. Turner adopted it almost certainly to distinguish himself from the artist Joseph Mallory William Turner and, to a lesser extent, from William Turner of Oxford, who were both active at the time.

The catalogue produced for the art exhibition at Limerick in 1821 gives some indication of the artist's activities in previous years. The titles of seven of his paintings describe continental scenes, four of Italy and three of France. The background to a portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance, was said to represent the Tuileries gardens in Paris, 'the scenery sketched on the spot by Mr Turner'. ²⁵ This is an important clue to the identity of the artist. We noted earlier that Turner of Shoreditch exhibited a painting, *View of Paris from the side of the Louvre*, at the Royal Academy in 1792. ²⁶ The Louvre adjoins the Tuileries gardens. This means that both artists, Turner of Shoreditch and Turner de Lond, had previously produced paintings of practically the same location in central Paris, which is another strong indication that they are likely to be the same individual.

The Italian paintings in the Limerick catalogue included views of the Badia monastery at Florence, the Tiber near Rome, and *The Ruins at Tivoli and the Fall on the Anio*.²⁷ Tivoli was the site of Emperor Hadrian's villa (120-38 AD). Ancient Tivoli lay at the falls of the river Anio, a tributary of the Tiber. The evidence of the catalogue therefore shows that prior to his journey to Ireland, Turner de Lond had travelled on the Continent. However, this appears to have occurred many years previously. The drawing of the vegetable market in Edinburgh confirms that in 1820 Turner was in Scotland, and in all likelihood travelled directly from Edinburgh to Limerick.

YEARS IN LIMERICK

HEN WE ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN WHAT MOTIVATED TURNER DE LOND TO COME TO Ireland, we enter the realms of speculation. It has been suggested that he came to record the visit of George IV, the first visit of an English monarch to the country in over a hundred years. This conjecture does not stand up to scrutiny. Turner de Lond was in Ireland by 1820, which was too early for the royal visit, which did not occur until August 1821. In any event Turner would hardly have located himself in Limerick for a visit that would largely be centred on Dublin. The suggestion that he came to Ireland in search of patronage is even less convincing. There were surely better opportunities for patronage in the prosperous cities of Britain and the Continent than could be found in the impoverished west of Ireland.

The key question must be: why did Turner choose Limerick above any other city or town in Ireland? One answer might be that he had some attachment or connection with the area. In this regard the presence of the British army in Limerick is a possibility. As



4 – MARKET DAY, EDINBURGH, UNDER NORTH BRIDGE WITH CALTON HILL BEYOND
(aka The Vegetable Market, Edinburgh)

1820, pencil and stump on paper, 27 x 36 cm (photo: Christie's, London)

his panorama of the Battle of Waterloo indicates, he had good contacts with veterans who had fought in the wars against Napoleon. Another possibility is that he had a family connection with the locality. In 1678 a William Turner, pipe maker, was living in Limerick.²⁸ In 1721 a William Turner was appointed sheriff of the city.²⁹ The death of William Turner, burgess, is recorded in 1741.³⁰ In the 1820s no less than sixteen forty shilling freeholders bearing the surname Turner were recorded within the environs and city of Limerick, three of them with the forename William.³¹ It is possible that he could have been related to one or more of these individuals and the ready access he was to gain to the Limerick Chamber of Commerce tends to confirm that he had good local contacts.

Turner de Lond clearly had a natural curiosity about Ireland and travelled extensively. One of his journeys was to Killarney where he visited O'Sullivan's Cascade, a well-known tourist landmark. The waterfall is located on the western shore of Lough Leane and would have required Turner to cross the lake by boat before he could make a drawing of it. He also spent much time exploring the neighbouring county of Clare, producing a painting of Bunratty Castle and two views of the river Shannon at Killaloe. One view depicted the Cathedral with the arches of the bridge in the background and the other, the river and canal at Killaloe. A series of lateral canals were built alongside the Shannon in the eighteenth century to allow boat traffic avoid obstacles in the river between Killaloe and Limerick. But perhaps his best Clare painting is his wonderful and detailed depiction of the market place and courthouse at Ennis, with the Limerick mail coach arriving in

the town (Plate 3). One wonders if this painting was specially commissioned in view of the time and care spent on its composition.³³

Turner's paintings of Limerick are of particular interest for what they reveal of the city's topography. His *View of the Shannon from the North-strand*, *Carrig-o-gunnel in the distance* seems impossible today, and even for Limerick people of the 1820s must have been a stretch (Plate 5). The North Strand is now called Clancy's Strand. The castle of Carrigogunnel is situated on an elevated site some eight kilometres south-west of Clancy's Strand (as the crow flies), and while the castle may have been visible on a good day when our artist was in Limerick, such a view is obscured today. *Portrait of a Horse, with a view of the Race Course at Newcastle* reminds us that horse racing was the premier sporting interest of the period. The Newcastle races attracted racing enthusiasts from all over Munster. In 1819 an attendance of 50,000 people was reported.³⁴ Horse racing at Newcastle, first recorded in 1787, continued until 1867 when the venue was finally closed.³⁵

Unfortunately, with the exception of the Ennis painting, none of these pictures is known to have survived; they are known only from their listing in the catalogue for the 1821 Limerick exhibition of paintings. Perhaps some were produced on paper and would not have been as robust as oils painted on canvas. Additionally, Turner tended not to sign his lesser works on paper, which made them more vulnerable to being lost or attributed to other artists. There are two further topographical views of Limerick on paper that are unsigned, but that are generally ascribed to Turner de Lond. They are a view of Charlotte's Quay with the New Bridge and county courthouse in the distance, and a view from the North Strand of the courthouse, with St Mary's Cathedral and shipping in the river. The Charlotte's Quay picture was previously attributed to Samuel Fredrick Brocas and is currently in private ownership. The view from the North-strand was purchased by Limerick Museum at auction in 1984.

A third Limerick painting, an oil on canvas, called *The Chairing of Mr Spring Rice*, while it is unsigned, is undoubtedly by William Turner de Lond (Plate 2).³⁸ Spring Rice had campaigned against corruption in the corporation of Limerick, and in 1820 contested the city parliamentary seat but was defeated by the incumbent, John Prendergast Vereker. However, on petition to Parliament, the votes of the non-resident freemen were



5 – View of the Shannon from the North-strand, Carrigo-gunnel in the distance 1821, watercolour on paper, 43.5 x 56.5 cm (Limerick Museum)

opposite

6 – THE MARKET-PLACE AND COURT-HOUSE AT ENNIS 1820, oil on canvas, 73.5 x 104 cm



disallowed and Spring Rice was declared elected. On his return to Limerick in July 1820, the citizens excitedly 'chaired' him through the city, a ceremony associated with the electoral process. Spring Rice is depicted standing in an open car under a domed canopy festooned with silks and flowers, and drawn through the streets by the city labourers. Turner clearly witnessed the celebrations and made preparatory sketches of the proceedings. He may well have calculated that a large painting of the event would find a ready purchaser but in this he was disappointed. In the depressed economic conditions of the period there was little demand for such works.

At least three of Turner's pictures can be dated to the year 1820: the Ennis painting, because it is signed and dated 1820 by the artist; the Spring Rice picture, which must have been painted around 24th July that year when the triumphant procession was reported in the Limerick papers;³⁹ and a view of the racecourse at Newcastle that must date to shortly after the commencement of the horse races on 30th September 1820.⁴⁰ The following year the races ended on 5th October,⁴¹ which was too late for Turner who had just returned from Dublin and was busy completing his paintings of the royal visit for the Limerick exhibition that was already underway by 13th October 1821.⁴²

VISIT OF GEORGE IV TO IRELAND

EORGE IV CAME TO IRELAND SHORTLY AFTER HIS CORONATION IN JULY 1821 IN AN attempt to rehabilitate himself with his Irish subjects. The man had earned a notorious reputation because of his corpulence, habitual drunkenness and scandalous

extramarital affairs. It was originally intended that the king would disembark from the royal yacht at Dunleary but turbulent weather in the Irish Sea delayed the royal party at Holyhead. The king in the end elected to make the crossing on the post office mail boat, the paddle steamer *Lightning*, and landed instead at Howth on 12th August, a week later than intended. There was no official welcoming party, and he was instead greeted by cheering locals and government officials before being whisked off to the Vice Regal Lodge in the Phoenix's Park. No artists were present at Howth to record the event, so the repeated claims that Turner de Lond produced a painting of the king's landing are unlikely to be true. In 1991 a painting described as 'The arrival of King George IV at Howth in 1821, by the little known artist William Turner de Lond' was sold for a considerable sum at a London auction house.⁴³ If, indeed, this was a work by Turner de Lond it is more likely to have been a version of the king's departure from Dunleary, than his arrival at Howth.⁴⁴

Five days later, George IV made his official entry into Dublin through a monumental arch specially erected for the occasion at the north end of Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street). Dressed in military uniform and standing in a magnificent carriage, the king was drawn through the streets by a team of eight horses. The painting *George IV's grand entry into Dublin* (Plate 3) captures the moment George IV passed underneath the monumental arch while acknowledging the excited city crowds. Military men in colourful uniforms line the street, with the New Lying-in Hospital and large Rotunda depicted in the background. A second painting of the royal procession was executed in front of the Bank of Ireland at College Green (Plate 7). Turner described this picture as follows:

The king with the royal procession as they passed in Dublin with a view of the Bank of Ireland, the College, West Moreland Street etc. painted on a large scale, occupying a surface near 150 superficial feet and painted for the grand prize offered by the Dublin Society.⁴⁶

Turner's resort to 'the large scale' for his College Green painting is particularly striking. The great size of the picture, 150 square feet (14 square metres), harks back to the period when Turner of Shoreditch produced his huge canvases for the Naumachia in London, and later for his circular panoramas. It is perhaps our best evidence that Turner of Shoreditch and Turner de Lond are one and the same. The large scale would have allowed the artist to depict in considerable detail the topography and elaborate proceedings at College Green. By the 'Dublin Society', Turner probably meant the Royal Institution for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Ireland, founded in 1813, which offered a generous prize of £500 for the painting that would best commemorate His Majesty's visit to Ireland.⁴⁷ Turner entered what he clearly regarded was his best painting for the prize, but the outcome of the competition is unknown, and the prize, it appears, was not awarded. This painting came into the possession of Samuel Rush Meyrick (d.1848), and formed part of his collection of armour and art works at Goodrich Court, Herefordshire, England.⁴⁸ In 1869 the collection was exhibited at what is now the Victoria & Albert Museum, and was subsequently dispersed.

Fortunately, Turner made a small preparatory painting on paper (34 x 50 cm) of



7 – GEORGE IV AT COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN 1821, watercolour and oil on paper, 34 x 49.5 cm

the scene in front of the Bank of Ireland that survives in private ownership and which captures the mood and vibrancy of the occasion. The picture portrays the gilded state coaches, the bustling crowds and enthusiastic onlookers, some of whom have positioned themselves on the roof of the old parliament building to get a better view of the royal procession.⁴⁹ One notable omission from the composition is the equestrian statue of King William of Orange, the hero of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy, which stood in College Green and out of view from Turner's perspective. Perhaps Turner felt that the inclusion of such a potent symbol would distract attention from the main focus of the work and highlight, by comparison, the very modest achievements of George IV.

Among Turner de Lond's final paintings of the royal visit is his portrayal of the scene at Dunleary on 3rd September 1821, when the king was preparing to leave Ireland. The departure had been announced well in advance, and several of the country's leading artists were present to make a visual record. These included Thomas and John Mulvany, Thomas Kirk, Mr Sadler, Mr Rourke, one of the Brocas brothers and William Turner.⁵⁰ The artist described his picture of the occasion in the following terms: 'The King's Departure from Dunleary with a view of Howth, the shipping in the bay with the royal visitors etc. At the period when Mr O'Connell was presenting his Majesty with a laurel crown.'⁵¹

Daniel O'Connell's gesture of conciliation with the monarch was heavily criticised by many of his contemporaries. In later years he would defend his actions by saying that he was able to convert the king's visit from being a source of discomfiture to Irish Catholics into a future claim for political equalisation.⁵² The painting depicts the setting sun from the pier of Dunleary with abundant shipping in the harbour. Large crowds surround George IV beneath an ornate canopy supported on four pillars and surmounted by a crown and tall flagpole from which a flag is flying. The work is signed with the monogram W.T. and was previously attributed to Joseph Mallory William Turner. Currently housed at Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire, England, the picture forms part of the Fairhaven Collection in the ownership of the National Trust.

A second painting of George IV's embarkation at Dunleary was sold at auction in 1991.⁵³ It depicts the royal yacht in the harbour attended by many brightly adorned craft. On the left of the picture a three tier viewing platform has been erected to accommodate curious onlookers; on the right is the royal pavilion and in between are great crowds of people with serried ranks of soldiers and cavalry men waiting to escort the king. The painting is not unlike a picture of the departure by William Sadler,⁵⁴ except that the Turner painting is altogether a more detailed and finer piece of work.

RETURN TO LIMERICK

RETURNING IN SEPTEMBER 1821, TURNER WOULD SPEND ALMOST ANOTHER YEAR IN Limerick. His initial concern was the completion of the art work in hand for the exhibition of paintings taking place the following month at the Exhibition Room in Brunswick Street (now Sarsfield Street). A painting he prepared for the exhibition was *The Four Courts and Richmond Bridge*, *Dublin* (Plate 8). Turner's preparatory sketches for this picture must have been made during his stay in Dublin at the time of the king's visit. The painting depicts the busy pedestrian and horse drawn traffic on Richmond Bridge and the south quays with the Four Courts in the background. He coupled this picture with a repeat painting of *The Market-place and Court-house at Ennis*. The second Ennis painting can be distinguished from the first, having two dogs playing in the foreground, while the original had three. The artist envisaged the two pictures – that is, the



8 – The Four Courts and RICHMOND BRIDGE, DUBLIN 1821, oil on canvas, 76 x 107 cm

opposite

9 – A VIEW FROM BANK PLACE, LIMERICK n.d., pencil and body colour on paper 44 x 57 cm (courtesy Christie's)



Four Courts and Ennis paintings – as a matching pair, but this was an ill-chosen combination. James Gandon's architectural masterpiece, the Dublin Four Courts, could hardly be compared with Francis Bindon's pedestrian architectural composition at Ennis.⁵⁵

Turner occasionally placed notices in the *Limerick Chronicle* newspaper on the progress of his work. In May 1822 he announced that he had completed a painting called *Casino Romano*, which he described as a 'classic specimen' that illustrated 'the height to which the ancients carried the fine arts'.⁵⁶ The painting could be viewed at 2 Franklin's Quay along with many of his other works. The announcement demonstrates that Turner did not need to be in Rome to produce a painting depicting classical antiquities. But presumably the preparatory drawings for the picture were taken while the artist was in Italy. Franklin's Quay was situated well away from the city centre on the east bank of the river north of Thomond Bridge, currently known as Verdant Place.

Turner continued working on his paintings, particularly the large canvas of the royal procession at College Green and the departure of the king from Dunleary. At the end of June he advertised that the completed pictures would go on display at the Tontine House on the Crescent, together with a large collection of pictures forming a 'most splendid exhibition'. Admission was by way of a fee of 10d.⁵⁷ The Crescent was in a more central and upmarket location than his previous address and was likely to attract the affluent citizens of Limerick. However, it is improbable that Turner succeeded in selling his two principal works. More likely he brought them with him to Scotland from where they would eventually find homes in Goodrich Court and Anglesey Abbey, respectively.

William Turner's lack of commercial success left him discouraged and in straitened

financial circumstances. His frustration was evident in his notice of July 1822 where he announced that he would soon be leaving Limerick and going to Edinburgh.⁵⁸ He offered the painting of Thomas Spring Rice, which he had failed to sell, to the Limerick Chamber of Commerce, at half of its intrinsic value. Turner claimed that, while painting the picture, he had been 'countenanced' by the independent merchants of Limerick and he felt sure that such a powerful body would not be indifferent to an individual who had exhausted his substance and suffer him to depart without at least a partial remuneration for his time and expense. In the end, the Chamber of Commerce agreed to buy the painting for the knock down price of £45 10s.⁵⁹ Included in the deal was George IV's grand entry to Dublin, which, like the Spring Rice painting, the artist knew would be hard to sell in Scotland. Even in payment of the money there was further difficulty. Turner had departed Limerick before the end of July 1822, but the Chamber of Commerce did not meet until the following September to authorise payment, when presumably the money was forwarded to the artist.⁶⁰

Regrettably, Ireland did not have an industrial or a sufficiently wealthy landed class to patronise the fine arts. Much of country's landed elite, in any event, resided abroad. Irish artists were largely dependent upon the urban commercial classes. However, the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 was followed by a dramatic fall in agricultural prices, and many of Limerick's agricultural related enterprises struggled to stay in business. In May 1820 Maunsell's Bank, the most secure and respected of Limerick's financial institutions, failed, leaving the mercantile community of the city badly shaken. It was in this difficult economic environment that Turner de Lond was operating. The heavy rains of autumn 1821 severely damaged the potato crop, which resulted in widespread famine. Over one million people in the west of Ireland were seeking relief from destitution and outright starvation in 1822. It is little wonder, therefore, that the artist found the going tough. There simply was not in Limerick at that time a society that could support an artist of the calibre of William Turner de Lond.

SECOND PERIOD IN SCOTLAND

HILE MUCH UNCERTAINTY SURROUNDS TURNER DE LOND'S MOTIVES FOR MOVING to Limerick, no such uncertainty attaches to his return to Edinburgh. The artist returned to record visually the visit of George IV to the city in August 1822. Turner's particular expertise was in the portrayal of streetscapes, crowd scenes and the detail of urban topography. The visit of the reigning monarch to Scotland provided him with the opportunity of deploying his artistic skills to the full. Among the artist's first undertakings was the publication, using the lithographic process, of a print entitled *The Arrival of His Majesty, George IV, at his ancient palace of Holyrood, 16 August 1822.*⁶² Prints could be sold cheaply to the public. Black and white prints sold for 1s 6d and coloured ones for 2s 6d. They provided the artist with an immediate and steady stream of income. Unfortunately, the lithographic process was not available to Turner while he was in Limerick; if it had been, he may well have had more success in Ireland.

Two Turner paintings of the royal visit are currently preserved in Scottish public



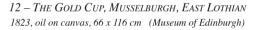
10 – The procession of George IV entering Princes Street, Edinburgh 1822, oil on canvas, 85 x 117.5 cm (Museum of Edinburgh)

11 – George IV at a military review on Portobello Sands, 23 August 1822 1822, oil on canvas, 66 x 91 cm (detail) (Scottish National Gallery)



collections. The Procession of George IV entering Princes Street (Plate 10) forms part of the collection of the Museum of Edinburgh. The picture depicts the royal parade proceeding from the eastern end of Princes Street, with Calton Hill and the Nelson monument in the background. Crowds of excited onlookers throng the streets. The royal coach is stationary in the left foreground of the image, while a military band on horseback leads the parade. A second work, George IV at a military review on Portobello Sands, 23 August 1822, is in the Scottish National Gallery (Plate 11). Portobello Sand is on the Firth of Forth, three miles east of Edinburgh. The one mile stretch of beach was used for the training of cavalry and the marshalling of troops. At the review, George IV inspected the Lowland Volunteer Cavalry and a large contingent of Highland Clans. It was estimated that up to 50,000 people attended on the occasion.

A third painting that is not associated with the king's visit is *The Gold Cup*, *Musselburgh*, *East Lothian* (Plate 12). Musselburgh, sited on the coast some seven miles east of the capital, was notable for its racecourse. In 1822 the race for the Musselburgh Gold Cup was run on Monday, 29th July, more than a fortnight before George IV's arrival in Scotland.⁶³ This was too early for Turner de Lond, who was still in the process of leaving Limerick. The painting, therefore, is likely to date to 1823 or a subsequent year. The painting, now at the Museum of Edinburgh, shows the horses crossing the finishing line to the cheers of the jubilant spectators.⁶⁴ Another work echoing an Irish theme is *The Arrival of the Mail Coach at the 'Black Bull'*, *Edinburgh* (Plates 1, 13). This picture is noteworthy because of its evident similarity to Turner's painting *The Market-place and Court-house at Ennis*, except in the Scottish example, instead of the courthouse, the mail coach arrives at the 'Black Bull', one of city's premier coaching inns. The painting is in public ownership and may be viewed at the City Art Centre, Edinburgh.







13 – THE ARRIVAL OF THE MAIL COACH AT THE 'BLACK BULL', EDINBURGH c.1825, oil on canvas, 63 x 81.5 cm (City Art Centre, Edinburgh)

Turner appears to have sold his preparatory sketches of the royal visits to Scotland and Ireland at an exhibition he organised in Edinburgh in May of 1825. A notice in a city newspaper announced the exhibition of 'Black Lead Pencil Drawings' by W. Turner de Lond at the Calton Hall, Waterloo Street. The principal subjects were the drawings of George IV's visits to Edinburgh and Dublin. Presumably, these were the initial sketches the artist had taken of the king's principal engagements, which he had subsequently worked up into oil paintings. Admittance was one shilling and catalogues were provided gratis.

This was a period, unfortunately, when many artists were in the habit of not signing their works, which in later years was to give rise to considerable confusion as to who were the original authors of the paintings concerned. Recently, an unsigned painting that for several decades formed part of a private collection in the United States was wrongly assumed to depict Duthie Park in Aberdeen and to be by the 'Irish artist', William Turner de Lond. Following its sale, the work was correctly identified as the long-lost painting *Glasgow Fair* by the Scottish artist John Knox, which in 1901 had been displayed as part of the Glasgow International Exhibition. 66 Notwithstanding this episode, there are, undoubtedly, unsigned works by Turner de Lond in private collections in Scotland and elsewhere that are unrecognised or perhaps attributed to other artists, which still await discovery.

BRIAN Ó DÁLAIGH







14 – CATHOLIC CHAPEL, BROUGHTON STREET n.d., lithograph on paper, sheet 29 x 45 cm

15 – CADYOW n.d., lithograph on paper, sheet 30 x 47 cm

16 – SHIPWRECK OF THE COMET STEAM VESSEL 1825, lithograph on paper, 35.5 x 40.5 cm

opposite

17 – VIEW OF THE GREAT FIRE AT EDINBURGH 1824, lithograph on paper, sheet 25 x 38 cm (detail)

(all: Scottish National Gallery)

LITHOGRAPHY

ILLIAM TURNER PRODUCED A LARGE NUMBER OF ENGRAVINGS AND PRINTS. Evidently, he found the production of images through lithography profitable to have engaged so extensively in the process. In his early period in Scotland Turner tended to engrave the pictures of other artists, while during his second period his engravings were largely based on his own self-composed images. In 1824 a booklet entitled Scotia Delineata was published which contained four Turner de Lond engravings: The Calton and Catholic Chapel, Broughton Street (Plate 14) were characteristic renderings of the urban topography of Edinburgh, but the other two, Cadyow (Plate 15) and On the Esk near Roslin, were rare portrayals by the artist of scenic Scottish landscapes.⁶⁷

Later the same year, the great fire of Edinburgh broke out in an engraver's workshop off High Street. The fire quickly spread and engulfed large sections of the centre of the city. Turner witnessed the conflagration and took swift sketches of the flame-consumed streets and buildings (Plate 17). There were many casualties, and the aftermath was widely reported. Turner realised that the catastrophe could work to his advantage. The initial sketches were taken on 16th November 1824, and just two days later his first printed image of the great fire was ready for sale. The print shows the destruction wrought by the fire on High Street, smoke and flames issuing from the Tron Kirk spire, while groups of citizens look on in horror. A second print depicted the firefighters in Parliament Square successfully preventing the flames from reaching St Giles Cathedral. Coming so close after the event there was tremendous demand for his prints. A publication subsequently appeared, A series of six views of the Great Fire of Edinburgh on 15/16 November drawn at the scene by William Turner de Lond. 68 His engravings of the great fire are by far his best-known Scottish works. It appears also that Turner worked up some of his sketches into full oil paintings. A painting described as 'A view of the east end of St Giles' Church writhing in the flames of November 16th, 1824' was long ascribed to J.M.W. Turner but has subsequently been identified as a work by Turner de Lond.⁶⁹ That his painting should have been confused by so many with the work of the renowned Turner is a



sign of the remarkable skill and ability of the artist.

A particularly tragic incident in October of 1825, the sinking of the steam ship *Comet* at the mouth of the Clyde with the loss of 62 of its 80 passengers and crew, prompted the artist to produce a graphic print of the tragedy (Plate 16). The engraving depicts the sinking *Comet* with its doomed passengers struggling in the water.⁷⁰ Turner seems to have been at his most creative when he was reacting to events. Curiously for an artist of his ability, he appears to have received very few commissions. For instance, portraiture was the bread and butter of most artists, yet we have no record of painted portraits from his years in Scotland. At about the same time he issued another collection of engravings, *Six views on the new line of road communicating between Stirling and Carlisle*.⁷¹ The publication bears no date but the paper is watermarked 1825. Turner illustrated six scenic landmarks along the route which was the main channel of communication between western Scotland and northern England.

In 1826, under the patronage of the Highland Society of Scotland, Turner was commissioned to produce engravings of prize winning animals at the Glasgow agricultural show. These included illustrations of horses, cattle and pigs. In one print, a fine sow rubs noses with a boar of the Berkshire breed, ignoring a bunch of turnips that lie between them (Plate 18). The publication was titled *Twelve plates of animals from the Highland Society's Great Cattle Show held at Glasgow, Sept. 1826, drawn from life by Wm Turner de Lond.*⁷² A print that can also be assigned to this period is *Ancient Scottish Highland*

18 – A FINE SOW WITH A BOAR OF THE BERKSHIRE BREED
1826, lithograph on paper, sheet 29 x 46 cm (National Library of Scotland)

opposite 19 – View of Hyde Park corner with Apsley House, looking towards Piccadilly 1828, oil on canvas, 44 x 62 cm





Games as practised annually at St Fillans, Perthshire, 73 which the artist dedicated to the chieftains and members of the St Fillans Highland Society.

Through his connection with the Highland Society, Turner was employed in 1827 by Sir Henry Steuart of Allanton, North Lanarkshire to illustrate a book on tree cultivation which he intended to publish. While at Allanton House the artist gave drawing lessons to Sir Henry's daughter. His book: *The Planter's Guide ... on the best method of giving immediate effect to wood*, published in 1828, ran to several editions and carried four high quality engravings of the Allanton Estate by Turner. This is our last reference to the artist in Scotland. In contrast to his years in Ireland, his time in Scotland was concentrated less on painting and much more on lithography. His extensive body of engravings is his principal contribution to Scottish art.

FINAL YEARS AND LEGACY

URNER'S FINAL YEARS WERE SPENT IN THE SOUTH-EAST OF ENGLAND. THIS WE MAY deduce from a small number of his works that survive from the late 1820s or early 1830s. The painting *View of Hyde Park corner with Apsley House, looking towards Piccadilly* (signed by W. Turner) displays the formal architecture of one of London's most imposing streetscapes (Plate 19). The work must date to after 1828 because Apsley House was remodelled in that year as a residence for the Duke of Wellington. The street and balconies are crowded with onlookers watching a procession of Royal Horse Guards proceeding towards Hyde Park.⁷⁵ A second painting, *Crowds embarking on a paddle-steamer*

trip before Waterloo Bridge, is signed 'W. Turner. Pinx' (Plate 20). The picture depicts well-dressed Londoners boarding a paddle steamer for a journey down the Thames. The elegant top hats and bonnets of the passengers date the work to the early 1830s. A third unsigned picture dating to 1831 is attributed with less certainty to W. Turner: The London to Brighton Coach at Cheapside, 1831, which is now at the Guild Hall Art Gallery in Moorgate. As was the case in Scotland, there are paintings of the London area, particularly streetscapes and coaching scenes, attributed to Turner de Lond that are clearly not by him and, conversely, works by him that are wrongly attributed to others, including, not infrequently the great J.M.W. Turner.

Late in life, Turner de Lond returned to an earlier genre, that of the panorama. In the 1830s, Monsieur P. Daguire, a travelling showman, toured the south-west of England with revolving panoramas. This was a continuous painted canvas rolled at each end around two large spools that could be turned, causing the canvas to scroll across the back of a stage. Unlike previous panoramic displays, the revolving panorama had a narrator, who described the scenes as they appeared. In April 1834, at Exeter in Devon, Monsieur Daguire advertised the 'Grand Revolving Panorama' of the city of Antwerp with the bombardment of the citadel by the French under Marshal Gérard, an event that occurred in November and December 1832. The scenes were 'Painted by W. Turner of London (and assistants) from sketches made on the spot by Lieutenant Batty'. ⁷⁷ Daguire had previously exhibited the Antwerp panorama at Plymouth in November 1833. ⁷⁸ Therefore, it is likely that Turner painted the large canvases in the early months of 1833. This, unfortunately, is our last reference to the artist.

If we accept that Turner de Lond was the same person as Turner of Shoreditch, who first exhibited work at the Royal Academy in 1787, it follows that William Turner de Lond was born in 1763 and was seventy years old in 1833, which would have been a good life-span for a working artist of the period. The artist was unfortunate to have lived in an age that was so dominated by J.M.W. Turner, the most celebrated English artist of the nineteenth century. The great Turner dominated the artist's standing not only in life but also in death. Because both artists bore identical names, many of Turner de Lond's best works, after his death, were attributed to the great Turner, which meant that his art became even more marginalised and obscure than would otherwise have been the case.

British artists operated in an extremely competitive environment where individuals vied with each other for whatever patronage was available. In one sense Turner de Lond lived on his wits and needed to seize the opportunities that presented themselves. His opportunistic painting of the Spring Rice celebrations in Limerick and his engravings of the great fire of Edinburgh are good examples of his resourcefulness. In such an environment it was necessary for the artist to embrace innovation. Turner took full advantage of the opportunities offered by the lithographic process and was also alert to the money-making potential of the revolving panoramas. Painting large canvases for touring panoramas was a way of bringing art to the masses. Turner liked to paint on 'the large scale', and while it may not have been the highest art form, it broadened his reputation and boosted his earnings.

At an important art exhibition held in Limerick at the Protestant Orphan Hall, Pery Street, in 1858 – that is, 36 years after Turner de Lond left the city – only four of the 267



20 – Crowds Embarking on a paddle-steamer trip before Waterloo Bridge, London early 1830s, oil on canvas, 51 x 70 cm

paintings exhibited were by him.⁸⁰ The stratum of urban society that was in possession of his works is revealing. The paintings, *The Entry of George IV into Dublin* and *The Four Courts*, *Dublin*, were lent to the exhibition by William Hampden Russell.⁸¹ Russell was the Limerick 'sub-agent' to the Bank of Ireland.⁸² He may have held the painting in trust for the Limerick Chamber of Commerce, who was the owner of the work. The painting *View of Ennis* was exhibited by Patrick A. Shannon, son of Pierce Shannon, a prosperous hardware merchant of the city.⁸³ *The Potato Market, Limerick* was probably the Turner picture currently preserved in Limerick Museum (Plate 5). It was then in the possession of insurance and land agent, John W. Mahony,⁸⁴ who became mayor of Limerick in 1872. It is striking that none of the paintings were in the ownership of a titled individual or a member of the landlord class; all belonged to merchants of the city.

Turner de Lond is better remembered in Ireland than in Britain, principally because an artist of his ability, while not uncommon in England, was a rarity in Ireland. While in Ireland he visited areas that seldom attracted the attention of professional artists. For instance, his painting of Ennis is the only pre-photographic image of the town known to exist. In such circumstances it is easy to see why the work of the London coach-maker is so highly prized. The pity is that so few of his pictures survive. Currently only ten paintings are identified as being from his time in Ireland. The hope must be that in the future more of his pictures will come to light. Notwithstanding the deficit in the survival of his work, the artist has left as a legacy an extremely valuable window on life in the urban environments of Ireland and of Britain as it pertained two centuries ago.

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ENDNOTES

- Catalogue of paintings by the old masters and a collection of pictures by the artists and amateurs of Limerick (Limerick, 1821); copy in Limerick City Library. See also Ann M. Stewart, Irish art loans exhibitions 1765-1927 (Dublin, 1995) II, 722-23.
- Robert Herbert, 'The chairing of Thomas Spring Rice', North Munster Antiquarian Journal, IV, 1945, 138-41. See also Country Life, no. 99, 29th Mar 1946, 576-77: letter and photo of Spring Rice painting from Robert Herbert seeking information on William Turner de Lond.
- ³ Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'An early nineteenth century painting of Ennis', *The Other Clare*, no. 10, 1986, 13-14.
- William Laffan (ed.), Painting Ireland: topographical views of Glin Castle (Tralee, 2006) 68-69, 106-08, 190-98. See also Laffan's comment on Turner de Lond, 'One of the most distinctive topographical artists to have worked in Ireland', in Nicola Figgis (ed.), Art and architecture of Ireland, volume II: painting, 1600-1900 (Dublin, New Haven and London, 2014) 480-81.
- ⁵ Huon Mallalieu, 'Around the sales rooms', *Country Life*, no. 191, 3rd July 1997, 74-75.
- The painting View of Portsmouth harbour from Portsdown by William Turner of Shoreditch is preserved at the Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery, England.
- Royal Academy London, exhibition catalogues for years 1787, two pictures; 1792, two pictures, 1808, two pictures; 1813, three pictures; 1816, three pictures.
- 8 Anne Crookshanks and Knight of Glin, *Ireland's painters* 1600-1940 (London, 2002) 203; Mallaleiu, 'Around the sales rooms', 74.
- Morning Chronicle, 5th May 1800; Richard Spencer, 'Mr Turner and the Naumachia' in Turner Studies – his art and epoch 1775-1851, no. 9, 1989, 27.
- Spencer, 'Turner Naumachia', 27-30. Simon Schama, History of Britain, volume three: the fate of empire, 1776-2000 (London, 2002) 112.

- 11 Morning Post, 1st May 1802.
- The Exhibition of the Royal Academy (London, 1792) 31.
- The Post Office annual directory for 1815 (London, 1815) 337; Morning Post, 23rd Sept 1816.
- ¹⁴ Morning Post, 6th Dec 1804.
- See, in particular, his paintings Courthouse and Charlotte's Quay, Limerick; Four Courts and Richmond Bridge, Dublin and Mussellburgh Races, East Lothian, Scotland.
- Liverpool Mercury, 6th and 13th Sept, 4th and 11th Oct 1816.
- Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 7th Apr and 26th May 1817. I am indebted to Dr David Fleming for this reference.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*, 11th Nov and 25th Nov 1816.
- 19 See page 80 for a discussion on Turner's description of his painting Bank of Ireland at College Green.
- ²⁰ Aris's Birmingham Gazette, 3rd Mar 1817.
- ²¹ Caledonian Mercury, 14th Mar 1807.
- ²² Perthshire Courier, 23rd July 1810.
- ²³ Caledonian Mercury, 4th July 1811.
- ²⁴ Christie's, auction 10713, 9th Dec 2015, lot 193.
- ²⁵ Catalogue of paintings by the artists and amateurs of Limerick, no. 17.
- 26 The Exhibition of the Royal Academy (London, 1792) 15, no. 479.
- ²⁷ Catalogue of paintings by the artists and amateurs of Limerick, no. 41.
- Edward MacLysaght, Calendar of Orrery papers (Dublin, 1941) 205.
- ²⁹ P. Fitzgerald and J.J McGregor, *History, topography and antiquities of Limerick* (Dublin, 1827), Appendix II, p.xvi.
- ³⁰ Arthur Vicars, *Index: prerogative wills of Ireland* (Dublin, 1897) 463.
- ³¹ House of Commons, Westminster, Returns of the number of persons registered as freeholders, within the last eight years, in every city and town in Ireland (London, 1829).
- ³² For works mentioned in the paragraph, see *Catalogue of paintings by the artists and amateurs of Limerick*, nos 7, 8, 32, 51, 52.
- 33 Christie's London, auction catalogue, Glin Castle: a Knight in Ireland, 7th May 2009, lot 28.
- ³⁴ James Kelly, Sport in Ireland 1600-1840 (Dublin, 2014) 119.
- 35 Ordnance Survey Ireland, first edition, six inch map, Newcastle, Limerick, 1840-42. The former race course is today occupied by the greens and