

The Sir George Scharf Sketchbooks

5. Introduction to SSB 46 (15 February–27 July 1857)

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NB. All page references are to SSB 46 and catalogue numbers refer to items from the Art Treasures Exhibition's Gallery of Ancient Masters unless otherwise specified.

SSB 46 contains sketches of around seventy Art Treasures items, and encompasses the longest chronological span of any of the sketchbooks associated with the exhibition, a six-month period from mid-February to the end of July 1857. This has a lot to do with Scharf's increasing workload at Old Trafford, and his inability to continuously update the content of the sketchbook for days, sometimes weeks, on end. Between February and April, Scharf slowed and eventually concluded his countrywide survey of British collections, gradually abandoning plans for tours of Scotland, Ireland and the East of England (though Scharf's brief visit to the Northeast/ Newcastle in early April is indicated). As paintings began to arrive at the Art Treasures Palace during March and April, Scharf began hurriedly organising the hang of the Gallery of Ancient Masters in time for the opening of the exhibition on Tuesday 5 May.¹ He was required to attend various official events associated with the exhibition thereafter, and worked intensively to complete his contribution to its definitive catalogue, which was not ready until the end of May (although a far more abbreviated, provisional edition had been issued in time for the exhibition's opening). During this month and the next, Scharf was constantly shuttling between London and Manchester in order to fulfil a series of weekly Saturday lectures at Queens College, London. He also had to attend meetings associated with his new appointment as Secretary to the recently formed National Portrait Gallery which he had secured in early March (although these duties did not properly occupy him until the middle of October). As spring turned into summer, Scharf was once again suffering from physical and nervous exhaustion, but an antidote presented itself in the form of a tour of Cheshire and North Wales at the end of July. Material gathered on this trip brings SSB 46 to its conclusion.

¹ On 26 March 1857 Scharf wrote to the Edinburgh collector James Gibson Craig to confirm that "the very latest day of admission will be the 14th April beyond which period no work however small will be accepted" – MCL M6/2/6/2/194-195.

5.i. February-March 1857: Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Cheshire and Manchester

The opening pages of SSB 46 find Scharf in Gloucestershire, enjoying a rare day off and sketching views of Mitcheldean and the interior of its parish church on Sunday 15 February (pp. 1-3) - unusually there are no visits to lenders recorded for this day. On Monday, however, he was back on the trail with two appointments with collectors in neighbouring Worcestershire: Mr Aldham (who did not lend) at Stoke Prior (pp. 3-4), near Bromsgrove, and John Howard Galton (1794-1862) at Hadzor Hall near Droitwich Spa (pp.4-8). Scharf had already encountered some of the latter's pictures at an exhibition at the Athenaeum in London on Monday 8 December (see the **introduction to SSB 44**). Galton's collection – essentially inherited from his late father-in-law, Joseph Strutt of Derby (1765-1844) - was particularly rich in Dutch masters, and two standout works which Scharf selected for Manchester are now in the National Gallery of Ireland, Jan Mytens's *Woman with a Guitar* and Willem Drost's *Man in a Broad-brimmed Hat* (pp. 5-6; cats. 618 & 676), although both had different attributions at this point. Galton's appointed representative, his son Theodore, became a regular and persistent correspondent thereafter, repeatedly seeking certain assurances from Scharf regarding the safety and insurance of his father's pictures. It is not clear how much of an irritant this became for Scharf; although Theodore's anxieties seem to have slowed the selection and transportation of the loans, it bought Scharf time to garner further information on the status and provenance of particular items before deciding on which to claim. For example, Scharf wrote to Theodore on 17 March to (rightly) challenge Waagen's ascription of Pieter Codde's *Family Group* now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam to Jan le Duc (although Scharf was still forced to list it under this name at Manchester in accordance with rules laid down by the Executive Committee) (pp. 5-6; cat. 974): "I found a monogram on it which indicates another painter", he wrote to Theodore, and this detail was indeed spotted and sketched in a separate study on page 6 of SSB 46 (see also **fig. 5.i**) – an example of the usefulness to Scharf of making on-the-spot inspections of items before requesting them for Manchester.²

² MCL M6/2/6/2/100-103. For Scharf's dealings with Galton see also Cottrell, 2020, p. 292 (with thanks also to Michael Copeland).

On the evening of 16 February Scharf returned to Manchester and would not take up with SSB 46 again until ten days later on 27 February. Predictably, the first few days back at Mosley Street were dominated by an accumulated pile of Art Treasures correspondence. Over thirty letters to owners are recorded in the Art Secretary's Out-Letters Book over the next three days; many of them begin with an apology for leaving letters unanswered and places unvisited etc. Scharf now became highly strategic as to the pictures he sought, frequently declined further invitations from lenders, and was generally only interested in visiting those whom he could reach easily in and around Manchester or London. On these appointments he would now only scout for works by particular artists. Everything requested had to have a place found for it in the resulting hang; there could be no returns after pictures arrived at Old Trafford (see his letter to Thomas Bulkeley Owen on 16 March, discussed below). It was not, therefore, merely a matter of the time available, but also the sheer volume of loans already accepted which caused Scharf increasing concern. On Friday 20 February Scharf wrote to the Earl of Derby to say he regretted not being able to take up an invitation to make a return visit to Knowsley Park (see the **introduction to SSB 44**):

...as my duties in inspecting various collections and making arrangements for the reception of so many pictures in the building have fully occupied me. Nor does it seem possible that I can personally visit all that might come to us in sufficient time. The contributions that have already come to us are so vast that we are obliged to make several modifications in our original plans.³



Fig. 5.i. George Scharf, *Notes and sketches on the collection of John Howard Galton at Hadzor House, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, 16 February 1857.* Details of pages 5-6 of Scharf Sketchbook 46. Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.

³ MCL M6/2/6/1/251-252.

However, there were still important gaps to fill if Scharf was to achieve his ambition of offering a comprehensive overview of continental painting up until the mid-eighteenth century. His quest for Spanish pictures of quality was particularly pressing, and in this area he found himself in need of not just loans but also connoisseurial expertise. He found them embodied in William Stirling (later William Stirling-Maxwell) (1818-1878) - a prominent Scottish-based collector of the Spanish School and author of the four-volume *Annals of the Artists of Spain* of 1848. On 18 February Scharf recruited his assistance as a consultant in the writing of the Ancient Masters section of the Art Treasures Catalogue, which would appear first in provisional and then definitive editions:

As the arrangements and cataloguing of the ancient masters remain with me, I shall have great pleasure in submitting the proofsheets of the Spanish portion to you. I must however premise that our first catalogue will not contain much more than an enunciation of names but a second and more critical one will, I hope, be undertaken. I agree with you nothing can be much worse than our London Sale catalogues and have reason to know that Messers Christie's rejected offers of superior assistance in the case of the Rogers and Oxford sales.⁴

Scharf was obviously keen to establish common ground with Stirling in maintaining the scholarly integrity of the catalogue, which would not be overly tainted by the opportunistic attributions of dealers. Stirling responded enthusiastically, making several valuable suggestions. On 26 March Scharf thanked him for his notes with regard to the provisional catalogue, and hoped "to desire still more benefit from your information in a subsequent edition of our own catalogue which will be prepared with especial care".⁵ The latter, definitive catalogue was published towards the end of May a few weeks after the opening of the exhibition – see below.

With a slew of correspondence out of the way, Scharf returned to London on the evening of Friday 20 February remaining there till the following Tuesday. As he informed a frequent correspondent, Theodore Rathbone (1798-1863) of the Liverpool Royal Institution, the purpose of this trip was to "organise the extra assistants [probably picture handlers] whom I have engaged, we are tremendously busy" – see also the **introduction to SSB 45** for a wider discussion of Scharf's efforts to organise hired help during this period.⁶ Scharf then

⁴ MCL M6/2/6/1/234-235.

⁵ MCL M6/2/6/2/191-192. On Stirling's assistance see also Pergam, 2011, pp. 168-170.

⁶ MCL M6/2/6/1/245-246.

continued with SSB 46 on Friday 27 February in order to record two more potential lender 'inspections' - the first with the MP Philip de Malpas Grey Egerton (1806-1881) at Oulton Park, Tarporley, Cheshire. Scharf had arrived there the previous evening and stayed overnight (pp. 9-11). Among the pictures sketched, it would be interesting to establish the identity of the *Entombment* on page 9 which purported to be by Caravaggio. It may be surprising that this was the only painting representative of this master in the entire Gallery of Ancient Masters (cat. 336), although it was almost certainly by a follower, and excited little or no comment. This reflects the scant attention often paid by Scharf and many of his contemporaries to an artist whose influence over European painting is now considered to be hugely important. The neglect of Caravaggio is one of the more obvious areas in which Scharf's representation of the European Schools would not meet modern expectations. Apart from the odd work ascribed (wrongly) to Gerrit van Honthorst and Artemisia Gentileschi, paintings by Caravaggio's followers were notably absent from Manchester in contrast to the emphasis given to the Carracci and the seventeenth-century Bolognese School (see also the **introductions to SSB 43 and SSB 44**).⁷

On the same day as Scharf was at Oulton, he also visited the recently built and dramatically situated Peckforton Castle, the home of John Tollemache, later 1st Baron Tollemache (1805-1890) (pp. 11-17), to survey an interesting, but variable collection of British and Flemish works. "He has really some wonderful pictures & portraits", Scharf wrote in a follow up letter to Egerton on 2 March, "what a glorious selection also for a residence!"⁸ Despite this, Scharf only claimed two items for the Ancient Masters section of the exhibition - a curious *Trial Scene* by Egbert van Heemskerck (p. 12; cat. 843) and a bird piece by Frans Snyders (p. 13; cat. 535). His sketches were, however, useful to the organisers of the Modern Masters and British Portrait Galleries who required more in the way of loans from Peckforton. Scharf returned to Manchester either that evening or early the next day.

Pictures were now beginning to arrive at the Art Treasures Palace, as is plain from a letter written on 2 March in which Scharf acknowledges the safe arrival of Lt Gen Fox's paintings.⁹

⁷ However, a variant after Caravaggio's *Youth with a Ram* in the Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome, in the hands of the dealer John Hodgson clearly caught Scharf's eye on 29 November 1856 – see the sketch in SSB 44, p. 80.

⁸ MCL M6/2/6/1/282-284.

⁹ MCL M6/2/6/1/286.

In addition to sorting through works at the Art Treasures Palace, it was not unusual for Scharf to remain closeted at Mosley Street writing between ten and fifteen letters a day to owners during this period. Given the pace and volume of work, he clearly valued any opportunity to relax, and in the evening his diaries record numerous visits to the opera – presumably at Manchester’s Free Trade Hall. SSB 46 reveals that Scharf was finally able to escape Manchester once again on Thursday 5 March, although only as far as Cheetham Hill and the home of the collector George Faulkener (p. 18).¹⁰ The next day, Scharf travelled a little further afield, to George Fortescue Wilbraham (1815-1885) at Delamere House, near Northwich (pp. 19-21).¹¹ Scharf had already put off the visit at least once; three days earlier, on 3 March, Scharf wrote to Willbraham:

I regret exceedingly that time did not permit me to call on you the other day when in your neighbourhood. I hope however to do so on Friday next. We are so extremely pressed with quantity of work and variety of duties that it is scarcely possible to regulate the number of visits to be paid in a day and the more so as the duration of my inspection occupations can never be known beforehand...¹²

As he wrote to the restorer George Barker the day following his visit, Scharf’s chief objective with Wilbraham was to pursue Poussin’s *Venus and Adonis* now in the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth (see p. 20); the absence of *chefs d’oeuvre* by this artist was now becoming a particular concern: “Mr Wilbraham...has a N. Poussin which if merely cleaned and varnished would come out very creditably and do good service in our exhibition. I mentioned your name to him and he is willing to entrust the picture to you”. He then asks Barker if this could be done quickly so he could “reserve a space for it” in the hang.¹³ This wish to present Wilbraham’s Poussin in the best light contrasts with comments Scharf had made to the Duke of Manchester on 26 December in respect of the restoration of exhibition items: “with regard to the condition of the pictures I do not think it desirable that they should, any of them, be “done up” for our Exhibition and this I say to everyone. The simplest cleaning of the picture itself with sponge and water would suffice”.¹⁴ It is not clear what happened next, but ultimately Wilbraham did not lend. No matter: Scharf had already successfully written to

¹⁰ See also LB V, pp. 62-63.

¹¹ See also LB VI, p. 16-17.

¹² MCL M6/2/6/1/286.

¹³ MCL M6/2/6/2/29.

¹⁴ MCL M6/2/6/1/133-134.

Lord Carlisle on 4 March in the hope of securing Poussin's *Triumph of Bacchus* now in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (cat. 598 – see the **introduction to SSB 47**).

5.ii. March-April 1857: final preparations for the Art Treasures Exhibition; the end of Scharf's survey

SSB 46 would remain closed until Scharf's next foray into the field on Sunday 22 March. In the intervening period Scharf's duties kept him "a close prisoner in Manchester", as he wrote to lender Charles T. Maud on 8 March. But in the same letter also came news of a brief breakout, and the exciting promise of pastures new: "I am again off to the metropolis for a day", Scharf wrote, "in consequence of a government appointment which the Chancellor of the Exchequer has bestowed on me".¹⁵ His aunt's diary for 9 March elaborates: her nephew was "in London to attend a board, being appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be secretary to the gallery of national portraits", the official decision to appoint Scharf having been taken a few days earlier on 4 March.¹⁶ This represented the fulfilment of Scharf's quest to acquire institutional recognition as one of the country's most able art consultants. His new post also acknowledged how he had frequently acted on Peter Cunningham's behalf in sourcing works for the British Portrait Gallery (see, for example, Scharf's letter to Earl Warwick of 16 March 1857 discussed in the **introduction to SSB 48**). Scharf worked initially under the domineering eye of the National Portrait Gallery's Chairman of Trustees Philip Stanhope, 5th Earl Stanhope (1805-1875). Their working relationship was tetchy at first: tension immediately arose from the way in which Scharf sought to defer the bulk of his new duties until after the closure of the Art Treasures Exhibition in October (see the **introduction to SSB 47**). Even after this point, Scharf continued to lobby for ways in which his administrative role should be subordinated to his scholarly activity – an issue that would frequently manifest itself during this early phase in the emergence of the country's museum professionals. But eventually Scharf and Stanhope's relationship grew into one of close and amicable respect, with Scharf increasingly gaining the upper hand. His new posting was ultimately a career-defining moment; it would, over time, effectively evolve into the role of the National Portrait

¹⁵ MCL M6/2/6/2/39-40.

¹⁶ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6. On Scharf's appointment see also Pergam, 2011, p. 91 n. 153.

Gallery's first Director (his title was confirmed in 1882) - a position in which he would serve for the next thirty-eight years until his retirement in 1895.¹⁷

Unfortunately, as with his interview for the Art Secretary's position at Manchester the previous August, Scharf first appeared before the board of the National Portrait Gallery's trustees on 9 March feeling decidedly poorly; his aunt notes that after the meeting was over, he "came to us in the evening very unwell with a sore cold and sore throat. He staid [sic] all night and slept well but rose with his throat still worse could not swallow anything but a little nourishing liquids [and] was obliged to set off for Manchester in the evening so ill that it made us very uneasy and anxious".¹⁸ Scharf had begun to recover by Thursday 12 March and wrote a rapid succession of letters to owners that day apologising for a series of missed appointments. But these also reveal that he was still not sufficiently well to travel, and prearranged plans to return to London had to be put on hold until he recommenced his dwindling survey of pictures on Saturday 21 March.¹⁹

From his correspondence during this period it is clear that Scharf continued to be extremely cautious as to further pictures he should either solicit or accept; of those that had already arrived sight-unseen he found that claims for some of them had been exaggerated, and yet they still, according to the rules of the Executive Committee, had to be included; numerous letters also express his increasing unease at the scale of the whole Art Treasures undertaking and the time and space allotted for so ambitious a project. "I heartily regret that our galleries are not three times the size", he fretted in a letter to one Shropshire-based lender, Thomas Bulkeley Owen on 16 March, "and that we had not two years instead of six months to perform our duties in". In the same letter he writes:

I pen this note the moment that all hope of my making any further excursion from Manchester is over. I had indeed up to this minute hoped that the Executive Committee would allow me to make a short excursion into Shropshire and another in Nottinghamshire but they now decide that I am to remain entirely at Manchester until the opening of the Exhibition. It would have been impossible for me to employ others to assist me as we

¹⁷ On Scharf's relationship with Stanhope see Michie and Warhol, 2015, pp. 199-202 and Heath, 'Sir George Scharf and the early National Portrait Gallery, 2018, pp. 91-95.

¹⁸ Entry for 9 March. The next day Scharf's aunt records that she had caught her nephew's cold and was herself "very unwell" - NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

¹⁹ On 12 March 1857 Scharf wrote to J. Bergne to say "I am suffering from a very violent cold and do not think it would be prudent for me to risk a journey to town on two successive evenings - I must therefore propose to postpone my visit to you for a week viz. till Sunday the 22nd" - MCL M6/2/6/2/48.

should have possibly been collecting and accepting duplicate pictures. Moreover every picture that we receive must of necessity be provided with a place. I am now compelled to relinquish a visit to the counties of the east coast and worst of all, a sojourn in Scotland as I had fully looked forward to.²⁰

One is never quite sure of the extent to which Scharf was a free agent in some of these matters. In letters such as this, he frequently - and all too conveniently - invokes the dictats of the Executive Committee in order to convince recipients as to how his hands were tied on particular matters, such as the eligibility of pictures, the criteria for lending, and the management of his own schedule. One suspects this was often a pose, and a means of sparing himself personal embarrassment in managing the expectations of lenders. He certainly found himself suddenly empowered to break the embargo on further visits where Bulkeley Owen's Shropshire home of Tedsmore was concerned and decided to visit him after all - a week later, on 23 March (see below).

His "picture huntings" could not yet end: in addition to a dearth of good Poussins, he was still fretting over the acquisition of decent, genuine examples of Denys Calvaert, Salvator Rosa, and Ludolph Backhuizen.²¹ "We are singularly wanting in Backhuysen", Scharf had written to the dealer Peter Norton on 3 March, and pestered him again on 14 March to use his influence in securing the "Large Backhuysens belonging to Mr Delafield".²² With regard to Calvaert, Scharf wrote to a Scottish collector, K. L. Sutherland on 13 March that, "as long as there remains even a chance I do not give up the hopes of our displaying your picture; but I have yet to be assured that it is a Denys Calvaert. I have not yet seen a true specimen in this country".²³ Now that a trip to Scotland was out of the question, Scharf had to rely on this owner granting him further information on the work. But ultimately Scharf was not satisfied with its credentials and eventually declined the loan on 16 March, wishing to keep space free for a better example, but none presented itself.²⁴

Scharf now felt that the exhibition had reached a sufficient level of preparedness to acquaint G. F. Waagen (supposedly the exhibition's chief art historical consultant) with the

²⁰ MCL M6/2/6/2/100-103.

²¹ "picture huntings" is a phrase Scharf uses to describe his survey visit in a letter to Edmund Phipps of 17 February 1857 - MCL M6/2/6/1/231.

²² MCL M6/2/6/2/10-11 & 68. see also Scharf's letter to Col Hugh Baillie of 2 March discussed in the **introduction to SSB 45**.

²³ MCL M6/2/6/2/61.

²⁴ MCL M6/2/6/2/88.

current state of affairs. This he did in a long, revealing letter of Tuesday 17 March which is worth quoting at length:

I have long wished to send you a report of our Exhibition and have really not had one moment's time to do so. I have had to travel all over the country in search of unknown works of art as well as to examine others which have an undue celebrity and were offered to us...I have come to the stage of being obliged to reject offers. Our building is as full as may conveniently be without our being reduced to hanging the pictures so close as to rub frame against frame. We are not permitted to have any of the pictures from Blenheim, nor from Petworth nor, so far from Hamilton Palace...Death has been working in our favour. The late Lord Scarsdale refused to let us have anything. His successor at once wrote to give us all we want. The Duke of Rutland and Lord Amherst are since dead and I hope in the same way, that events may turn in our favour. We must have some of the Seven Sacraments by Poussin. The death of [their owner] Lord Ellesmere is a great loss to us. I fear we shall have nothing from the Bridgewater Gallery. His successor as our president, Lord Overstone is very active and from him I trust, we shall derive great benefit.

There then follows a further summary of who had and had not lent, with Scharf celebrating the major coups, such as the forty-two works from the Hertford Collection, while also mourning further no-shows from various lenders, including the Duke of Northumberland who “refuses us the Cornaro family [aka Titian’s *Vendramin Family* – now in the National Gallery, London], and all the Camuccini purchase including the Titian & Bellini [presumably the *Portrait of Georges d’Armagnac and his Secretary*, still at Alnwick, and the *Feast of the Gods* in the National Gallery of Art Washington]”. “The Royal Academy”, Scharf continues, “refuses their cartoon by Lionardo da Vinci [now National Gallery, London] and the fine old copy of the *Cena* by Marco D’Oggione [a full-size copy of *The Last Supper* still in the Royal Academy’s possession]”. The then, first director of the National Gallery, and ex-President of the Royal Academy, Charles Eastlake (1793-1865), had been recruited to Scharf’s crusade where the last two items were concerned, but we learn that Eastlake himself refused “to allow us any of his [own personal] pictures as he is afraid that if he appears publicly as a collector the people will say why does he not buy equally well for the National Gallery”.²⁵ Scharf then goes on to observe that “unfortunately the fears of many of the owners of galleries to remove their pictures being heirlooms prevent our having many fine specimens.” He also returns to the recurrent theme of inadequate time and space:

²⁵ On Eastlake’s purchasing criteria see Avery Quash, 2011, I, pp. 16-19, and with recourse to specifically Italian works, Avery-Quash, 2003, pp. xxix-xxx.

Our building is far too small and the time for preparation too short for us to render proper justice to so grand an undertaking. I am however devoting my every moment and every thought towards realising that success which I feel the enterprize to deserve. Your notes have been of invaluable service to us and I have almost implicitly followed your marks indicating the relative degrees of importance of the pictures....If I could only have had time to make various excursions into the country and examine pictures in out of the way localities, I am quite satisfied that many very curious and rare works of art would have been obtained.²⁶

A few days later, on the evening of Saturday 21 March, Scharf returned to London for the first time since his sickly interview with the National Portrait Gallery's Board of Trustees eleven days earlier. His express purpose, as revealed by SSB 46, involved some last-minute scouting for pictures, including those belonging to Dr John W. Prout at Neasden in Middlesex whom he visited the following day (pp. 21-22). Prout did not lend, or was not asked to, but on Sunday 22 March, Scharf bagged a Filippino Lippi *Virgin and Child* (pp. 23-24; cat. 61) to which its owner, Beriah Botfield, had alerted him a few weeks earlier in a letter of 3 March.²⁷ Comparing Scharf's sketch with the photograph in Caldesi and Montecchi's photographic album of the Ancient Masters exhibited at Manchester, it is arguable that the frame was the best thing about it.²⁸ Scharf left London the same day for Shropshire and visited a Mr Tupper of Stable Yard (pp. 24-25) over the weekend – but there were slim pickings here too. He sketched local landmarks and items of interest seen on the way, including a view of Stafford from the Grand Junction Hotel (p. 26). He also made a couple of drawings of a traveller with a coracle strapped to his back (pp. 25 & 27) encountered on the road from Shrewsbury to his next destination, Tedsmore Hall, West Felton. It was here, on Monday 23 March, he surveyed the collection of Thomas Bulkeley Owen (pp. 27-30). This represented a more interesting and diverse selection with some decent works, such as Dosso Dossi's, *Man Embracing a Woman* and Aelbert Cuyp's, *Portrait of a Bearded Man* (both now in the National Gallery, London). In the letter to Bulkeley Owen of 16 March already cited (see above), it is also clear that Scharf had high hopes of the Rubens *Portrait of Helene Fourment* (pp. 29-30), but none of these or any of the others sketched by Scharf at Tedsmore were ultimately lent to Manchester. At this late stage he had to be exceptionally choosy. Scharf seems to have returned to Manchester via Chester

²⁶ MCL M6/2/6/2/112-116.

²⁷ MCL M6/2/6/2/4.

²⁸ Caldesi & Montecchi, *Ancient Series*, 1857, pl. 67.

because an accomplished study of half-timbered buildings on Northgate Street on page 31 bares the dates 23 March and 26 July, dovetailing, therefore, with studies made later in SSB 46 on return visits to the city during the summer (see below and **fig. 5.ii**).

Fig. 5.ii. George Scharf,
*Sketches of buildings in
Northgate Street, Chester,*
23 March & 26 July 1857.

Page 31 of Scharf
Sketchbook 46. Heinz
Archive, National Portrait
Gallery, London.



Scharf then returned to SSB 46 to record a final round of collector visits in a sequence of undated notes spanning pages 33-46. These involved a trip to Liverpool and the surrounding area, including visits to the Royal Institution and the collector D. Hodgson (both pp. 33-35). *A terminus post quem* for these visits is suggested by an agitated letter written on 2 April to Theodore Rathbone of the Royal Institution. In this Scharf complains of the non-arrival in Manchester of an important group of *trecento* paintings from the Royal Institution:

I am in perfect agony of hurry and distraction in manifold duties. The pictures I now have requested to be packed are those of the earliest period and as they come first I cannot hang a single picture at Manchester without them. I intend to visit the Royal Institution shortly to consider and determine what further pictures might be desirable for us of the later schools.²⁹

²⁹ MCL M6/2/6/2/236-237. In his lecture to the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire in April 1858, Scharf also confirms the visit to Hodgson alongside that of a Mr Baruchson took place in April 1857 – see Scharf, 1857-1858, p. 309.

A single sketch identifiable with his subsequent visit to the Royal Institution on page 33 of SSB 46 show that he (unsurprisingly) examined the Royal Institution's *Landscape with Satyrs* by Poussin, but it did not travel to Manchester.

But in April there was also, it seems, an eleventh-hour dash to Newcastle and to the collectors William Burdon (pp. 35-46) and John Anderson (pp. 35-46). Page 35 of SSB 46 shows sketches of a trio of works garnered as a result of this foray: a *Jephtha* by Sebastiano Ricci (cat. 910) lent by Hodgson, and a pair of fine Murillos of *The Baptism of Christ* (cat. 636) (Staatliche Museen, Berlin) and *St John and the Pharisees* (cat. 645) (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) – the latter were two of a set of four originally from the convent of San Leandro in Seville, and both had at one time belonged to Burdon, but the *St John* had since been sold to Anderson. With these visits Scharf's eight-month tour of the country's collections finally drew to a close. Although the chronology and order of sketches and notes now becomes haphazard, the next securely datable entry in SSB 46 is an attempted sketch of the processional route and triumphal archway leading to the Art Treasures Exhibition made on the day of its opening, Tuesday 5 May (p. 40 – see also below).

It is very hard to properly assess the number of collectors' visits made since Scharf began his survey in September 1856. But a careful addition of individual visits recorded throughout the pages of SSB 43-46, brings the figure to one-hundred-and-one, across almost as many lenders. But Scharf's long books and diaries record dozens more, and even a conservative estimate would bring the number of appointments up and down the country to between one-hundred-and-fifty to two-hundred.³⁰ Before addressing the remaining contents of SSB 46, it is important to summarise Scharf's final preparations for the hanging of the Ancient Masters Gallery, and also how his time was spent in the immediate aftermath of the opening of the Art Treasures Exhibition.

Scharf was frantically busy. On Tuesday 31 March his aunt sadly noted the lack of his weekly letter home to Eastcott Place.³¹ His official correspondence involved brief last-minute checks on the identity, provenance and dimensions of this or that item. At times there are lengthier letters designed to placate worried lenders as to the safety of items which were now due, or

³⁰ For a particular study of the country house collections (around thirty in number) covered within Scharf's 1856-7 survey see Cottrell, 2021, especially p. 82.

³¹ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

rather overdue, for unpacking and hanging in Manchester - see, for example Scharf's entertaining letter to the Rev Francis Leicester of Monday 30 March discussed in the **introduction to the database**.³² By 15 April, with the hanging of pictures well underway, Scharf's industry and dedication to his mammoth task was being widely reported in the press. In a diary entry that day, his father proudly reported his purchase of a "Times Newspaper, containing a gratifying account of George's praiseworthy arrangements of the pictures at the Manchester Exhibition". Less than a week later, on 20 April, Scharf Snr also acquired "An illustrated London News containing views of the Art Treasures Exhibition of Manchester [in which] George's arrangement of ancient pictures is much praised, also the programme is contained in the Times of 29 April 1857". Again, on Saturday 2 May, with three days to go, Scharf Snr paid for "A number of the Athenaeum containing a[n] account of the Manchester Art treasures Exhibition".³³ Having laboured so long for the point at which he could finally arrange and review the hang, one imagines that Scharf's levels of nervous energy were sky-high. As early as 19 February, he had written to Miss Rushout, Lord Northwick's niece, that, "I almost dread the overwhelming excitement of hanging the pictures".³⁴ Inevitably, at the conclusion of the task he became ill again. On Monday 27 April his aunt's diary notes that her nephew "had come from Manchester the day before on account of being unwell"; he had recovered enough by the Wednesday to attempt a return trip back to Manchester in time for its opening on Tuesday 5 May.³⁵

5.iii. May 1857: the opening of the Art Treasures Exhibition

Amidst the bustle and excitement of the opening day of the Art Treasures Exhibition on 5 May, on page 40 of SSB 46, Scharf hesitatingly began a sketch of the entrance way to the exhibition from a high viewpoint, suggesting this was done early in the morning from his bedroom window at Windsor Terrace. He possibly intended to make something properly commemorative out of it (see other, more satisfying sketches of this general area made on 19-20 July on pages 64 and 70). But there was too much to do; Scharf had pressing official duties to perform, and he later gave an account of these to his admiring father, mother and

³² MCL M6/2/6/2/215-217.

³³ NPG7/3/7/2/1/14.

³⁴ MCL M6/2/6/1/240-242.

³⁵ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

aunt in London (who were not it seems encouraged to make the journey to see the exhibition, and there is no evidence they ever admired at first-hand the fruits of Scharf's prodigious labours in this regard). In notes relevant to 5 May, his father's journal declared that the "Exhibition of Art Treasures 1857 at Manchester was opened today by Prince Albert, George having to conduct him through his gallery of Pictures by the old masters, the effect is said to have been very grand and imposing".³⁶ A couple of days later, on Thursday 7 May, his aunt writes that she had "received a note from George saying how well everything had gone off on Tuesday and that he would come home on Friday night. Prince Albert was with him and hours in his gallery".³⁷

Scharf was as good as his word and returned to London the next day, Friday 8 May, and remained until the following Monday. He now had to fulfil a pre-arranged series of seven weekly Saturday lectures at Queen's College, the first being on 9 May. He would yo-yo back and forth between London and Manchester for the next few weeks until these came to an end on Saturday 20 June. He also had to attend meetings in London relevant to his new duties as Secretary to the National Portrait Gallery. He fell ill again following one of these on Thursday 21 May. Over the following weekend, his aunt records that she was "very uneasy about him" and that her nephew had caught another bad cold and "felt very unwell bathed in hot water and went to bed early".³⁸ This is hardly surprising, as he had worked through the previous night overseeing the final draft and printing of the definitive version of the Art Treasures Catalogue.³⁹ He now came full-circle, replaying the stress-related downward-spiral in his physical and emotional well-being which had first seized him in the immediate aftermath of his appointment as Art Secretary the previous August. The painful boils broke out again on his back and neck, and he became prone to violent emotional outbursts, with his father once more the object of his rage. On Monday 25 May, Scharf's aunt nervously relates the following incident:

³⁶ NPG7/3/7/2/1/14.

³⁷ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

³⁸ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

³⁹ On 23 May Scharf's aunt records that Scharf "Came in the morning with Mr [C. P.] Hillier they were detained at the Printers till 3 o'clock it poured with rain and they slept at the Hotel George caught cold & felt very unwell bathed in hot water and went to bed early". - NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

George dined with us and was very busy all day writing, a boil on his neck very painful it had fomented quite frequently [and he] quite upset me in the evening by getting into a paroxysm of rage about his father. He said he could not bear him in his sight. He had so much displeased him by his conduct in many instances quite counteracting all his wishes and directions which had been very injurious and aggravating to him for a long time past.⁴⁰

As before, it is difficult to fully appreciate upon what grounds Scharf's fury was founded. Scharf himself and his mother are silent on the subject, but clearly she and her sister found the tension between father and son something they were keen to avoid. On Thursday 28 May, his aunt records, "in consequence of George having taken such an antipathy to his Father's presence Mrs S [Scharf's mother] and I advised him to avoid meeting him for the present – very trying for Mrs S. and me who wish to make everything comfortable".

In fact, it seems that Scharf had already come to the same conclusion and may have deliberately misled his father as to his whereabouts during that week: from his diary, Scharf Snr was clearly under the impression that his son had returned to Manchester on Monday 25 May, but Scharf's aunt's diary makes it clear her nephew remained in London until the following Saturday.⁴¹ Scharf returned to London again on Friday 5 June anxious "that another boil was forming on his neck [but] otherwise in good health". With him at home that weekend, his aunt records that instead of his father's customary Sunday visit to Eastcott place, "Mr Scharf staid [sic] at his lodging all day".⁴²

5.iv. June-July 1857: Manchester, Chester and North Wales

Having persuaded the trustees of the National Portrait Gallery that he should defer the bulk of his new duties until after the closure of the Manchester Exhibition in mid-October (see the **introduction to SSB 47**), Scharf continued oscillating between Manchester and London for the rest of June. There is one important appointment worth noting on Saturday 20 June: the opening of the South Kensington Museum, later the Victoria and Albert Museum, at its current site. Here, according to his aunt, Scharf "had the honours of being introduced to the Queen by Prince Albert [with] the Prince Royal Prince of Prussia present".⁴³ During the

⁴⁰ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

⁴¹ See entries in the diaries of Scharf's father and aunt for 25 May - NPG7/3/7/2/1/14; NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

⁴² NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

⁴³ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

morning, Scharf had given the last of his lectures at Queen's College London, and his diary records that the next day he returned to Manchester. But he punctuated his stay there with a visit to Alton Towers on Thursday 25 June, although this is not recorded in SSB 46.⁴⁴ On Monday 29 June, Scharf again had ceremonial duties to perform at the Art Treasures Exhibition. Scharf Snr's journal notes that "Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and the Royal Family went today to near Manchester, to Lord Elsmere's residence in order to go in procession to the Exhibition of the Art Treasures, where George will have the honour to attend on them in the Gallery of Ancient Masters". The official state visit to the Exhibition actually took place the day after, Tuesday 30 June.⁴⁵

Scharf finally returned to SSB 46 to make sketches that were in conjunction with "an invitation of importance to Chester", as Scharf's aunt noted, on Thursday 2 July.⁴⁶ Scharf was in the city from between Wednesday 1 to Saturday 4 July, but the exact circumstances are unclear – his trip probably had something to do with his membership of the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, because this is also cited in Scharf's aunt's diary as the cause of his return to Chester on Tuesday 21 July (see below) in order to attend its annual general meeting.⁴⁷ From drawings not only of Chester but of landmarks around High Legh, it seems that after leaving the city he was again the guest of one of the members of the Art Treasures Executive Committee, William Entwistle, between Sunday 5 and Wednesday 6 July (pp. 41-46) – he had previously stayed with Entwistle over the weekend of the 27-28 September 1856 at the very start of his survey of British collections (see the **introduction to SSB 43**). By the afternoon of Wednesday 7 July, Scharf had returned to Manchester and made a sketch of the Exhibition archway at Old Trafford station (pp. 37-38). He stayed on in Manchester to tidy up business at the Mosely Street office and, although there is no mention of them in his diaries, he surely also attended the lectures John Ruskin delivered in Manchester as a response to the Art Treasures Exhibition on Friday 10 and Monday 13 July.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ According to Scharf's smaller Letts's Diary - NPG7/3/1/13.

⁴⁵ NPG7/3/7/2/1/14.

⁴⁶ NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

⁴⁷ Entry for 20 July, NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

⁴⁸ See the discussion in Pergam, 2011, pp. 15-16.

Scharf now also availed himself of the opportunity of reviewing the Gallery of Ancient Masters for his own purposes and from the standpoint of a visitor to the works *in situ*. From this point until the Exhibition's closure in mid-October, he would make prolonged visits to the Art Treasures Palace, spending hours compiling far more careful notes and sketches than had been previously possible; scrutinising particular items which he had secured for the exhibition, alongside others from other sections.⁴⁹ Although the results of this endeavour are chiefly preserved in SSB 47-49, there are several relevant studies in SSB 46 made between Wednesday 8 and Monday 20 July (pp. 37-38, 47-53 & 67-78). These include striking one-page sketches of Hobbema's, *Stormy Landscape* (p. 48) (Wallace Collection, London) which was cat. 24 of the Hertford Gallery, and Raphael's, *Virgin and Child* (p. 66; cat. 136) lent by Earl Cowper (National Gallery of Art, Washington). Two of the works that Scharf sketched during this period on page 72 he would return to in September to make more complete studies: Antonio Carracci's *Virgin and Child with Saints* (cat. 329) (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) and Juan Carreño de Miranda's *Portrait of Charles II of Spain* (cat. 739). Both were lent by John Evelyn Denison. In this section of the sketchbook one also finds three pages of hang diagrams relevant to cats. 834-900 which anticipate those which dominate SSB 49 (see below). It was also during this period that Scharf began shipping some of his books and other personal effects back to Eastcott Place in London.⁵⁰

From 21 July until the end of the month, Scharf embarked upon a return trip to Chester in order to attend the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, followed by a refreshing tour of North Wales. Before departing Manchester, in order to bid adieu to his lodgings on Windsor Terrace, Scharf made a number of fascinating sketches of the area over the afternoon/ evening of Monday 20 and the early morning of Tuesday 21 July. These include an impressive double-page panorama of the Old Trafford Toll Bar with Windsor Terrace in the background on pages 73-74 (see also **fig. 5.iii**).⁵¹ The area is

⁴⁹ This was in apparent contravention of rules which the Executive Committee had enforced around the time of the exhibition's opening, strictly forbidding the making of notes and sketches on works of art *in situ* - see Scharf, 1857-158, p. 317 and the **introduction to SSB 47**.

⁵⁰ Such is clear from an entry in his aunt's diary on Wednesday 15 July - NPG7/3/7/4/1/6.

⁵¹ This corroborates and re-orientates an anonymous contemporary watercolour of the scene that exists in Manchester City Council's Local Image Collection (m52422).

<http://images.manchester.gov.uk/Display.php?irn=20827&QueryPage=%2F&QueryName=BasicQuery&QueryPage=%2F&Restriction=&StartAt=1&Anywhere=SummaryData%7CAdmWebMetadata&QueryTerms=old+trafford+toll+bar&QueryOption=Anywhere&Submit=Search>

unrecognisable today, but as Scharf records in an accompanying note added decades later towards the end of his life, “I visited this spot in 1887 after an interval of 30 years...The Toll house still standing August 1887”. As he rose to pack for his trip to Chester on the morning of 21 July he also made a charming sketch of the Art Treasures Palace at daybreak (4.15 am) as seen from the window of his bedroom at Windsor Terrace (p. 75), and in addition to sketches around the local railway station, there is a double-page vista of the view of Manchester from the standpoint of this area on pages 77-78 which recalls William Wyld’s famous *View of Manchester from Higher Broughton* of 1852 now in the Royal Collection.



Fig. 5.iii. George Scharf, *Sketches of the Old Tollbar at Windsor Terrace, Old Trafford, Manchester, 20 July 1857.* Pages 73-74 of Scharf Sketchbook 46. Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.

From now until Sunday 26 July Scharf sketched sites of interest in and around Chester (pp.31-32, 79-80, 83, 89-92, & 94), and from Monday 27 July he completed some attractive and atmospheric views of North Wales: Snowdon, Caernarvon and Conwy. There is one curious sketch on page 88, which may have been a response to a witnessed incident, involving a child dramatically suspended out of what seems to be some sort of carriage window but being pulled back in by a woman who might be its mother. This took place “outside of the Niagara” – possibly a reference to the Britannia (Tubular) Bridge across the Menai Strait (see also p.57). Mingled among these studies are three diagrams of the hang of Ancient Master paintings installed on the South Wall of the Clock Gallery of the Art Treasures Palace (pp. 56-60). It is not immediately apparent when these were completed – possibly earlier that month in the fortnight he spent at Manchester between Wednesday 8 July and Tuesday 21 July, but it may be that they were sketched as an addendum to his

general record of the Art Treasures hang during early October – most of which dominates SSB 49.

Scharf returned to London on Friday 31 July. No sketchbook entries are recorded for August, and it is telling that his formal diary-keeping now recommences in earnest. As a result, we know of numerous personal and family appointments. There are plenty of dinner and lunch engagements with acquaintances such as Charles Kean, and Lt General Fox, and the usual trips to the theatre. He also paid a visit to his friend Lady Caroline Sitwell at Rempstone between Monday 17 and Wednesday 19 August. As with the previous August, a lot of time was taken up with moving around his personal effects; he had yet another new address to occupy - the Secretary's flat at the National Portrait Gallery's first home, 29 Great George Street, Westminster. He seems to have been intermittently resident there by Tuesday 11 August, while his mother and aunt stayed on at Eastcott Place. On Tuesday 1 September he took up a long-standing invitation to visit Lord Northwick at Thirlestaine House where he stayed until Thursday 3 September. His experience of this visit is recorded in a smaller sketchbook, SSB 46A, which does not currently form part of the database. SSB 46A also has a view of Manchester from the Spread Eagle Hotel where he stayed between Friday 4 – Monday 7 September.⁵² He spent that weekend sketching in the Art Treasures Palace, and this is where SSB 47 commences.

October 2018 (revised August 2021)

<https://people.ucd.ie/philip.cottrell>

⁵² SSB 46a p. 35 recto.