

Keys to the collection— Stories

Stanhope Forbes

“It was part of our artistic creed to paint our pictures directly from Nature, and not merely rely upon sketches and studies ” which we could afterwards amplify in the comfort of a studio...

—Stanhope Forbes, for the *Cornish Magazine*, 1898.

1857 Stanhope Forbes was born in Dublin, Ireland. His English father was a railway manager and his mother was French.

1876 He attended the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

1880 He studied in Paris under Leon Bonnat. During his time in France he was introduced to the new *plein air* style of painting which he used for the rest of his life.

1884 Forbes moved first to Penzance and then Newlyn in Cornwall where he became a leading figure in a growing colony of artists.

1899 He married Elizabeth Armstrong who was also an artist. Together they set up a School of Painting in Newlyn. Forbes continued to *en plein air* well into the 1930's making use of the region's bright light and attractive scenery. He also exhibited at the Royal Academy, London.

1947 Forbes died just before his 90th birthday.



The pier head—

The little harbour seen here was a busy place with brown-sailed boats in the bay and fishermen who were keen to catch mackerel. Onlookers, fishermen, fishwives, salesmen and children were often seen looking down on the boats moored at the quay. People in the fishing village were happy to model for Forbes. They felt proud to be featured in the artist's paintings. The fishermen were part of everyday life at Newlyn in their working clothes and were picturesque subjects in their working sea-going boots and the women in their everyday clothes of neat blouses and cotton aprons.

**Geelong
Gallery**

AusVELS level 2 to 6

geelonggallery.org.au/learn

Stanhope Forbes
The pier head (detail) 1910
oil on canvas
Collection: Geelong Gallery

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Stanhope Forbes

born Ireland 1857;
died United Kingdom 1947

The pier head 1910
oil on canvas
123.5 x 149.5 cm
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Purchased 1912

Questions

Stanhope Forbes worked in the *plein air* style. What does this mean?

Research

Forbes used local people from the Newlyn fishing village as models for his paintings. The old man seen from behind in this painting with the white beard, and dark hat and blue shirt can be seen in several of Forbes' paintings. Find 3 paintings in which he can be seen. Write down the names of the these paintings and the role of the man in each work. See if you can find the name of the real life model for this figure, and even a photo of him.

Activity

Imagine yourself standing on this pier as an onlooker. Write a letter to a friend who lives in a different country, describing this scene: what was happening; who was present and what it felt like being there. Look at the painting for clues such as the light at this time of year and time of day; body language of the people depicted; activities; types of boats; gaze of viewers and anything else you observe.