

Joseph Syddall

Janet Murphy

Joseph Syddall was born at Old Whittington, Chesterfield in 1864, son of Samuel Syddall, Master Carpenter: his elder brothers became joiners. After leaving school he was employed in a local solicitor's office and joined classes at Chesterfield Central School of Art, where in 1887 he won a National Book Prize from the Science and Art Department, South Kensington. The first annual distribution of prizes for the school took place in December 1887 when Joseph Syddall won a prize for the best study of a head from the antique. The headmaster of the school Mr Harris went on to say that:

One of the most successful students of the school – to whom the highest Government prize has been awarded that the school has obtained – has the honour conferred upon him of being admitted as student into the Herkomer School in Bushey, Herts. Mr J. Syddall was only with us about six months before his removal, during which time he produced the greater part of these drawings that bear his name. The oil studies from life in colour, are a selection from the set he painted during his first term with Mr. Herkomer. Everyone who examines these will see at once that his industry is backed up by genius, and that he has powers in reserve, which if rightly developed, will make of him an artist. And for my part I am glad for his sake – though sorry to lose him as a student – he has been so fortunate before performing any style, as to be placed under the care of such an able painter as Mr. Herkomer, who is not only the principal of the Herkomer School, which he founded to help young painters in developing their individuality, but is also Mr. Ruskin's successor as Slade Professor at the University of Oxford.

Following his time at Bushey, Joseph returned to Whittington



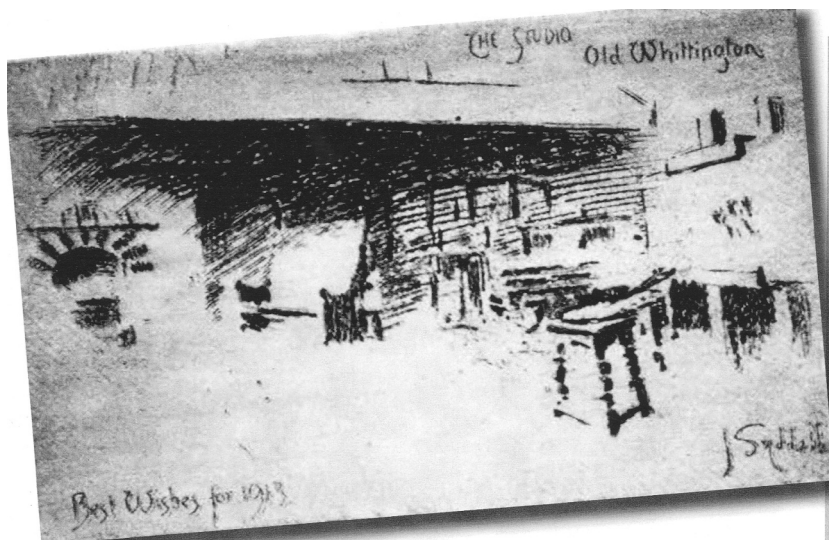
where he lived with his brother Edmund. In the 1901 census, Joseph is described as a landscape painter. He also gave drawing lessons to the young ladies of the town. In 1914 an exhibition of his work was held in Chesterfield which was described in the local paper.

ART EXHIBITION AT CHESTERFIELD Whittington Artist's Beautiful Work

Under the auspices of the Chesterfield branch of the Workers' Educational Association, an art exhibition of exceptional interest is remaining open

for a short season in the Toynbee Room at the Settlement, Vicar Lane, Chesterfield.

The work on view, numbering about 60 examples, has all been done by Mr. J. Syddall of the Studios, New Whittington, and for those hitherto unaware of the artist's ability, is a revelation in all-round technique and general excellence. Mr. Syddall, who studied under the late Sir Hubert Von Herkomer, at the Bushey Park School, has an extraordinary command over his gift. His studies range from the most delicate pencil drawings over



sepia, water colour, pastel, and oils to copper plate engraving and modelling. In these he shows a fidelity in drawing – as attested by familiar figures and places – which gives his work a particular view, and in at least two of his colourings, 'Chesterfield by Night' and 'Viewing the Fireworks' his ability in effect is surprising. In the former he has merged the town in sombre tones and yet preserved its individuality – the pin points of light being cleverly introduced, and in the latter, the reflected hues of group of rocket stars on a night crowd being wonderfully caught. Among the local figure studies a large equestrienne subject – Miss Deacon, daughter of Mr. Maurice Deacon, of the Sheepbridge Works, mounted on a splendid black hunter, is full of life and charm. A pastel painting of Miss Gratton, daughter of Mr. Richard Gratton also shows warm and artistic treatment, and light, unconventional pencil drawings of Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Morris, of Chesterfield, and the Rev. H.T.A. Peacoy are exquisite in their way. Whilst formerly engaged in a studio in Kensington, it is understood that Mr. Syddall was eminently successful in portraiture, but in the work on view pencil drawing makes the strongest general appeal. Some of his heads, particularly of elderly people and street types, are quite arresting, and his study of the late Sir Hubert, drawn from life at Bushey Park, is a further exposition of his power to seize expression and 'mood'. Landscapes in varied lights, a bird's

head, rich in sheens, a bit of Venice, a pastel study of an old farm kitchen at night, book illustrations (including two of the six done for Hardy's 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles'), a copper plate etching of St. Bartholomew's Church Whittington, in 1879, broadly suggested oil scenes, and two perfectly arranged and lettered addresses – one to Mr. E.D. Swanwick, M.A., for his services to the Chesterfield Students' Association, and another to Mr. Geo. Broomhead, on retiring from the position of warden, after 27 years' service – are among other exhibits, and as the collection is being maintained in the Toynbee Rooms over the holidays, everyone with the least inclination to art in its pictorial aspect, should take advantage of seeing what the Whittington artist has generously loaned to help the Association in its educational work.

The Derbyshire Courier 11th April 1914

Edmund Syddall died in 1915 and in 1920 Joseph moved to Hampstead to live with his lifelong friend Annea Spong whom he had met at Bushey. On his death in 1942, he bequeathed his works to Annea who, in turn, donated much of it to Chesterfield Museum and Art Gallery.

Although best known as an artist Syddall, designed the war memorials at Old Whittington and Dronfield and among the collection donated to Chesterfield Museum is this statuette of a lady golfer.

