

Interviewee: <i>Richard Haslam-Jones</i> (RHJ)	Interviewers: Gordon Cowan (GC) and Mike Duguid (MD)
Date of Interview: 28 March 2018	Ref: DG53-2-1-1T

TITLE	<i>Gordon Cowan and Mike Duguid interview Richard Haslam-Jones.</i>
REGION	<i>Dumfries and Galloway</i>
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	<i>Kirkcudbright artists' community, Charles Oppenheimer, Anna Hotchkis, Tommy Lochhead, community life, art.</i>
COUNTY	<i>Dumfries and Galloway</i>
TOWN	<i>Kirkcudbright</i>
DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>14/06/2018</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>Gordon Cowan and Mike Duguid</i>
YEAR RANGE	<i>2018</i>
SUMMARY	<i>Gordon Cowan and Mike Duguid interview Richard Haslam-Jones about his life in Kirkcudbright, and his knowledge and connections to the artists in Kirkcudbright's artists' community. First, they discuss his family background and his connection to Charles Oppenheimer through his great-aunt. They also discuss what Kirkcudbright was like in the 1960s and how it has changed since then. Richard discusses his friendship with the artist Anna Hotchkis and talks about her life. They also discuss the advent of Kirkcudbright as an artists' community. Richard mentions commissioning a dish to be made by Tommy Lochhead and talks about the process of having that made. Finally, they discuss Oppenheimer's life and art in more detail.</i>

Richard Haslam-Jones – RHJ; Gordon Cowan – GC; Mike Duguid – MD.

Keywords: Family Background; Kirkcudbright in the 60s; Anna Hotchkis; The Artists' Town; Tommy Lochhead; Charles Oppenheimer; Oppenheimer's Connections to Manchester.

Family Background – 0h 00m 00s

GC: Record.

RHJ: Excellent.

MD: Right, here I am, I'm Mike Duguid and I'm here in the High Street, Kirkcudbright, with Gordon Cowan and we're interviewing Richard Haslam-Jones for the Artists Remembered Project. So, mebbe first of all I could ask you, Richard, about when you came to Kirkcudbright or your background in Kirkcudbright. Were you born in Kirkcudbright, for example?

RHJ: No. No, I was born and brought up in Oxford and I came here after my father died, when my mother bought this house in Kirkcudbright but she had a long relationship with the town: our family, my great-grandmother came from Kirkcudbright.

MD: Yeah.

RHJ: And obviously, Charles Oppenheimer married my great-aunt.

MD: Ahh.

RHJ: So, that was the-

MD: You've got a family connection to Oppenheimer?

RHJ: That was the family connection.

MD: Aye.

RHJ: And my mother had a very close relationship to Charles Oppenheimer. Um, she was his favourite niece.

MD: Ah.

RHJ: So, after my father died, she had no reason but to come up here.

MD: Right.

RHJ: By that- we came up here in nineteen-sixty... Seven and by then, he had been- he passed away six years previously-

MD: Mm.

RHJ: -and I think about the same year Connie died, as well. So, I just met her briefly.

MD: Uhuh.

RHJ: But Charles wasn't here when I came up here.

MD: Right. So, just going back to the Kirkcudbright connection, when you first- in '67, so what can you remember of Kirkcudbright then? What was it like, if ye like?

RHJ: It was... It was more, should I say, of a county town because the council offices were here. There was more industry here. The fishing wasn't- there wasn't so much fishing. There were ships coming up, there was the tanker, and there was ships to take away... Wood and also grain. So, it was a busy commercial town.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: As I say, not many fishing boats but there was... There were remains of that very strong artists' community still here.

Kirkcudbright in the 60s – 0h 02m 06s

MD: You could sense that, could you?

RHJ: Oh yes, yeah.

MD: Right.

RHJ: But you had the sense that from about 1955 onwards the main stalwarts had gone and it was just the evident ones that were left.

MD: Right, right.

RHJ: And they were slowing down and really just enjoying their memories.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: But the town was a county town. It was a very important town in the area.

MD: Right.

RHJ: With all the council offices and sheriff court and all the goings on.

MD: Mm. But artists featured in the town even then, do ye feel?

RHJ: Yes, there were- mainly in the High Street that there were artists down the closes like Tim Jeffs.

MD: Aw right.

RHJ: He was here doing his fabrics. Down at the Greengate Close, next door to here, there were, um... There was still Dorothy Rey, there was still Anna Hotchkis, Lena Alexander was still here.

MD: Right.

RHJ: So...

MD: So, those artists, you met some of them?

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: Em, later on. So, what do you think brought the artists to Kirkcudbright, if ye like, over the years?

RHJ: I think the main influence must have been Hornel because he certainly- he brought Charles Oppenheimer here.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: He brought him here on a visit and then after they got married, he then came up and they settled here under his sponsorship. And I think it was that that brought a lot of artists here. By that time, artists were travelling in groups and they were mainly connected by their art school links and other artists, and they tended to migrate to places like St Ives, Whitby, the Yorkshire coast.

MD: Mm, mmhm.

RHJ: So, that was the group that was circulating at the time but Hornel certainly attracted them here.

MD: Mmhm. So, the idea of an artists' colony would be quite true then?

Anna Hotchkis – 0h 04m 01s

RHJ: I think it wasn't his idea at the start but I think it developed quite quickly.

MD: Mm, mm.

RHJ: Yeah. Certainly Jessie M. King and Hornel between them attracted a lot of artists and other... new people.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: Who'd never been here.

MD: Right.

RHJ: Never been here. But I mean, Charles Oppenheimer always said that it was the light that brought him here. He had this wonderful light. If you had a studio here, you needed strong light and, well, steady light and that's what he had here.

MD: Mm. Right. So, which artists can you remember personally?

RHJ: Well, Anna Hotchkis who lived-

MD: Right.

RHJ: -next door in the Studio. Saw a lot of her.

MD: What do you remember about her?

RHJ: She was, ah... At that stage, she'd stopped travelling and going around and she'd settled down with her sketches and she was painting them all up, um, either as pastels or as oils or as watercolours. Her eyesight wasn't that good-

MD: Mm.

RHJ: -but she just enjoyed doing that. I remember we went in for- my wife and I went in just after we were married and we said we'd been to Granada in Spain and she then pulled out something she'd just done of a sketch which we bought.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: But they were sketches from her travels and at that time, in the 1960s, '70s, before I got married, I used to come here a lot on leave from the Merchant Navy and she would always call me in for a cup of tea.

MD: Ahh, ah.

RHJ: Regularly. And we'd sit down and she would go through some of the pictures that were around, what she'd been working on, and talk about them.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Talk about her wonderful life.

MD: Mm. Did she talk about China? Her trip to China?

RHJ: Yes, yeah, and she talked about Mary Mullikin as well, who she...

MD: Oh, her fellow traveller to China?

RHJ: Yeah, the American artist who she met out there and then they travelled together and they eventually published the book...

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: About China.

MD: Yeah, *The Nine Sacred Mountains*...?

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: *of China*. Now, did Anna Hotckis do some of the paintings and drawings in there or was it Mullikin?

RHJ: Oh yes.

MD: Oh, it was probably joint.

RHJ: No, no, it's-

MD: Joint.

RHJ: They're joint, yes.

MD: Oh right.

RHJ: She did quite a few. But she had a chest in the studio absolutely stuffed full of paintings.

MD: Aye.

RHJ: [*laughter*]

MD: Aye.

RHJ: Which she just couldn't be bothered to sell.

MD: Yeah.

RHJ: And some of them she considered to be quite inferior. But that was what was left when she died and then her niece took over because she was never married. And... She didn't clear the Studio at all, she just kept it as it was.

GC: Mm.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: So, she's left it to Mary. But Anna came from a very humble background.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: She was the daughter of a housekeeper and they had a huge family and all the boys died except one, I think. There were five boys, they all died except one – or six boys. So, she had all these wonderful memories, but especially of China.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Because she was very privileged to be the only westerner allowed into the, uh... Into the sort of back country. And she travelled with Mary and they had quite a few scrapes [*laughter*].

MD: Yeah, I guess. And that was the, what, 1935, '36, wasn't it?

RHJ: It would be the thirties, yes.

MD: Yeah. Mm. So, Lena Alexander do you remember her?

RHJ: Vaguely, yeah.

MD: Right.

RHJ: She just came and went. It was more Dorothy Rey-

MD: Right.

RHJ: -who had the owl, Jeeves.

MD: Aye.

RH: She had an owl that sat in the corner and she did- she was still painting but mainly about Jeeves because she just sat in the room and painted him, and he had a little hole in the window that he could come and go [*laughter*].

MD: Right. And what sort of owl was it?

RHJ: Uh, I don't know. It just sat in the corner and looked at you [*laughter*]. Yeah. But I mean, that was- that was- I mean, Greengate one time was almost completely artists.

0h 08m 00s

MD: Mm.

RHJ: When Jessie M. King and E.A. Taylor were there.

MD: Yeah, 'cos you've got all the cottages down the bottom are let out to artists.

RHJ: Yeah, and her sister was there as well, yes.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: Yeah.

GC: Because there were two other sisters who painted, weren't there? Hotchkises?

MD: Isobel.

GC: Isobel.

RHJ: Oh, Hotchkises?

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: Oh, there were three sisters. One ended up in China, teaching.

MD: Mm.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: Isobel was the other artist and Catherine...

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: As well, Catherine.

GC: Mm.

RHJ: I think.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Who dabbled but she was the main...

GC: And did they live in Greengate's Close?

RHJ: No. No. She came down- I don't know what brought her down here. It was probably meeting Jessie M. King.

MD: Mm. So, Jessie King, she'd have gone- Jessie King, you remember her?

RHJ: No.

MD: She'd gone.

RHJ: No, they were gone.

MD: Right.

RHJ: No, cause the Army took over the house. They had Army officers in there.

GC: What about Dallases? Were they around at the time?

RHJ: They were around but they were- they weren't very public.

MD: Right.

RHJ: At the time.

MD: Mmhm.

GC: They had a shop, didn't they, or their friends did?

RHJ: I mean, there were a few- there were quite a few exhibitions because by then the Cottage Gallery had been running for a while.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: Of which Charles Oppenheimer was one of the founding fathers. And that had a summer exhibition and all the artists gave something to it, put something in it.

MD: Right.

RHJ: So, certainly the Dallases had art in that.

GC: Mm.

MD: And was that just an exhibition or were they selling...?

RHJ: They were- some were selling.

MD: Right.

RHJ: But it was put together by the artists as a regular summer exhibition.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: But there wasn't... There were no new artists as such. In the 1960s, it was very much the core of the original set of artists.

GC: Mm.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: And then, later on other artists came in. Not so much from Kirkcudbright but from around.

The Artists' Town – 0h 10m 00s

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Yeah. But it wasn't an institution until, what, the middle seventies?

MD: Mmhm, mmhm.

RHJ: The summer exhibition.

MD: Right. So-

GC: But nobody would have described it then as the artists' town?

MD: No. It was known as an artists' town.

GC: It was a town in which artists happened to live.

RHJ: And Hornel at that time had no great attraction, yeah, for tourists or visitors.

MD: Mmhm.

GC: Mmhm.

RHJ: Broughton House at that time was- he'd left it in trust.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: As you know, and he had... It was just opened every summer and run by volunteers and trustees, quite successfully but I wouldn't say there were hordes of visitors.

MD: No, no.

RHJ: To come and see it. I think Jessie M. King was a much bigger attraction and...

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: Because people had- because of her connections with the Glasgow School.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: People were much more interested to come down and see where she lived, and the Greengate was quite well known as an artists' community.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: Yeah. So, any other- Tim Jeffs or...?

RHJ: Tim Jeffs I did meet briefly but unfortunately, he was- he had an accident in the river.

MD: Oh.

RH: And was drowned.

MD: Oh, right.

RHJ: That was very, very unfortunate and that was around the middle- uh, when I was here, that just happened.

MD: Mmhm. The potters, the Lochheads?

RHJ: Yes, the Lochheads, Tommy Lochhead.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: We met him- we were, uh... My wife and I came here, just before we got married, we came up and we visited the pottery because we were thinking of commissioning a piece for our wedding and just as something special. So, we asked- we went there, up to his pottery, and asked him to make us a fish dish, a sort of salmon sized dish which we sketched out on the table and he said yeah, he'd try and do that.

Tommy Lochhead – 0h 12m 04s

Then, we were away quite a while and we came back and we went up to the pottery and asked if he'd done it and he produced this beautiful dish and then he showed us all the accidents and problems he'd had trying to make it [*laughter*]. Um, which I saw in the Museum, actually.

MD: Oh.

RHJ: The Museum, yes. All the accidents are in the museum. We've got the final version.

MD: Oh right, right. The Stewartry Museum? Right, right.

RHJ: All the accidents are in the museum [*laughter*].

MD: Aye.

RHJ: It was- yeah. But he was, at that time, he was producing a lot of pottery which was- most of it was being sold locally, but he didn't make a lot of money out of it, I don't think. He wasn't a... It didn't do him a great income. It was really after he had died and when his son took over that people realised that he was actually very good and his pieces were fetching good prices.

MD: Mm, mm.

RHJ: But he was a very interesting man.

MD: And so, you actually went to the pottery then?

RHJ: Oh yes, yeah, yeah. It's busy, a busy place.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: But he enjoyed making that fish dish, I think. It was a real challenge and it was something different [*laughter*].

MD: And it's survived, has it?

RHJ: Oh yes, yeah. We have it, yeah.

MD: Yeah. Splendid.

GC: What about the legacy of Charles Oppenheimer? Is there anything else you can tell us about him?

RHJ: Well, I mean, most of it is hearsay because I didn't actually meet him but obviously through the family-

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: And a very strong Manchester connection because his... His father was obviously German and they ran this mosaic factory in Manchester and- with his brothers. And he was, not the odd sheep, but he'd decided to carve out a career as an artist rather than work in the business, but he did help in the business and when his brother died, he went down to run the business for a while.

Charles Oppenheimer – 0h 14m 06s

But once he came up here, he set his roots here. And he met Connie, my great-aunt, in Manchester because she was a tailor from Manchester, as well. So, they met in Manchester and were married there and then they came up, after he had been up here, to see Hornel. And by then, he was into full production with watercolours.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Yeah. But he- I mean, he was a very organised and methodical worker. He worked mainly in the mornings and he just ploughed on through, making- uh, painting watercolours. And most of his work is studio work. He didn't do so much work out in the field – it was mainly sketches in the field.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: But his main production was in the studio. Um, cause when he came he was at 14 High Street which is where Hornel put him, Hornel had the house, and helped him get settled and then he had a studio up with- by Tommy Lochhead, there at the back. And then eventually he moved to Woodlea in 1939-

MD: Mm.

RHJ: -which was a house they'd bought when- and he built a studio on the side of it.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: But, as I say, most of his production was done in the studio.

MD: Mm, mm.

GC: He did a fair bit for- by way of commission for railways and things, didn't he?

RHJ: Railways and boardrooms, yes.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: He did a lot of railway posters... For most of the railway companies, but a lot of boardroom commissions too, the dams, um... The lily pond at 14 High Street, that was- some of those ended up in America.

MD: Like he painted he painted more than the one that's in his house?

RHJ: Oh yes, yeah. There are several versions of it.

MD: Yes, I saw one on *Antiques Roadshow*.

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: About, probably, five years ago now.

GC: Really?

MD: Yeah.

RHJ: And there were several versions of the back of the house done at various times of the year, with and without Auntie Connie and... Various studies. But he was like that, and the view from Woodlea, he painted that dozens of times, sometimes commissions and sometimes just to, ye know, put more art on sale. So, there's lots of versions.

0h 16m 20s

MD: Is that the view down to the river from-?

RHJ: Yes.

MD: From up the hill?

RHJ: That's on railway posters and it's on...

MD: Mm.

RHJ: All kinds of paintings. But he gave- a lot of people in the town were given paintings either as presents, Christmas or anniversaries or weddings and any occasions and he also paid his bills with paintings. He *[laughter]*...

GC: *[laughter]* It's worth a try.

RHJ: He paid his electricity bill by painting on the wall of the electricity board showroom *[laughter]*.

MD: A mural?

All: *[laughter]*

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: Yeah.

RHJ: So, very much a part of the community.

MD: Uhuh. The golf is...?

RHJ: Golf, yes. He was President of the Golf- I don't think he was one of the original founders but he was certainly quite prominent and the first hole is called Oppenheimer's.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Because it ends at his studio.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Yes, he enjoyed golf, but his fall out with- his falling out with the town came after the war, when he felt that the veterans weren't being honoured and treated properly.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: So, he... He walked out of most of the activities with the town, with the council.

GC: Good.

RHJ: Yeah. He felt very strongly about...

MD: Mm.

RHJ: The people who came back from the war.

GC: And that was because of the war?

RHJ: Well, he was- he was in the war. He went- he was in his forties by then, I think, but he certainly was quite old to go into the war, and he joined the Artists' Rifles but was then quite rapidly moved into intelligence and his career in Intelligence is a bit, sort of, dotted, it's not clear. But he was used in observation balloons to sketch the enemy trenches and things, and to observe also the artillery fire. And then, we know that he also went up in aeroplanes and took pictures, took photographs, and interpreted those. And then, he disappeared off the radar for a while – no one knows what he did. But he certainly contributed something towards the war.

0h 18m 20s

MD: Mm.

RHJ: But, as I say, when he came back he felt very strongly about the veterans and the way that they were treated.

MD: Mmhm. Was this the Second World War we're talking about?

RHJ: First War.

MD: Oh, the first war. The first one, yeah.

RHJ: The First World War, yeah.

MD: Right. He died in '61, so, right.

RHJ: '61, yeah.

MD: Yeah. So, was he- was he involved in the memorial, do ye know? The war memorial? Because Hornel was on the memorial's committee.

RHJ: He...

MD: And had the [?] done.

RHJ: Probably would've been- done something to do with it, yes.

MD: Right.

RHJ: I think he probably helped raise the money for it.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: Cause it was done by subscription, yeah.

MD: Right.

RHJ: No, he... Apart from the gulf, he was a... He was known because he also- he had one of the first cars in Galloway. There was a factory at Tongland where they made cars...

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Which were very, very early types of cars and he had one of those.

MD: Right.

RHJ: And, um, as he had the first car in Galloway, he had right of way over everybody else on the road and he drove down the middle of the road and he continued to drive down the middle of the road-

MD: Even after the road changed [*laughter*]?

RHJ: -I think [*laughter*]... Well into the 1950s.

All: [*laughter*]

RHJ: As was his right. He was a good fly fisherman, yeah. We've still got his rods; he loved fishing.

MD: Oh, did he? Yeah.

RHJ: Yeah. And of course, there was a connection with Dorothy L. Sayers who came here in the 1930s and wrote *The Five Red Herrings*.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: And he was one of the...

MD: Featured in the-?

RHJ: One of the featured...

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: I'm not quite sure which one. I don't think he was one of the-, no, he wasn't a murderer but he was... She took bits of all of them.

0h 20m 03s

GC: Yes, she did.

MD: She tried to include them.

GC: I think Dallas features.

RHJ: Yeah.

GC: Or certainly his shop features.

MD: And the [?] features as well.

RHJ: Yeah.

GC: Mm.

MD: Or Broughton House certainly features.

GC: Yeah, and the Selkirk Arms, I think.

RHJ: The Selkirk, yeah, and the Greengate.

MD: Mmhm.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: Yes.

GC: And Lady Mary Ashley.

RHJ: But the...

GC: Who banned the books, didn't she?

RHJ: Yeah. Well, I think the artists were, when they read the book, they were not too pleased about some of the things she'd said about them [*laughter*].

MD: Yes, well, they weren't really likely disguised, I think [*laughter*].

RHJ: So, there was that, then there was the-

GC: So, he made quite an impact, one way or another, on the town obviously?

RHJ: Yes, yeah. I mean, I think before the First War he really, ye know, dived into the community and the activities. He was on the council and was quite a leading member.

GC: Mm.

RHJ: It was only the First War that things became a bit... A bit strange.

GC: Yeah, mmhm.

RHJ: But there was also this- he was known for his connection to the Glasgow constabulary... That he-

MD: Yes, he was a special constable, wasn't he?

RHJ: Yes, a special constable and I- they say that he designed their cap badge but he certainly was behind the move to have the tartan band round the peaked cap.

MD: The black and white check?

RHJ: Yes, the black and white check.

GC: Oh right.

MD: That's what I thought.

RHJ: Which is the-

MD: That's what I tell all my- my visitors to Broughton House, that he was-

RHJ: Yeah. Sillitoe tartan.

MD: Oh, it is? Mm.

RHJ: Yep. And the purpose was to make the policemen more visible at night.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Cause they put away their bobby helmets and they had these. And then they reappeared, I think, on Z cars I next saw them because the Liverpool police took their bobby helmets off and put peaked caps on to drive cars.

MD: Mm.

0h 22m 00s

RHJ: And I think it was the North West police.

GC: Z cars?

RHJ: Z cars [*laughter*].

GC: Mm.

MD: Yes, the story I heard-

RHJ: That's where it all came from.

MD: The story I heard was that the Chief Constable, I thought it was Dumfries, but anyway, the Chief Constable had mixed up a policeman with a janitor one day, and said 'hey, Oppenheimer, can you design me something to make them more-'

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: '-stand out better?' So, that's the story I tell.

RHJ: I think it's the Chief Constable of Glasgow-

MD: Glasgow.

RHJ: -cause I know that they were good- great friends. Yeah.

MD: Ah right. Right.

RHJ: They'd go off together.

MD: Uhuh.

GC: What about Lena Alexander?

RHJ: No, I didn't...

MD: You said-

RHJ: Know very much...

MD: Mmhm.

GC: Mm.

RHJ: About her.

MD: Cause she was very prolific in painting portraits of children, wasn't she, around then?

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: Yeah.

RHJ: I certainly remember her pictures in the Summer Exhibition but I don't remember her as a person.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: It was more...

GC: Time-wise, I don't know when she was in...

RHJ: Dorothy Rey.

MD: Well, Lena died in... Well, I don't know.

RHJ: Yeah, and Oppenheimer's great friend was Fred Jackson who was a very well-known Manchester artist. I think they- I think they were at art school together, and they did a lot of travelling together with- you know, at places like Whitby, and St Ives, and around. They were great buddies, and we have a picture hanging here that was- the story behind that was that they went out, this was after Charles got married, they went out and had a few drinks, and on the way back, they passed a shop and saw a beautiful oval frame. So, they decided that was a suitable one to make a portrait for Connie. So, when they got home, they hadn't got a canvas the right shape, so they cut out a piece of cardboard and Fred Jackson did the portrait there and then...

MD: Mm.

GC: Mm.

RHJ: On the cardboard and popped it in the frame.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: It's on the stairway [*laughter*].

MD: Wow.

GC: Good lord.

MD: On cardboard.

ALL: [*laughter*]

MD: Cause Oppenheimer... I think the one in Broughton House is insulation board it's painted on, isn't it? I think the brown... It's insulation board.

0h 24m 06s

RHJ: Yeah, we've got an oil painting.

MD: Right.

RHJ: On what looks like sort of insulation board.

MD: Yeah.

RHJ: Yeah... Now, and this- as I was saying, there's this... The other thing I recall was that he didn't like bridges at all. So, he never painted the town bridge except as a stone bridge.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: And all the paintings that had- or views that had bridges in, he painted them out.

MD: Ah.

RHJ: They're missing [*laughter*].

MD: And you don't know why that was?

RHJ: I think... He just felt it spoilt the view. He had very strong ideas about views. He didn't paint the highlands very much because he thought they were just so beautiful and should just be admired by eye. He did do just a few paintings, but he thought they were too beautiful to be painted by him.

MD: Mm. Interesting take. Yeah, yeah.

GC: What do you think your, particularly Charles Oppenheimer, would make of the town now and its art gallery and the description it's acquired for itself as the artists' town? How do you think he would resonate with that?

RHJ: He was certainly very upset when Hornel died and Jessie M. King died, and he felt that things were- could only get worse.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: Wouldn't say he was depressed, but I heard that he, he wasn't very happy after they'd gone and no one else was coming in. So, I think he'd probably be happy to see that... That the town had been called an artists' town.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: But his- he was a perfectionist, and I think that he wouldn't be very happy with, sort of, some of the modern styles that were around, modern artists that were around.

GC: Mm.

RHJ: Yeah, I think he was quite happy with Jessie M. King's [*laughter*]... Style, but that was about the limit.

GC: So, traditionalist, really?

0h 26m 00s

RHJ: Yes, very, very much so.

GC: Yeah, yeah.

RHJ: But I think he would also- he'd be very pleased that there was some kind of community around the artists.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: But it would- I don't think it's ever as strong as it was then.

GC: No. You often wonder what they would make of life now or whatever. How they would react, for instance, to the spring fling or something like that. Would they approve of it or be slightly disdainful?

RHJ: They might think it's, ye know, slightly amateur [*laughter*].

GC: [*laughter*] Yes, quite.

RHJ: I mean certainly knowing Anna, she didn't... She didn't appreciate any other artists. She never spoke about other artists.

MD: Oh right.

RHJ: She only spoke about herself and her friends in the Close.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: So, I don't think any of them were really up to modern standards or modern art.

MD: Mm.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: Which is understandable because their background. Hornel brought them here because he wanted them...

MD: Hm.

RHJ: To, uh... To work here. And it was- it was probably quite cheap to live here at that time, 'cos artists didn't make much money and being able to work in a community that wasn't-

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: -going to cost them a lot.

MD: Right. So, they would've been appreciative of the fact they got this Wasps Studio now, the fact that they're providing-

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: -studio space that artists can...

RHJ: Yes, but it doesn't have a central figure like Hornel-

MD: No.

RHJ: -whose- who provided a lot of the finance too. I mean, he gave Charles Oppenheimer 14 High Street to get him started.

MD: Right.

RHJ: Which was a- clearly a great help to him. Even though he had money invested in his mosaic works, I think he was- he was trying very hard to make a living out of art.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: And he was very successful.

MD: Mm.

RHJ: Indeed.

MD: Yup. So, I mean, do you have any particular favourites of his?

0h 28m 06s

RHJ: [*laughter*] Well, obviously... I mean, the ones that we have are ones that were painted for the family, so they're not what you call commercial paintings. They're more just ones that he enjoyed doing for... To give to people. I think... His ones of the Harbour in the various seasons are very good. I think some of his ones where he's tried to capture twilight and evenings are- they're very, very clever.

GC: Mm.

RHJ: Where they're very dark and there's just one light in the window, or where the windows catch the evening sun. It's very clever. But he was very good at water, he could paint water perfectly – whether it was a lake, or a river, or a stream. They're all beautiful. So, the ones we've got are- a lot of water in them, which is nice. He wasn't a great portrait painter but his portraits are very good. We've got a portrait of Connie which is very nice. No, I think- he had- he could paint anything, and he could paint people, it was just that that was very- or could draw people, so he was a very good all round artist.

MD: Mmhm.

RHJ: But especially arty was the watercolours and landscapes. No, I think Anna Hotchkis too, she had a- had the same ability to draw people and to do landscapes and capture them. And colour too, it's very difficult to do a landscape in this environment and put enough colour in it to make it look nice.

MD: Cause I think one of the artists who painted was just all green. I can't remember who that was but, eh, nothing but green.

RHJ: And skies.

GC: Did he maintain a long connection with Manchester? I know the family firm was there.

Oppenheimer's Connections to Manchester – 0h 30m 02s

RHJ: Yes, he did. Yeah, yeah. Well, as I said, once-

GC: He didn't paint down there, did he?

RHJ: No.

GC: Mmhm.

RHJ: When his brother died, he had went down to run the family business.

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: And it was sold off, and it was very successful-

GC: Yeah.

RHJ: -as a business, but he wasn't really interested in industry or business.

GC: No.

RHJ: He wanted to be an artist.

GC: He wasn't all that loud in trying to break out-

RHJ: No.

GC: -by any stretch of the imagination.

RHJ: And he was- he was in the constabulary and he also... In what they would call- I can't remember... The volunteers, wasn't it?

MD: Aw right.

RHJ: And that's how he met Connie. He was on parade one day, in his lovely, bright red uniform and...

MD: Right.

RHJ: Struck her down [*laughter*].

MD: The local reg- the local volunteers?

RHJ: No, in Manchester.

MD: Oh, in Manchester.

RHJ: Manchester, yes.

GC: Yes, she was in Manchester, wasn't she?

RHJ: That was the time of the Boer War, roughly, wasn't it?

MD: Right.

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: Any more you can- any others you can think of?

RHJ: No, I think we've covered just about all of them.

MD: William Miles Johnston, did you ever-?

RHJ: No.

MD: -have any dealings with him?

RHJ: No, no.

MD: Oh, the 1980s, was it the 1980s-?

RHJ: No, just in passing.

MD: Oh, sorry, 1974.

RHJ: 1974, yeah. Just in passing.

MD: Right.

RHJ: 'Cos I was just an occasional visitor-

MD: Uhuh.

RHJ: -really, in those days and they came and went. But the main event of the year was the...

MD: The Summer Exhibition?

RHJ: The Summer Exhibition at the Cottage Gallery. But then you didn't- but then, these people weren't particularly special at the time. So, you didn't sort of recognise them for what they were. It

was only, like all artists, after they died people begin to recognise and collect them and put their lives in perspective.

GC: My, Hornel was an exception to that rule, wasn't he? He made a vast amount of money out of his painting.

0h 32m 00s

RHJ: It was completely different, yes... Completely...

GC: But as you say, that wasn't typical.

RHJ: No.

MD: Well, he struck lucky for various reasons, didn't he? The Japanese movement was all the rage, so the art dealer up in Glasgow bought the paintings.

GC: Yeah. Oh, absolutely.

MD: He sold forty-three to forty-four paintings all in one exhibition, and ye know, had joined the Glasgow Boys.

GC: Yeah.

MD: So, there was a group that had recognition. That was- lots of things fell in his favour.

GC: But you can imagine he got very good prices for his work.

RHJ: But in a very particular style which at that time was...

GC: Fashionable.

MD: Avant-garde, yeah.

RHJ: Hit the market in the right spot, yeah.

GC: Yes.

RHJ: Whereas these art- I mean, Jessie M. King, ye know, she turned out all kinds of things: potteries and paintings and-

GC: Illustrations.

RHJ: -etchings and illustrations, yeah. A lot of them were commissioned but she had much more freedom. I think Hornel had to concentrate very hard on what he was being paid a lot of money for.

GC: Yeah. Mm.

RHJ: But without Hornel Kirkcudbright would never have happened. That's the bottom line.

GC: Yeah.

MD: And the phase- the phase before them, I think it's-

RHJ: Yeah. But the phase didn't really hit the jackpot, did they?

MD: No. Other than starting other groups, the Fine Arts Society. So, there's now a formal- I guess, a formal body of which Hornel was a member, again, so he was right at the beginning of that movement as well, wasn't he? So.

RHJ: Yeah.

MD: Yeah, he's a key figure. I agree, yeah. Great.

RHJ: Ah.

MD: Anything else?

RHJ: No.

GC: No, no.

MD: Well, thank you very much indeed, Richard. That was...