



## William Henry Charlton 1846-1918

William Henry Charlton was born in Newcastle upon Tyne July 12<sup>th</sup> 1846, the son of a prosperous grain merchant. Little documentary evidence has been uncovered to verify details of his early life but it has been suggested he was educated both in Edinburgh and Newcastle. Charlton worked for the family business 'W. Charlton, Corn Merchants' until his father's death in 1875. After this time he took over the reigns of the business until he retired in 1882, aged only thirty-six. Financially secure and with abundant leisure time he was now free to pursue his great passion in life – art.

Something of a late developer in his field Charlton enjoyed the company of contemporaries who in some cases went on to claim greater public recognition of their work than he. The artist Ralph Hedley (1848-1913) was often a companion on sketching trips and a study of Charlton's sketchbooks revealed they contain a number of sketches actually executed by Hedley. An active member of the emerging Tyneside school of artists at the time, Charlton was involved in a number of different local organisations such as *The Newcastle Life School* and *The Bewick Club*. He exhibited work at:

- The Royal Academy, London
- The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
- The Royal Glasgow Institute
- The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle
- The Department of Art, Armstrong College, Newcastle



He travelled widely both in the UK and abroad, cruising around the Mediterranean (1883) and Norwegian Fjords (1884) and visiting Holland and France. Charlton also spent some time studying in Paris at the Académie Julian (other notable students were Paul Gauguin and later Henri Matisse).



Today the Hatton Gallery holds an extensive collection of work by William Charlton. The SINE Project has digitised a set of images from this collection which focus on the North Shields Fish Quay area in the early nineteenth hundreds.

By this time Charlton was in his fifties and a mature artist. The works vary enormously in speed and quality of execution as Charlton experimented with charcoal, graphite, pen and ink and watercolours - often combining the use of different media in one sketch.

The fact that Charlton revisited North Shields many times during the span of a decade or more serves as testament to the vibrancy of this busy, working port and the inspiration he drew from it. Today Charlton's sketches have become an important historical record of an area in North Tyneside which has undergone radical re-development. They give a glimpse of the past as seen through the eyes of a Victorian gentleman artist.

To view a selection of the artist's sketches of the North Shields quayside visit:

**[www.sine.ncl.ac.uk](http://www.sine.ncl.ac.uk)**