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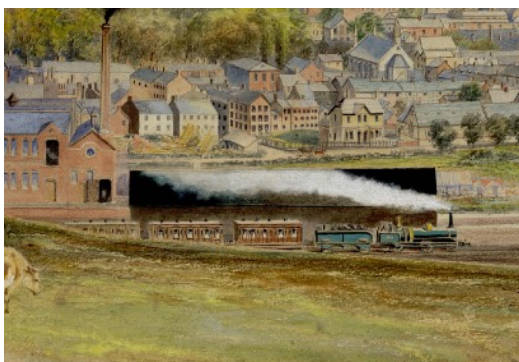
# Edward Salter: Landscape Artist

John Evans, Curator.



*For some forty years, this 1878 panorama painting of Newtown hung on a wall in the museum. Little attempt had been made to discover the identity of the artist until the museum was transferred to the care of the present charitable trust in 2016. Since then, we have been busy piecing together the story of the man who created this magnificent view of our town at the height of its flannel producing days.*

**T**o modern eyes, this pastoral scene, with cattle grazing on the slopes of Treowen, might appear quaint, offering a glimpse of a 'lost' Newtown. However, to the Victorian viewer, it was more likely to represent an optimistic forward-looking vista of the recent changes within the town. For, in truth, most of the prominent features evident in the painting had been created within the previous thirty years.



In the left foreground, a passenger train of the Cambrian Railway passes the Severn Valley Woollen Mills, owned by Pryce Jones, one of three new steam-driven mills built in the town in the 1860s and 70s. The train is about to stop at Newtown Station, built - in 1863. The Cambrian Railway Company had been formed in 1864 from several smaller companies that had been active in constructing short rail stretches, such as between Llanidloes and Newtown, since the early 1850s. By 1878 these lines were connected up to what was becoming a national rail network.

St David's Church, which dominates the central foreground of the painting, had in the 1840s, replaced the flood-damaged



church of St Mary's which had stood on the banks of the River Severn for centuries. The tower of the former parish church can be seen just to the right of the new church tower. To the left of centre, the United Reformed Church (or, as it was known at the time, the English Congregational Church) rises behind a row of terraced workers' cottages. The church opened its doors for the first time in the same year as this painting was created.

Beyond this, the developing suburb of Penygloddfa is visible and it is possible to distinguish the building which now houses Newtown Textile Museum. Immediately above it and at the very top can be seen the 'Clock' Factory on Bryn St and, just below this, the South Factory on Commercial St., all three built in the 1830s.

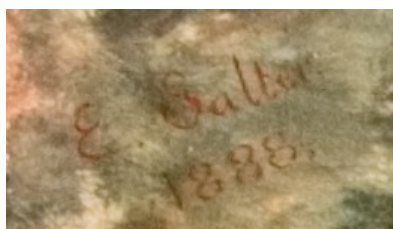
The right-hand side of the painting shows the other two newly constructed steam-powered woollen mills. It was these new 'integrated' flannel factories which would sound the death-knell for the handloom weavers of Pengloddfa. The multi-storeyed Cambrian Mill, which would become the largest of its kind in Wales, is prominent whilst in the far distance on the extreme right can be discerned the chimney of the Commercial Mill (also known as the Cymric). Both mills were situated close to the canal, but it was the railway which, in 1878, represented the future, and one man, more than any other clearly understood its potential. Pryce Jones, the mail order pioneer, had opened his draper's shop in 1859 on a site near where the town clock stands today in the centre of town. His business quickly flourished and provided a welcome boost to the sale of Welsh flannel. Within a decade he could boast Florence Nightingale and even Queen Victoria among his customers. Success soon led him to look for larger premises and, just as the paint was drying on Salter's view of Newtown, so too was Pryce Jones's Royal Welsh Warehouse nearing completion. In 1878 his customers were numbering some 40,000 and the railway was transporting his wares to all parts of the country.



Whilst the painting gives us a vivid visual record of Newtown in the late nineteenth century, the museum's catalogue provided no clue as to its creator, apart from a brief note recording the artist's name as 'R.G. Salter'. And so it remained until 2016. As part of the revamping of the displays, the painting was removed from its location on a damp external wall to a safer location on the first floor. At the same time an interpretation board was added to provide some context to the painting. Despite researching contemporary records, no reference could be found of an R.G. Salter, although a father



Salter's signature on the museum's painting



Signature on 'A Waterfall', Sandwell Gallery (Art UK)

and son printer partnership of George and Jackson Salter were present in Newtown between 1830 and 1871. Fast-forward to 2025. The museum had subscribed to the on-line art gallery of ARTUK and our Salter painting was one of the items uploaded to the site. An eagle-eyed editor, noticed the similarities of style between our painting and two other examples in their collection. One is of a waterfall, held by Birmingham Sandwell Gallery; the other is of Plas Dolerw, Newtown, the home of none other than Pryce Jones. Both are signed by the artist as 'E. Salter'. A check of our painting's signature, clearly shows it to be E. Salter also. As a consequence of this discovery, we were able to recreate the life of our artist, Edward Salter (1830-1910).

Edward Salter was baptised at Kerry, Montgomeryshire on 13 Oct 1830<sup>1</sup> to parents Henry and Elizabeth Salter. The 1841 census lists Henry and Elizabeth as mercers and drapers living in Kerry village with their four children (including Edward) and three servants<sup>2</sup>. Three years later, the Salters appear in Pigot's Trade Directory under 'Shopkeepers and Dealers in Groceries' in Kerry<sup>3</sup>. But, in 1846, disaster struck the family when Henry died at the early age of 48<sup>4</sup>, just seven months after the couple had buried their 12 year old son, George<sup>5</sup>. Henry's widow, Elizabeth, continued the draper's business, assisted by her eldest son, also named Henry.

Despite the loss of his father, Edward was able to continue his education, enrolling at St Mark's College, Battersea, the following year. St Mark's had been established in 1841 by *The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Church of England*. The Society had been established some twenty years prior to Edward's birth with a mission to establish an Anglican elementary school in every parish in England and Wales. Like the pupils who enrolled in these schools, the teachers themselves were drawn from the ranks of the working class and were themselves poorly educated. In an effort to improve the quality of National School teachers, the Society opened its first teacher training college, St Marks, with the Rev. Derwent Coleridge as its principle. Derwent was the second son of the great Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and, like his father, possessed a

<sup>1</sup> Baptism of Edward Salter recorded as 13 Oct 1830. Exist only as card index record in [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>2</sup> The National Archives (TNA) HO 107/1439/16 folio 7

<sup>3</sup> Pigot's Trade Directory, Newtown and district, 1844

<sup>4</sup> Parish Register (PR), Kerry, Burials, 25 July 1846

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 22 Dec., 1845



profound love of nature. It may be that it was under Coleridge's influence that Edward gained a deep appreciation of the natural landscape which would shape his future career as an artist. Derwent also inherited his father's belief in the 'educability' of the lower classes. Edward, fitted the bill, the son of a small country shopkeeper who had only recently died. His entry into the college in 1847 was probably as a consequence of his receiving a scholarship, which provided him with the £25 to cover his maintenance. As a consequence, Edward would have had to agree to be bound by the terms of the scholarship including, "Thankfully to accept any school to which I may be appointed by the Principal of the College". In reality, the seventeen year old Edward entered into what was considered by the Society as an apprenticeship with the college until the age of 21.



The National School  
Llanidloes, early 20th century

By 1853, Edward had returned to Wales and had taken up an appointment as Headmaster at Llanidloes National School, a school built ten years early to accommodate 250 pupils. But by 1861 he had moved to Rhyl in Denbighshire where he was lodging in the household of Benjamin Lewis, printer and stationer of 57a High St Rhyl and working as a school master at the town's National School<sup>6</sup>.

By this time Edward was 30 years of age. Time he was settling down. He did just that the very next year. On 30 October 1862, he married 22 year old Hannah Bourne Burrell at Christ Church, Newgate St., London. Exactly how the two met, or how they found their way to London is a mystery. According to the parish register, Edward was living in 'New Brompton' at the time of the marriage, and it may be that he was teaching at the (St Mark's) National School in that village situated on the Medway between Chatham and Gillingham<sup>7</sup>. His bride was residing at 22 Bullsmouth Street. Hannah was the daughter of Joseph Burrell, an inspector of Police. Twenty years earlier, the census finds the Burrell family living in Old Hall St., Liverpool (just across from the Liver Building) with one-year old Hannah listed as the youngest of three sisters. The family were still resident in the city twelve years later, when father Joseph is again listed as inspector of police at 7 John St., Netherfield Road North<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The National Archives (TNA), RG 9/4296, folio 84

<sup>7</sup> Morris, E.R.A. *A Montgomeryshire Artist - Hugh Jerman, Llanidloes (1836-1895)* in *Mont. Colls.*, Vol. 72, 1984

<sup>8</sup> 1853 Gore's Directory of Liverpool & its Environs

The Salters' first child, Agness Elizabeth, was born in the autumn of 1863 in Gillingham<sup>9</sup> but by 1867, Edward and his family had returned to his native Montgomeryshire and taken up residence back in Llanidloes where he was again headmaster at the National School. On August 10 that year, their son Alfred was baptised. The baptismal register records the family living at Smithfield, Llanidloes, probably in the School House, with Edward's occupation given as school master<sup>10</sup>. Between 1867 and 1874 Hannah Bourne Salter gave birth to another three children, but by 1870. Edward was styling himself as 'artist'. In that year, their newly born son, Edward Henry Langford Salter was taken back to his mother's church of St Peter's in Liverpool to be baptised and it is here that we find the first reference to Edward as an artist. From then on, he is consistently referred to in documents as either 'artist' or 'landscape artist'. It may be that some time around 1870, he was earning sufficient money to give up teaching to concentrate fully on his painting, whilst Hannah took over the role of regular breadwinner as a school mistress at Cwmbelan National School<sup>11</sup>.



One of Salter's illustrations to accompany *Two Siôn Catti*, 1871(NLW)

It is from the early 1870s that the first surviving examples of Edward's work survive. They come in the shape of lithographs produced for two publications. The first appeared as a series of illustrations for the third edition of *Two Siôn Catti* by J.T.L. Pritchard, printed at Llanidloes in 1871<sup>12</sup>. Contemporary reviews of the illustrations were mixed. The Welsh medium newspaper, *Baner Ac Amserau Cymru* described the eight prints as "ardderchog" (excellent)<sup>13</sup>. *The Cardiff Times*, however, was less forgiving, concluding that, "The new edition is very neatly got up, and illustrated by Mr. Edward Salter, whose ideas appear to be better than his powers of execution"<sup>14</sup>. The following year, nine prints by Salter accompanied an article in the Montgomeryshire Collections on the *Parochial Account of Llanfechain*<sup>15</sup>. But it was his works in oils and watercolour which made up most of Edward's works. His earliest painting so far discovered is an oil on

<sup>9</sup> General Records Office (GRO), births Oct.-Dec. 1863 Vol. 2a, p.403

<sup>10</sup> PR Llanidloes Baps (1831-1874) p. 180, no.20

<sup>11</sup> Morris, *op.cit.* 1881 Census records the couple living at School House Cwmbelan with their six children. Edward described as 'Landscape Artist' and Hannah 'Schoolmistress (B. School)'

<sup>13</sup> *Baner Ac Amserau Cymru*, April 28, 1875

<sup>14</sup> *The Cardiff Times*, November 25 1871

<sup>15</sup> *Mont. Colls.* Vol. V, 1872



Plas Dolerw, 1876, (NLW)

canvas work dated 1876 of Plas Dolerw in Newtown. The scene depicted seems to have been taken from Milford Road looking down on what is now Dolerw Park and the hills towards Dolfor. A gentleman, astride a briskly cantering horse, with dog in pursuit, makes his way to the Hall, which is shown as it was prior to Pryce Jones's addition of the Italianate campanille. The connection of this painting to Pryce Jones, as well as the prominent features associated with the entrepreneur in our museum's painting (i.e. the Severn Valley Mill and Royal Welsh Warehouse) may indicate that both paintings were in fact commissioned by the Pryce Jones family.

Meanwhile, Edward was exhibiting his work to a wider audience. In 1878, for example, the same year in which he completed our painting, he exhibited three of his landscapes at the Crystal Palace Art Gallery - *The Fairy Glenn*, *A view of the Severn near Llanidloes*, and *Pont Aberglaslyn*. They were later proudly exhibited in the window of Newtown photographer John Owen where they were described as a "trio of gems in the pictorial art, and reflect the highest credit upon the talented artist"<sup>16</sup>.



The Glaslyn Valley in Eryri was a favourite of Salter's. This example, entitled Llyn Glaslyn, was painted in 1888

Edward was also throwing himself into the wider cultural life of Montgomeryshire. During his first residence in Llanidloes, he had struck up a friendship with another Montgomeryshire artist, Hugh Jerman. This friendship was cemented in 1859 when Jerman married Edward's sister, Elizabeth, at Kerry Church, where Edward had acted as witness to the event<sup>17</sup>. Jerman had been a pupil teacher at Llanidloes during Edward's first time as headteacher and would go on to attend St John's College, Battersea, the sister training college of St Mark's. The two men seemed to have shared the same interests in music (Edward became organist at Llanidloes Parish Church) and in painting. Perhaps it was Jerman's influence which finally convinced Edward to give up his teaching career and become a professional landscape artist. It was also this love of music which brought him into contact with like-minded individuals such as Newtown photographer John Owen and his chemist brother, Edward. Both men were accomplished musicians and was these brothers, together with Edward, who were prominent in the establishment of the Montgomeryshire Choral Union in 1873 with the two Owen brothers joining the committee and Edward acting as its secretary. At a meeting at *The Bear's Head Hotel* at the end of

<sup>16</sup> *The Montgomeryshire Express*, 19 March, 1878

<sup>17</sup> Kerry PR Marriages 1837-1922, p.99

October of that year, it was Edward who seconded the motion to establish the Union for the express purpose of "improving choral singing in Montgomeryshire, and for uniting the different choirs in the county for the purpose of performing oratorios and other works of the great masters, and taking part in any musical competition which might be considered expedient"<sup>18</sup>.

Edward had also joined the Plinlimmon Lodge of the Order of Oddfellows, becoming its Hon. Sec. On October 25 1876 he was among about 100 members present at a 'demonstration' of Oddfellows at Newtown, assembling at 1pm at "...their lodge house, the Unicorn Inn, and formed in procession, with a grand banner at their head, each member being dressed in the full regalia, and the officers carrying the various insignia. The procession wended its way up High-street, and through New Church-street, to the parish church"<sup>19</sup>.

The Salters disappear from the census record in 1891, but the family still appeared to have been living in Cwmbelan in the mid 1890s as Edward is listed as a landscape artist in Slater's Directory<sup>20</sup>. It may be that some time before the publication of the Directory the couple had already decided to move to Montgomery residing first at Victoria Buildings, Princess Street and later *The Oak Shop*, Broad Street<sup>21</sup>. It was during their residence in the town that Edward completed a view of Montgomery from the east. The painting is dated 1894 and it is a fine view looking across from Church Bank to the castle set atop its hill. Immediately below is the Wesleyan Chapel and a row of cottages. The view, itself, is little changed today apart from the fact that the chapel had a school room built in the same architectural style in 1905.

If, indeed, the Salters did move to Montgomery, their time there was short, for when the census of 1901 was taken, they had left the county and were to be found living in Barrow St., Much Wenlock. Edward was now aged 70, but was still occupied as a landscape artist. Hannah, ten years his junior had secured a post as school mistress in the town's National School. Yet, once more, their residence there was brief. On March 1 1891, Edward Henry Langford Salter, the son who, back in 1870, had been taken to Liverpool to be baptised in

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<sup>18</sup> *The Cambrian News & Merioneth Standard*, 7 Nov., 1873

<sup>19</sup> *The Cambrian News & Merioneth Standard* 3 Nov., 1876

<sup>20</sup> *Slater's Directory of North Wales*, 1895

<sup>21</sup> Drs. Ann & John Welton unpublished email to the author, 22 April 2017



his mother's family church, married Sarah Jane Rogers. The marriage took place in Neath, Glamorganshire, where twenty year old Henry was working as a gardener. It would appear that his bride had followed him from Montgomeryshire, for, according to the marriage register, Sarah was born in Llandyssil, the daughter of David Rogers a farm labourer<sup>22</sup>. At some stage after their marriage, Henry Salter seems to have branched out in the music business and by 1911, he was described as a musical instrument dealer. It may be because of the establishment of Henry's music business, that Edward and Hannah decided to move to South Wales, perhaps to assist their son in the setting up of the business. It was in Neath, at the age of 79, that Edward passed away on 19 May, 1910<sup>23</sup>. Henry Salter's music business, which Edward probably helped to establish continued to flourish well into the new century. By 1921 his two sons were also employed in the business as organ tuners and pianoforte makers and repairers, whilst his mother, Hannah Bourne Salter, now aged 80 continued to live in the family home in Queen St., Neath<sup>24</sup> where she died in October of the same year.



This watercolour of 1894 was advertised on the web as 'An English Village'. It is actually a view of Montgomery from Church Bank

To date, our research has identified over 30 examples of Edward Salter's works. There are probably many others still in existence lying forgotten in attics or anonymously hanging on walls in private homes. Some of his works have appeared in on-line auctions in both the UK and the USA. Occasionally, some appear in on-line market places, often both unattributed by place or artist. Very little has been written about Salter and he has no entry in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, despite three of his paintings being included in the collection of the National Library of Wales. Perhaps it's time that Edward Salter and his works were given greater prominence in the art history of Wales.

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<sup>22</sup> PR Neath Marriages

<sup>23</sup> National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995 Edward Salter of 72 Windsor Road Neath, died 19 May 1910. Admin. with will proved, London 27 July to Hannah Bourne Salter widow effects £209, 13s page 119

<sup>24</sup> TNA 1921 Neath 23/159