

## **Ernest Stafford Carlos 1883-1917**

Carlos depicted a range of different scenes of early Scouting activity. He was involved in Scouting and was able to accurately reflect the movement, its ethos and endeavours, particularly those in the East End of London.

A number of these artworks are on display in The White House, Gilwell Park, the headquarters of The Scouts.



## Biography

Born on 4th June 1883, Carlos received his early education at St. John's Middle Class School, Kennington. From there he moved to the Lambeth Art School and thence to the Royal Academy School in 1901 on a three-year scholarship. This was renewed for a further two years.

He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1900 with a small picture entitled *Soldiers*; he was then 17 years old. In the same year he was awarded the National Medal [South Kensington]. This was followed by the Landseer Scholarship for painting in 1903, a British Institute Scholarship in 1904 and the Royal Academy Silver Medals in 1904 and 1906. He gained a gold medal at the Bury St. Edmund's Exhibition of 1908.

He set up his studio at 42 Foxley Road, North Brixton, somewhere around 1904, and a small notebook, still in the possession of his family, records his commissions from that year onwards. It was here that he first became involved with youth work and was also made aware of the social problems in London's East End.

In November 1908 he painted a copy of the portrait of John, Bishop of Salisbury by Sir George Reid. This was executed at Church House, Salisbury. There followed from this a long and fruitful connection with the cathedral clergy. He was held in high regard there and helped with the camps held for boys of the Bishop's School. In 1908 he painted the boys in camp [no 53 in the exhibition of his works held at Church House, Salisbury in the same year]. The Salisbury connection was also instrumental in bringing commissions from families who were connected with the cathedral clergy, particularly the Oldfields of Salisbury.

In his early days, Carlos travelled extensively around the country, painting and making copies of portraits and other works. In 1906 he was at Inverary Castle, making a copy of a Hoppner painting for the Duke of Argyll, and at a later date he supplied the Duke with a copy of a portrait of HRH the Princess Louise, Colonel in Chief of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He went to Paris in 1906 to make a copy of the portrait of Catherine II of Russia for the Princess Bobinsky.

In addition to this kind of work he was receiving commissions and steadily building up a reputation as a portrait painter. His painting *Rejected and Dejected* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1908. This had previously been shown at his Salisbury exhibition under the title *One of London's Unemployed* and was a portrait of an old soldier who the artist had met outside the Church Army Shelter in London, a man still in the prime of life but without a trade. The painting made a deep impression at the Academy and was later used by the Independent Labour Party on one of their local election pamphlets in Lambeth. It also included Carlos' own feelings about life and conditions in London's East End, a situation which Carlos was to attempt to alleviate during the remainder of his life.

This was achieved in two ways – working through the Church organisations and within the Scout Movement. Scouting had been started in 1907 by Robert Baden-Powell who, through his defence of Mafeking during the Boer War, had become a popular hero. Scouting today is sometimes criticised as being a middle-class Movement. Baden-Powell's intention was to help the underprivileged

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Philipps, son of Viscount St. David, founded Roland House, a settlement for Scouts in the East End of London. He was killed in France in 1916 and the House became his memorial.

Ernest Carlos founded the 107th London Troop and he was assisted in his work as Leader by his brother, the Reverend J.B. Carlos, who was in later years to hold many positions in Scouting. The 107th London Troop still continues as the 21st Camberwell [Trinity] Scout Group.

His connection with the Scout Movement led to move away from portraiture to the production of a series of paintings with a Scouting context illustrating Scouting activities of the period. Some of the paintings especially those which were exhibited at the Royal Academy made an impact upon the viewers. If Baden-Powell's 'Scouting for Boys' had caught the imagination of boys, Ernest Carlos' paintings brought to the attention of a wider audience the meaning of Scouting and its ethos. They gained widespread sympathy and support and were reproduced as prints, post and greetings cards and even as stained glass windows.

Carlos produced several versions of his most important works such as *If I were a boy again* and *His Country's Flag*. Upon the Scout Movement itself his picture *The Pathfinder* has made a lasting impression. Baden-Powell wrote in 1917: 'I am certain that his picture and especially 'The Pathfinder' have already done an immense amount of good among boys and will live to do more'. Reproductions of the picture were made and could be found in most Scout Headquarters throughout the world. Many know of the painting but few know of the man who was responsible for its conception. It has been reproduced as a stained glass window in several churches. *The Pathfinder* window in Holy Cross Church, Hornchurch, is the family memorial to him. The original painting now hangs in The Scout Association's national Headquarters at Gilwell Park in the 'Baerlein Room. He did paint two copies but always regarded the version at Gilwell as the original.

This painting has been reproduced as posters, Christmas cards, calendars and other ways. But its biggest claim to fame is that a sepia print of the painting appears in Granada TV's Coronation Street and has done so since the soap opera began in 1961. [First it was Uncle Albert's, then Deirdre's and now it's on Ken Barlow's wall.]

At the outbreak of war in 1914 Carlos volunteered for military service but was rejected on medical grounds. As a result he became more deeply involved in social work, particularly for the parishes of St. George in Camberwell and St. John the Divine, Kennington. He was also associated with the

Belgrave Hospital for Children and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Relief Association while continuing his work in Scouting. He also continued producing paintings depicting the Scout's role in the Great War, a fine example being *Coast Watching* of 1915 showing the Sea Scouts who were supporting the Coastguard Service throughout the First World War (1914-1918).

Carlos again volunteered in 1916 and was accepted as a Private in the Queen's Westminster Rifles [the 16th London Regiment]. After a short period of service abroad he returned to England and was posted to No 12 Officer Cadet Battalion at Newmarket from which he was commissioned as a Second-Lieutenant to the Royal East Kent Regiment [the Buffs]. He joined his regiment in France in March 1917, he still found time to sketch life in the trenches but he did not live to see the end of hostilities. Carlos was killed by shellfire in the evening of 14th June 1917 while leading his platoon in an attack and his body now lies in the Chester Farm Cemetery, Zillebeke.

Mrs. Wordsworth, the wife of the Bishop of Salisbury, writing to his mother after his death said: *'It seems to me utterly wrong that such a man as he was should be a soldier. We cannot afford to lose these gentle, high, fine natures, who do so much by their gentle kindness and understanding to help everyone to make this world a better place. He did this always, in a remarkable way.'*

### **An Assessment of Carlos the artist**

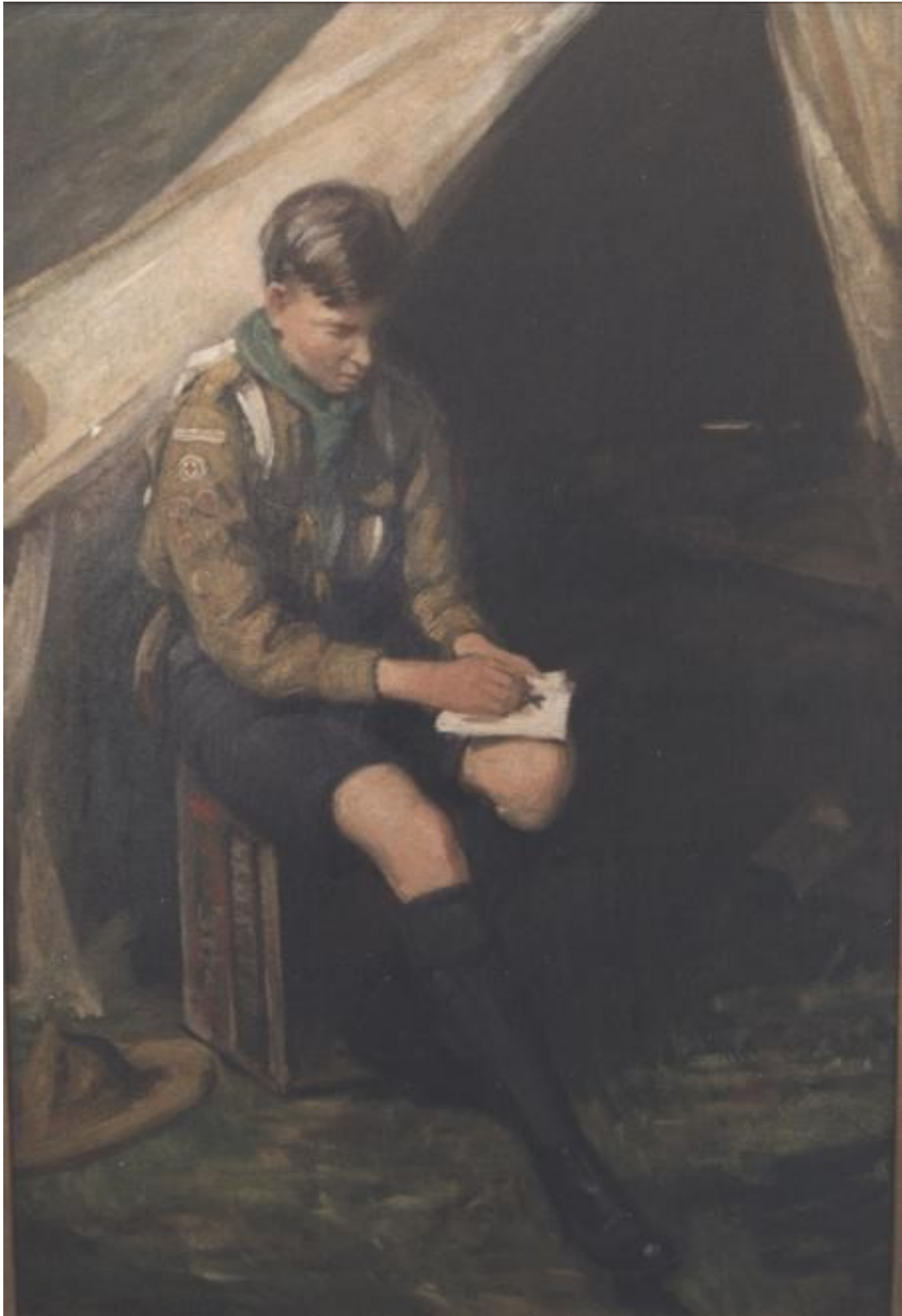
For too long Carlos has been thought of as the 'apologist' of the early Scout Movement, with his famous [and much reproduced] painting *The Pathfinder* epitomising not only the ideals of Scouting but also the ethos of an age now past.

Thus, his continuing neglect by a wider public is not too difficult to understand, a neglect heightened by the fact that many of his paintings have remained in the possession of his family and as a result his talents have been seen by the comparatively few. Certainly his work reveals him as much more than a mere publicist for 'Scouting for Boys'. True, he appears to have been passionately interested in the Movement and his paintings of Scouting subjects reveal his own involvement and have a veracity and an almost timeless appeal to Scouts and Scouters.

It was, however, as a portrait painter that he made his reputation and his notebooks for the years 1904-1916 reveal that a substantial amount of his time and energy was devoted to this field. It is easy to understand why, for his portraits, although lacking any very great individuality reflect with some accuracy both the superficial appearance and the character of the sitter.

But Carlos had more than the artist's eye for truth – he had a social conscience. The more striking of his paintings [*Dejected and Rejected* for example] indicate quite clearly his sympathy for the oppressed and reflect his concern for the state of his times.

Something of the same feeling emanates from his war-time notebooks. Most of the small watercolour sketches are drawn boldly, almost as cartoons, with no great fineness of line. Some are superficially funny and the whole series reveal an ability to retain a sense of humour under extreme circumstances, but the overall impression left by them is one which seems merely to emphasise the futility of war.



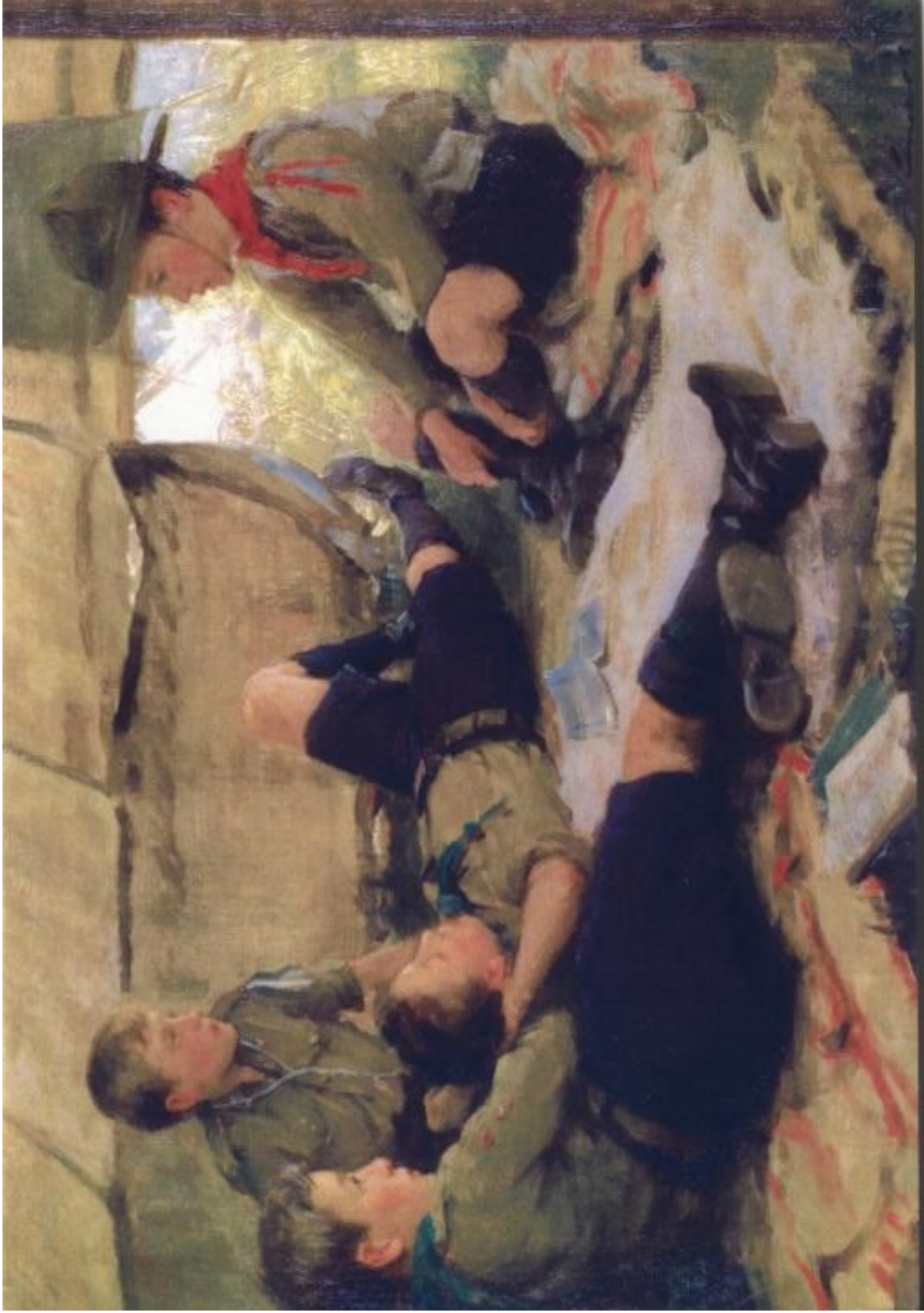
Carlos, Ernest Stafford  
Time for Thought, 1911



**Carlos, Ernest Stafford**  
Good Service Work in a London Slum, 1912



**Carlos, Ernest Stafford**  
Raw Material, 1914



Carlos, Ernest Stafford  
A Ripping Yarn, circa 1910





**Carlos, Ernest Stafford**  
If I Were A Boy Again, circa 1910



Carlos, Ernest Stafford  
Pathfinder, circa 1910s



Carlos, Ernest Stafford  
Day Dreams, circa 1907-1917



**Carlos, Ernest Stafford**  
Coast Watching, circa 1914-1918