

# Who is the artist?



In the guest lounge and some of the bedrooms you will see paintings and drawings by George Alexander Stevens, Anne's father and Michelle's grandfather. He was an important figure in British and African art education in the early to mid-20th century. Many guests have asked about the paintings and the artist so here is a very short biography.

## **George Alexander Stevens (1900 - 1963), Artist and Educator**



## **Education**

George was born in London on 6 June 1900 to Ellen and John Stevens. He was educated at Bancroft School, Essex, then Queens College, Oxford (BA History) and subsequently the Slade School of Art. While there he

studied art under Henry Tonks and Gilbert Spencer, and remained a friend of Stanley Spencer's throughout his life. He was subsequently mentored by Roger Fry, a Bloomsbury critic, and London Group painter.

## Achimota College, Gold Coast

After graduation he became an art teacher and in 1925, he was appointed art master at the Government Training College in Accra, Ghana (then known as the Gold Coast). He was the first art master when this moved to Achimota as the Prince of Wales College and School. The school was subsequently formally opened as Achimota College in 1927. Above all, he was keen for his students to develop their own native styles of painting rather than be subject to European influences. Kwame Nkrumah, the first Prime Minister and later President of Ghana, was one of his pupils. While in the Gold Coast he painted many scenes of local life.

Stevens curated an exhibition of his students' works in 1927 at the Imperial Institute in London. His patronage of his students' creative effort is summarised in this tribute:

*"An excellent artist himself, he was intensely interested in the simple drawings of his pupils, and when Captain Rattray asked him to illustrate his volume of Ashanti folk tales, he successfully turned the work over to a group of his students" (Meyerowitz, 1937).*

## Family

On his return to England, he taught at Eastbourne College and while there met and married Edith Whitworth, a nurse. His eldest daughter Mary was born in 1932 and subsequently they had a son John who died in infancy. His second daughter Anne was born later in 1937.



Edit



Mary



Anne

## National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

In 1936, he became the Arts and Crafts Adviser to the NCSS where he worked with Richard Carline. In this role he established a craft centre for the unemployed at Kingstanding, Birmingham, teaching skills such as woodworking to improve their employment prospects.

## War Service

During the war he toured air bases, gunnery and balloon emplacements teaching crafts to prevent boredom such as macrame knotting and plastic crafts. He designed the first logo of the Citizens Advice Bureau which was started by the NCSS at this time.

While in London he renewed friendships with Richard Carline and Stanley Spencer and their families. Anne has many happy memories of playing croquet in the garden at Hampstead with Unity Spencer and the Carline family.

During the war he became an external examiner for Cambridge University School Certificate Design for Applied Art papers and History of Art at Higher School Certificate level. He continued this for very many years becoming Senior Examiner.



## Educator

In 1948 he returned to teaching, becoming Senior Art Lecturer at Cooper's Hill Emergency Training College which was founded to address an urgent need for teachers after the war. He trained returned soldiers as handicraft teachers. At this time he became an enthusiastic member of the Society for Education Through Art and their Pictures for Schools scheme.

When the Emergency Teacher Training scheme ended in 1951, the London County Council (LCC) offered him the management of the prestigious Whitechapel Art Gallery and then firstly, the post of Principal of Fulham and Hammersmith Evening Institute and subsequently, the Battersea Men's Institute, where he stayed until his death in 1963. While at Battersea he held a one man show at Battersea Town Hall.

## Find out more

If you'd like to see more of his paintings or to find out more about the life and work of George A Stevens while you are here please let us know.



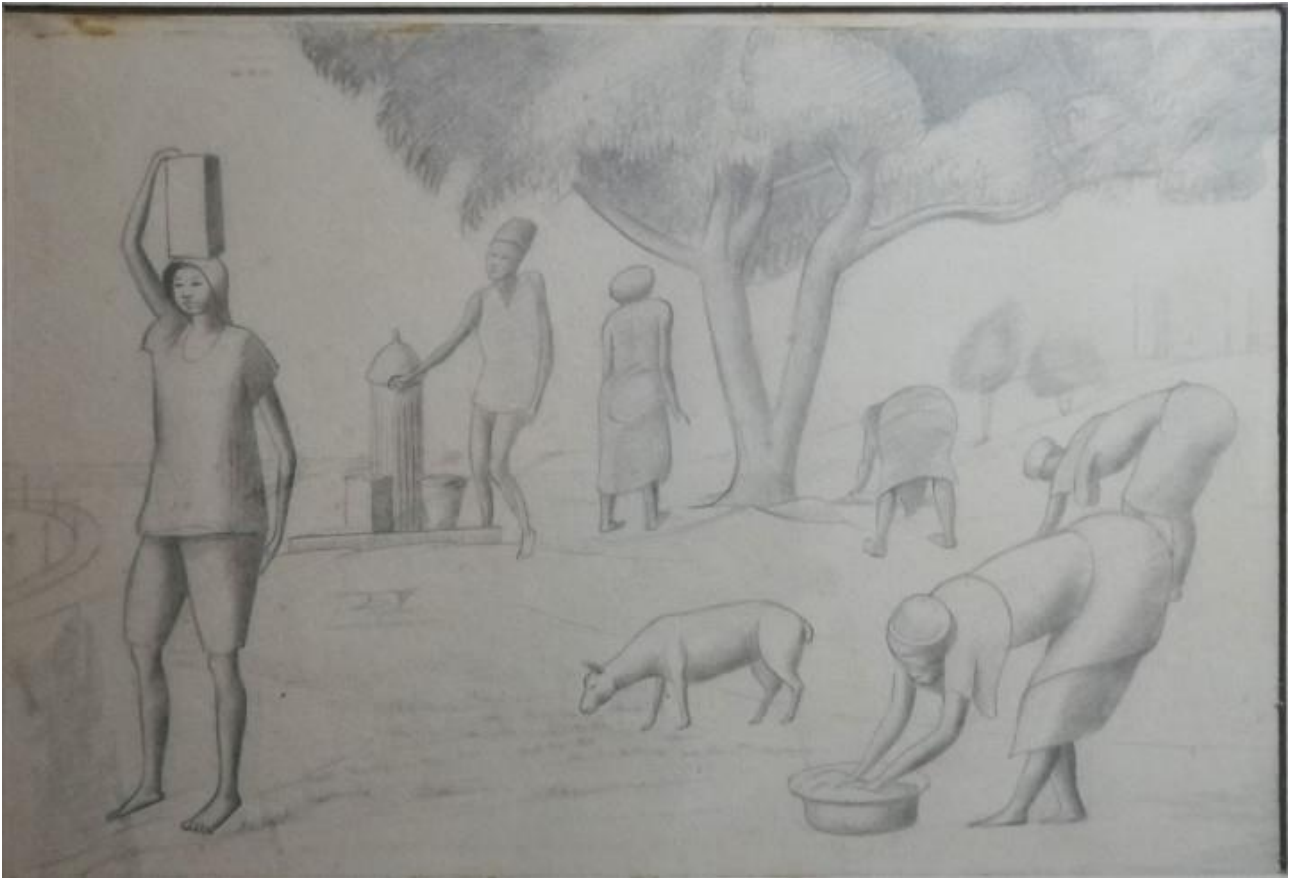
# GALLERY



GA Stevens: Trio playing in an Oxford tea room, possibly the Cadena Cafe painted while a student at the Ruskin School of Drawing, Oxford (oil)



Undated – not in his usual style



GA Stevens: Fetching Water Pencil drawing





Christiansborg Castle - Accra, Gold Coast (oil) 1927. This symbol of European occupation was built by the Danes, occupied successively by Portuguese and Dutch Colonists, and then became the British Governor's residence. the boats are native-built dug-out canoes used by the fishermen

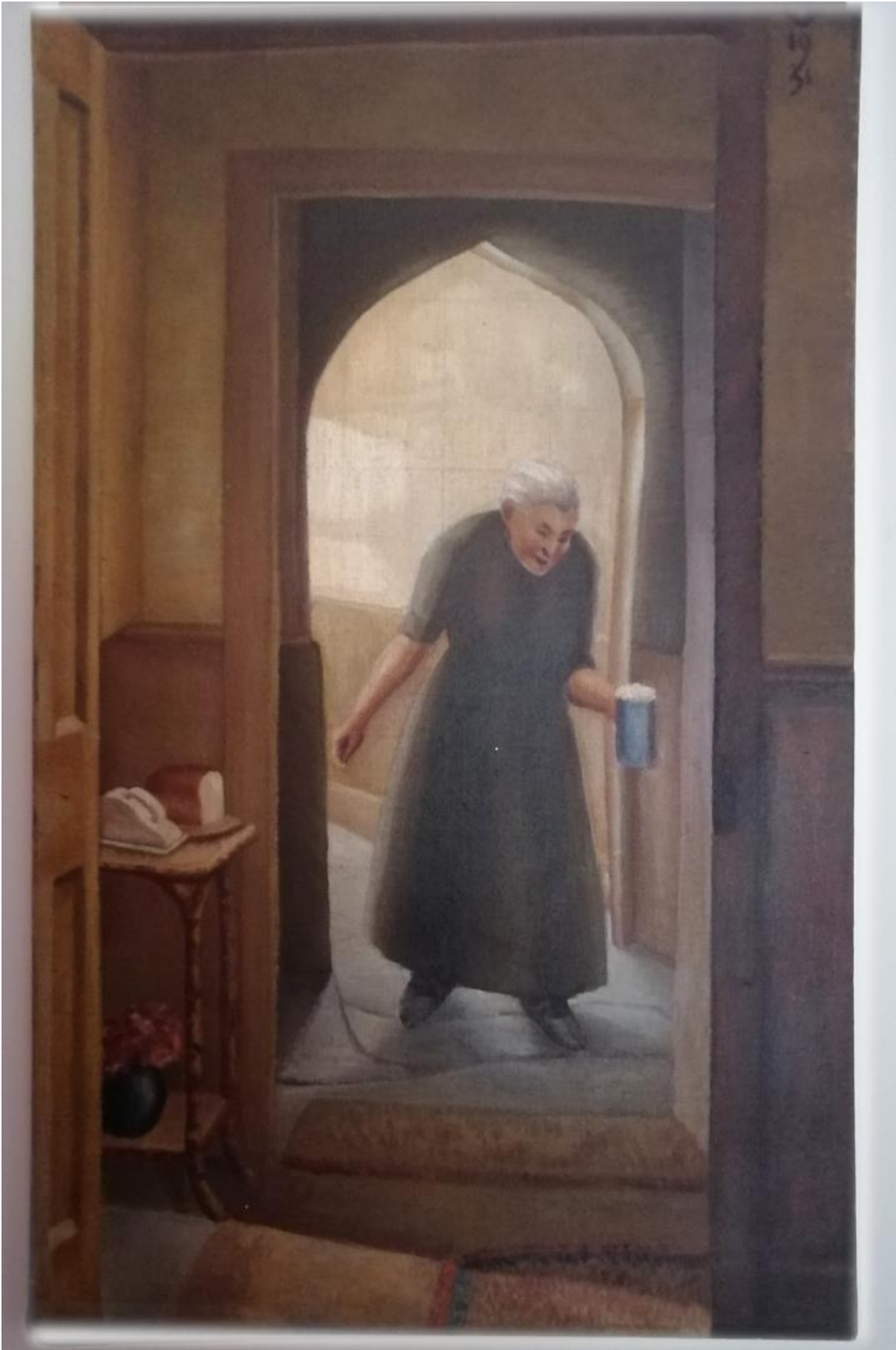


GA Stevens: Oil sketch on hardboard undated



GA Stevens: Surf-boats racing round the buoy - Accra (oil on canvas)





GA Stevens: Mrs Anne Lomas of the Swan Inn, Burford 1931 (oil on canvas)



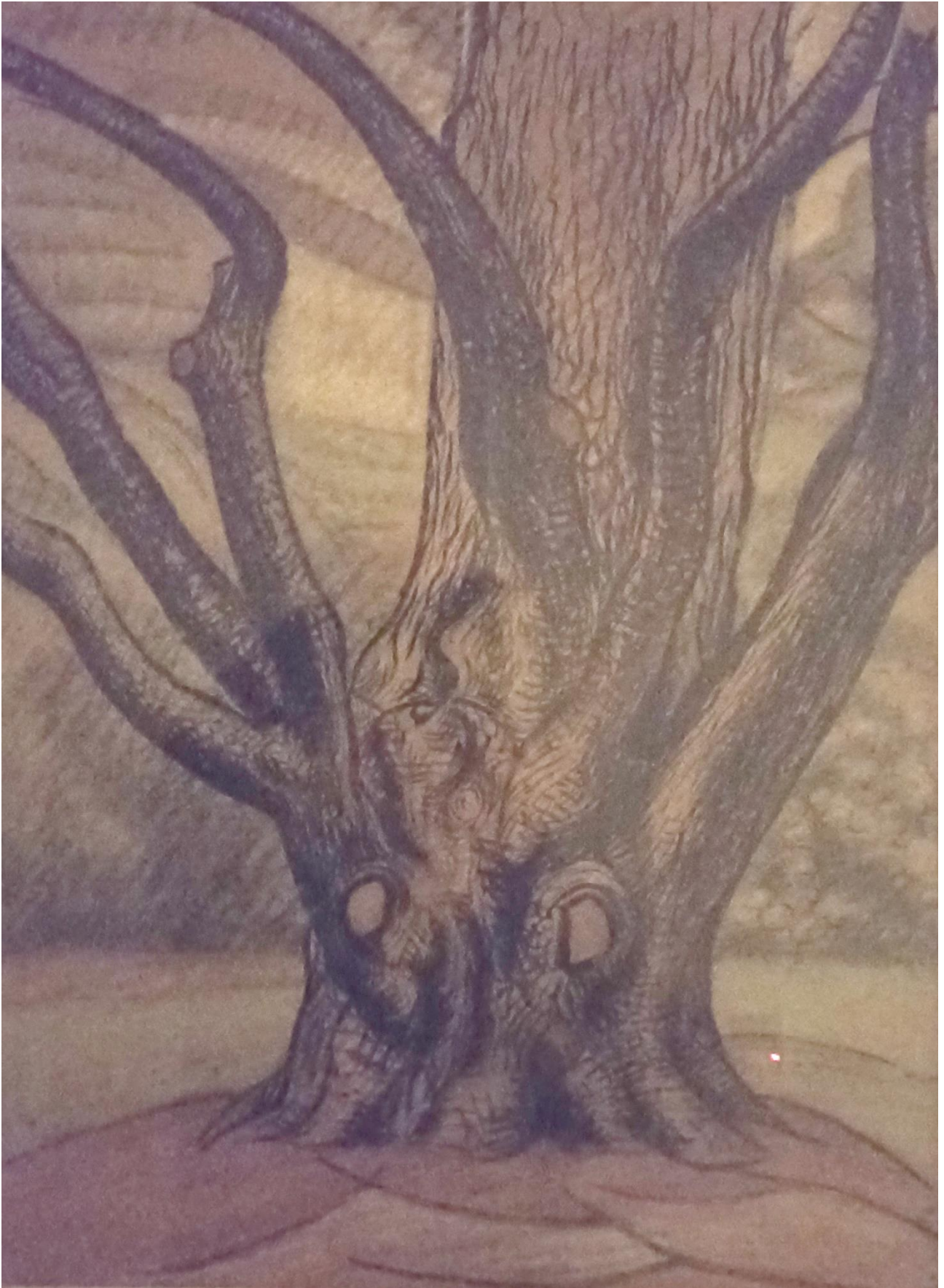
GA Stevens: Anne in the Garden, Lichfield (oil), undated but approx 1940



GA Stevens: The Local, Lichfield (oil) 1942

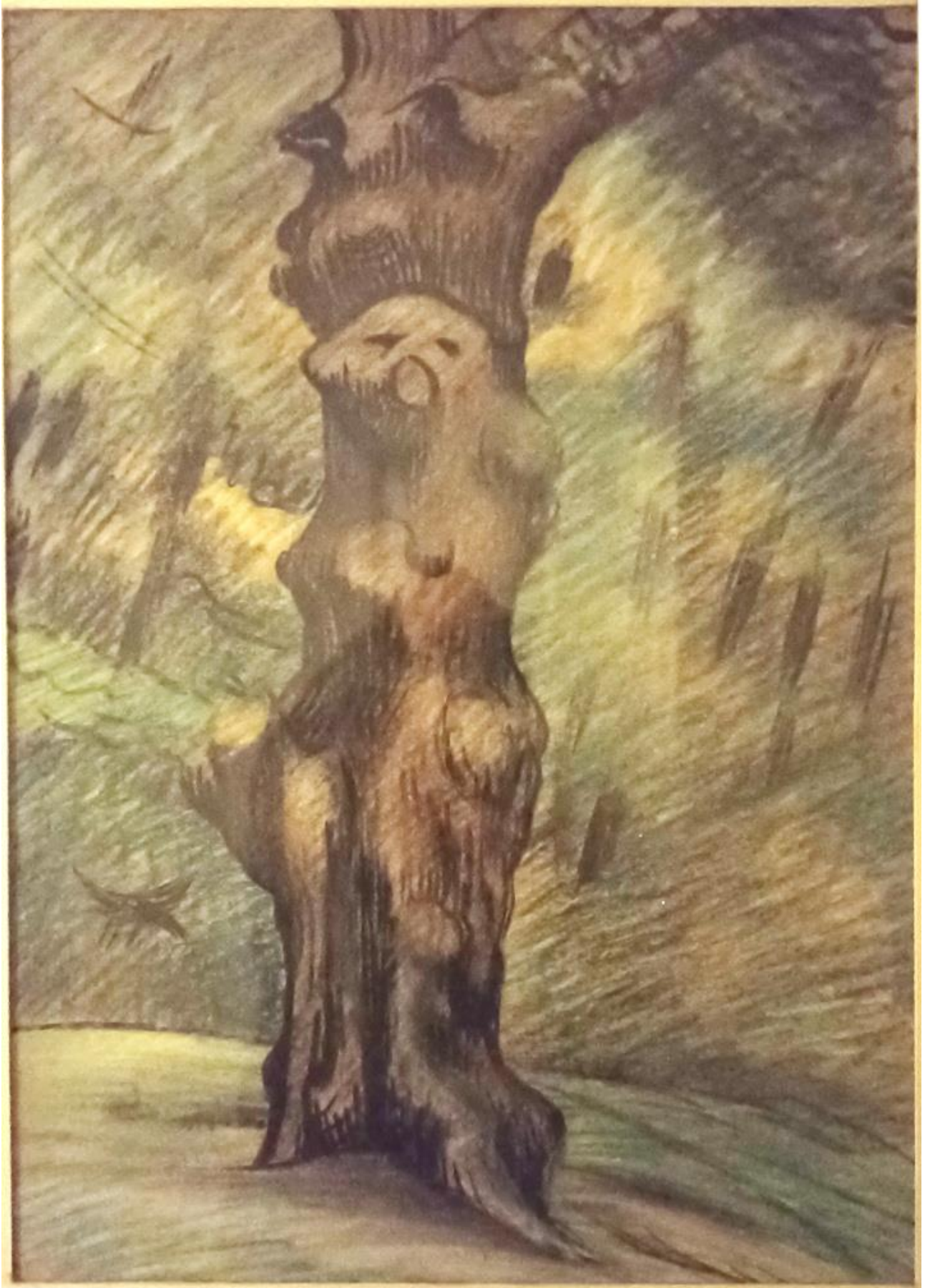
“Like characters in a play, those who habitually frequent the same house take up their positions, sitting or standing with little change on each occasion. Anecdotally the pubgoers are listening to the wartime newsreel which was broadcast at 7pm each evening. Another variation of the 'people in places' theme. “  
Retrospective Exhibition catalogue





GA Stevens: The Octopus Tree (undated)





GA Stevens: The Bear Tree (undated)



GA Stevens: Edith Stevens 1947 (oil)





GA Stevens: Mary Stevens 1947 (oil)



GA Stevens: Anne Stevens (oil) on canvas 1957



GA Stevens: Alan Lampson (oil on canvas) 1958





GA Stevens: Oil on canvas 1954



GA Stevens: Runnymede from Coopers Hill (date unknown) Oil on Canvas



Oil painting by GA Stevens 1955 Cotswold View





Oil painting by GA Stevens Cotswold View



Oil painting by GA Stevens Cotswold View





Oil painting by GA Stevens, "Submerged Forest" 1960



## AFRICAN LIFE PORTRAYED AT LIBRARY EXHIBITION

History of the relationship between Africans and Europeans was a sad and sorry chapter in our annals, but now at last the two races were learning to approach each other in a spirit of humility, said Mr. Michael Stewart, M.P. for East Fulham, in opening an exhibition of paintings and drawings of English and West African life by Mr. George A. Stevens, principal of Fulham Men's Institute, at the Central Library on Monday evening.

"This new approach has to be carried through on a plane of imaginative understanding if the two races are ever to live together in harmony," said Mr. Stewart.

### UNDERSTANDING AND SENSITIVITY

12. It was for this reason that Mr. Stevens' paintings were very important. They portrayed the West Africans and their life with understanding and sensitivity.

10. The mayoress, Mrs. E. M. Rankin, J.P., L.C.C., presided and introduced Mr. Stewart. A vote of thanks was proposed by last year's mayor, Cllr. W. G. Wallis, chairman of the Libraries Committee. Mrs. Wallis was also present.

The exhibition of 76 paintings and drawings traces Mr.

Stevens' life for the past 30 years, from student days in London and Oxford to the Gold Coast (1925-29), and then back to England. The portraits are especially interesting, while a study in water-colours of the old slave market at Accra gives point to Mr. Stewart's remarks.

### New-style guide to London

A new-style guide to London has been published by London Transport.

The whole of the greater London area is covered and it gives details of 400 "sights," and in addition to the main book of 130 pages, the guide features a 36-page "when they open and how to get there" section.

The guide deals comprehensively with London's museums, art galleries, churches, parks, mansions, monuments and buildings. There is a mention, for instance, of Fulham Palace, All Saints' Church and Bishop's Park.

A DAYLIGHT thief broke into a flat at Colehill Gardens, Colehill Lane, while it was unoccupied, and stole a watch and a bottle of whisky.



## HAILED AS A GENIUS

Fulham can number many famous artists in the past and present among its residents, but apparently another genius in George Stevens, principal of the Fulham Men's Institute, has been discovered. An exhibition of his works is being held at the Central Library.

The fact that he has been able, according to Mr. Michael Stewart, M.P., himself an artist, to cement friendship between East and West is eloquent testimony of Mr. Stevens' powers to make his works impressive. That is a rare gift.

People who have viewed his pictures declare that he will become one of the foremost painters in the country and consider that he should devote all his time to painting. That may be more easily said than done. Unless one rises to the top it is not so easy for modern artists to dispose of pictures.

Mr. Stevens is evidently a prolific painter because the whole exhibition is devoted to his output. He is, however, still regarded as an amateur and until a demand is created for his creations he would be well advised to carry on as principal of the Men's Institute and paint in his spare time.

In art the substance for the shadow is always the best policy.



# BORO DISCOVERS A GREAT ARTIST

## His paintings caused friendship between East and West

**T**RIBUTES for the way in which he has strengthened the relationship between Europeans and Africans by his art, were paid to Mr. George A. Stevens, by Mr. Michael Stewart, M.P. for East Fulham, when he opened an exhibition of works by Mr. Stevens at Fulham Central Library on Monday.

Mr. Stevens is well known in the Borough as Principal of the Fulham Men's Institute.

Mrs. E. Rankin, L.C.C., Mayoress of Fulham presiding apologised for the absence of the Mayor.

She said it had always been the policy of the Public Libraries Committee to arrange exhibitions for Fulham people. They had already sponsored several shows also the Society of Fulham Artists.

It was, she went on, of special interest to those present to know that the Council had just received a bequest of 47 pictures by various artists.

"Tonight the exhibition is a one-man show by George Stevens, well known locally for the work he has done. It is appropriate that Mr. Michael Stewart be asked to open this exhibition as he himself is a Fulham artist. He has exhibited in Fulham and is President of the Society of Fulham Artists."

Mr. Michael Stewart referred to the fact that this was the first occasion on which Mrs. Rankin had presided as Mayoress of Fulham.

He went on to say that Mr. Stevens had commended himself by being born in London. He went to Oxford University, and also studied at the Ruskin Drawing School there.

"He found that art and teaching were the two things for which he had real gifts. He has practised as an artist and teacher of art in many parts of the world, particularly at Accra on the Gold Coast.

"During the war he took part in army education, after which

he came to work in Fulham, becoming Principal of the Fulham Men's Institute.

"You will realise when you look at this exhibition that Mr. Stevens' chief gift is of portraiture and places. Although the work you will see tonight is very varied, I would like to refer to the pictures that deal with West Africans."

Mr. Stewart said that years ago the relationship between Europeans and Africans was bad, but now they were beginning to look upon each other with humility.

"The relationship has got to be carried through to a plane of imaginative understanding."

There was life in Mr. Stevens' African portraits, stated Mr. Stewart. "We welcome Mr. Stevens' exhibition, not only as a man who has distinguished himself in Fulham, but also as a man who has a sensitive and imaginative understanding of his fellow men in all parts of the world" he concluded.

Proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Stewart and the Mayoress, Cllr. W. G. Wallis said that the Libraries Committee had always taken a lively interest in exhibitions in the borough. "We aim at making the library the cultural centre of Fulham," he added.

The exhibition will remain open until June 12.

Two of his earlier works which were particularly impressive were the oil paintings of a coffee stall and Christiansborg Castle at Accra. Both

(Continued in next column)

## P.C. SWITCHED ON GARAGE LIGHTS AND SAW 2 MEN

### They claimed they were night watchmen

Percy James Hinder of Clerkenwell, E.C., and Henry Lawrence, aged 35, lorry driver of Playfair Street, Fulham, were remanded at Wimbledon accused of breaking and entering the goods yards at Merton Abbey and stealing 11 wheels, complete with tyres and inner tubes, two outer covers, and an electric drill, value £149, the property of Messrs. Charrington, Gardner, Gardner Locket (London) Ltd., coal merchants.

A police officer said the previous day he went to Messrs. Charrington's garage at Station Road, Merton Abbey, and getting into the premises he found the tyres had been placed near to the door, ready to be taken away.

When the lights were switched on he saw the two men, asked what they were doing there, Lawrence said, "We are night watchmen."

In their presence Mr. Charrington said, "They do not work here."

Clothing for male and female attendants at Lime Grove Baths is to cost Hammersmith Council £43 10s. 0d.

(Continued from previous column)

these paintings were startlingly realistic.

His African portraits and views were really excellent. The portraits were not just faces, Mr. Stevens has brought out the person's character in his works to such an extent that after looking at the portrait you can imagine that you have met the person depicted.

His views too, have a certain warmth about them. You feel that you have visited the places and know them.

The pen and ink drawings, pencil sketches, and his pastel and powder colour drawings, were also very good.

The display is well worth seeing.

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