**Francis Reily, 1858–1928**

A landscape painter in oil, art teacher and at least occasional portraitist, born in January 1858 in Birmingham, probably in Handsworth on its north-western outskirts towards West Bromwich. The third son and fifth child of seven born between 1850/1 and 1864/5 to Francis Reily (1825–1887), a hardware and saddlery merchant, and his wife Emma Preston (1825–1912), Francis junior was preceded by two elder brothers and two elder sisters, then followed by two younger sisters. From at least 1871 until Francis senior’s death in January 1887, the family appears to have lived at 16 Weston Road, Handsworth, with his widow continuing there almost until her death in West Bromwich in 1912. In 1881, aged 23, Reily was already noted there as a ‘Teacher Art Master’ but was probably still training. In 1884–85 he was apparently attending the National Art Training School (NATS) at South Kensington and in 1885 living at 12 Drayton Gardens, West Brompton. After the NATS became the Royal College of Art in 1896, he is known to have used ARCA (i.e. an associate of it) as a formal qualification post-nominal.

By 1890 he appears to have begun teaching at the School of Art at Southport, Lancashire, and in the third quarter of that year he married at West Bromwich to Minnie Amy Taylor (1859–1940). Their first home by 1891 was 43 Forest Road, North Meols, Southport, but by 1895 Arbour Road, and 68 Forest Road again by 1903. They had four sons and a daughter (the fourth child) born between August 1892 and July 1901, all in Southport.

Reily’s earliest known exhibited works were two at the Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham, in 1884 and he showed two more there and four at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, by 1819. His only exhibit at the RA was in 1903, where he was rather misleadingly described by Algernon Graves (1906) as a ‘miniature painter’, since it was a ‘Portrait of my mother’ in that format: if he painted miniatures more generally, none are yet recorded. Exactly how long he taught at Southport remains for clarification, but it was probably a long staple employment and his landscape expeditions were apparently never very far from home. The eleven paintings by him on Art UK – one being a portrait of an old man (possibly a Lancashire fisherman) – are all in the Atkinson Art Gallery at Southport. All were bequeathed to it by his daughter Amy Lilian (1896–1982), with one by Theobald Butler Gould (d. 1918), and identified locations depicted are in Lancashire, North Yorkshire and Herefordshire. Reily died at 68 Forest Road, Southport, on 14 April 1928, leaving ‘effects’ of just over £4621 at probate, his widow being executor.

His immediately younger sister, Alice Louisa Reily (1862–1952) was also artistic and showed eight works with the Royal Society of Artists, Birmingham, between 1899 and 1910, all from their parental home at 16 Weston Road, Handsworth.

*Summarised from Art UK discussion on Reily’s ‘Village, a Bridge and a River’, now identified as the bridge over the River Greta at Burton-in-Lonsdale, North Yorks, in the Atkinson Art Gallery, Southport*

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