

The 'Missing' Irish Kent Paintings

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Before the end of this year a very large illustrated book will be published that centres on Rockwell Kent and in particular his association with Ireland. It is not exclusively about Kent as the valley where he stayed for four months in 1926 can also boast other notable visitors such as Prince Charles Edward Stuart or Bonnie Prince Charlie (if extensive and recorded local tradition is to be believed) and Welsh poet Dylan Thomas.

The book, which will be titled *The Road to Glenlough*, treats the valley as a stage where these visitors appear, stay awhile, and then exit off again. A detailed summation of their lives before they come to the valley is given, their story while there and what became of them subsequently.

One of the major motivations for putting this book together was to try and track down all of Kent's Irish art works again, and to bring them back together in a manner of speaking for the first time since 1927. Overall, I think that we have done pretty well in this search operation as I believe that we have achieved over a 90% success rate based on the evidence of various exhibition listings, auctions and Kent's own Irish sketch books.

However, a small number of these art works have remained maddeningly elusive and out of reach. I believe that the majority of these 'missing' drawings and paintings are in private rather than in public collections, as they would undoubtedly have turned up before now if held in art museums. Sometimes, it takes the likes of a new book, a documentary or a wonderful new website like [The Rockwell Kent Forum \(www.rockwellkent.us\)](http://www.rockwellkent.us), to once again kindle a renewed interest in, and hopefully the whereabouts, of some of these art works.

With regard to the drawings and watercolours, we have no idea as to how many of them were actually produced. What we do know is that the artist tended to sign all of his watercolours in black ink and date them 1927, being the year of the exhibition. The drawings on the other hand tended to be dated 1926 as they were completed on site in Donegal. So, if you have a Kent work dated these years, please do not hesitate to contact me and I can confirm its Irish origins or otherwise.

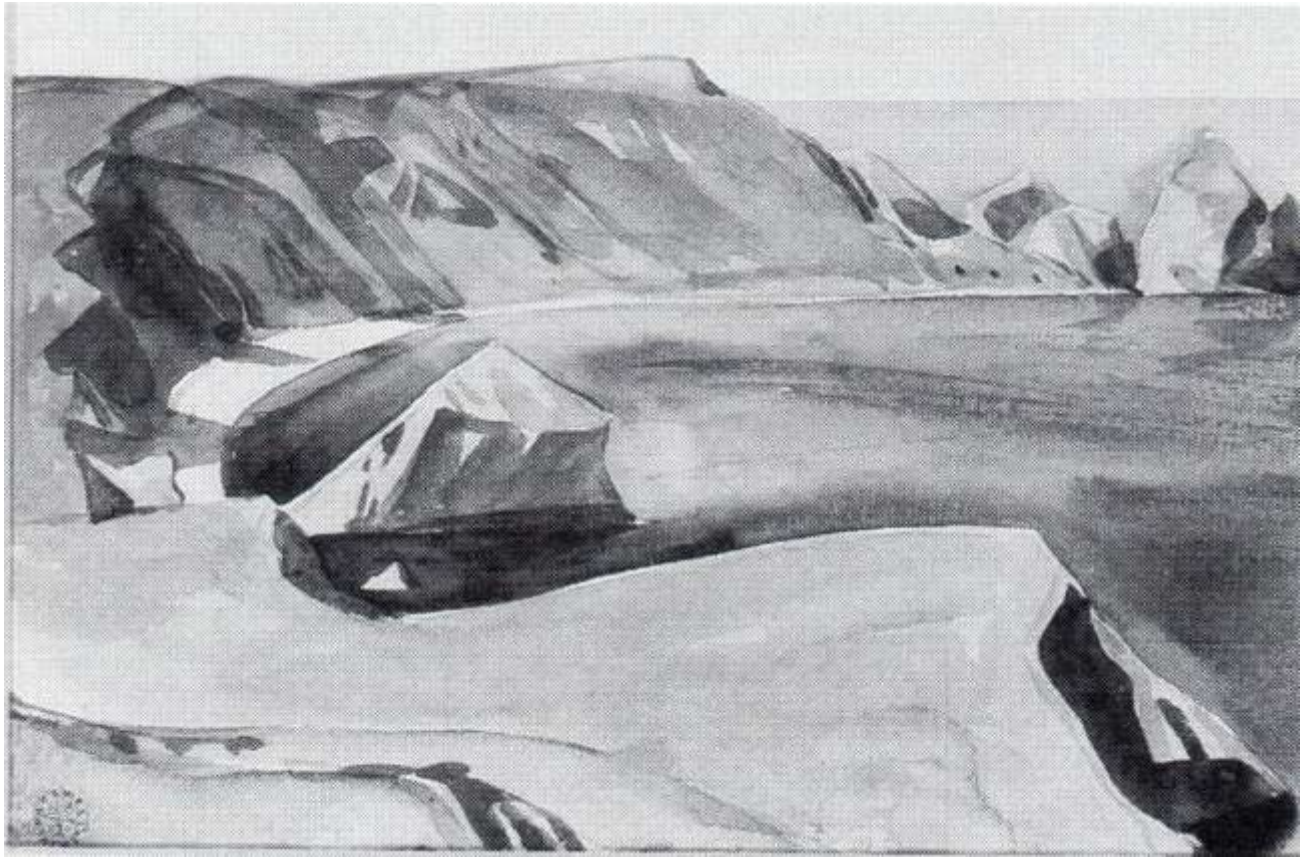
Four watercolours that I would love more information on are *Irish Coast*, *Study of Tormore*, *The Road Home* (my title), and *Irish Cottage*.

Irish Coast features a woman sitting at the coastline in roughly the same position as to where the major oil painting *Annie McGinley* was executed. This work may indeed be *Coast of Ireland* which Kent presented to his Russian artist friend Orest Vereisky. However, one must be cautious here as although both titles are similar, they are not the same. All we have of this artwork at present is a small thumbnail print held in the files at Plattsburgh State Art Museum with no other useful information.



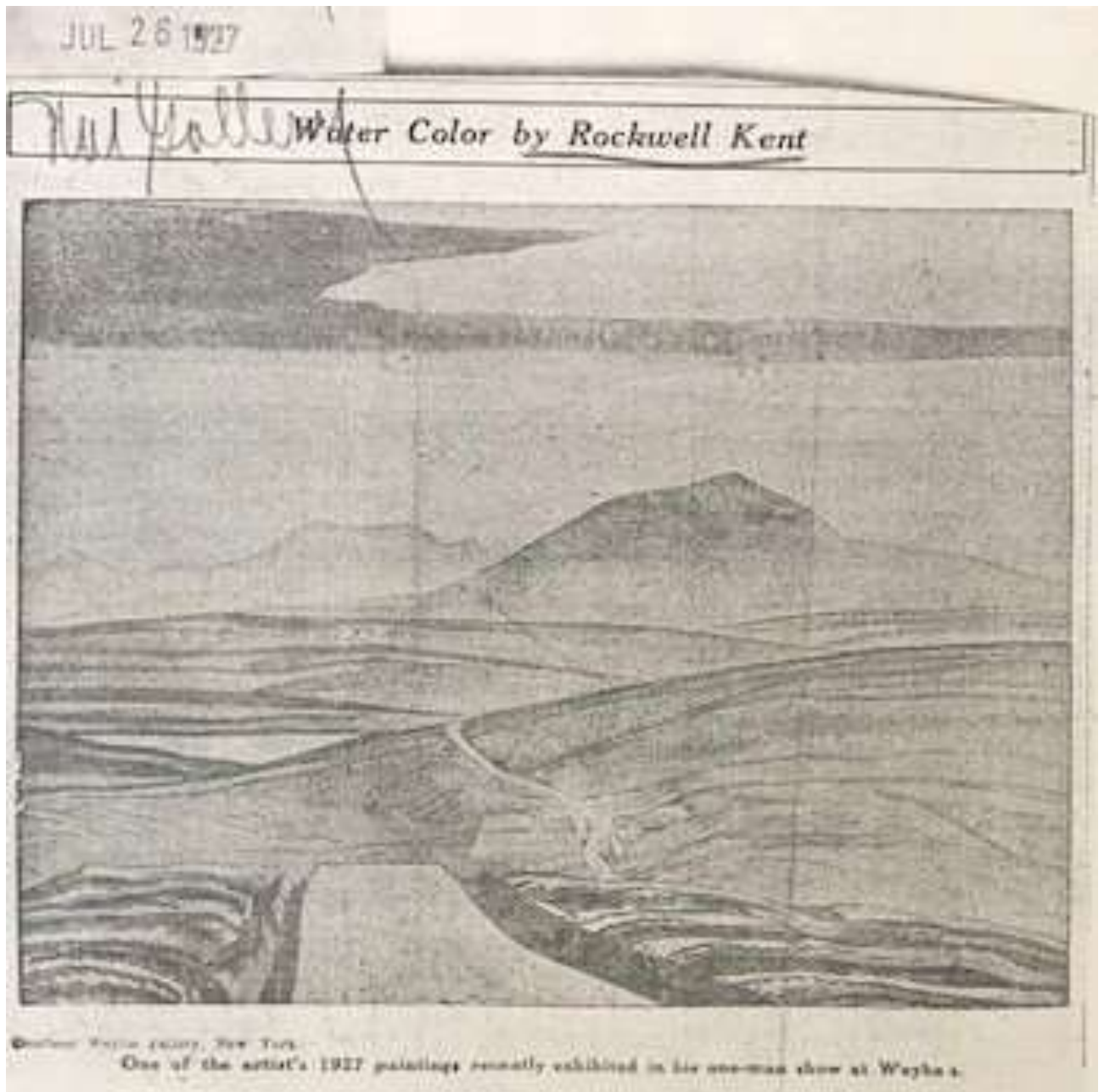
Irish Coast watercolour. Location unknown. Photoshopped - Executed close to Annie McGinley painting.
[Image courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum]

The second watercolour *Study of Tormore* is a lovely artwork showing the expanse of Glenlough Bay. This black and white image of the watercolour featured in Christie's New York catalogue for their auction titled "American Watercolours, Drawings, Paintings and Sculptures of the 19th and 20th Centuries" of March 20 1987.



Study of Tormore Ireland Watercolour on paper 6 x 9 in. Estate stamp lower left. [Christie's New York auction p.152 (20.3.87)]

All we have of the third watercolour, *The Road Home*, is a very poor image from a newspaper article of July 26, 1927 which covered the watercolour and drawing exhibition. It features a road winding into the distance, with a lake to the left and mountains in the background.

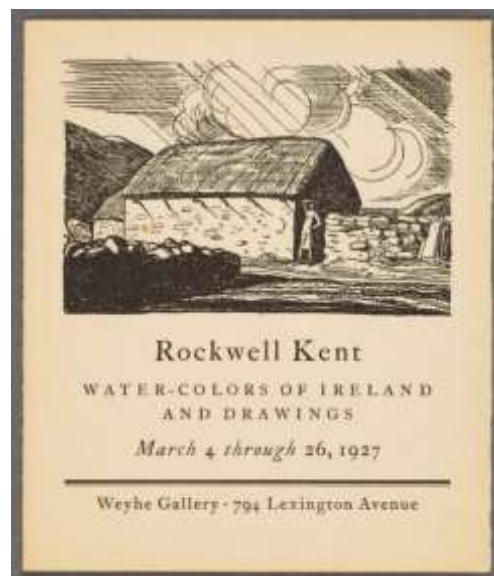


'The Road Home' watercolour from newspaper (July 26 1927). [Image courtesy of Scott Ferris]

The watercolour *Irish Cottage* was of course based on the drawing of the same name, which was featured on the cover of the announcement for the Irish Watercolour and Drawing Exhibition.



Irish Cottage. [Image courtesy of Scott Ferris]



Irish watercolour and drawing exhibition announcement. [Image courtesy of Kent Collection, Columbia University, New York]

With regard to the oils, there is just the one painting of the original 36 exhibited during April of 1927 for which we do not have any image. It was a small work titled *Her Cottage*, which naturally must have featured a house. In all, Kent had three oil paintings in that exhibition that had the word cottage in their titles but the other two are larger and readily identifiable. This one, *Her Cottage*, does not appear to have surfaced at all since that original show of 1927 and may indeed now have an alternative title, as have a number of other Irish paintings from that exhibition.



Her Cottage, no image available

There are five other oil paintings for which we have black and white images only at present. These are *Corn*, *Loughros Bay*, *Sun Paths*, *Tormore* and *Glen Lough*. The first four of these were photographed by Peter A. Juley & Son before the 1927 exhibition. These are the only images that I have for these paintings.

Corn is the largest of his Irish paintings and one of the largest that he ever completed. It came up for sale in Sotheby's: "American Impressionist and 20th Century Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, December 2, 1982, lot 120."



Corn Oil on canvas 38 x 54 in. Photographed by Peter A. Juley & Son (1927). [Image courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum and Archives of American Art]

The second painting, *Loughros Bay*, was the view from outside the *Loughros Bay Hotel* where Kent stayed for his last week before his departure back to America. To my knowledge, this particular painting has not come up for auction ever since, so where has it been displayed in the interim?



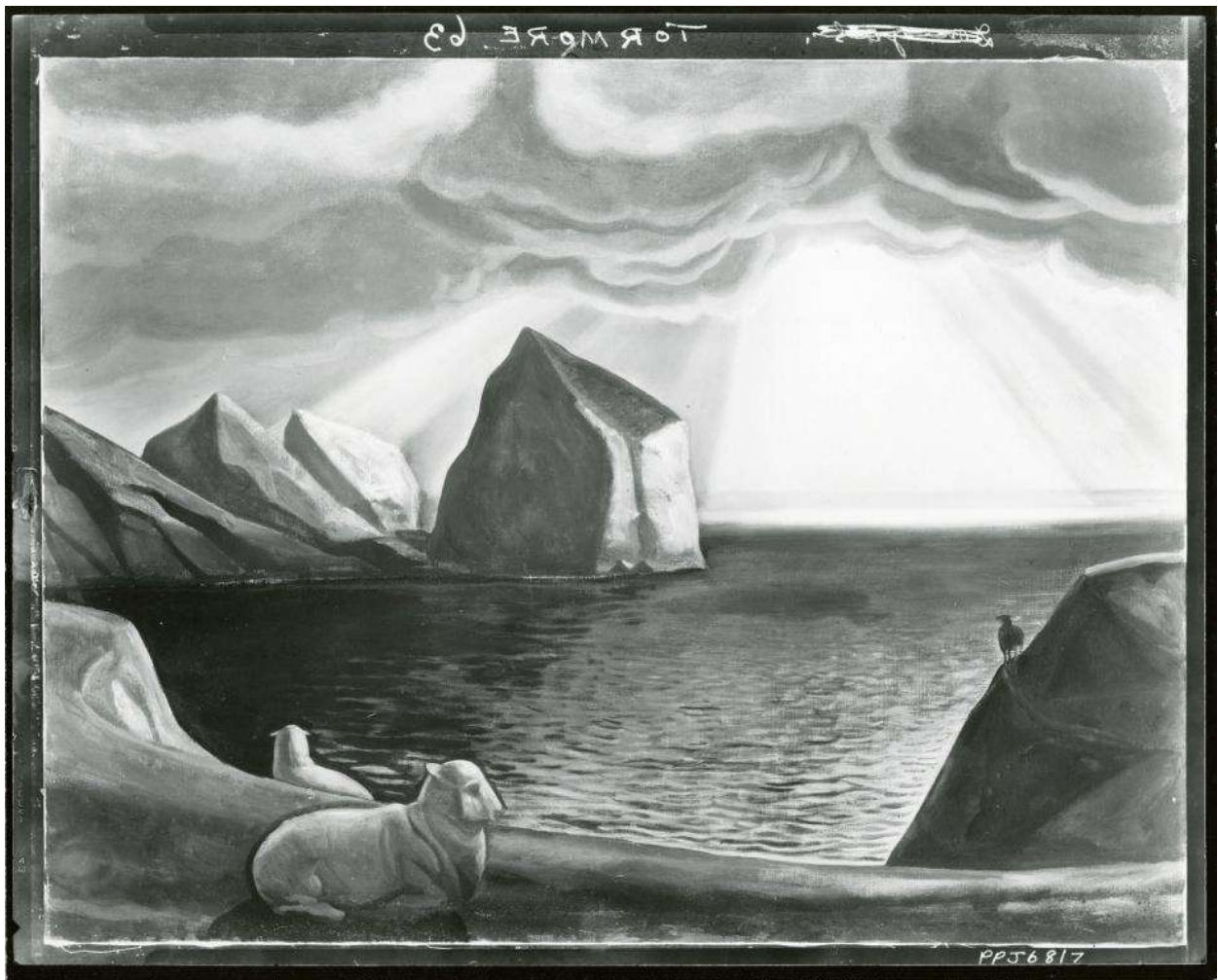
Loughros Bay with title. [Image courtesy of Archives of American Art]

Sun Paths is another painting that does not appear to have resurfaced since 1927. The watercolour, *To the Heavens*, on which this oil is based, came up for auction in 2017.



Sun Paths. Photographed by Peter A. Juley & Son (1927). [Image courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum and Archives of American Art]

Finally of the Juley four, we have *Tormore*. To say that we have a black and white image only of this painting would be a bit of a white lie as a 'coloured' image of it did appear in a newspaper article of April 17 1927, which covered the oil exhibition. In an accompanying piece Kent considered this painting to be "one of his best."



Tormore. Photographed by Peter A. Juley & Son (1927). [Image courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum and Archives of American Art]

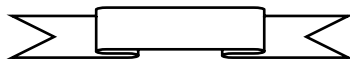


Tormore Newspaper Article [Image courtesy of Scott Ferris]

Kent described *Glen Lough* as “a scene overlooking that valley in Donegal where I lived, my own little house being one of the nearest spots down in the valley. The darker spot down there is not a house but a big haystack.” This image of *Glen Lough* appeared in Kent’s autobiography. It was bought by collector J.J. Ryan in 1950 and may have subsequently have been retitled *Co. Donegal Landscape*. It is not clear as to what became of this painting following the breakup of Ryan’s impressive Kent Collection.



Glen Lough Oil on canvas 38 x 44 in. [Image courtesy of Scott Ferris]



All of his Irish oil paintings barring one were dated 1926, 1927 or 1926-7, so again if you have an artwork of these dates then please do not hesitate to get in touch with me – **Christy Gillespie:** rockwellkentireland@gmail.com