

Edward Lear and his Cretan drawings

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(Note : Much of this paper is extracted from 'Edward Lear's Cretan Drawings' by Stephen Duckworth, published in The Gennadius Library's The New Griffon 12 (2011) and so is subject to the American School of Classical Studies at Athens copyright).

My talk this evening focuses on the British painter, Edward Lear's seven week journey to Crete in 1864, the only visit he paid to the island, then in Turkish hands. Lear's daily written journal survives and forms an essential accompaniment to the drawings he made. It was published in 1984¹ with an introduction by Rowena Fowler¹, together with illustrations in colour of several of the drawings held by the Gennadius Library in Athens and by other institutions and individuals. It is appropriate that this year is the 150th anniversary of his travels in Crete, and on Saturday 14th May 1864 he had stayed the previous night in Archanes, not far from here; he travelled around Mount Juktas and drew the mountain, visited Kani-Kastelli (Profitis Ilias) and spent the night with Kyrios Manuel Bernardhakis in Dhafnes and dined on '*good rice soup, tough fowl, tough artichokes and a sort of omelette.*' He was 52 years old at the time.

As a little background to Lear himself¹, he was born in 1812, and so his bicentenary was celebrated in 2012. Some time between 1828 and 1830 he began to earn his living by drawing birds and he helped with illustrations for a book, *Illustrations of Ornithology*. He began work on a book of his own with wonderful hand coloured illustrations of parrots when he was only eighteen, with the cooperation of the new Zoological gardens in London¹. From that beginning and his lengthy stay in Lancashire in the north of England, where he illustrated

¹ Rowena Fowler (ed.), *Edward Lear : The Cretan Journal* (Denise Harvey, Athens and Dedham, 1984, 3rd edition 2012)

animals and birds in the menagerie of Lord Derby, he gained contacts who would later become patrons and buyers of his art. He began to draw landscape rather than birds and travelled widely in Europe including Greece, and also to the Middle East and to India. He made money to support himself with worked up watercolours and oil paintings from his drawings. He published some of his travels and also wrote and published limericks, a type of poetry, which he had written for children and their parents. He was an intrepid traveler, on foot or by mule, and suffered all sorts of discomforts of terrain, lodgings, and food as he explored parts of the world which very few other Englishmen of the time knew at all.

My research, suggested by Rowena Fowler's *The Cretan Journal* and my own discovery of the excellence of the Gennadius Library collection, has aimed to identify the places in Crete which Lear sketched in some 187 consecutively numbered drawings. By finding what happened to many of these drawings after Lear's estate was dispersed after his death, not only have their Cretan locations been identified but a record has been built up of the nature of that dispersal, including the exhibition history of particular drawings, and details of the drawings and watercolours which can now be seen at public institutions.² A website now fully records this research.³ I am only aware of one similar study having been made (in this case to mainland Greece in 1848) for any of his many other and varied journeys round the world, though a catalogue of his early journeys in the English Lake District also comes close to it.

The Cretan journey was Lear's last significant visit to what is now Greece. He had previously spent much time in Corfu, as a base for visits to other Ionian islands and for travels further afield in the 1850s and early 60s. His Greek travels are shown below :

- 1848 Greece and Albania
- 1849 Southern Greece, Northern Greece

² Earlier research on all Lear's Greek and Cretan drawings was carried out by Dr Fani-Maria Tsigakou for her unpublished thesis 'Edward Lear in Greece', University College London, 1977. Later footnotes citing Tsigakou refer to this thesis.

³ www.edwardlearandcrete.weebly.com

Commented [L4]: Greek visits

- 1855 Corfu
- 1856 Corfu, Mount Athos
- 1857 Corfu, Albania
- 1858 Corfu
- 1861/62 Corfu
- 1862/63 Corfu, Ionian islands
- 1864 Corfu, Crete

Subsequently he only stopped briefly at Corfu in 1866 and 1877 en route elsewhere or to visit his old servant and his family. So the Cretan drawings represent the culmination of his recording of Greek topography. Dr. Fani-Maria Tsigakou, previous curator of the paintings, drawings and prints department at the Benaki Museum in Athens, commented : *In its entirety, his Greek production is a unique treasure trove of visual testimonies for anyone interested in tracing Greece's authentic natural environment in the 19th century.*⁴

The talk will cover :

- Edward Lear in Crete – his travels and vicissitudes
- Lear and his drawings – including his method of working
- The Cretan drawings today – the subject of my research

Edward Lear in Crete

Lear travelled to Crete from Athens, arriving in Hania on 11 April, 1864. He had first considered visiting Crete only in February that year but had planned the journey by mid March, and read Robert Pashley's 'Travels in Crete' (1837) which he carried with him to Crete.⁵

Throughout his seven weeks in Crete, Lear kept a detailed journal. Rowena Fowler comments '*He offers us, first, a detailed and sometimes minute-by-minute commentary on the landscape of Crete and, second, an impression of the ups and downs, physical and mental, of an artist travelling on foot over*

⁴ Dr. Fani-Maria Tsigakou, *Edward Lear on Corfu* ,(essay in *Edward Lear & the Ionian Islands*, Corfu Museum of Asian Art, 2012), p.56.

⁵ Fowler, p.10

difficult country. *He is good on people, food, birds and flowers, disappointing on language, literature and local culture; he notes a few dialect words but, although he knew Fauriel's 'Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne' (1824-5) he makes no mention of any folk music or poetry. The weather was generally foul, and in the evening the rigours of Cretan hospitality matched the physical strain of the day's travelling.*'⁶

Lear based himself in Hania (which is spelt at least five different ways on his drawings, from Canea to Khania). He stayed just outside the town in Halepa, first in a room owned by the Dutch Consul and then with the British Consul Mr. Hay and his family. No less than 25 nights were spent in the Hania area, but in day or overnight journeys from there and in two much more significant expeditions he covered much of the west and centre of the island. One of the latter journeys in April was to the west, as far as Kissamos, the other in May was a large clockwise circuit of Mount Ida via Rethymnon and Heraklion but going as far south as Pombia, below the Plain of Mesara. Until the end of the first week of May he was plagued by bad weather. *'And what consolation is it to hear that such late rains were never known before as are in Crete this year? – much as we English tell foreigners that east winds and bitter cold in June, long dreary rains through July and August, and fogs in September are "quite extraordinary and never occurred before the present year"'* (Journal⁷ 21 April).

Lear initially had qualms about his visit to Crete and retained an ambivalent attitude throughout his stay, though his mood improved once the weather was better. *'I much doubt Crete being a picturesque country in any way, or that it will repay much trouble in seeing it. Its antiquities, etc so old as to be all but invisible; its buildings, monasteries, etc. nil; its Turkish towns fourth-rate. Rats O! and gnats' (15 April). But a few days later he wrote (in Greek in his Journal) 'since it's necessary to "do" Crete, let's do it well' (22 April).*

His descriptions of Hania, Rethymnon and Heraklion, such as they are, fully bear out the fourth-rate description of Turkish towns. He saw some

⁶ Fowler, p.10/11

⁷ The Journal extracts given here and later are taken from Fowler.

antiquities, in particular at Aptera, south of Suda Bay, and at Polyrrhinia, south of Kastelli Kissamos at the west end of the island. He relied on Pashley for information on these but called the Polyrrhinia 'Palaiokastros', the local name. He also travelled near the site of Knossos, then of course unexposed, and to Gortyna near the Mesara plain in the south of central Crete where the Roman remains were very visible.

But at none of these does he show great interest in the history or nature of the visible remains. For example at Gortyna he arrives on 16 May at Agii Deka, *'a total-miserable scrubby collection of narrow ways between half or wholly ruined houses of one storey high. Lots of old columns, friezes, etc, etc, about'*. He stays overnight with a Captain Elias and has a nasty supper and a bad night, but cheers up a bit in the early morning when he gets to the Gortyna site and makes three drawings between 5 am and 7.15 am. *'All the plain is covered with great or small masses of ruins : masses of Roman rubble, and brickwork and columns, etc. At the theatre, several portions of which are standing, I drew till six; the view of the plain is beautiful thence, and greatly pleased me.... I went on to the ruined cathedral of St Titus with Captain Elias and then left him, poor man, giving him 25 piastres'*.

Of the monasteries and their monks, he is less scathing than he had been of Mount Athos on his visit in 1856. He wrote to his friend Chichester Fortescue about Athos that : *'so gloomy – so shockingly unnatural – so lonely – so lying – so unatonably odious seems to me all the atmosphere of such monkey.'*⁸ He approached the monasteries he visited in Crete with some suspicion, but then responded in terms of his own perception of each hegoumenos (abbot). In the Akrotiri near Hania, he visited Aghia Triada and Aghios Ioannis (Gouverneto) and the ruined monastery at Katholiko, shown in an engraving in Pashley and then from a different angle in one of Lear's drawings. (His drawing of Katholiko is compared with a photograph I took a few years ago of the same scene from Lear's drawing point. You will see that he sketched the scene accurately except

⁸ Quoted in Vivien Noakes, *Edward Lear : The Life of a Wanderer*, (Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 2004 edition), p.123

for the background range of mountains) Then he also visited Gonia monastery on the Rodopos peninsula, and later in his travels Asomatos and Arkhadi monasteries in central Crete, near to Mount Ida.

He had intended to stay at Asomatos monastery in the Amari valley on 19 May. But as the abbot disappeared and he was not impressed by the place, and despite a long walk already that day and some disagreement from his companions, he went on to Arkhadi where he was well received. He liked the Hegoumenos, Gabriel, who was 'a man of the world, ...very jolly and pleasant'. *'Only two years after Lear's visit to the monastery of Arkhadi it was to go up in smoke, and with it his host, the abbot Gabriel Marinakis, during the most renowned and violent of the island's uprisings. Besieged by the forces of Mustafa Pasha, the Cretan insurgents in the monastery put a light to their powder magazine, choosing to kill themselves and the enemy rather than surrender. It is said that Gabriel himself gave the fateful order.'*⁹

As his travels progressed, particularly after 9 May when he left Rethymnon for Heraklion by ship for his longest expedition through central Crete (until 20 May), Mount Ida, the highest mountain in Crete, became something of an obsession. He was always anxious to find good views of it to sketch, but constantly disappointed by cloud or by bad vantage points. *'Ida always covered, the truth being that she is unwilling to have comparisons made by a distinguished landscape-painter'* (19 May) and at Arkhadi *'Ida would be lovely and the whole scene delightful but clouds stopped all'* (20 May).

Thankfully for his artistic ambitions for the visit to Crete, at last on an overnight visit to Phre south of Hania in his last week he achieved excellent views of Ida both in the evening and early morning. *'The view of Ida is by far the best I have yet seen, and truly fine. Never til now have I had much respect for Ida. A dream-like vast pile of pale pink and lilac, with endless gradations and widths of distance, and the long curve of sands from Rethymnon hills to Armyro'* (24 May).

⁹ Fowler, p.12

He had hoped to get to Sphakia in the south and also perhaps to Selino in the far south west, but after the good Ida views he abandoned the idea thinking Sphakian mountains would be an anti-climax. It is somewhat odd that despite the time he spent in the west in Hania, he pays little attention to the White Mountains above Sphakia and looming to his south. Possibly the weather was too bad to see them clearly for much of his time around Hania. Only on 29 May, two days before his departure, does he acknowledge 'the Sphakian mountains, though now almost snowless, are very grand'.

Given Lear's earlier interest in natural history we might have expected more wild life and flowers to be pictured on his travels. Very little is so pictured in any detail. However here is a sketch by Lear of an arum dranunculus, almost certainly made in Crete as the plant is so common here. He describes it as '*that brutal-filthy yet picturesque plant*', no doubt because of the very nasty smell it gives out at its peak.

The rigours of Cretan hospitality, both food and sleeping conditions, feature strongly in the Journal and marred his enjoyment of many an evening and night. Generally he and George, his servant and cook, provided for themselves and other travelling companions a good luncheon picnic with wine, and insisted on a midday doze under an olive tree or somewhere else pleasant. After normal early rising between 4 and 5 am and some very long journeys, the need for this was clear. But evenings depended totally on the host and the quality of his accommodation. Hosts were often a bore, and the nights could be a significant trial: '*One was glad – fleas, flies, bugs, ants, swallows, silkworms, dogs, cats and cocks considered – to rise at 3.30*' (17 May). I show Lear drawing himself chased by, as he described it, an enraged Moufflon. You will be aware that the moufflon breed of wild goat was introduced in the Neolithic era into the islands of Cyprus, Sardinia, Corsica and Rhodes. I found this stuffed Cypriot one in Heraklion's new Natural History Museum across the road from here last year. But they are not found in Crete, and Lear had confused them with the agrimi, which I found in this Hanea park! Another moufflon escapade is illustrated here.

Commented [S.R.18]: Food drawing

Lear kept his sense of humour : *'Three new things I have done, never before in all my life: first, to drink wine out of a candlestick; second, to sup on snails; third, to walk for two hours on the tops of houses'* (16 May).

George's incredible patience and forbearance, at least as recorded in the Journal, were essential for this. *'It must be said, George's attention and activity are the greatest comforts.... George's good humour is always a blessing'* (19 May). At one stage his acknowledgment of what he owed becomes real as he cuts George's toe nails *'thereby saving the Suliot much pain and trouble'* (20 May).

Lear and his Drawings

There is an intimate link between Lear's Journal and the large number of drawings he produced whilst in Crete. Of the drawings on which details have been found, his Journal records the time at which he made the drawing in some 90 of the cases. In the case illustrated the drawing is clearly dated 7 am on the 9th May, Unless long journeys had to be covered, there were often three or four times in each day when he stopped to draw, and sometimes more. Whilst the longer term prospects of making an income from worked up water colours or from a book based on these travels must have had some influence, drawing was an essential part of his motivation and perseverance – witness the Ida obsession referred to earlier. He had intended to write a book on Crete – but it got overtaken by other travels and commitments.

Franklin Lushington, Lear's friend and literary executor, wrote :
'Lear never set out on a journey to any of the new lands he visited throughout his life, without previously exhausting and digesting all the literature on the subject that he could collect; and in the journey itself he was a model traveller. He knew perfectly what he wanted to do and was not to be put off from doing it. He was impervious to discomfort and fatigue, and almost to illness that might have quelled the stoutest energy.' *He gained an eye for at once seeing the distinctive local character of all varieties of scenery, and a hand for reproducing it on paper or canvas, sometimes with laborious fullness and finish, sometimes with a few*

swift incisive strokes and broad simplicity of effect, always with a thorough truth of representation, and the highest appreciation of whatever poetical beauty the scene he was drawing contained.'¹⁰

Lear's more specific drawing technique has also been well described by a younger contemporary, Hubert Congreve, who knew Lear in the last twenty years of his life :

*'When we came to a good subject, Lear would sit down, and taking his block (of drawing paper) from George, would lift his spectacles and gaze for several minutes at the scene through a monocular glass he always carried; then, laying down the glass, and adjusting his spectacles, he would put on paper the view before us, mountain range, villages and foreground, with a rapidity and accuracy that inspired me with awestruck admiration..... They were always done in pencil on the ground, and then inked in sepia and brush washed in colour in the winter evenings.'*¹¹

In her unpublished thesis (UCL 1977), Dr Fani-Maria Tsigakou comments that Lear was meticulous in his annotation of his drawings, certainly in his work in Crete :

*'Lear was in the habit of writing down the exact time of the day he had made the drawing. Thus he recorded different light effects at various times of the day. The Gennadius Library in Athens has a complete set of one day's work..... The drawings are dated '24 May 1864'. This was the first day of a short tour around Khania that Lear and Giorgio made. Thanks to the numbers in the lower corners of each drawing there can be no doubt about their precise sequence. The number of drawings is not exceptional unless one considers that to reach the places depicted they had to walk some twenty miles much of it up and down the mountain.'*¹²

¹⁰ Franklin Lushington's Introduction to 'Poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson', illustrated by Edward Lear, 1889. Lushington wrote this a year after Lear's death. Lear had intended one scene of Crete to appear in such a volume, but the number of illustrations was severely restricted in the published volume.

¹¹ Preface to 'Later Letters of Edward Lear to Chichester Fortescue, Lady Waldegrave and others', ed. Lady Strachey, London, 1911

¹² Tsigakou, p.87. The reference to the short tour around Khania refers to their travels that day to several places in the Khania province which included Palaiokastro, Neohori, Paidhohori, Pemonia and Phre !

Placing Lear's work in a wider artistic context, Robert Wark comments in the introduction to an exhibition catalogue of Lear's drawings in 1962 :
'It is clear at a glance that his basic style and approach remain constant; he works essentially with line supplemented with washes of tone or color. But as he matures, the line becomes freer and more calligraphic; the objects represented (whether hills, trees or buildings) become more simplified and stylized; the washes of color become more arbitrary.' These tendencies give mature Lear water colors a rather two-dimensional but lively and decorative quality that brings to mind certain twentieth-century drawings. Lear is by no means unique in developing this type of stylized linear draftsmanship. Earlier men like Francis Towne and John White Abbott had similar interests. All of these men looked at landscape with an eye for pattern and shape; they attained a degree of monumentality and grandeur through simplification and stylization; the primary tool of each was line. In these respects Lear's drawings are very different from those of his major older contemporaries. He has, for instance, very little of Constable's concern with atmosphere, or transitory effects of light and weather, and equally little of Turner's magically evocative color.'¹³

Dr. Fani-Maria Tsigakou suggests some further development in Lear's works in Crete :

'In most of the drawings from the Cretan tour he makes more use of colour than lines probably because by then (1864) he was feeling more certain of his ability to handle colour. In 'Mount Psiloritis from Fre', vigorously brushed purple and brown watercolour fills the outline of the mountain and by contrasting the dark mass with a lemon sky Lear conveys the effect of early morning '4.30 A.M. before sunrise'.¹⁴ In the view of Lake Kourn he suggests with grey-green and blue washes the warm haze that hangs over the lake on a hot summer morning.¹⁵ 'Rethymnor' is economically washed in green, yellow and ochre; while the view is drawn in outline, the colours lend unity to the middle ground

¹³ Robert Wark, introduction to *Drawings by Edward Lear*, (Exhibition at Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1962)

¹⁴ Lear 167, Gennadius collection

¹⁵ Lear 77, Gennadius collection

details and at the same time produce a warm light; the bright red spots on the men's waistcoats and belts break the monotony and give depth to the composition.'¹⁶ (About this last drawing Pashley included a somewhat similar engraving based on a picture by A. Schranz who illustrated many of the places to which Pashley went. It is interesting to see that both artists included a small group of men in the foreground to give perspective, Lear perhaps taking the idea in this case from his predecessor though it is quite common as a perspective device.)

It is worth giving a final quote about his methodology from Dr. Tsigakou. She speaks about his time back at his studio in Corfu or London, but the following comments as regards his drawings might apply as much to his time back at the Hays' house in Hania and reflect an earlier comment by Congreve : *Each day he would sketch or paint newly commissioned works and consistently 'pen out' older drawings. 'Penning out' was a standard procedure of highlighting the outlines and adding suggestive touches of watercolour to his Views drawn on site in pencil. This drawn-out studio work was a process that allowed him to revisit his in situ drawings – not to rework them, but to underline topographical details and atmospheric effects, so as to sustain the vividness of each location's authentic spirit.*¹⁷

Finally, Lear seemed to enjoy his drawing, not least as a relief from the rigours of walking long distances, and the uncertainty of comfort at the end of the day. Often drawings are annotated with idiosyncratic notes to himself : 'froggs', 'many nightingales and asses that is to say donkeys' (Greek script and mixture of English and Greek language), 'there are beeeaters who eat the bees', and so forth.

During his time at Halepa with the Hays, he made alphabet and numeral drawings for Madeleine, their young daughter. He was fond of her, and she of him. On 26 May, near the end of his stay, she had been funny at the family lunch. Lear went out in the afternoon with George and sketched the Arab

¹⁶ Lear 90, Gennadius collection. Whole paragraph quoted from Tsigakou, p.83

¹⁷ Tsigakou, *Edward Lear on Corfu*, p.51.

encampment just outside the walls of Hania.¹⁸ In the foreground are two odd little figures which look as though they could come from a nonsense rhyme, and below Lear has written :

*'There was a Young Person of Crete
Whose toilette was far from complete'*¹⁹

He could have continued from the limerick which he had published in 1861 in 'A Book of Nonsense' :

*'She dressed in a sack, spickle-speckled with black,
That ombliferous person of Crete.'*²⁰

But instead he went into Hania and bought some toys for Madeleine.

The Cretan drawings today

Lear referred to '196 drawings - & a vast number of small bits' when penning out and colouring his Cretan sketches back in England in the summer of 1864.²¹ His working practice as mentioned earlier was to number his drawings consecutively, as well as to date them and usually give the time of day. In fact his last drawing as he left the island by ship from Hania on 31 May 1864 was numbered 179. At least four of the numbers have A and B supplements on separate drawings, making 187 in all and there may have been others not yet identified.

Then there were the vast number of small bits. In the course of this research 54 drawings of Crete without a number, or where I have not seen them without a recorded number, have been found. A number of these may actually fall into the numbered category but probably at least 36 of the 54, judging partly by size and content, would have been 'small bits' – and there were probably many more, since destroyed or dispersed. Most of the subjects are small and colourful male and female figures in Cretan dress, mules and small landscape sketches.

¹⁸ Lear 174, Gennadius collection

¹⁹ The late Vivien Noakes confirmed to the author that to her knowledge this is the only Lear drawing inscribed with the lines of a limerick.

²⁰ Edward Lear, *A Book of Nonsense*, (Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1861, new and enlarged edition)

²¹ Fowler, p.15

A complete listing of both these categories of drawing has been prepared on the website showing, as well as Lear's number if applicable, the Cretan location illustrated, date, time and size of drawing where known, and the provenance, present owner (where willing to be named), exhibition history and other notes of relevance.²²

The Gennadius Library in Athens holds an exceptional collection of Edward Lear's drawings of Greece, including those of Crete. The history of the Gennadius acquisition goes back to the 1920s, 40 years after Lear died in 1888. Joannes Gennadios, born in 1844, had been the chief spokesperson in England, publicly and privately, for Greece and the Greeks for 60 years. In four separate periods totalling 20 years he headed the country's Legation in London. He was affable, energetic and purposeful and took part actively in London's social and intellectual life. He was actively involved with Venizelos in the creation at King's College, London of a Professorship in Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies and chaired the inaugural lecture of its first incumbent, Arnold Toynbee, the famous historian.²³

He avidly collected books on Greece, both antiquarian and modern, and had always intended that his library should go to Greece. In 1921, after abandoning ideas of gifting it to the National Library of Athens or to the British School at Athens, a plan emerged on a visit to the United States that his collection would be presented to the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. His condition was that a specially constructed building on a site close to the School would house the collection in memory of his father. The Gennadeion building in Athens was completed in 1926, and 24,000 volumes left London for Athens.

²² Stephen Duckworth – see www.edwardlearandcrete.weebly.com

²³ Gennadius biographical details in this and subsequent paragraph taken from Francis B. Walton's *Portrait of a Bibliophile* (The Book Collector, Autumn 1964, pp305ff) and from Donald Nicol's *Joannes Gennadios – The Man* (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1990)

Now I get to Edward Lear's part in all [this](#) : In the then Gennadius Director Haris Kalligas' preface to the exhibition catalogue for 'Edward Lear's Greece', shown in Thessaloniki in 1997²⁴, she describes :

'The celebrations for the opening of the Gennadius Library took place in Athens on April 23 1926, after which John and Florence Gennadios returned home, in Surrey. The collections were already in the Library and his financial resources very limited. His mania for collecting had not, however, left him. On 23 February 1929 he received a letter from the house of Craddock & Barnard, in which they announced they had 'recently purchased the entire collection of drawings by Edward Lear, left by him to his great friend Sir Franklin Lushington', about 140 of which were views of Greece. They offered the lot at a price of £25. He hastened to reply, asking to see a small selection, as was suggested. Three days later, on 26 February, in the letter accompanying the selection they mention: 'We think, when you examine these, you will agree that the price of £25 for the whole lot is quite reasonable'. Immediately after examining the drawings and returning them the next day 27 February, he wrote to Edward Capps, President of the Managing Committee of the American School, in Princeton urging him to purchase them for the Gennadius. 'The collection is simply magnificent' and the price is 'absurdly low', he remarked and awaited the answer by cable before March 10.'

After delays due to Capps' absence and an extension of the time limit, Gennadios received the cable 'Accept. Pardon delay. Capps.' As a result 188 drawings, far more than originally quoted, were shipped to the Gennadius. 90 of these are from Lear's Cretan visit of 1864.

So the Gennadius Library acquired these 90 drawings in 1929, the year in which most of Lear's works were put on the market. When Lear died in 1888, the unpublished original journal of his Cretan visit was left with other journals, letters and papers for his friend and literary executor, Franklin Lushington. A

²⁴ Fani-Maria Tsigakou, *Edward Lear's Greece* (Organisation for the Cultural Capital of Europe Thessaloniki 1997 and the Gennadius Library), p.5

Commented [L40]: Lear portrait

fragment of a later version of the Cretan journal, somewhat edited and intended eventually for publication, also survives.²⁵

Lear was in Crete from 11 April to 31 May 1864. Interestingly the earliest numbered drawing in the Gennadius collection is for 27 April and all the rest are from 3 May onwards. 88 of the 117 numbered drawings sketched from that date until the end of his stay are with the Gennadius.

It is not certain how Craddock & Barnard, who were print dealers based in Tunbridge Wells, Kent at the time, acquired 'the entire collection of drawings by Edward Lear' including no doubt many drawings of other countries as well.. Philip Hofer, the American collector and writer on Lear, refers to the auction sales which took place by the order of Sir Franklin Lushington's 'daughters' in February and March of 1929.²⁶ One of these, a Sotheby's Valuable Printed Books sale took place between 25 and 28 March and included seven lots of Lear items including one containing 30 volumes of his private diary from 1858 to 1887, now in the Houghton Library, Harvard and including the 1864 Cretan journal. This sale was therefore after the Craddock & Barnard acquisition.

An auction by Hodgson and Co. of London was earlier, on 21 February, two days before Gennadius received the offer letter from Craddock & Barnard. The Hodgson sale had 16 Lear lots, but at most 150 drawings were included, with mention of location given only to Italy, Malta, Egypt and England. It seems almost certain therefore that Craddock & Barnard acquired their substantial holding of Lear drawings, which were not confined to Greece, by direct purchase from Sir Franklin's daughter Mildred (as no other daughter seems by then to have been alive) before the public sales.

Mildred's father was born in Kent in southern England, and it is thought that she was living near Tunbridge Wells in Kent and so may have had some previous contact with Craddock & Barnard. Sadly she died on 1 April 1929 aged 63, just after the sales had taken place. Craddock & Barnard were chiefly print

²⁵ Fowler, p.17

²⁶ Philip Hofer, *Edward Lear as a landscape draughtsman* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1967), p.60

dealers in Old Master and more contemporary etchings, lithographs and other forms of print, moving later to a London base and closing in 1986.

However in the 1930s Craddock & Barnard continued actively to sell Lear drawings of all countries. The Howard Gallery in London held an exhibition in October and November 1929 in which 57 drawings owned by the firm were offered at prices from three to ten guineas, many times the sale price to Gennadios, and demand was poor.²⁷ There were other exhibitions and sales in the 1930s which included Cretan drawings, and in the catalogue illustrated they were priced from two to fifteen guineas each. So in this period and subsequently Lears of Crete began to reach individual collectors.

Sir Arthur Evans probably acquired at least three of the Cretan drawings at this time, of Hania, Heraklion and Silamos. They came to the British School at Athens on his bequest in 1936, and hung in John Pendlebury's office at Knossos. They can still be seen in Athens in the British School.

Auction records from the 1930s to the mid 1950s show virtually no evidence of onward sale of any Lear drawings. There had been one other major sale later in 1929, by Sotheby's of the Earl of Northbrook's Lear collection, which had further flooded the market.²⁸

However some individual collectors were beginning to create large collections, in particular William B. Osgood Field and Philip Hofer, both from the USA. Philip Hofer's 1967 book on Lear as a landscape draughtsman describes the subsequent development of collecting.

During this period Professor R.M. Dawkins, Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature at Oxford University, must have been building up a fine collection of Cretan drawings. He first visited Crete in 1903 and did some excavations at Palaiokastro in the east of the island. He was Director of the British School of Archaeology in Athens from 1906 to 1914 excavating at Sparta, Melos and Sikinos, was an expert on dialect

²⁷ Hofer, p.60

²⁸ Hofer, p.60

folk tales in Asia Minor, and served as an interpreter around the coasts of Crete in the First World War.

I understand that this was something of a cover for intelligence gathering especially regarding the pro-British and pro-German sentiments of the Cretans. He no doubt acted as an interpreter for British officials visiting Crete, but this was not the chief purpose of his mission. Also, his service in Crete was by no means confined to the coasts; in fact, he repeatedly criss-crossed the island as well as making journeys along the coast. Amongst the many books he published were 'The Cypriot Chronicle of Makhairas' in 1932, and 'The Monks of Athos' four years later.²⁹

After his death in 1955 his collection was sold by Sotheby's on 30 November 1955 under the title of '*a collection of Mediterranean views by Edward Lear*'. He is known to have given at least one other Cretan drawing away as a gift in 1937 so must have been buying Lears over many years. Dawkins had acquired what must have been the largest group of Cretan drawings after those of the Gennadius. At the Sotheby's auction 42 drawings or sheets of drawings were sold in 24 lots. Lear's identifying numbers were not given in the sales catalogue. Many of the drawings were Lear's 'small bits', but 22 are certainly or probably identified as numbered drawings of Crete. Lots at the Sotheby's sale comprising only one drawing sold for between £30 and £80 each, a substantial increase on 1930s prices.

No other substantial sale of Lear's Cretan drawings has come to the London auction market, but from the 1960s onwards there has been a steady supply of Lear drawings generally, and a trickle of auction sales of Cretan ones. I have traced 21 Cretan drawing sales in the last fifty years. From prices that are known the average price in the 1990s was £3,600, and in the last decade £5,800. However the highest known price at auction was £14,000 in the 1980s !

My research has also confirmed the existence of at least twelve worked up watercolours for sale produced by Lear of Cretan scenes, probably based on

²⁹ These career details are from his obituary published in the Oxford Magazine, Vol.LXXIII, No.23, June 1955.

drawings from his journey. These watercolours would have been for particular clients, and four were purchased by Rev. Henry Fanshawe Tozer, who travelled in Crete and later left them to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. No oil paintings or engravings of Crete by Lear are known.

Commented [L45]: Arkhadi watercolour

Commented [L46]: Hania Gate watercolour

The overall results of my research are that of the 187 numbered drawings, 104 have been identified as now held by public institutions. Auction sales and sales by art dealers, presumed mostly to individuals, have been established for a further 29. Of the remaining 54, probable/possible provenance has been established for 15 (most through the Dawkins sale in 1955), but no detail has been found of the remaining 39³⁰. It is possible to indicate the likely Cretan locations of these latter with the help both of Lear's diary and of the dating of those drawings whose provenance is known. Several may have been destroyed, and the rest do not appear to have come to the auction market since the 1930s.

The institutions holding Cretan Lears are as follows (all from the numbered series except where stated):

- The Gennadius Library, Athens (89 numbered drawings and one unnumbered)
- Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, USA (5 drawings)
- Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (4 watercolours, 2 drawings)
- The British School at Athens (3 drawings)
- National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (1 watercolour, 1 drawing)
- British Museum, London (1 drawing)
- Houghton Library, Harvard, USA (1 drawing)
- Toledo Museum of Art, USA (1 drawing)
- National Art Gallery of New Zealand (1 drawing)

Finally the research has established the exhibition history of the drawings identified. There has only been one Lear exhibition confined to drawings of Crete. This was mounted in Athens in 1966 by the Academy of Fine Arts and the

³⁰ The drawings with no recorded numbers may include some of these, but insufficient detail is recorded to establish a possibility.

Gennadius Library to commemorate the great Cretan uprising of 1866-69. 62 drawings were shown. Probably all of these came from the Gennadius collection.

There have subsequently been two major exhibitions based on Lear's Greek drawings in the Gennadius collection :

- 'Edward Lear in Greece', which circulated round eight American institutions in 1971/72 under the auspices of the International Exhibitions Foundation. 25 Cretan drawings appeared in the catalogue.
- 'Edward Lear's Greece – from the Gennadeion Collections', held at the Cultural Centre of Thessaloniki from 12 June to 12 July 1997 as part of the Cultural Capital of Europe festival, and organised with catalogue written by Dr Tsigakou. In this case 17 Cretan drawings were shown in the catalogue.

There have also been a range of other exhibitions since the 1950s in which Edward Lear's of Crete have appeared, usually with Lear drawings, and sometimes oils and watercolours, from his wider travels. Prominent was the Royal Academy, London exhibition on Lear in 1985 (with one drawing from Crete, and also some delightful 'nonsense' sketches of moufflons chasing the artist around the mountains of Crete³¹).

In Lear's bicentenary year 2012 there was an exhibition in Corfu on his work in the Ionian islands. The British Museum showed a number of its drawings which included the Mount Ida in the evening drawing shown earlier. Finally the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford held a major exhibition of Lear works, the largest in the UK since 1985

Details of all Lear events, exhibitions and publications can be found at www.nonsenselit.wordpress.com/

A listing of the Cretan drawings by number, with all the details found in my research, can be seen at www.edwardlearandcrete.weebly.com and I would

³¹ The Royal Academy catalogue notes 'The moufflon is in fact the wild goat of Corsica and Sardinia; that of Crete is called the agrimi, and is now only found in the region of the Samarian Gorge. These drawings (Cat.92b) were made after Lear's return from Crete when he was staying with the Prescotts in Roehampton.'

welcome, through that website, information on any other of Lear's Cretan drawings known to you.

The third edition of '**Edward Lear - The Cretan Journal**', published by Denise Harvey (Publisher), Limni, Evia in 2012 is available from a number of Cretan bookshops and, hopefully, at the Heraklion Historical Museum during May.