



Horse outside a Cottage. Signed 19½ x 25 watercolour. Inspired by Landseer and Herring. Private Collection.

he attended lectures there, he had by this time exhibited the 'Field Mice' at the Royal Academy, and the 'Squires Pony' in Ipswich (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of his Ipswich exhibits). These works are highly competent, so I would suggest an earlier date of the mid 1870's for his formal studies. Rope's first London exhibit was at the Royal Society of British Artists in 1876, an oil entitled 'Housed in Winter', which did not sell in London, but did sell at a later Exhibition in Suffolk.

The end of the training period with Webb marks Rope's culmination of learning from other artists and the start of his practical experience phase. Live-in training with Webb was followed by individual lessons with him, the last being recorded in G. T. Rope's expenses book on February 7th, 1877, at 10/6 per hour. In Webb's letter requesting payment he addresses George Thomas as 'Dear Mr. Rope', and passes on his wife's kind regards before finishing by asking for a Postal Order for payment, as 'country cheques can sometimes be awkward to pay away'!

London must have been an alien world to George,



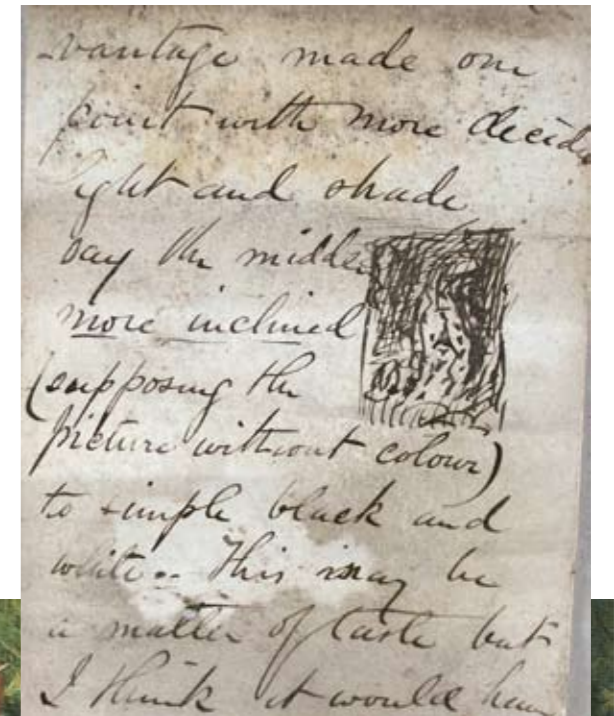
A Suffolk Lane Oil

when he was there he probably missed Suffolk and his family but seems to have been well liked by the Webbs. His letters written home to Blaxhall show he took an interest in farm life and the activities of his family members, especially how the children were progressing. In 1870's London the young artist would have seen a wide variety of painting styles, with the Pre-Raphaelites still being influential but French influence starting to have an effect on the younger artists. A broader style of painting was emerging, but Rope's tutor William Webb was of the traditional school so Rope was trained to paint carefully what he observed, which undoubtedly suited his temperament as a naturalist and resulted in the production of his beautifully detailed paintings.

Success at the Royal Academy

The oil paintings from the late 1870's after his training are of outstanding quality and prove that Rope could have become a leading painter of his day, had he wished to do so. Following the sale of his small 'Field Mice' painting for 25 guineas at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1877, he had little to prove regarding his ability as an artist to make a commercial living.

George asked William Webb's opinion of his picture at the Academy, and the letter in reply survives. After going to see it, Webb informed George the work was 'hung on the line' which impressed him and indeed it was an honour for an unknown artist to be displayed at eye level. Consequently it was sold at the Private View as its quality could be appreciated, rather than lost with distance had it been hung two or three rows up toward the ceiling. Tactfully Webb suggested



William Webb 'Early Spring' 1856 Oil 18 x 23 location unknown