



Dame Laura Knight nee Johnson 1877-1970

Artist

Laura was born in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, the youngest of three daughters.; she was brought to Nottingham by her parents to live at 9 Noel Street where there is a **commemorative brown plaque**.

Her father abandoned the family not long after her birth and the family suffered financial hardship. Laura was educated at Brincliffe School, Forest Road. Her grandfather owned a lace-making factory but with the advent of new technology led to the business going bankrupt. The family had relations in northern France who were also in the lace-making business and in 1889 Knight aged 12, she was sent to them with the intention that she would eventually study art at a Parisian atelier. After a miserable time in French schools, the bankruptcy of her French relations forced Knight to return to England. Her mother was teaching part time at Nottingham School of Art, and she managed to have Laura enrolled as an 'artisan student' there, paying no fees, aged just 13. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer and became seriously ill and Laura aged 15 took over some of her teaching. Unfortunately, Charlotte died aged only 40 (memorial in Gen Cemetery). Laura met Harold Knight, while they were both at the college and some few years later in 1903 they were married. They both carved out careers in the arts. Laura painted in oils and water colours, and did etching, she is famous for her paintings behind the scenes at theatres, circus and gipsy camps. In 1921 she was the **first** female artist to be made a Dame and in 1927 she was also the **first** woman to be elected to the Royal Academy, Society of Arts though she couldn't attend their banquets until 1937 being female. Dame Laura Knight was commissioned to paint the Nuremburg trials of Second World War Criminals for the Imperial War Museum. Her works have been exhibited at most of the principal art galleries in Britain and abroad and have gained many medals and other awards. During a career spanning 70 years she was the most famous artist of her day. Her works are in the permanent collections of the Tate Gallery, London, the British Museum, and most of the leading British Art galleries, with some 10 works in the Nottingham Castle Art Gallery. She chaired the Midland Group of Artists and was also a member of the Nottingham Society of Artists. Laura wrote 2 autobiographies *Oil Paint and Grease Paint* (1936) and *The Magic of a Line* (1965). She has a tram named after her.