



**Large print  
text for**

***Wigram's  
Wanderings***

**Please leave this copy  
in the Gallery for other  
visitors to use**

# **Keeper's Galleries (starting on the East, Market Place, side)**

**Introductory panel  
(in the glazed link)**

## **Wigram's Wanderings**

Sir Edgar Wigram, 6th Baronet Wigram was an architect, Mayor of St Albans between 1926 and 1927 and was also an artist. There are more than 400 of his paintings in St Albans Museums' collection and this exhibition features just some of them. Through these watercolours, we can wander with Wigram from St Mary's Parish Church in Ashwell, Hertfordshire to the banks of the river Tigris in Mosul, northern Iraq.

In this exhibition we follow in his footsteps as he travels across Europe and the Middle East at the start of the

1900s. We discover the ways in which some well-known destinations have changed over the last 100 years and how many have stayed the same.

Often travelling by bicycle, Wigram paints a wide variety of scenes from sweeping landscapes to bustling towns and brings an architect's eye for detail to all of them. Art consultant Stephen Somerville singled out Wigram's art from our collections as having "*a freshness and delicacy of touch which makes them highly desirable.*"

In the prologue to his illustrated book Northern Spain, Wigram himself wrote:

*"Of their shortcomings [the author] believes that no one can be so conscious as himself. But in the hope that they may prove of interest to sympathisers he ventures to expose them to the public gaze."*

## Wall to the right of the door

# Travels in Europe

The paintings in our collection include towns and rural scenes across Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Greece, Italy and Spain. He was a great traveller and encouraged his readers to travel too:

*“Year after year our horde of pleasure-seekers are marshalled by companies for the invasion of Europe: yet it would seem that there are but few in the total who have any real inkling of how to play the game. Some seem to migrate by instinct, and to make themselves miserable in the process... Others can indeed relish a flitting; but cannot find it in their hearts to divorce themselves from their dinner-table and their toilet-battery, their newspaper, their small-talk and their golf... But, to the elect, the*

*very root of the pleasure of travel lies in the fact that their ordinary habits may be frankly laid aside.”*

Preface to *Northern Spain* by Edgar Wigram

## **Inside desktop case**

(left to right)

### **List of English paintings**

Several of Edgar Wigram's paintings in our collection show views across England, Scotland and Wales. However none of them show St Albans. You can see two paintings of nearby locations in Hertfordshire in the other room.

### **Untitled watercolour**

Wigram gave some of his paintings titles, but not all of them. If anyone recognises this street scene -let us know.

## **Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland**

Bamburgh Castle was built on the site of a Celtic fort known as Din Guarie. The first written reference of the castle is from AD570.

## **Harlech Castle, Wales**

This painting of Harlech Castle in Wales appears to have been done before the major restoration that took place after the First World War.

**Paintings on wall (left to right)**

## **Durham, County Durham (above)**

Durham Castle and Cathedral were made a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1986. The cathedral, built between 1093 and 1133, is one of the best examples of Norman architecture in Europe.

## **Loch an Daimh, Aberfeldy, Scotland (below)**

This view of Loch an Daimh is in one of the most remote parts of Highland Perthshire, described by their tourist office as *“brooding and isolated.”*

## **Hotel Grand Cerf, Les Andelys, France**

The hotel shown in this picture no longer exists. Most of Edgar Wigram's paintings show views in their natural

colours, but here he is experimenting with a different style. Les Andelys is in Normandy, in northern France.

## **Heidelberg, Germany (above)**

The bridge in this picture is the Karl Theodor Bridge also known as the Old Bridge. The current bridge was built in 1788, but it is the ninth bridge on the site since the 1200s.

## **Quai Flamand, Antwerp, Belgium (below)**

Antwerp sits on the River Scheldt and this painting shows the city from the left bank of the river. The city's wealth is based on trade coming through its port. Today, the port of Antwerp is the second biggest in Europe.

**Paintings on wall facing door (left to right)**

## **The Temple of Olympian Zeus, Athens, Greece (above)**

The Temple of Olympian Zeus, also known as the Olympieion, is an enormous structure in the centre of Athens. Construction took over 638 years and was finally completed in AD125. The temple originally had 104 columns and was the largest in Greece.

## **The Parthenon, Athens, Greece (below)**

The Parthenon is a temple to the goddess Athena and was built between 447 and 432BC. The name Parthenon comes from one of Athena's many titles - *Athena Parthenos*, meaning virgin.

## **Cirque de Gavarnie, Hautes-Pyrénées, France**

The Cirque de Gavarnie is in the Pyrenees close to the border between France and Spain. It is a natural amphitheatre, cut out from the surrounding mountains by a glacier. It was described by Victor Hugo as "*the Colosseum of nature*".

## **Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome, Italy (above)**

Originally built in AD134 and 139 to be a tomb for the Emperor Hadrian, Castel Sant'Angelo was later used by the popes as a fortress and castle. The statue that stands at the top is of the Archangel Michael.

## **Piazza di San Marco, Venice, Italy (below)**

Napoleon is said to have described the Piazza di San Marco as “*the drawing room of Europe*”. The Basilica di San Marco and the Doge’s Palace form part of this main public space in Venice. The piazza is just above sea level and nowadays regularly floods at *acqua alta* (“high water”).

## **Pont Du Gard, Nîmes, France (above)**

The Pont du Gard is a Roman aqueduct which was built in around AD40-60 to supply water to the city of Nîmes. Today, the bridge is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most popular French tourist destinations.

## **Avignon, France (below)**

The Pont d'Avignon, also known as Pont Saint-Bénézet, was built across the river Rhone in 1234 at the site of an earlier wooden bridge. The bridge is well-known for inspiring the song *Sur le pont d'Avignon*. The bridge was abandoned during the 1600s as the arches started to collapse.

**Wall to left of door**

## **Map of East Kurdistan**

This map was published in *The Cradle of Mankind* by Edgar Wigram and his brother William. The area shown on the map now covers parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. The whole book is available on the Project Gutenberg website to read for free at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

## **Mosul, Iraq**

This painting of Mosul shows the view across the river Tigris to the tomb of the ruler Yahya Abu al-Qasim built in 1239. In the book *Cradle of Mankind* by Edgar and William Wigram, the brothers write that they are worried it will collapse as it is so close to the river. However it survived until 2014 when it was

destroyed by the self-styled Islamic State.

## **Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, Israel**

The Dome of the Rock is an Islamic shrine located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is one of several sites in Jerusalem which is sacred to Islamic, Jewish and Christian people. The Dome was built in 1022-23 and is one of the oldest surviving examples of Islamic architecture.

## **Beirut, modern-day Lebanon**

In the early 1900s when Edgar Wigram painted Beirut, it was under Ottoman rule and was the capital of a 'vilayet', or administrative province of Syria. Today it is the capital city of Lebanon and the modern view of the city looks very different.

## **Aleppo, modern-day Syria**

This view of Aleppo shows the Citadel of Aleppo which is one of the oldest and largest castles in the world. The site has been in use since at least 2000BC. The citadel was badly damaged during the Battle of Aleppo 2012-2016, but reopened to the public in 2017.

## **The Reverend Doctor William Ainger Wigram**

Edgar Wigram's brother William was a clergyman who was known for his work with Assyrian Christians (Assyria covered parts of modern-day Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran).

He travelled widely in the region and in 1914, Edgar and William wrote *The Cradle of Mankind; Life in Eastern Kurdistan*, a series of stories from their travels.

William was a chaplain in Constantinople when the First World War broke out and was imprisoned by the Turkish authorities. St Saviour's parish magazine in St Albans reported on his family's nervous wait for news. By April 1917 they were able to share that a message had reached St Albans:

*"16<sup>th</sup> February 1917 Please tell his mother that Rev. Dr. W. A. Wigram is very well and that he has not even grown thin. He has done a wonderful work."*

**West gallery (with window and blind)**

**Wall to left of door**

## **Edgar Wigram and St Albans**

Edgar Wigram was mayor of St Albans in 1926 and 1927 and left his mark by designing our city War Memorial by St Peter's Church. The Memorial was carved by Charles Alderton and was unveiled on the 21 May 1921. There is a local story that Wigram placed a written account of the history of St Albans during the First World War inside the memorial itself.

Wigram was also Vice-President and then Director of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society (SAHAAS). He gave several talks to the society and

wrote papers for its journal  
*Transactions*.

At his death, the society reported how he had contributed to the group's revival after its struggle to keep going during the First World War:

*“He aroused a new interest in our work, sparing no effort to that end. Those of us who were present at any of the fourteen lectures he delivered to the Society cannot fail to recall them with much pleasure”.*

## **St Mary the Virgin, Ashwell, Hertfordshire**

Very few of Edgar Wigram's paintings in the Museums' collection show the local area. None of the works feature St Albans, perhaps because painting was something he associated with travel. Ashwell Parish Church is best known for its octagonal tower and leaded spike shown in this painting.

## **Water Hall, Little Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire**

Water Hall Farm is between Little Berkhamsted and Hertingfordbury, to the south-west of Hertford. There is now a quarry on part of this land.

## Wall and case opposite door

### Map of Spain (1884)

We do not have a complete map of Edgar Wigram's journeys in Spain. However, this map, taken from *Sketches in Spain from Nature, Art and Life* by John Lomas, shows Spain at around the time Wigram was painting. Wigram also illustrated John Lomas' book *Spain*.

## Left hand side of case

Although Edgar Wigram travelled widely across Europe and the Middle East, many of the paintings given to St Albans Museums feature Spain. Wigram also illustrated three travel books about Spain.

## **Back of case**

### **Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain**

Miguel de Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, was born in Alcalá de Henares, 22 miles north east of the capital.

### **The Alhambra, Granada, Spain**

### **The road from Alcoy to Alicante, Spain**

### **The Convent of Sant Domènec, Girona, Spain**

Girona in Catalonia in north-eastern Spain is built on a hillside, so many of the churches have steep stairs leading to them. *Game of Thrones* fans may

recognise parts of Girona which were used as filming locations for Braavos, Oldtown and King's Landing in the series.

## **Floor of case**

### ***Peeps at Many Lands: Spain* by Edith A. Browne**

The illustrations for the Spanish edition of this book were painted by Edgar Wigram.

### **Torre de las Damas, The Alhambra, Granada, Spain**

### **Arco San Martin, Teruel, Spain**

### **Dénia, Alicante, Spain**

Dénia is in eastern Spain, on the coast

of the Mediterranean. Edgar Wigram never finished this painting so we can still see the figures drawn in pencil. If you look at other paintings in the gallery, you'll notice several others with incomplete figures.

## **Albarracín, Aragon, Spain**

## **Right hand side of case**

Although Edgar Wigram travelled widely across Europe and the Middle East, many of the paintings given to St Albans Museums feature Spain. Wigram also illustrated three travel books about Spain.

## **Back of case**

### **Sant Pau del Camp, Barcelona, Spain**

Sant Pau del Camp is one of the oldest surviving churches in Barcelona. The columns in its cloister, shown here, are carved with images of plants and flowers, alongside scenes of Adam, Eve and the Serpent.

### **Gállego Gorge, Aragon, Spain**

# **The Gateway at Burgos, Spain**

## **Puente Nuevo , Ronda, Spain**

The Puente Nuevo is the largest of three bridges in Ronda. They cross the 120 metre deep chasm formed by the Guadalevín River which divides the city.

### **Floor of case**

## **Sigüenza, Guadalajara, Spain**

## **Báguena, Aragon, Spain**

## ***Spain* by John Lomas**

This book was illustrated by Edgar Wigram. It is opened at the pages on Toledo and you can see another of Wigram's paintings of the city nearby.

## **Puerta del Sol, Toledo, Spain**

## **Puerto de Pajares, Asturias, Spain**

The Puerto de Pajares is in the Cantabrian Mountains in northern Spain. It was the main transport link between Asturias in north-western Spain and the Central Plateau.

## **Aljafería Palace, Zaragoza, Spain**

**Wall to right of door**

**Inside case**

## ***Northern Spain* by Edgar Wigram**

The full title of this book is *Northern Spain Painted and Described by Edgar Wigram*. The book is a lively read, full of stories - some from his own travels, sharing histories and local myths. The whole book is available on the Project Gutenberg website to read for free at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

## **Posada de la Sangre, Toledo, Spain**

This painting is very similar to an illustration Wigram used in his book, but here he has sketched some figures in pencil. Many of his book illustrations use

the same views as his paintings, but with changes to some of the details.

## **Spanish paintings**

This list of the paintings of northern Spain covers just one box of our collection of Wigram's watercolours. It was written either by Edgar Wigram himself, or by his nephew Clifford Wigram who donated the paintings to the Museums.

### **Paintings on wall left to right**

## **San Miguel, Segovia, Spain**

Wigram thought that Segovia was one of the finest towns in Spain and referred to the poet Byron's words: *"there are none of beauty's daughters with a magic like thee."*

## **Arco de San Martin, Burgos, Spain**

The Arco de San Martin is one of the gates into the town of Burgos. In *Northern Spain*, Wigram describes walking through “*the narrow streets blazed white and scintillating under the flood of sunshine.*”

## **Burgos, Spain**

This view of Burgos is painted from the same place as the illustration in Wigram’s book *Northern Spain* in the case below. He has changed some of the details, including the time of day and the people featured, but the town looks the same.

## Outside gallery

### Wigram Baronets

Edgar Wigram was the 6<sup>th</sup> Baronet Wigram. The title was first awarded to his great-grandfather Robert Wigram in 1805. Robert was a successful merchant and Member of Parliament and had 23 children by his two wives, Catherine Broadhurst and Eleanor Agnew (née Watts). His sons went on to be merchants, lawyers, politicians and scholars.

The family were merchants and ship owners and many of them travelled extensively. Money Wigram (Robert's fifth son and Edgar's grandfather) wrote a diary during his travels in 1830 with his wife Mary, which included a visit to Antwerp during the Belgian Revolution. Money Wigram later became a director of the Bank of England.

Money's son Woolmore (Edgar's father) also kept a diary of his travels which included these wonderful descriptions of the crags on the Dent Blanche, a mountain near Zermatt in Switzerland:

*"I saw... a most excellent copy of one of Macbeth's witches; the old lady was 'grinning' at me from under a straight peaked hat, adorned with a beautifully clean cap and lapels of snow white".*

In 1886, Woolmore was appointed as a canon at St Albans Cathedral and brought his family to live in the local area.

## **The Wigram family today**

Alongside Edgar and William Wigram's St Albans connection, another branch of the family also has local connections. Tony Wigram (the great-great-grandson of William Pitt and Robert's sixteenth son) moved to St Albans with his family

and are an important part of the local classical music scene. His son David Wigram was a Head Chorister at St Peter's Church and became the Radio 2 Choirboy of the Year in 1999.

During the project to build St Albans Museum + Gallery, the family supported St Albans Museums and Galleries Trust's fundraising through concerts including *Mistress Wigram's Whimsy*.

We are grateful to the family for sharing their family history books for the research of this exhibition.

**(label for photograph)**

## **Sir Robert Wigram, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet and family**

Edgar's great-grandfather Robert Wigram (1744 – 1830) had six children with his first wife Catherine Broadhurst

and another seventeen by Eleanor Agnew (née Watts). This family portrait shows Robert Wigram with his Eleanor and twenty-two of his children. Catherine and their first son Francis who died in infancy also appear in the portrait.