

Gourlay Steell, R.S.A., one of the oldest members of the Academy, died on 31st January. Born in Edinburgh in 1819, Mr. Steell was educated there, and received his early art training in the Board of Trustees' School under Sir William Allan. Like his elder brother, the late Sir John Steell, R.S.A., he began his art studies under his father, who was an eminent wood-carver and modeller. From the first he showed a decided talent for modelling and painting animals, and when only in his thirteenth year exhibited a model of a greyhound in the Annual Exhibition of the Academy.

At the outset of his professional career he was much employed in drawing and modelling groups of animals for silversmith's work, and also as a draughtsman on wood for book illustration. He was for a number of year's teacher of modelling in the School of Art, Adam Square. As an animal painter his works attracted considerable attention, and he had an extensive practice in painting portraits of favourite horses, dogs, and cattle. He made a special study of Highland cattle, and they were represented largely in the works which he contributed to the Annual Exhibition.

He was appointed Her Majesty's Animal Painter for Scotland, and also Animal Painter to the Highland and Agricultural Society. In 1882 he was appointed Curator of the National Gallery of Scotland in succession to the late Sir William Fettes Douglas, on the election of Sir William to the Presidential Chair of the Academy.

RSA Obituary, transcribed from the 1894 RSA Annual Report