



74 A MAN WITH A PINT

Oil on canvas 91.5 x 106.75 cm
(36" x 42") Signed and dated 1932
Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool
Exh. RA 1933

The man is grasping the beer-mug with an air of an habitu . Though he is an everyday kind of a fellow with orange-peel skin and a bulbous nose, Elwell gives him centre-stage. There is tension between our expectation of a figure more heroic and handsome, and the frank reality. The humour which this generates is entirely sympathetic.

The artist's own hostelry was the Rose & Crown in Beverley, where Elwell was a popular customer. The subject of beer at the time was a matter to be held up to the light. In the last budget the price of a pint had been raised by one penny.

The contemporary public enjoyed this painting's human qualities. As *The Artist* stated, Elwell belongs to the School whose purpose is Life. To the modernist of the time such a concept was irrelevant, but "true art has no fashion" and artists like Elwell, to quote *The Artist*, will be seen to have "held art together during a time when insane ideas sought to prevail".³⁰

With Life in the forefront, this drinking man represents it as he engages us in conversation as his fellow drinkers. He appears to make a point, stabbing the newspaper with his finger. The sense of a personal encounter makes his presence even more real.

At the Royal Academy summer exhibition in 1933 this striking piece was Picture of the Year³¹, a true statement of its huge popularity.