

Ivon Hitchens (1893-1979)

Autumn Trees with Distant Hill

Oil on canvas, 1947-48

British Council Collection

The bombing of Ivon Hitchens' Hampstead home during the early years of the Second World War prompted his move in 1940 to Lavington Common amongst the silver birch trees and the bracken, just south of Petworth in West Sussex. The move revitalised his work and provided material for a lifetime.

Autumn Trees with Distant Hill is assured and full of vitality, the harmonious tones and colours reflecting aspects of the forms of the natural world around him. Hitchens would often return to the same subject matter seeking new ways of expressing its totality, rather than topographical accuracy. The ordered, fluid sweeping brushstrokes of *Autumn Trees with Distant Hill*, are employed to effect on his preferred long and shallow canvas shape. Hitchens' marriage to Mary (Mollie) Coates, a pianist, in 1935 helped him strengthen his views on the links between painting and music in terms of harmony, rhythm, tempo, pulse and structure. His paintings were, he said, painted to be listened to and as in *Autumn Trees with Distant Hill*, which captures his affection for painting woodland scenes, it should be scanned from left to right.

William Herbert Allen (1863-1943)

Work on the Land, Farnham

Oil on canvas

Hampshire Cultural Trust

W. H. Allen studied at the Royal College of Art from 1884, becoming a prolific painter in watercolour and oil. In 1889 he joined the staff of the Farnham School of Art later becoming its director. The surrounding countryside provided much of his subject matter. Allen would venture out in all weathers making drawings and watercolour studies and returned repeatedly to the same areas to capture the landscape and farming activity across the seasons.

Allen's interests were wide-ranging and included the agricultural landscape, buildings and traditional crafts. Fields of stooked corn, oast houses, barn interiors and tranquil village scenes were favourite subjects. Allen must have been conscious that this quiet rural world was increasingly under threat from mechanisation, development and the rise of motor traffic. *Work on the Land, Farnham* with its autumnal colours presents a timeless scene of agricultural work; in the distance a plough team is preparing the soil for the new season's sowing.

Heywood Sumner (1853-1940)

The Fern Cart

Watercolour

Hampshire Cultural Trust

Sumner had no formal training as an artist but became an active figure in the Arts and Crafts movement. In 1904 he moved to Cuckoo Hill, near Gorley in the New Forest where his interest in local history, topography and rural life resulted in *The Book of Gorley*, published in 1910. This painting is a development of an illustration called *Splash Bridge - Near Holly Hatch*. Sumner explains:

The two harvests of the Forest are fern and holly - ferning in the autumn and holly in the winter. The fern is cut by the Forest men, and carried by the buyers at 8 shillings a load: and the loads are full measure! Twelve feet high from the ground, bonded in the loading, corded, and then the moving brown stacks creak slowly homeward along the ruddy Forest tracks to supply litter for the small farmers who are not men of straw.

Sumner has placed much of the landscape, with its fading heather and grasses, in deep evening shade while the bright sunlight illuminating the tree-covered knoll gives it an almost supernatural appearance.

Dora M. Batty (1891-1966)

There is Still the Country

Poster, 1926

London Transport Museum

Dora Batty produced at least 60 posters for the Underground Group and London Transport between 1921-38, like other women artists of the period she was paid less than her male colleagues and also received limited critical attention. Her versatile and bold designs included *There is Still the Country* with its highly stylised art deco autumn landscape featuring in the foreground a young woman with short cropped hair, sporting a blue patterned stylish top over a grey skirt, she stands powerfully in profile, staring self-assured into the distance. Batty cleverly suggests through her composition the idea of a pleasurable daytrip to the country for an independent woman to enjoy the seasonal sights and sounds of autumn.

Batty taught textile design at the Central School of Arts and Crafts and also worked as a book illustrator and designed ceramics for Poole Pottery, most notably the Nursery Toys patterned ware for children.

Robin Tanner (1904-1988)

Harvest Festival

Etching, 1930. Stuart Southall Collection

Harvest marks an important date in the British farming calendar as the crops grown for food and animal feed are gathered. *Harvest Festival* celebrates this success; in Britain, such ceremonies have since pagan times been held annually in autumn during the month of September. Robin Tanner's scene was based on studies made at Harvest Festival time at three churches located close to Chippenham: St James's, Draycot Cerne, St Peter's, Langley Burrell and St Nicholas, Biddlestone.

Tanner's freshly decorated church interior in *Harvest Festival* focuses on the 'fruits' of the farmers' labours. A shaft of light from the stained-glass window illuminates the sheaves of wheat stacked under the wagon roof in front of the altar table on which are cottage loaves. In front of the boxed pews piles of apples and other fruit and well-scrubbed vegetables are placed alongside large cabbages with Michaelmas daises and giant sunflowers. As the congregation enter the church, they are met by wheat roughly stacked against the back of the rows of pews. The figures in the pews were posed for by Tanner's family including his mother, one of his brothers and several friends.

Sara Hannant (b.1964)

Burning effigy of David Cameron with Nick Clegg as his puppet,

Cliffe Bonfire Society, Lewes, Sussex

Archival pigment print, 2010

Collection of the Artist

Traditionally, at the end of the harvest when all the work on the land was finished, pastoral communities would slaughter weak animals before the winter, and light the dark nights with fires and feasting. Sussex Bonfire Societies seemingly echo this practice by staging costumed torch-lit parades throughout Sussex from September to November. In Lewes, tar barrels are dragged through the streets on sledges as part of the bonfire celebrations. Later the barrels are thrown blazing into the River Ouse. Lewes is well known for the controversial practice of burning effigies of 'unpopular' characters, including politicians, known as 'Enemies of the Bonfire'. It is also customary to burn an effigy of the Pope, which is in reference to the burning of 17 protestant martyrs in the mid-1500s. Most Bonfire Societies stage firework displays, and many societies also include remembrance services for lives lost in armed conflict.

Sara Hannant

Alan Reynolds (1926-2014)

Bleak November

Ink, watercolour and gouache, 1955-56

Ingram Collection of Modern British Art

The sombre landscape of *Bleak November*, with its simplified forms and earthy and muted palette of muddy brown and black washes, is one of Alan Reynolds' remarkable botanical watercolours.

Reynolds viewed the landscape as an inexhaustible subject and here his focus is on a hop garden in late autumn; winter is not far away. The bare pointed black hop poles in *Bleak November* rise up from nowhere and appear like spears embedded in the ground. They stand starkly behind the ploughed field, threatening against a mottled and foreboding sky. The low perspective Reynolds adopts renders the spiky ghost-like silvery leaves of the dandelion gargantuan, as they reach menacingly into the disquieting landscape. Dissatisfied with his work and feeling he was repeating himself he started his move into greater abstraction between 1958 and 1959 leaving behind landscape painting and botanical motifs.

Gertrude Hermes (1901-1983)

Autumn Fruits

Wood engraving, 1935

Julian Francis Collection

Hermes' affinity for nature and awareness of its changing face across the seasons can be traced in a number of her engravings. *Spring Bouquet* (1929) shows daffodils, primroses, crocuses and catkins, while its pair *The Harvest* (1929) is a study of oats, barley and hops. Two stylistically contrasting colour linocuts *Winter: Rooks and Rain* (1950) and *Spring Trees* (1957) portray rooks swirling above their treetop nests and the appearance of fresh new leaves.

Autumn Fruits celebrates the seasonal harvests of hedgerow and woodland featuring fungi, blackberries, teasels and conkers. The startling contrasts of black and white seen in *Mistletoe* have been replaced by more nuanced variations of mark making and incredibly fine hatching on the gills of the mushroom and the background patterns. When it was exhibited in the Society of Wood Engravers exhibition in 1935 *The Times* commented that 'the most striking print among 130 is the large circular design by Gertrude Hermes'.

Paul Drury (1903-1987)

September

Etching, 1928

Stuart Southall Collection

Paul Drury studied at Goldsmiths' School of Art and with Graham Sutherland became part of a coterie of gifted young students inspired by the pastoral visions of Samuel Palmer. Such was their excitement they even dressed in cloaks in imitation of Palmer and the Ancients during their Shoreham heyday a hundred years previously.

The most Palmer-inspired of Drury's etchings are *After Work* (1926) which shows a weary labourer on his way home hand in hand with his daughter, and his masterpiece *September*. This plate was begun in 1927 and completed the following year. Having settled on the composition Drury developed the etching's beautifully evoked lighting through a sequence of 12 states in which the initial sunbeams were removed so that the evening glow is created only by subtle variations in the density of line. What Drury achieved was to make a simple scene of evening apple picking into an image that symbolises autumn and the month of September in particular - it is Keats' 'mellow fruitfulness' made manifest.

Mark Hearld (b.1974)

Thrushes and Crab Apples

Lithograph, 2010

Julian Francis Collection

Mark Hearld has described himself as a 'collagist, printmaker, designer of this and that, and collector of tat'. He studied illustration at the Glasgow School of Art before moving on to the Royal College of Art to take an MA in natural history illustration. His admiration for artists like John Piper, Eric Ravilious and Edward Burra is evident, as is an interest in folk art shared with Enid Marx and Barbara Jones.

Hearld's enthusiasm for the kind of everyday nature seen in gardens, streets and country lanes is reflected in work that celebrates sometimes unloved species like mice, pigeons and starlings. *Thrushes and Crab Apples* shows how Hearld's work as a collagist has informed his approach to lithography, the birds appearing almost as cut-outs layered against the abstracted setting. His keen observation of the world around him is reflected in convincing portraits of the behaviour and quirks of his subjects. The landscapes in which they flit and strut are also full of seasonal references, here an autumnal feast of crab apples.

Charles Tunnicliffe (1901-1979)

The Acorn Hunters

Etching, 1929

Stuart Southall Collection

Autumn traditionally saw the release of domestic pigs to roam in forests to forage for fallen acorns, which if left in large quantities were poisonous to horses and cattle. The custom known as Pannage or 'Common of Mast' was granted to local people on common land or in royal forests and dates to the time of William the Conqueror, who founded The New Forest in 1079 and where the practice continues, lasting for not less than 60 days. The pigs are marked, have rings put through their snouts to lessen the damage caused by rooting and are turned out on a start date determined by the Court of Verderers who manage commoning rights and practices.

Tunnicliffe's early upbringing on a farm in East Cheshire gave him first-hand experience of many traditional agricultural practices including working with pigs, and importantly for the young would-be artist, opportunities to draw them on any available scrap of paper. *The Acorn Hunters* is a fine example of his trademark precision and accuracy and conveys his affection for pigs and the beauty he found in their form.

Charles Tunnicliffe (1901-1979)

Swifts and Swallows

Watercolour, 1960

Ladybird Books / University of Reading Special Collections

The gathering of swallows, swifts and house martins in preparation for their migration south is a sure sign that autumn is arriving. This illustration from *What to Look for in Autumn* is based on a view of the village of Malltraeth on Anglesey where the Tunnicliffes had made their home in 1947. One of Tunnicliffe's diary entries for September describes swallows gathering in preparation for their migration:

They came in hundreds, twittering excitedly all about the roof and the garden, and in the afternoon the slates of the roof as well as the ridge tiles were populated with them as they basked in the bright sunlight ... some of them rested on their sides with one wing and tiny foot turned skywards as if revelling in the warmth. Others preened vigorously, and some young birds crouched and asked for food whenever a flying bird approached them.

Carry Akroyd (b.1953)

Fieldfares

Screenprint, 2019

Collection of the Artist

The date when these winter thrushes arrive depends on conditions in Scandinavia, but suddenly there will be a gathering of them moving down the hedgerows feeding on the autumn berries, or calling to each other as they fly towards a buffet on other bushes. They fly with a hesitation, a moment with the wings held still. As winter comes on, they must feed on the ground, faring over frosty fields. I never see them leave in spring, I just notice one day that they have gone.

Carry Akroyd

John Minton (1917-1957)

The Hop Pickers

Gouache, chalk, pen, watercolour, 1945

The Ingram Collection of Modern and Contemporary British Art

Hop picking required considerable labour, its value depended on being harvested quickly and at the right moment, a task that required an additional work force. East Enders in their droves left London by special trains each September for Kent for the annual hopping season where they would stay in rudimentary farm huts for four to six weeks, many regarding it as a rural holiday with pay.

Minton's lyrical and highly individual painting the *Hop Pickers* was completed in the mid 1940s when he was teaching illustration at Camberwell School of Art. The three male workers are engrossed in their various tasks. One is perched halfway up a ladder stripping the hop bine growing up a 10-foot-high pole, while the other two prepare to move the full hop bins for measurement so that payment can be calculated. At the far end of the row, in the shadows, can be glimpsed a diminutive male figure beneath 'the net' of hops. Minton's interest is not only with observing the actions of the workers but also in conveying the abundance of the luxuriantly coloured hops and the dense patterning created by their richness.

Stanley Anderson (1884-1966)

Three Good Friends

Line engraving, 1950. Stuart Southall Collection

Ploughing with horses was a skilled job but like other traditional ways of working it was threatened by increasing mechanisation. Stanley Anderson had great sympathy and admiration for rural workers and concerned by the pace and impact of these changes he sought to painstakingly record English country crafts and seasonal farming practices before they disappeared.

Three Good Friends demonstrates Anderson's mastery of engraving, a skill he helped revive in the inter-war years. Highly disciplined in his approach it was based on his customary practice of undertaking detailed preliminary sketches. These commenced in 1945 and were inscribed 'Darkie and Prince in the Orchard'. Anderson was by then living in Buckinghamshire in the cottage 'Old Timbers' in Towersey, about two miles east of Thame. *Three Good Friends* shows his keen understanding of the rural environment and the harsh reality of agricultural labour together with the close bond established between man and beast. Here the ploughman and his trusted team of horses take a well-earned rest. The rooks, having followed the plough and feasted on wireworms and other soil pests, return to the treetops where old nests remain.