



# **BRITAIN IN PICTURES**

# A collection of pictures inspired by the classic 'Britain in Pictures' series of books, published in the 1940s to celebrate Britain's social and cultural history

The 'Britain in Pictures' series of books, most of which contained the word 'British' or 'English' in the title, were published between 1941 and 1948 and were conceived during the Blitz as a form of benign cultural propaganda, asserting what it was that made Britain worth defending at a time of crisis: its art, its literature, its history, its buildings, its landscape, in short, its social and cultural life.

The list of authors commissioned by the editor, Walter Turner (the then *Spectator* editor) reads like a cultural '*Who's Who*' of mid-century Britain: John Betjeman; George Orwell; Vita Sackville-West; Graham Greene; David Low; Edmund Blunden; John Piper; Thomas Hennell – all chosen as the authority on their subject, be it '*Country Houses*' (West) '*Cartoonists*' (Low) or '*The English People*' (Orwell).

We've called this collection 'Britain in Pictures' partly as a tribute to that most charming series, but also because its gently patriotic subject matter and discursive interest in Britain's social history – or 'The British People in Pictures' as the series was subtitled – mirrors our own unusual take on picture dealing, which has always leant towards pictures of people, places and events, rather than art for art's sake.



John Betjeman



Although produced in the 1940s, the focus of 'Britain in Pictures' panned backwards in history, from the Second World War to prehistory, surveying the depth and richness of Britain's social history. The series presented Britain as a place of fertile individualism and creativity, parochial traditions and diversity, nestling under the wing of a benevolent national banner. As a philosophical exercise, the books could be seen as a riposte to the nightmarishly mono-



dimensional quality of totalitarian regimes – Nazi and Soviet alike with their all encompassing racial and social platitudes and emphasis on the State.

At the heart of this catalogue is a group of pictures emblematic of the spirit of *Britain in Pictures'* by one of the series' most distinguished contemporary contributors, David Low – arguably the greatest satirist and chronicler of the seismic events of the 1940s and an artist just as ready to skewer Britain's political leaders as foreign dictators.

Low's illustrations to '*The Modern Rake's Progress*' a collaboration with the writer Rebecca West are, as the title suggests, scathing of modern foibles but also reverential of Britain's richly satirical visual tradition. Despite the sparkling quality of Low's 'modernity', with its motor cars, press photographers and film cameras, he and West's conclusion is '*Plus ça Change*' - humanity in modern Britain is fundamentally unchanged since Hogarth's time.

The only qualification for inclusion in this catalogue is that the picture should somehow encapsulate the spirit of the books – so David Jagger's swaggeringly accomplished depiction of himself as 'The Huntsman' (an important recent re-discovery) could be included under 'Sporting Pictures of England' or 'British Portrait Painters'.

Similarly Oswald Badcock's poignant and beautiful portraits of his sister, could qualify either under '*Britain's Portrait Painters*' or perhaps '*English Women*', so quintessentially English is her physiognomy, hairstyles and dress – a veritable '*Railway Children*' in oils.



Elsewhere, the pictures have been selected to complement the spirit of particular volumes. John Betjeman's *English Cities and Small Towns'* is perhaps the most memorably poignant of all the *Britain in Pictures'* volumes, written in 1942, as Britain was fighting for its life. "Not the most magnificent scenery" he writes

"can compensate for the loss of the Corn Exchange, the doctor's house...the rural garages, the arid municipal park, the church and the Jubilee drinking fountain". We attempt to capture something of the spirit of Betjeman's words in Nathaniel Hughes Baird's delightful watercolour of the canvas awnings in a Torquay shopping street and Leslie Badham's deliciously detailed oil painting of The Tackleway in Hastings Old Town, viewed from on high, as if through a *camera obscura*.

Andrew Sim



# **FREDERIC WHITING**

R.P; R.S.W; R.I (1874-1962)

**The Dandy – Self Portrait** Oil on canvas, signed & dated 1912 63 x 56cm





## **DAVID JAGGER** R.P; R.O.I (1891-1958)

#### **'The Huntsman' – A Self Portrait** Oil on canvas, signed & dated 1919 58 x 48cm

David Jagger painted '*The Huntsman*' - a playful self portrait in the Orpen manner, with himself playing the role of the huntsman - just after the Great War in 1919, when the young portrait painter had come under the twin influences of Orpen and his principal mentor, Alfred Munnings.

It shows Jagger painting in a dashing and flamboyantly free *alla prima* style reminiscent both of Orpen and Munnings, etching 'Jagger' into the wet scarlet paint of the huntsman's jacket with the end of his brush very much in the Munnings manner.

Jagger is depicted wearing the same huntsman's jacket in Munnings' 1919 canvas '*New Year Morning in a Chelsea Studio*'



# **REX WHISTLER** (1905-44)

#### Evacuation

*Graphite* 32 x 40cm

Despite being a middle class boy from Eltham, Rex Whistler's wit, visual erudition and versatility led him to be in great demand among the *beau monde*, who commissioned him to paint them, their houses and the walls of their houses. He also created innumerable sketches to delight his friends, including this witty take on the evacuee children, who were not always either angelic or grateful to their country house hosts.





## TREVOR MAKINSON (1926-92)

**Requisitioned Country House** 

Oil on canvas, signed & dated 1944 54 x 68cm

Laura Knight was very taken with the young Trevor Makinson when she met him in Malvern during the war, describing him as an 'unrepentant adherent of the traditional representational school of British painters' qualities evident in this remarkable depiction of the young servicemen and women in a requisitioned country house.





# The Modern Rake's Progress

## **SIR DAVID LOW** (1891-1963)

Original watercolours (complete set of 12) 43 x 59cm (each)

Sir David Low, or 'Low' as he was universally known to an entire generation of newspaper readers, was the doyen of 1930s cartoonists: the arch-skewerer of fascist and communist dictators alike and the inventor of characters such as Colonel Blimp, which survive as recognisable types to the present day.

Low's newspaper cartoons were generally in black and white but in *'The Modern Rake's Progress'* – his 1934 illustrated updating of Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress', in collaboration with author Rebecca West – the cartoonist bursts into spectacular colour. One commentator described his updating of Hogarth's famous series as *"richly coloured and fabulously evocative of the age"*.

Ephemerality is the curse of the newspaper cartoonist but in '*The Modern Rake's Progress*', Low makes a bid for the timelessness enjoyed by his predecessor Hogarth and, as Horace Walpole said of the original Rake's Progress: "the curtain was drawn aside and his genius stood displayed in its full lustre".

Low, who wrote 'British Cartoonists' in the Britain in Pictures series, was a keen student of the diverse history of caricature in Britain and tolerant



Sir David Low

of its various strains, from the scathing savagery of a Gillray to the gentle, 'situational' humourousness' of a Charles Keene. Low inclined very much to the latter in his own productions but there is bite as well as wit in the mix.

#### Literature

Rebecca West & David Low, '*The Modern Rake's Progress*' Hutchinson & Co, 1934

#### **Exhibition History**

Hayward Gallery, London 'Thirties British Art & Design Before the War'. Organised by the Arts Council, 1979-80



#### The Press Hails a new Celebrity



"George [a clerk] wakes to find himself a millionaire and peer – the inheritor of a fortune earned in the manufacture of the second best preparation for the blackening of female eyelashes."

#### The Rake Gives a Cocktail Party



"George has moved into an expensive flat decorated with an Epstein statue and a Ben Nicholson picture which represents to George nothing but the stripes of a locomotive, coldly illumined as by regret. But he was compelled to buy them by art dealers who had the same degree of knowingness as those who frequent racecourses."

#### The Rake Invests in the Movies



"George has put a great deal of money into British talkies. Two leading exponents of female glamour languish now on his shoulders, professing readiness to bite off far less than they can chew."

#### The Rake Backs a Possible World Champion



"Another of these English heavyweights who, as time goes on, prove themselves descendants of Wordsworth's 'Lucy': boxers whom there are none to praise and very few to love."

#### The Rake on the Crest of the Wave



"George is 'obeying that curious impulse to give the mating instinct its fling in a night club', where through the fumes, bottles of champagne are borne solemnly, as if they were reminders of mortality by waiters who have the pasty gravity of Inquisitorial Gaolers."

#### The Rake Plunges on the Turf



"Having plunged on his horse and lost at Ascot, George loses his temper - to much consternation: On the faces of both the jockey and the trainer at the horse's head dwells that expression, which is seen when one who is not a child of light finds a mug showing itself not quite such a mug as he thought."

#### The Rake's Marriage



"At the wedding we look at the bride's mother in her pew and recognise at a glance who was the steel trap, the fish hook, the lethal bullet."

#### The Rake at the Gaming Tables



"He has staked all his future power and happiness on a game such as children play in the nursery ... he is suffering the agony without consolation that sick beasts feel."

#### The Rake's Divorce



"Nothing is clearer in this world than that a cloud and its silver lining are too often destined for two different possessors. In this case George holds the cloud. On George's wife, we must not be too hard. Could one explain to a goldfish that it may swim in one aquarium but not in another?"

#### The Rake at the End of his Tether



"Had George lived in a Bloomsbury boarding house, practised the chaste thrift of celibacy and had his life been as bare of horses as Mr Noel Coward's '**Cavalcade**', George might still be having this painful interview with his bankers."

#### The Rake is Thrown out of his Hotel



"George is borne out through the hall, losing his dignity in a sudden realisation that life is even more difficult than he had suspected."

#### The Rake Finds his Level



"So George one day finds himself waiting to draw his dole and glad to get it. What has happened ... happens very slowly; it happens to too many of them; it has no news value."

# **FRANKLIN WHITE** (1892-1975)

**Village Football Match** *Oil on canvas* 102 x 124cm

White was an Australian by birth but spent almost his entire adult life in the secluded Kentish village of Shoreham in the Darenth Valley, which the artist Samuel Palmer, a follower of William Blake, had delineated as a kind of artistic Eden a century before. White taught drawing at the Slade after studying there as a young man, but the orchards, pubs and hop-fields of Shoreham were his abiding love. In retirement, he opened a private art school there with his wife, Gertrude, that he named the *'Samuel Palmer School of Arr'*.







#### FRANKLIN WHITE Hop Picking Oil on canvas 28 x 34cm



FRANKLIN WHITE Blossom – Homage to Samuel Palmer Oil on canvas 39 x 34cm



# **OSWALD MARSHALL BADCOCK**

(1876-1950)

My Sister (I, II & III)

Oils on canvas (II & III signed & dated '96' and '94' respectively) I & III 49 x 39cm II 61 x 50cm

Badcock, a Londoner, trained at the Royal Academy Schools between 1893 and 1898, during which time this charming and evocative trio of portraits of the artist's younger sister were painted. Remarkably, the pictures survived as a group, descending through the family, one of whom married into the peerage. Badcock is recorded as having a studio in the Tottenham Court Road at the beginning of the twentieth century but emigrated to South Africa.









## THOMAS HENNELL R.W.S; N.E.A.C (1903-45)

Thomas Hennell was the ideal choice to write the *British Craftsmen*' volume of the *Britain in Pictures* series. Steeped in rural life as the son of a country parson, he was a talented writer as well as an artist and took an academic interest in the history of traditional craftsmanship, the ebbing away of which he regretted and was anxious to record.

Vinny Cheese, a Dorset blue cheese was once made in virtually every farmhouse in the county but by the time Hennell came to make this charmingly well-observed watercolour of a mother and daughter engaged in the time-honoured craft, it had almost died out – and, in fact, disappeared completely after the Second World War.

Hennell was equally keen to single out and praise the revival and flourishing of craft practice and his lovely pen and ink drawing of the tumbledownlooking Winchcombe Pottery is a case in point. Hennell developed a close relationship with the potter, Michael Cardew, who had breathed new life into an ancient Gloucestershire pottery, pioneering a revival of fine earthenware slipware for the modern table.



Winchcombe Pottery Reed Pen 31 x 47cm



Vinny Cheese making Watercolour 35 x 47cm



# *attr to* **TOM TAYLOR** (1817-80)

#### Portrait of Ellen Terry as Ophelia

*Pastel, Monogrammed `T.T` l.r* 55 x 36cm

This striking new discovery shows Ellen Terry, the *grande dame* of late Victorian theatre in her legendary 1878 portrayal of Ophelia at the Lyceum, where she played opposite Henry Irving's Hamlet. Taylor was a close friend of Terry's and had been the art critic of *The Times* as well as the editor of *Punch* in a long and distinguished career.





# JOHN EDGAR PLATT R.C.A. (1886-1967)

#### Esther

*Watercolour signed* 160 x 49cm

This sumptuous and beautifully preserved watercolour was an important commission for John Edgar Platt as All Saints Church, Leek was not only his local church but an icon of the arts and crafts movement (now Grade I Listed) having been designed by Norman Shaw and decorated with stained glass and murals by William Morris and W.R Lethaby. Platt studied at the Royal College of Art and exhibited at the Royal Academy and the NEAC from 1908 onwards. Although he worked in all media, from watercolour to oils, he began to specialise in print making and woodcuts from 1920 onwards, winning the Gold Medal at the International Print Makers' Exhibition in 1922. His work can be found in the Tate Gallery, the British Museum, the V&A and the Imperial War Museum (he was an Official War Artist in World War Two).









# **CYRUS CUNEO** (1879-1916)

#### Sculptor at the Langham Sketch Club, Chelsea c.1909

*Oil on canvas* 66 x 45cm

San Francisco-born Cuneo (the father of Terence) was a young President of the Langham Sketch Club in Tite Street, Chelsea. Artists (including sculptors) worked from live models and produced quick, timed sketches and maquettes for competition and club discussion.





## RONALD BRADSHAW (fl.1930-40)

**1930s Ham Radio Operator** *Oil on canvas, signed and dated 1934* 60 x 80cm

Amateur radio enthusiasts, popularly known as 'Hams', enjoyed a heyday in the 1930s and 40s, when their wireless tracking expertise was channeled into the Y service that listened to and recorded enemy wireless transmissions. Much later, when Bletchley Park, the home of the Y service, was threatened with demolition, it was saved with help from the Milton Keynes Amateur Radio Club, who built a radio station there. With help from the experts at Bletchley, we have been able to track down the call sign of the Ham Radio station illustrated here – an extremely rare, if not unique, painted image of a 1930s 'Ham' in action.





# MICHAEL ROTHENSTEIN (1908-93)

Wild Flowers

Watercolour & Ink, dated 1938 50 x 32cm





## **DAVID ALISON** R.S.A; R.P (1882-1955)

#### Violet Anderson, painter

*Oil on canvas, signed c. 1928* 77 x 60cm

The influence of the Scottish Colourists can clearly be seen in David Alison's stylish 1920s portrait of Violet Anderson, the daughter of Glasgow painter, William Anderson. Alison was a distinguished Scottish portraitist who studied with Francis Cadell in Paris and later became one of the *Society of Eight* with Lavery and Peploe. The sitter, Violet Anderson, would later go on, like Alison, to study at the Glasgow School of Art, and become a notable painter of flowers under her married name, Neish.





# NATHANIEL HUGHES-BAIRD (1865-1930)

The Strand, TorquayWatercolour, signed & dated 190030 x 43cm

Baird was a versatile and talented artist – equally at home with landscapes, portraiture and genre scenes – who exhibited widely at the R.A, the R.B.A and the R.O.I. His portraiture owed something to Whistler and Sargent, as did his delicate, sparing use of watercolour, which evokes the spirit of Betjeman's *Britain in Pictures*' volume and the age of H.G. Wells' small shopkeepers in *Kipps* and *Mr Polly*.




### E. LESLIE BADHAM (1873-1944)

#### The Tackleway from East Hill, Hastings Old Town Oil on board

39 x 48cm

Badham was a London-born artist, who trained at the Slade but worked – and died – in Hastings, where he taught at the School of Art. His superbly detailed paintings provide an evocative record of Hastings between the wars – perhaps the most complete painted portrait of an English town in that period in existence. He and his daughter were killed by a *Luftwaffe* bomb in 1944.





# **CHRISTOPHER WOOD** (1901-30)

#### Portrait of Artist's Mother

*Graphite, 1927* 30 x 24cm

Christopher 'Kit' Wood, designated memorably as a 'fatal Englishman' by Sebastian Faulks in his short biographical study, never had time to fully develop a talent that was acknowledged by some of the most important figures in European art, from Picasso and Cocteau to Diaghilev and Ben Nicholson. It was in 1927, the year that 'Kit' met Nicholson that he drew this haunting and strange portrait of his, still young, mother.





#### **JOHN HARDEN** (1772-1847)

Hartley Coleridge

*Graphite* 18 x 22cm

Hartley Coleridge was a brilliant poet like his father. Once described as the 'sweetest sonneteer since Shakespeare', his reputation had ebbed away until a recent revival of interest in the man and his work. Our discovery of a beautiful and hitherto unknown portrait of Hartley as a young man by his friend, John Harden, an artist who skilfully documented the lives of the Lakeland poets, is an exciting addition to the scholarship. His biographer, Andrew Keanie said of Harden's recently discovered portrait: "we now have a new visual image of the breathing and blooming man in his prime, at ease in the company of a good friend. It is a likeness that could send readers back to his work resensitised."







### **GRACE GOLDEN** (1904-93)

**Speakers' Corner** Oil on canvas, dated 1940

45 x 35cm

This rare oil by watercolourist Grace Golden depicts Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park and dates from 1940, when she had been granted permission to sketch the effect of the Blitz on London. In typical fashion, Golden spent a long time sketching in the area, and also produced a larger oil called 'Free Speech', which was purchased by the Tate through the Chantrey Bequest.





#### LESLIE WILSON (1870-1958)

Allegory of War Oil on canvas 48 x 68cm





Leslie Wilson began his artistic life conventionally enough, studying under Henry Tonks at the Slade, where he met Stanley Spencer. But Wilson became gripped by what he saw as the iniquities of the world's capitalistic system and his work became overtly political and bizarre. He worked as a commercial artist and printer but also began to make his own political pamphlets, which he distributed at Speakers' Corner, a habit he continued throughout the war and until the 1980s. In 'Allegory of War' - surely one of the most unusual and surprising pictures to have been produced in WWII - Wilson contrasts the unnatural top-hatted capitalist with his harvest of bombs with the honest endeavour of the costermonger: a satire reminiscent of John Heartfield's anti-Nazi satire 'Hurrah - Die Butter is Alle' (above).



#### **PERCY HORTON** MA; RBA; ARCA (1897-1970)

#### Self Portrait

*Oil on canvas, c.1940* 58 x 44cm

Percy Horton was a conscientious objector in the First World War, imprisoned for his absolutist views. During the Second World War, he was commissioned by the War Artists' Advisory Committee to paint Civil Defence personnel and factory workers.





#### REX WHISTLER (1905-44)

**Selecting a Cigar** *Pen and ink* 21 x 15cm

Whistler volunteered to serve in the war that would take his life, but continued to take on a bewildering amount of artistic commissions, from theatrical stage design, portrait commissions and even advertising work – in the example here for Rothmans Cigars.





#### FREDERICK ELWELL R.A., R.O.I., R.P (1870-1958)

**Bulldog – a study** Oil on board, signed and inscribed 30 x 40cm

Elwell was an English painter in oils of portraits, interiors and figurative subjects. He exhibited at the Paris Salon and the Royal Academy, becoming an elected member of the latter in 1938, and painted a portrait of King George V in 1932.

Elwell is known for his interesting and unusually detailed depictions of ordinary life: from the home to the local village hall and place of work. A review of his work in *The Times* described him as 'pre-eminently a painter of domesticity'.





## CHARLES JOSEPH STANILAND R.I., R.O.I. (1838-1916)

#### Opening of Tower Bridge (the Royal Party departing for Westminster on 'The Palm')

*Gouache, monogrammed. 1894* 20 x 30cm

Staniland was one of the star artists of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper, where his vivid depictions of notable occasions, such as this wonderful, Tissot-like commemoration of the Royal Opening of Tower Bridge were popular set pieces. Vincent Van Gogh was a keen student of the best *Daily Graphic* artists and particularly admired Staniland, whose praises he sung in surviving letters to his art dealer brother, Theo.





#### EDMOND XAVIER KAPP (1890-1978)

#### Caricature of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, composer

Pen and ink, signed and dated 1917 15 x 20cm

Kapp was a well known illustrator, whose volumes of caricatures proved popular between the wars. This memorable and stylish caricature of the classical composer Charles Villier Stanford appeared in Kapp's 'Personalities: Twenty Four drawings', published in 1919.





## LEONARD JOHN FULLER R.O.I (1891-1973)

**The Antique Shop, St Ives** *Oil on canvas, signed* 60 x 74cm

Leonard Fuller was the founder and principal of the St Ives School of Painting from 1938 onwards. Fuller was an old fashioned and skilful painter, equally at home with figure, still life and landscape subjects but enlivened his traditionalist output with unusual compositions, such as this view from the interior of a St Ives antiques shop, looking out into the harbour.





#### HENRY MOORE R.A., R.W.S. (1831-95)

Moore was a master of the play of light on water, in watercolour as well as oil, as this watercolour of sea fisherman drying their nets on Loch Tarbert. Martin Hardie, the great writer on watercolour describes his technique thus: "He watched its ever-changing lights and colours, the subtle play of sunshine and shadow in partnership, interweaving and moving to and fro, like dancers in a quadrille, over its surface."





**Drying the Nets – Loch Tarbert** *Watercolour, signed with initials and dated July 1865* 33 x 63cm

Henry Moore was Britain's foremost painter of the sea. Christopher Wood wrote in his 'Dictionary of Victorian Painters': "In the 1880s and 1890s, Moore was regarded as one of England's most important painters". Moore's work was highly prized by the shipbuilding class of the Victorian era, but also by sailors, who recognised the nautical specificity of his pictures, which are very much depictions of actual 'wavescapes' in real locations – as indicated by the precise title of this work.

**Off St Catherine's (I.O.W) after a Gale** Oil on canvas, signed, inscribed and dated 'Aug 26 '82 l.r 38 x 63cm



#### **FRANK SALISBURY** R.I; R.O.I; R.P (1874-1962)

**The Empty Club** Oil on canvas, signed & dated 1917





## **ROBERT ANNING BELL**

R.A. (1863-1933)

#### Cinderella

Black chalk, heightened with coloured chalks, signed and dated 1908 72 x 86cm

'Cinderella – The Crown and the Slipper' was only the second work that Bell exhibited at the Royal Academy and this is a study for that work – an unusually large and atmospheric study in chalk that shows Bell's affinity for the medieval, which would later find expression in the sepulchral interiors of Westminster Cathedral. There is a further study for the work in the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester.





# **MUSEUM SALES**

#### **SOCIAL HISTORY**



Sold to the The Geffrye Museum

**LEONARD FULLER Sunday afternoon** *Oil on canvas* 



#### **ART HISTORY**



Sold to the National Portrait Gallery

MICHAEL ROTHENSTEIN Edward Bawden & Eric Ravilious Watercolour



# fine Simart

## SCIENCE



Sold to the Science Museum

PAUL DRURY Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton collection Various media - 150 works



## LITERATURE



Sold to The George Eliot Fellowship

Portrait of Mary Ann Evans (aka George Eliot) Pastel



## Index

David Alison	35
Oswald Marshall Badcock	26-27
Robert Anning Bell	51
E Leslie Badham	37
Ronald Bradshaw	33
Cyrus Cuneo	32
Frederick Elwell	44
Leonard John Fuller	47
Grace Golden	40
John Harden	39
Thomas Hennell	28-29
Percy Horton	42
Nathaniel Hughes-Baird	36
David Jagger	7
Edmund Xavier Kapp	46
Sir David Low	10-22
Trevor Makinson	9
Henry Moore	48-49
John Edgar Platt	31
Michael Rothenstein	34
Frank Salisbury	50

35	Charles Joseph Staniland
-27	Tom Taylor
51	Rex Whistler
37	Franklin White
33	Frederic Whiting
32	Leslie Wilson
44	Christopher Wood
47	
40	
39	
-29	
42	
36	
7	
46	
-22	
9	
-49	
31	
34	

1 T 1 C 1

45

30

8,43

23-25

6

41

38

# Acknowledgements

The late Peter Coate Nick Somerville Roger & Ann Sceats Susannah Mayor, Smallhythe Place NT Dr Andrew Keanie Emma Hicks

## **Recommended Reading**

Michael Carney '*Britain in Pictures - a History & bibliography*'. Publ: Werner Shaw 1995

# Photography

Matthew Hollow

Design

Ant Graphics Design Services

Contact: Andrew and Diane Sim Email: simfineart@btinternet.com Telephone: 07919 356150







www.simfineart.com 07919 356150