

THOMAS HENNELL COLLECTION

Thomas Hennell N.E.A.C., R.W.S. (1903-45)

"I have no doubt that Thomas Hennell was the greatest watercolourist that England has produced this century"

Carel Weight C.B.E., R.A. (1908-97) Artist and Professor of Painting at the Royal College of Art

'All framed, except when otherwise stated'



At Ridley – Wintry Scene with Man and Two Horses **£2,250**

Watercolour, signed & dated 'Jan '42' (31 x 47cm)



White House Farm, New St, Ridley **£2,250**

Watercolour, signed 'T.Hennell', dated verso August '41 (31 x 47cm)



The Orchard in the Snow (Artist's home, Ridley) **£2,250**

Watercolour (31 x 47cm)



Spreading Manure in the Snow, Glebe Field, Ridley (January 1942) **£2,250**

Watercolour, signed and dated '42 (29 x 46cm)



Rummer's Pond, Old Rectory, Ridley **£2,250**

Watercolour, signed 'T.Hennell' – dated Jan 1942 (31 x 47cm)



Fieldworkers 'Singling Out'
Watercolour (31 x 47cm)
Exhibited Fine Art Society 1984 No.39

£2,250



Building an Airfield at Pegu, Burma
Watercolour, signed & dated 1945 (48 x 58cm)

£4,750

This large, impressive watercolour displays the newfound confidence with large groups of figures that characterised Hennell's war pictures from the Far East. A disparate group of workers, all deftly and individually captured rather than generalised, proceed with the task of extending an airfield to accommodate more and larger aircraft. The smooth ultra-modernity of a Douglas Skytrain paratrooper transport plane provides a note of culture clash with the almost medieval un-mechanised labour.



Ruins in Wartime Normandy
Pen and Wash, signed & dated 1944

£2,350

Hennell arrived in Normandy just behind the D-Day invasion, a time lag he regretted, but he soon made up for lost time. This was one of the busiest and most fruitful periods of his war artist's career, as he sketched his way from the beachhead to the ruined towns and villages of northern France.



Calais Nord - post D-Day - 1944
Watercolour (38 x 48cm)
Exhibited Fine Art Society 1984

£3,750

Hennell's depiction of the 'ruined field of Calais Nord' was made in October 1944, immediately after the capture of the City by the Canadian army. The artist recalled that the desolate scene became 'half identified in my mind with a great, empty ploughed field near my father's house in Kent', adding that it was in this "half nostalgic, half severe mood, that scenes of battle seize one's mind most strongly". Hennell brought his Calais pictures back to England in a Royal Navy motor launch.



Farmer with Plough (Jagged Tree)
Watercolour (38 x 48cm)

£2,500

"The blasted tree is lightning's finger post" - from Hennell's poem, 'Jacob's Dream'. Although two farmworkers and their horse are ostensibly the subject of this watercolour, it is the jagged tree, rich, loamy soil and the palpable changeability and liveliness of the weather that are more memorable, the figures themselves almost melding into the landscape, an effect that Hennell clearly intended. It is the atmosphere of an afternoon, a moment that he is attempting to distil and capture in a painting.



Gypsy Boy Asleep

£1,200

Reed Pen, signed with Monogram and inscribed (24 x 32cm)



Chateau D'Esquelbecq, Nr Dunkirk

£2,750

Watercolour, signed. Dated 1944, with two war censor stamps verso (34 x 45cm)

Chateau D'Esquelbecq, near the village of Wormhoudt about 15 miles south of Dunkirk, close to the Belgian border, was a place requisitioned regularly by competing armies in both wars. The size of the building and the relaxed presence of soldiers, some with bicycles, in the scene suggests that this was probably the scene of Hennell's lodgings with the Canadian army during the Allied advance in 1944.



Devastated Harbour, near Calais, 1944

£2,500

Watercolour (34 x 47cm)

In late September 1944, a few days after the Canadian Army had secured the port, Hennell visited Calais recording the near total destruction of the town and port – in our watercolour, presenting the chaotic mess of the harbour, with boats and buildings thrown together in a bizarrely picturesque jumble.



Pre-war Rural Scene with Ploughman and Tractor

£2,250

Watercolour, dated 1938 (32 x 46cm)



Yarmouth Sands from Memory (includes self portrait I.I) £7,500

Watercolour (70 x 58cm)

Exhibit: Landscapes of the Mind, Bethlem Royal Hospital Museum of the Mind Exhibition 2021; Fine Art Society Exhibition, 1986

In this highly unusual and self-revelatory work, Hennell includes a self-portrait, for the only time in his mature career: a depiction of himself seated, sketching at the seaside. Except that this is clearly not a realistic picture of Yarmouth Sands but, as Hennell's title suggests, a dreamlike depiction of Hennell's memory of the scene. Freud would have a field day interpreting potential meanings: light blazes from a gaudily painted tearoom with 'Just as Mother Makes it' written on its fascia, outside which a pavement artist sits, accompanied by the words 'All My Own Work' written, perhaps in sand, in front of him. Other elements include an outsized carnival head, railway tracks that lead along the seafront and a dramatically unreal sky akin to the Northern Light.



Moulin Scherrier, Bollezeele, Calais Nord

£3,750

Watercolour, dated 1944 (41 x 47cm)

Exhibited Fine Art Society 1988, No.29

Coll Ex: Rex Wailes, authority on windmills

During the Allied advance farther north, Hennell took the opportunity to visit a number of the local windmills in the flat, rather featureless landscape of the area. He had introductions from a friend and noted windmill expert, Rex Wailes, who had visited the area before the war, and received hospitality from three of the millers, including the owner of the Moulin Scherrier at Bollezelle, just a few miles west of Chateau D'Esquelbecq, where the artist was billeted with officers from the Canadian Army. Hennell's blissfully bucolic watercolour shows the miller and family going about their business, seemingly unaffected by war – an appearance supported by the evidence of letters from the artist describing the lavishness of the hospitality he received.



Bagging Potatoes, Ridley

£2,750

Watercolour, signed and monogrammed (35 x 47cm)

Exhibited R.W.S., 1942



Heavy Horse & Cart, with Fieldworkers, Ridley

£2,750

Watercolour, signed



Wartime Fieldworkers, including Land Girls, Sacking Winter Greens, Ridley

£2,750

Watercolour, signed



Wymondham North Mill, Norfolk

£2,500

Reed Pen (48 x 38cm)

Hennell was a close friend of windmill expert and conservationist, Rex Wailes and had been planning to illustrate Wailes's definitive account of their history and design, until the war intervened. A cache of Hennell's extant drawings and watercolours was discovered posthumously and published in a book, written by Alan Stoyel, called 'The Windmills of Thomas Hennell'. This is Wymondham Mill, an octagonal stock mill and the tallest in Norfolk. Remarkably, it had been dismantled from another location (Dilham) and relocated via the Great Eastern Railway in 1858. It was still in use when it was burnt down in 1950, a fire which started in the engine room.



Gully Bridge, Kinsale (1930s Irish scene)

£1,950

Watercolour (42 x 48cm)

Picturesque coastal scenes are extremely rare in Hennell's oeuvre but this pretty depiction of a horse-drawn cart crossing the River Bandon in County Cork finds the artist in holiday mood as he would have been staying in Eire with his good friends, the Smyths (portrait of Julianna Smyth is included in this exhibition) whose house - Rathcoursey - features in some of the artist's happiest works. The Smyths habitually drove around in a horse-drawn cart, as Hennell did in childhood.



Women, Old Men and Children helping out on the Land

£1,950

Pen, wash & watercolour, signed & dated 5 Dec 1940



Wattle and Daub Barn

£1,500

Reed Pen (51 x 31cm)

Used as frontispiece for 'Miles from Anywhere' by C. Henry Warren Publ, 1944



Schoolgirl from Ridley
Watercolour (60 x 42cm)

£1,750



Mr Wiggins, wearing his father's sheepherding smock
Reed Pen (30 x 31cm)

£1,250



Portrait of Julianna Smyth, Rathcoursey House
Graphite, inscribed 'Julianna, 28 Dec 1937' (29 x 22cm)

£500



Lady with Chauffeur
Graphite (25 x 35cm)

£650



Hedging, Leicestershire style
Watercolour & Reed Pen (36 x 46cm) Mounted

£1,250



Hedging (a study)
Watercolour and Reed Pen (24 x 30cm) Mounted

£1,250

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