A Mill on the Thames at Vauxhall, London

John Varley



REF: 2715

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Description

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John Varley (1778-1842)
A Mill on the Thames at Vauxhall, London

Signed lower left: J. Varley
Watercolour over pencil heightened with touches of bodycolour on laid paper
23.7 by 50.4 cm., 9 ¼ by 19 ¾ in.

This view across the Thames looking towards Pimlico and Westminster, appears to be taken from near Randall's Mill, Battersea, and dates from 1815-20. The three-storey, stone built, tower mill was constructed in the 1760s by the creek of the River Effra (now underground and part of the London's sewage network). It was the largest of the mills along the Battersea stretch of the Thames. John Varley produced another watercolour showing Randall's Mill surrounded by buildings from the other side of the mill, showing how busy the site was in the 1830s.
Millbank penitentiary with its distinctive profile and high walls is visible across the Thames. Although it started taking prisoners in 1816, it was not fully completed until 1821. Built on a low lying and swampy area and there were several outbreaks of disease at the prison and it was eventually closed in 1890. Two years later, the decision was made to build the Tate Gallery on its site. Further to the right can be seen Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall and the newly built Vauxhall Bridge. Also opened in 1816 and initially called The Regent's Bridge, it was the first iron bridge over the Thames in London.

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