

On the Road over the Moor to Tavistock, Devon

Francis Towne

Sold



Description

Francis Towne (1739-1816)

On the Road over the Moor to Tavistock, Devon

Signed verso: No2 / near 1 o Clock / on the road over the Moor to Tavistock / August 29th 1815 Francis Towne

Pen and grey ink and watercolour over pencil

13.7 by 23.1 cm., 5 1/4 by 9 in.

Provenance:

Bequeathed by the artist to James White, Exeter (1744-1825);

John Herman Merivale (1779-1844);

By descent to his granddaughters, Maria Sophia Merivale and Judith Ann Merivale, 1915;

Given to their cousin Mary Ann Loveband (b.1865), who sold it as part of an album to Agnew's in May 1938; D.L.J. Perkins;

With Agnew's, 1939, where bought by J. Hawkesley Elliott of Sheffield;

By descent to his daughter who sold it at Christie's, 14th March 1978, lot 94, bt. Leger;

Anonymous sale, Christie's, 10th July 1984, lot 198;

Private Collection, UK

Literature:

A.P. Oppe, 'Francis Towne - Landscape Painter', Walpole Society, vol. VIII, 1919-20, p.124

Exhibited:

London, Agnew's, 66th Annual Exhibition of Water-Colour and Pencil Drawings, 1939, no.108;

London, Leger Galleries, English Watercolours, 1978, no.10

Although Towne spent a large part of his life in his adopted Devon, following his return from his European tour in 1782, he spent increasing amounts of time in London, moving there permanently during the final decade of his life. Although he was a popular figure in Exeter, with a wide circle of friends and patrons, he was keen to further his standing as a landscape artist and shrug off his reputation as a provincial drawing master. He continued to undertake regular sketching tours around Britain and in 1815, he embarked on what would be his final tour, returning to Devon.

For this final tour, Towne used a single sketchbook to record most of the trip, it probably remained intact until it was sold by Mary Ann Loveband in 1938. There are a few sketches from the beginning of his tour, when he was in Exeter, which were originally in another sketchbook.

The artist's habit of working up his on the spot drawings into finished works and carefully numbering, dating and inscribing them, as seen on the present sheet, means that it is possible to plot the route he took on his various tours. On the 18th August he was in Exeter, where he spent time with his old friend James White, (the recipient of this drawing), before continuing to Chagford, on the eastern edge of Dartmoor, then across Dartmoor, to Tavistock and onto Plymouth, before heading along the South Devon coast to Sidmouth.

The first sketch, no. 1 in the series, is a view of Holly Street, Chagford (now in the Courtauld Gallery, London) which was executed according to the inscription, the day before the present watercolour, between 5 and 6 pm in the evening. There is a further view of Tavistock with part of the Abbey, which is numbered 4, in the series, which was also executed on 29th August but slightly later in the afternoon than the present watercolour, between 3-4pm. There is also an un-numbered and un-inscribed, monochrome watercolour of

a view near Tavistock (Private Collection).

The inclusion of the time, as well as the date evident on this watercolour, was something that Towne began to pra...