

The Avon Gorge and Bristol from Leigh Woods

John Scandrett Harford

Sold



Description

John Scandrett Harford (1787-1866)
The Avon Gorge and Bristol from Leigh Woods

Inscribed in a later hand on the reverse of the frame: Emily Harford from A. Harford
Watercolour over pencil heightened with bodycolour, gum arabic, stopping out and scratching out
45.8 by 83.7 cm., 18 by 33 in.

Provenance:
By descent in the family of the artist

Harford was an enthusiastic amateur artist and founder President of the Bristol Academy for the Promotion of Fine Arts, now the RWA, in 1844. Stylistically the influence of Bristol School artists, and especially Samuel Jackson (1794-1869), is evident. The present watercolour appears to date from the 1830s and shows the Avon Gorge from Leigh Woods, a popular sketching ground for artists, before work on the suspension began in the 1850s. On the hill to the left is the Clifton Observatory built in the 1760s, with the terraces of Clifton beyond. A watercolour of Rome by Harford sold at Sotheby's on 6th July 2010, lot 265 for £10,625.

Harford was the son of the banker/manufacturer John Scandrett Harford (1754-1815) of Blaise Castle, Henbury near Bristol. He was a supporter of the Church Missionary Society and the Bible Society and set up branches of both in Bristol. He befriended the writer and social reformer Hannah More (1745-1833) in 1809 and met the anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce (1759-1833) in 1812. Harford supported the anti-slavery movement and became close friends with Wilberforce. In the last years of his life he published *Recollections of W. Wilberforce* in 1864.

On the death of his father in 1815 he inherited the family estates and became a magistrate and deputy lieutenant for Gloucestershire and Cardiganshire. Between 1815 and 1817, he was in Europe buying works to build up the art collection at the family seat, Blaise Castle. While in Rome he met Pope Pius VII and asked for his help in suppressing the Spanish and Portuguese slave trades.

In 1822 he gave land at Lampeter for the foundation of St David's College now known as the University of Wales, Lampeter and he was appointed 'sub-visitor', a role he took very seriously. He was president of the Bristol Infirmary for fifteen years and helped financially the restoration of the cathedrals at St David's and Llandaff. In later years he visited Italy twice and published a biography of Michelangelo in 1857.