



John Piper in the Countryside
Exhibition Catalogue

Introduction

Dr Richard Turkington has assembled a rich and varied array of Piper's art that exemplifies the artist's work and talents over some 40 years. Places that Piper repeatedly depicted and felt a close association with are well represented e.g. Snowdonia, Pembrokeshire, Windsor, France and Venice. Also Piper's favourite subject of buildings 'in the landscape', in particular churches, appear in diverse styles. These depictions are presented as originals and via a wide range of printing techniques that include an attractive selection of some rare screen printed textiles produced by Arthur Sanderson & Sons Ltd and David Whitehead Ltd. The assorted books illustrated by Piper or featuring a dust jacket designed by him include the quirky alongside the plain fabulous.

Biography

Exhibitions of John Piper should preferably demonstrate some of the wide range of subjects, styles and media he worked on during his long artistic career. Born in Epsom in 1903 to a successful solicitor Piper felt obligated to pursue

a legal training until his father died in March 1927. Free then to follow his artistic longing he began by absorbing the art of his home country (Turner, Blake, Griggs) alongside that of the modern movement abroad (Picasso, Braque, Leger, Matisse). He travelled widely in this country, and later in France and Italy, keen to record his feelings, experiences and reactions to each location. An early and persistent aim was to encourage wider awareness and appreciation of the heritage and visual pleasures throughout Britain. This aspiration was most evinced by his long involvement with the Shell Guide series begun by John Betjeman. The 1930s saw Piper chiefly exploring the south coast landscape to enable his style to go into and through a purely abstract phase. The lessons learnt producing these abstracts spilled forward and into many aspects of his art for the next 50 years. The subsequent war and his inherent wider interests ensured he visited and recorded many other places in passing and, often as not, repeatedly so, over decades to capture changes.

The requirement to earn a living as well as Piper's temperament meant he often collaborated with other artists and craftspeople. Be it designing for the theatre, stained glass, mosaics, ceramics, textiles, tapestries, fibre glass, firework displays or books. Printing was particularly close to Piper's core means of expression as he realised there were many ways to 'boot the technique' (as his much admired artistic hero Picasso had also done) and he knew printing enabled his art to reach a wider audience. He joked that he didn't enjoy parties, only working parties. The truth was his immense energy and ability enabled him to tackle many projects, often concurrently, although he always said painting was the fountainhead i.e. the creative source he must repeatedly and regularly return to in order to supply and inform his art work in other mediums.

Hugh Fowler-Wright

Hugh is the author, with David Fraser Jenkins, of *The Art of John Piper* (2016); and with Alan Powers of *Piper in Print: John Piper's Books, Periodicals, Ephemera and Textiles* (2010)

The Exhibition Team

This exhibition has been very much a team effort, with thanks:

for his generosity in allowing me to consult his encyclopaedic knowledge and insight of John Piper – Hugh Fowler-Wright, author and collector;

for transformational paper conservation – Lisu Adye, accredited paper conservator

01684 294198

07812 042009

lisu@paperconserve.co.uk

for ever artful framing – Lyttelton Framing Gallery – and especially Lyndi
www.lytteltonframing.com

for designing and printing this high quality catalogue – Aspect Design
www.aspect-design.net

for exceptional marketing and social media support – Signify Digital
www.signifydigital.com

for expert advice on exhibition layout and hanging – Sheila Farrell
www.sheilafarrellartist.co.uk

Drawings and Paintings



1. **Aberayron, South Wales, 1954**

Mixed media

John Piper produced some lively 'on the spot' collages, atmospheric photographs and rugged mixed media depictions of Aberayron mainly from the mid 1930s to the mid 1950s. Here Piper looks across at the cluster of buildings on the northern side of the harbour at Aberayron with the harbour walls turning a corner in the lower left of the picture and the water in the foreground referenced by cursory white squiggles. A splash of blue top left indicates the roof of the old Harbourmaster's house, now a hotel, and the top right shows the apex of the Tabernacle Chapel on Market Street. Buildings relating to and influenced by coastal activity, such as the

Harbourmaster's House, were lucidly written about by Piper in his article in the *Architectural Review* of January 1938 entitled 'The Nautical Style'. And the architecture and personality of Welsh Chapels were covered at length by him in his piece 'Nonconformist Architecture' in the *Architectural Review* of December 1940.

In 1954 Piper was actively working on his first stained glass commission for Oundle School Chapel and in this fully worked up sketch thoughts of stained glass influence Piper's focus upon slabs of colour, blocks of building and 'lead' lines. This style of painting was to develop in the following few years to much larger abstracted landscapes – including buildings – which composed of carefully balanced areas of colour and tone, in flat perspective grid like surfaces.



2. **Gloriana costume design,**
1953
'Lady in waiting Act III Sc.1'

Gloriana, Opus 53, is an opera by Benjamin Britten which depicts the relationship between Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex. It was composed for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953, John Piper designed the sets and costumes.



3. **Gloriana costume design,**
1953
'Lady Essex Act III Sc.3'



4. **Llaethdy St David's,** dated 28/5/69
Mixed media

From the summer of 1961 John Piper began regularly visiting and depicting the area around Pembrokeshire facilitated by buying two cottages and fourteen acres of land on the southern slopes of Garn Fawr north of St David's. This scene is of the countryside north west of St David's near Whitesands Bay. Piper looks north towards the tiny settlement of Llaethdy on the lower slopes of Carn Lidi. Loose sketch marks are scattered on the paper surface depicting patches of vegetation in the surrounding landscape and a curving lane in the lower foreground serves to frame the typical stone wall found in coastal Pembrokeshire lining the roads and fields.



5. **Orcop, Herefordshire, 1973**

Mixed media

The Shell Guide to Herefordshire by David Verey, which John Piper edited, says of Orcop: 'Undulating country with small fields and hairy hedges. The church is rather dull because it has been so drastically restored. There is nothing much else.'

This is a somewhat unkind summary of this scattered settlement which has the remains of a motte and bailey castle as a reminder of

the centuries when it was part of a disputed borderland. First between the Romans and the Welsh tribes and then between the Normans and the Welsh. The area also has an historic reputation for witches. The church on rising ground has traces of its Norman builders. The internal fabric may have had the attention of well-meaning Victorian restorers but the outside clearly caught John Piper's eye, and inspired his experienced hand.

John Piper first explored and recorded Herefordshire in April 1936 when seeking out

to record early stained glass and Romanesque sculpture, visiting Kilpeck some five miles from Orcop. He subsequently revisited the county many times and was friends with Kenneth Lindley who in 1973 was the Principal of Hereford Art College.

This attractive 1973 mixed media painting is typical of John Piper's early 1970s works made for sale through Marlborough Fine Art who had represented him from 1963. The church sits squarely within the composition where some sunlight picks up on the lighter pink tones of the local sandstone used to build the nave and chancel. This contrasts with the darker Welsh slate roof and weathered timbers of the distinctive bell tower. A scattering of grey slab gravestones serves to give a foreground and dark green trees and vegetation act to frame the church below a few squiggles enlivening the otherwise brooding sky.

The 'formula' used for composition and technique may appear straight forward and typical of John Piper yet they are carried out with deft confidence stemming from years of observing how buildings sit within their landscapes and understanding the key elements that make any building unique. Piper deliberately depicts a fluid sky to contrast, and thereby emphasise, the solidity of the church structure.



6. Red Wharf Bay, Anglesey, 1950
Gouache and watercolour

This was painted towards the end of John Piper's concentrated period (c.1943 to 1952) exploring and depicting the natural landscapes around Snowdonia. At this time Piper was based in a rented cottage at Bodesi farmhouse near Tryfan, often during the winter months.

Piper primarily sought out grand scenes

of mountains, lakes and scattered rocks to depict, but he also made a few more domestic sized works showing man-made structures embedded into the rugged landscape. Here the dry stone wall and modest cottage are rooted into their surroundings by years of weathering and Piper's palette.

Many of Piper's best paintings from this period were shipped to America for exhibition and then sold into public and private collections

there. Indeed this picture was in an American private collection until recently. It is highly likely to be the 'Red Wharf Bay' listed in the 'John Piper' exhibition of 1951 (February 6th to March 4th) at the Philadelphia Arts Alliance.

Red Wharf Bay, Anglesey is closely related to *Nant Ffrancon Farm, 1950*, mixed media, in the Derek Williams Trust/National Museum of Wales.

7. Stag Rock, Freshwater Cliffs, Isle of Wight, 1953

Ink and crayon

This view is west from Butter Bay towards Fort Redoubt and Freshwater Cave. Stag Rock is named after the tale of a stag leaping to the safety of the rock from the cliff to escape a hunt. S. John Woods's 1955 book on John Piper has four ink sketches of Freshwater Cliffs (wrongly dated 1952) including Stag Rock, ex Bohun Gallery and Dr Peter Mangold.





8. *The Arch, Freshwater Cliffs, Isle of Wight*, 1951

Ink and crayon

Piper has added painting notes to this sketch which was used to illustrate Phoenix Broadsheet No.280 of the poem 'An End to Love' by Arthur Caddick in 1986. The Arch collapsed on the 25th October 1992. S. John Woods's 1955 book on John Piper has four ink sketches of Freshwater Cliffs (wrongly dated 1952) including part of The Arch.

Fabrics



9. *Arundel*, 1959

Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric

For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, seven panels, white colourway



10. **Arundel**, 1959

Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric

For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, white colourway



11. **Arundel**, 1959

Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric

For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, dark blue colourway



12. **Brittany**, 1968

Screenprinted satinised cotton fabric

For David Whitehead Ltd, very rare



13. **Chiesa della Salute (Venice)**, 1959

Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric

For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, rare



14. **Fawley**, c. 1960
Screenprinted satinised cotton fabric
For David Whitehead Ltd, very rare



15. **Foliate Heads**, 1953
Screenprinted cotton fabric
For David Whitehead Ltd, rare



16. **Foliate Heads**, 1953
Screenprinted cotton fabric
For David Whitehead Ltd, rare, two lengths



17. **Glyders (The)**, 1960
Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric
For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, rare



18. **Northern Cathedral**, 1962
(Based on Sheffield Cathedral)
Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric
For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, rare



19. **Snape Maltings**, 1974
Screenprint on silk scarf
White colourway



21. **Stones of Bath**, 1962
Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric
For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, green colourway



20. **Snape Maltings**, 1974
Screenprint on silk scarf
Terracotta colourway



22. **Stones of Bath**, 1962
Screenprinted 'Sanderlin' fabric
For Arthur Sandersons and Sons, blue colourway

Prints

Please note: most labels state 'Levinson' then a number. This refers to the definitive catalogue of Piper's prints: ***The Prints of John Piper; Quality and Experiment***, Orde Levinson (2010)

23. *Anglesey Beach*, 1963

Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 120



24. *Abbeville, St Wolfrun*, 1972

Limited edition screenprint. Levinson 207





25. **Avoncroft Museum**, 1976
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 258



26. **Buckden in a Storm**, 1977
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 281



28. **Chateau de Taillebourg**, 1958
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 111



29. **Courthouse, Long Crendon,
Buckinghamshire**, 1978
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 285



27. **Canterbury Cathedral**, 1956
Poster – an autolithograph for the British
Travel and Holidays' Association
Levinson 102



30. **Dorchester Abbey**, 1973
Limited edition print



32. **Easton, Portland, Dorset:
St George Reforne and
eighteenth-century church
among quarries**, 1964
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 137



31. **Dryslwyn Castle**, 1953
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 82



33. **Exton, Rutland:
monument
by Grinling Gibbons**, 1686,
1964. Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 126



34. **Flowers in a Black Pot**, 1988
Limited edition etching and aquatint
Levinson 410



35. **Fotheringhay, Northamptonshire: Medieval Stone**, 1964
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 135



36. **Garn Fawr, Pembrokeshire**, 1968
Screenprint
Levinson 192



37. *Gedney, Lincolnshire: a Tower in the Fens*, 1964
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 139



38. *Gloriana Street Scene*, 1953
Lithograph
Levinson 85A



39. *Harlaxton Manor*, 1977
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 271



40. *Harlaxton through the Gate*, 1977
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 275



41. *Île-d'Elle*,
1958
Limited edition
lithograph
Levinson 110



42. *Ironbridge*,
1966
Limited edition
lithograph
Levinson 178



43. *King's
College
Cambridge,
from Trinity*,
1953
Limited edition
lithograph
Levinson 86



44. *Landscape
with Rocks*,
1950
Colour-collotype



45. *Late Summer Flowers*, 1989
Limited edition etching and aquatint
Levinson 419



46. *Les Junies*, 1988
Limited edition etching and aquatint
Levinson 411



47. *Magi, La Charité-sur-Loire, Ste. Croix*, c.1976
Lithograph
Levinson 255



48. *Man and Nature, Mural at the Mayo clinic*, 1961
Rare limited edition machine-made lithograph



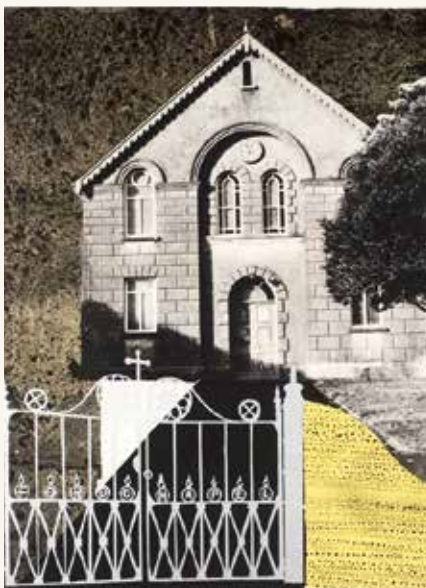
49. *Near Newcastle Emlyn, Cardigan*, 1968
Limited edition screenprint. Levinson 193



50. *Parthenay*, 1958
Limited edition lithograph. Levinson 109



51. ***Pebble Alcove (The)***, Stowe, 1986
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 386



52. ***Penybont Ford Congregational Church***, 1966
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 176



53. ***San Moisè, Venice***, 1961
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 119



54. **Skeabost, Skye, 1975**
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 250



55. **St James the Less, Westminster by G. E. Street, 1964**
Limited edition lithograph. Levinson 144



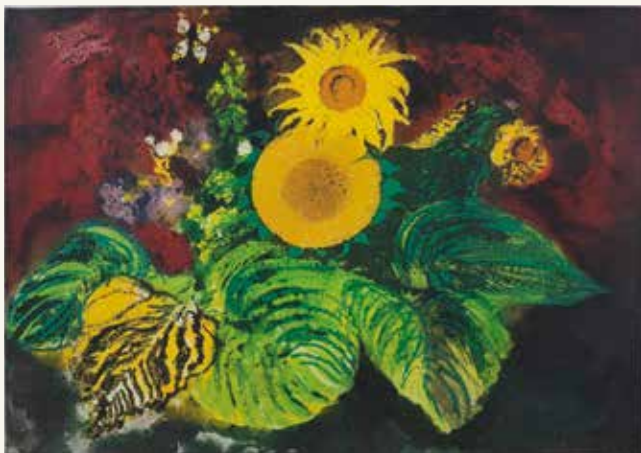
56. **St Kew, Cornwall: Church in a Hilly Landscape.** Limited edition lithograph, 1964. Levinson 127



57. **St Mary's, Paddington by G. E. Street, 1964**
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 145



58. **St Nicholas, Alcester, 1986**
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 383



59. **Sunflowers**, 1989
Limited edition etching and aquatint. Levinson 420



60. **Swansea West**, 1989
Limited edition screenprint. Levinson 415



61. **Two Suffolk Towers**, 1973
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 237



62. **Vaux-le-Vicomte**, 1972
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 208



63. *Visitation (The)*, 1975
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 253



64. *Wessex Hotel, Winchester*, 1963
Menu folder depicting a design for a stained glass panel in the hotel



65. *Wigmore Abbey Gateway*, 1981
Limited edition screenprint. Levinson 323



66. **Willington Dovecote, Bedfordshire, 1978**
Limited edition lithograph
Levinson 286



67. **Windsor Castle, 1948**
Auto-lithograph for Penguin Books
Levinson 67



68. **Wymondham, Norfolk, 1971**
Limited edition screenprint
Levinson 205

The 'Castles on the Ground' lithographs, 1946

These lithographs were commissioned to illustrate the book 'Castles on the Ground: the Anatomy of Suburbia' by J. M. Richards. The scenes are composites and are likely to have been influenced by Piper's early life in Surrey and London with similarities to work produced in Cheltenham.



69. Castles on the Ground no. 1
Levinson 59



70. Castles on the Ground no. 2
Levinson 60



71. Castles on the Ground no. 3
Levinson 61



72. Castles on the Ground no. 4
Levinson 62



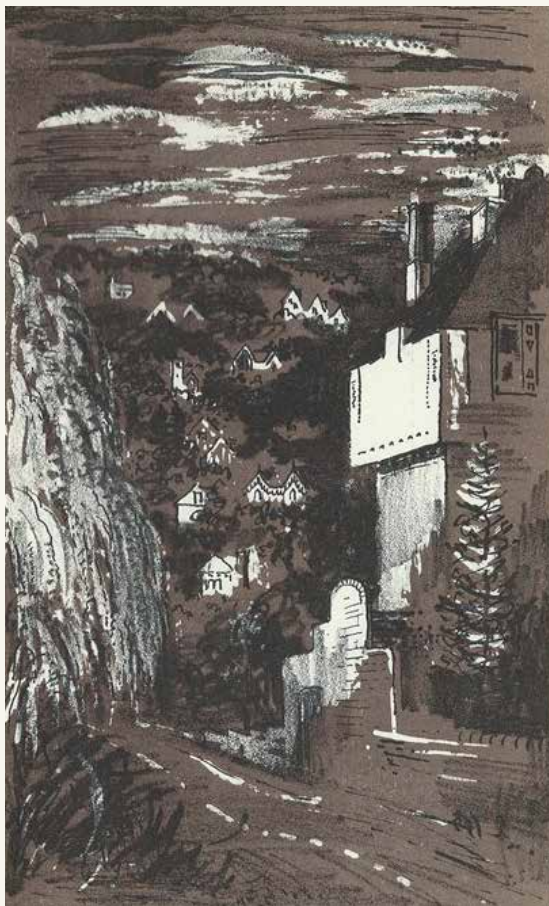
73. *Castles on the Ground no. 5*
Levinson 63



74. *Castles on the Ground no. 6*
Levinson 64



75. *Castles on the Ground no. 7*
Levinson 65



76. *Castles on the Ground no. 8*

Levinson 66

The 'Deaths and Entrances' lithographs, 1984

These lithographs were commissioned to illustrate a limited edition of Dylan Thomas's poems 'Deaths and Entrances' published by Gwasg Gregynog Press, Newtown, Powys. Ten sets were separately produced by the Senecio Press in Banbury to a very high technical standard, and these lithographs – which are rare to find – are from one of those sets.



77. *Kidwelly Castle*

Lithograph



**78. Nonconformist
Chapel, Newtown**
Lithograph



**79. Swansea
Towards Port
Talbot**
Lithograph



**80. Swansea
Towards the Gower**
Lithograph



**81. Welsh Hill Farm
Near Newcastle
Emlyn**
Lithograph