

RAVILIOUS: LARGE PRINT GUIDE

Please note that there is no additional information in this guide, everything published herein is available in the galleries.

**Please return the guide before
leaving the exhibition.**

Thank you.

RELICS AND CURIOSITIES

Like his father, who ran an antiques shop in Eastbourne, Eric Ravilious had an eye for beautiful, strange or amusing objects. A sketchbook from his schooldays includes pencil drawings of a teapot, an early aeroplane and a pair of boots, subjects that he returned to in later design work. In the early 1930s he moved with his wife Tirzah to Essex, and there he found inspiration in derelict machinery and abandoned vehicles. His father had apprenticed as a coachbuilder, and Ravilious himself would drop everything to draw an interesting wagon or van; he even bought a pair of Victorian fever wagons for use as accommodation at Peggy Angus's Sussex cottage, Furlongs.

There is no hierarchy in Ravilious's world of objects. Whether drawing a broken bicycle wheel on a beach or a warship in dry dock, he worked with the same meticulous care, bringing his subject to life in a way that contemporary critics described as 'magic, almost mystic'. In peacetime, when free to pick and choose, he opted for subjects that surprised and delighted him – a home-made waterwheel or a ship's funnel. As a war

artist his scope was inevitably limited, yet his approach was the same. When first commissioned in early 1940 and posted to the naval dockyard, Chatham, he was denied permission to draw an admiral's bicycle. From then on, he navigated between his own artistic needs and those of his employers, approaching military hardware from unusual angles and, in the last year of his life, finding renewed inspiration in aircraft, particularly bi-planes.

Church Army Caravan

1935

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

No. 29 Bus

1934

Watercolour and pencil

Towner, Eastbourne.

Acquired in 1998 with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, National Art Collections Fund and Friends of the Towner, following long term loan to the collection.

In the early 1930s Ravilious painted numerous abandoned vehicles that he found in a sprawling agricultural junk yard in Great Bardfield, Essex. There is a wry humour in this depiction of an old bus, its wheels replaced by barrels, that seems about to head off across the fields.

Talbot-Daracq

1934

Watercolour and pencil

Towner, Eastbourne

Acquired in 2003

Caravans

1936

Watercolour and pencil

The Fry Art Gallery

Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund in 2010

The Waterwheel

1938

Watercolour and pencil

Brecknock Museum; with support from the Art Fund; the V&A Purchase Fund; Brecknock Art Trust; Brecknock Society; Usk Valley Trust

South Coast Beach

1939-1942

Watercolour and pencil

Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums Collections

Are these brightly painted boats protected from harm by the concrete blocks and barbed wire of Britain's wartime coastal defences? Or imprisoned by them? The title gives nothing away.

Anchor and Boats, Rye Harbour

1938

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

Tiger Moth

1942

Watercolour and graphite

Tate

Presented by the War Artists Advisory Committee, 1946

De-icing aircraft

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

Ship's Screw on a Railway Truck

1940

Watercolour and pencil

Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Present by H.M. Government (War Artists' Advisory Committee), 1947

Yellow Funnel

1938

Watercolour and pencil

Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool

When Ravilious visited Le Havre shortly before the war he was particularly taken with a steam yacht owned by

the Rothschild family, describing it as ‘a beauty; the most elegant boat I ever saw, all white and a white funnel with a figurehead in front elaborately carved’. You can just make out the figurehead in this painting, but the celebrated vessel is a rather ghostly presence here, compared to the splendid yellow funnel.

Submarines in Dry Dock

1940

Watercolour, crayon and pastel

Tate

Presented by the War Artists Advisory Committee, 1946

A Warship in Dock

1940

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

Bomb Defusing Equipment (unfinished)

c.1940

Watercolour, pencil and colour pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Greenwich Observatory

c.1937

Watercolour and pastel

London Transport Museum

Design for Dunbar Hay Embroidery

1939

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

Design for Handkerchief

1941

Lithograph

Private Collection

Design for Wedgwood 'Alphabet' Mug

1937

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Showcase labels (centre of the gallery):

Wood engraved illustrations from The Almanack,
published by Lanston Monotype Corporation, 1929:

1) Andromeda

2) Sagitarius

3) Serpentarius

Towner, Eastbourne. Gift of the Victoria & Albert
Museum

4) Taurus

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner,
Eastbourne

5) Untitled (Boy Birdnesting)

1927

Wood engraving

Towner, Eastbourne. Gift of the Victoria & Albert
Museum

6) Untitled: (Boy Birdnesting); Wood block engraved with untitled design

1927

Engraved hard wood block
Private Collection, on long loan to Towner,
Eastbourne

Artist's Engraving Tools

23 tools with original tool roll
c.1930s
Private Collection

Leonard A.G. Strong and Eric Ravilious
**The Hansom Cab and the Pigeons: Being Random
Reflections Upon the Silver Jubilee of King George
V**

Published by Golden Cockerel Press, 1935
Private Collection

James M. Richards and Eric Ravilious
High Street

Published by Country Life, 1938
Private Collection

Please continue into the next gallery.

FIGURES AND FORMS

Although people appear only rarely in Ravilious's watercolours, he did explore the figure and natural forms in different media throughout his career. He painted animals occasionally and with success, but was more at ease with plants, perhaps because the shapes of leaves and flowers could be distorted without their essence being lost.

Having studied life drawing at the Royal College of Art he was well versed in the discipline, and in the late 1920s drew a number of sensitive portraits in pencil. Stylised figures also appear regularly in his wood engravings of the time [see Vitrine One], a particular highlight being 'Boy Birdnesting'. Ravilious was described by his fellow RCA student Enid Marx as 'the country boy who enjoyed bird nesting and games, a sort of Papageno' (the bird catcher in *The Magic Flute*), and this is close to being a self-portrait.

People also feature prominently in the murals he painted at Morley College in 1928/9. Sadly, the murals themselves were destroyed in the Blitz, but surviving

studies show them well populated with flamboyantly-costumed, rather doll-like figures – actors in a scene. More substantial is the portrait of Edward Bawden, his great friend and partner in the Morley College project, in which preparatory drawings for the murals are shown rolled up in the corner.

Like his RCA tutor Paul Nash, Ravilious did occasionally include figures in watercolours, but it was not until July 1940, when he travelled aboard a naval training submarine, that he made people the main subject of his work. Having spent a month sketching in the hot, noisy confines of the submarine he produced a series of remarkable lithographs: a record of men at war and an enduring work of art.

Study for Morley College Murals

1928-1930

Watercolour and pencil (extensively annotated)

Private Collection

Portrait of a Girl

1927

Pencil drawing

Private Collection

Drawing of a Sunflower

c.1930s

Pencil drawing

Private Collection

Harlequin

1928

Watercolour and pencil on paper with board support

The Fry Art Gallery

Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund and the Essex Heritage Trust

This figure, drawn in preparation for Morley College, stands out as one of the artist's more unusual creations.

A stock character of the Italian *Commedia del Arte*,

Harlequin became established as a British theatrical institution during the eighteenth century. Here we see

the character with traditional tight-fitting patterned

costume, black *Commedia* mask and *batte*, or

'slapstick', which he used to bash flaps and levers

placed strategically around the stage, to change the scenery and so the location.

Study for Submarine Series 2: Diving Controls 2

c.1940-1941

Watercolour and pencil

Towner, Eastbourne.

Acquired in 1998 with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, National Art Collections Fund, MGC/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and Friends of the Towner, following long term loan to the collection.

Submarine Series

Top row (left to right)

Introductory Lithograph

Diver

Testing David Apparatus

Bottom row (left to right)

Diving Controls (2)

Commander of Submarine Looking through a Periscope

The Ward Room (1)

1941

Lithographs

IWM (Imperial War Museums)

In July 1940, having recently returned from Norway, Ravilious took on one of the biggest challenges of his life. For several weeks he travelled aboard a naval submarine, 'trying to draw interiors. Some of them may be successful, I hope,' he continued, 'but conditions are difficult for work. It is awfully hot below when submarines dive and every compartment small and full of people at work.'

Initially he tried to paint watercolours of the submarine interiors, but when he worked on the paintings at home in Essex he found that they were too gloomy and so embarked instead on a series of lithographs. While he had drawn sensitive portraits in the past, he faced a considerable challenge in trying to portray the human forms of the submariners in the context of a radically simplified, distorted design. From numerous detailed preparatory studies he created a remarkable set of prints.

The Vicarage

1935

Watercolour and pencil

Collection of David Hephher

The Butcher's Shop: (Design for 'High Street')

c.1937

Watercolour and pencil

Towner, Eastbourne

Acquired in 1998 with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, National Art Collections Fund, MGC/ V&A Purchase Grant Fund and Friends of the Towner, following long term loan to the collection

Ironbridge Interior

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Flowers on a Cottage Table

1942

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

Still Life with Acanthus Leaves

1938-1939

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection, on long term loan to The Fry Art Gallery

Prospect from an Attic

1932

Watercolour, pencil and pen

Scarborough Museums Trust

Hampden Park

c.1928

Watercolour, pencil and pen

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Edward Bawden Working in his Studio

1930

Tempera on board

Royal College of Art Collection

While certainly a portrait, this is a painting as much of Edward Bawden's aesthetic world as it is of him in person. Bawden was an early admirer of Victoriana – note the rococo mirror and easel, and the bust of Queen

Alexandra on the mantelpiece, not to mention the guardsman's jacket on the floor. There is something curiously animated about the jacket, and with the curtained corner and the tailor's bust the overall picture has an understated strangeness that presages the mood of Ravilious's later watercolours.

Please continue into the next gallery.

INTERIORS

As an artist who invariably began a watercolour on site, Ravilious perhaps turned his attention indoors when wet weather made it impossible to work outside, but he was soon painting interiors out of choice. In 1935 he discovered a greenhouse in Firle, East Sussex, and set about making a picture that was both tightly designed and evocative: 'Greenhouse: Cyclamen and Tomatoes'. In 'Geraniums and Carnations', painted in 1938, the geometric structure is absorbed into the overall composition so that we hardly notice it. Yet a subtle play of shapes and angles gives the painting a peculiar energy, and leaves us with the feeling that something is about to happen or has just happened.

Ravilious interiors tend to appear quite straightforward but they are carefully composed, lines and angles subtly distorted in a way that makes us look twice without knowing why. Since Ravilious himself made little public comment about his work it is difficult to say what his purpose was, for example, in making 'Farmhouse Bedroom' so uncanny. Perhaps he sought simply to paint a memorable watercolour, one in which traces of

Vuillard and Van Gogh are subsumed into a composition that is new and strange.

Within this set of watercolours particular subjects and motifs reoccur. We see neatly made beds and empty chairs, patterned wallpaper and wall maps. Sometimes a decorated interior and the view from the window are delicately balanced, most notably in 'Train Landscape'. In the spring of 1941 Ravilious was invited to sketch the newly opened fire control centre beneath Whitehall, and he responded with a series of haunting paintings that capture the otherworldly atmosphere of this underground realm.

The Bedstead

c.1939

Watercolour and pencil

Towner, Eastbourne

Acquired in 1998 with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, National Art Collections Fund, MGC/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and Friends of the Towner, following long term loan to the collection.

A Farmhouse Bedroom

1930s

Watercolour and pencil

Victoria and Albert Museum

RNAS Sick Bay, Dundee

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

The Operations Room

1942

Watercolour and pencil

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum

Wall Maps

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

The Teleprinter Room

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

Ravilious was not only interested in antique objects. In 1941 this teleprinter machine was cutting edge; it had just been installed in the newly-opened Home Security Control Room deep beneath Whitehall.

No.1 Map Corridor

1940

Watercolour and pencil

Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery)

Room 29, Home Security Control Room

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

Interior at Furlongs

1939

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Train Landscape

1940

Watercolour and pencil with collaged sections
Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums Collections

Look at the detail in this painting: the upholstery so carefully and sensitively realised, the window strap, and the striped draught strips. The interior of the railway compartment is drawn with wonderful clarity, but perhaps it is the slight crookedness of the picture that really brings it to life. It's as if someone noticed the chalk figure, grabbed their camera and – as the landmark slid by amid anguished cries of 'Hurry up! You'll miss it!' – focused briefly and pressed the shutter.

Room at the William the Conqueror

1938

Watercolour and pencil
Private Collection

Geraniums and Carnations

1938

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection, on long term loan to The Fry Art Gallery

The Greenhouse, Cyclamen and Tomatoes

1935

Watercolour and graphite

Tate: Presented by Sir Geoffrey and the Hon. Lady Fry in memory of the artist 1943.

Focus on the shapes in this painting and we perceive a gradually diminishing progression of rectangles and triangles, so carefully arranged that we could trace these geometric shapes and make an abstract composition. Look again, and we are once more in a greenhouse, with bunches of yellow tomatoes hanging overhead and the smell of warm, damp compost.

Please continue into the next gallery.

PLACE AND SEASON

Ravilious often described in his letters to friends the discovery of 'a good place'. This typically laconic phrase referred to an almost indefinable combination of topography, atmospheric conditions and, importantly, light, often with unexpected or quirky manmade objects thrown in. The underlying soil was important, since it lent a particular colour to the scene. Whereas Edward Bawden found the rich reddish Essex countryside inspiring, Ravilious much preferred the pale chalk downland of East Sussex, which he rediscovered when he went to stay with his RCA friend Peggy Angus at her cottage, Furlongs, which lay a mile or so west of Firle.

Time and season mattered just as much. Fully aware of the British tradition of landscape painting, and determined to paint watercolours that were new and distinctive, he got up early at Furlongs to capture the atmosphere of the winter dawn. Cold skies and snow would continue to inspire him, until eventually he travelled to Norway with a naval convoy. Meanwhile, his studies of the Sussex Downs at different seasons culminated in 'Tea at Furlongs', an evocation of simple

peacetime pleasures painted during the first uncertain months of the war.

Throughout his career Ravilious sought out unusual locations, finding inspiration in places we might consider surprising, such as a downland cement works. His quest took him ever further afield, to Capel-y-ffin in the Welsh borders and to Le Havre. Proposed trips to Greenland and the USA had to be abandoned with the declaration of war, but his work as a war artist took him around Britain and beyond.

Firle Beacon

1927

Watercolour, pen and pencil
National Museum of Wales

Litlington, Sussex

c.1920

Watercolour, ink and pencil
Towner, Eastbourne

Presented by Arthur and Helen Grogan through the Art Fund

River Thames at Hammersmith

1933

Watercolour, ink and pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Vicarage in Winter

1935

Watercolour, pen and pencil

Collection of David Hephher

Faced with the problem of how to represent the peculiar radiance of the winter sky, Ravilious invented a pattern: a loose, delicate, airy version of the cross-hatching he used to create texture in wood engraving. He had begun experimenting with pattern in his watercolours the previous year, but this is something of a breakthrough, and a prelude to the bold studies of dawn skies he would make later in his career.

The Duke of Hereford's Knob

c. 1938

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

Wet Afternoon

1938

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

Barrage Balloons Outside a British Port

1940

Watercolour and pencil

Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery)

Leaving the naval dockyard at Chatham in search of good subjects during his first months as a war artist, Ravilious discovered this nearby port, writing, 'Sheerness, itself, that is to say the docks – is good – and lovely Regency buildings, almost Venetian in parts, and oh, the still-life of buoys, anchors, chains and wreckage! I must try to remember what I am here for...'

Leaving Scapa Flow

c.1940

Watercolour and pencil

Bradford Art Galleries and Museums

The Cement Pit

1934

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

In the cement works close to Furlongs, Ravilious found a miniature landscape complete with dramatic cliffs and deep gorges: a kind of modern, industrial – and in a strange way domesticated – version of the Romantic landscapes painted by Cozens and Towne.

Wiltshire Landscape

1937

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

Tea at Furlongs

1939

Watercolour and pencil

The Fry Art Gallery

Presented to The Fry Art Gallery by Jane Tuely

Mount Caburn

1935

Watercolour, pen and pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Furlongs

1935

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

From his first visit in the spring of 1934, Ravilious was captivated by this cottage in the Sussex Downs.

Furlongs in fact consisted of two adjoining cottages, which were part of a bustling farm; Barnes the ploughman (shown here) lived in one cottage, while Peggy Angus rented the other.

Downs in Winter

1934

Watercolour and pencil

Towner, Eastbourne

Acquired in 1936

Please continue into the next gallery.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

With the rise of motor travel, the 1930s saw people take to the roads and explore Britain in a way that had not been possible before. While guide books proliferated, landscape painting was suddenly as popular as it had been more than a century earlier, when JS Cotman, Francis Towne and Robert Cozens painted Romantic scenes for a public newly alive to the drama of lakes and mountains.

Ravilious learnt from his illustrious predecessors how to handle watercolour and also how to compose pictures in unusual and imaginative ways. In both areas his work evolved markedly in the second half of the 1930s, so that by 1939 he had become less reliant on finding novel subjects and instead tackled well-known landmarks in new ways. From the famous meanders of Cuckmere Haven to the white horse of Westbury, these are familiar scenes made new, but Ravilious reserved the most inventive treatment for the chalk giants of Wilmington and Cerne Abbas. The former in particular is extraordinary, the white figure framed by strands of wire that seem real enough to grasp.

A 1941 visit to May Island in the Firth of Forth resulted in a pair of energetic paintings in which the eye is led by curving lines from large foreground objects to distant ships on the horizon. Ravilious was there only briefly, whereas he spent several weeks in Newhaven studying coastal defences and finding new ways of representing them. Having visited the port in peacetime he had already portrayed it in paintings, wood engravings and his first lithograph, 'Newhaven Harbour'. For the watercolours of coastal defences he adopted unusual viewpoints, on one occasion framing the harbour with a slab of concrete in the foreground as he had framed 'The Stork at Hammersmith' years earlier.

The Cerne Abbas Giant

1939

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

The Wilmington Giant

1939

Watercolour and pencil

Victoria and Albert Museum

An easy cycle ride from his boyhood home and clearly visible from the window of the Eastbourne–Lewes train, the Long Man of Wilmington intrigued Ravilious greatly. In a rare piece of published writing he mused on its origins, suggesting that it might be a representation of Virgo, and he always referred to the figure by its less gender-specific name. He included it in the Morley College murals and in a wood engraving of the same period, but waited years to paint the figure in watercolour; the composition is among his most assured.

Storm

1941

Watercolour and pencil

British Council Collection. Presented by the War Artists' Advisory Committee in 1946

Convoy Passing an Island

1941

Watercolour and pencil

British Council Collection. Presented to the British Council Collection by the War Artists' Advisory Committee in 1946

In November 1941 Ravilious spent a few days on May Island in the Firth of Forth. While a convoy massing on the horizon reminds us of the war, it is the island itself - with its fish-drying racks, seventeenth-century beacon and cross-shaped sheepfold - that seems to be the real subject of this painting.

Channel Fisher

1940-42

Watercolour and pencil

Ferens Art Gallery, Hull Museums

Newhaven Harbour

1937

Lithograph

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

The Stork' at Hammersmith

1932

Watercolour and pencil

Towner, Eastbourne

Acquired with the assistance of the Victoria & Albert
Museum Purchase Grant Fund

Runway Perspective

1942

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

Hurricanes in Flight

c.1942

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

Coastal Defences

1940

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

Coastal Defences

1940

Watercolour and pencil
Imperial War Museum

The Westbury Horse

1939

Watercolour and pencil
Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Cuckmere Haven

1939

Watercolour and pencil
Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

This view of Cuckmere is a favourite among photographers, but could a photograph express the artificial nature of the famous waterway with such daring? These meanders could have been carved into the chalk, and the foreground resembles a kind of meshwork – as if the land itself had been roughly modelled and the underlying structure left showing.

The Causeway, Wiltshire Downs

1937

Watercolour and pencil

Victoria and Albert Museum

Given by the Contemporary Art Society

Please continue into the next gallery.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

As a young man Ravilious greatly admired Samuel Palmer, whose paintings and etchings are so often filled with the mysterious light of sunset or full moon.

Ravilious himself generally avoided moonlight, instead taking advantage of artificial lighting to illuminate nocturnal subjects, from the bright electric lamps at Bristol City Docks to the moving beams of the Beachy Head lighthouse. The effort to capture the fleeting effects of light in motion was a constant preoccupation, whether this was light spilling from the windows of a passing train, or the flash of fireworks.

From early on in his career he also strived to paint directly into the sun, particularly at dawn when the sky has a cool radiance quite different from the warm glow of sunset. In Sussex he got up early on winter mornings to capture the clear, cold light, and on a 1938 trip to Aldeburgh he did the same with the summer dawn; the bathing machines he drew with such pleasure on that visit seem to have been conjured out of the light.

By this time he was developing his own visual language, using patterns and textures that were modelled in part on techniques he had learnt as a wood engraver and lithographer. This language he carried with him into his work as a war artist, so that 'Dangerous Work at Low Tide' can be seen not just as a record of a mine disposal operation but also as a follow-up to the peacetime painting 'Rye Harbour'. Ravilious had further opportunity to study darkness and light *in extremis* when, in May 1940, he joined a naval expedition to Norway. The resulting paintings show his delight in the luminous Arctic summer.

Train Going Over a Bridge at Night

c.1935

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

November 5th

1933

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection

This strange and wonderful painting was created in the aftermath of the Morley College commission and may have been a study for a mural. As with the earlier work it shows an exuberant creative mind at work, transforming the annual ritual of Bonfire Night into an anarchic urban spectacle.

Firing a 9.2 Gun

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

The title may give the impression that Ravilious was fascinated by ordnance, but the picture itself must have left artillerymen scratching their heads. Gunfire is all smoke, noise and confusion, but there is no smoke here, just a flower of flame.

HMS Ark Royal in Action

1940

Watercolour and pencil
Imperial War Museum

Belle Tout Interior

1939

Watercolour and pencil
Private Collection

Beachy Head

1939

Watercolour and pencil
Private Collection

The Lifeboat

1938

Watercolour and pencil
Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Bathing Machines

1938

Watercolour and pencil
Private Collection

Bathing Machines, Aldeburgh

1938

Watercolour and pencil

Daniel Katz Gallery, London

An important feature of Edwardian seaside culture, bathing machines enabled people to enter and leave the water unobserved. As a boy Ravilious would have seen them on the beach at Eastbourne, but by the late 1930s these eccentric wheeled tents were a rarity; so too were seaside curiosities like the chicken – in fact a vending machine filled with egg-shaped chocolates.

Paddle Steamers at Night

1938

Watercolour and graphite

The Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate Borough Council

Rye Harbour

1938

Watercolour and pencil

The Ingram Collection of Modern British and Contemporary Art

Dangerous Work at Low Tide

1940

Watercolour and pencil

Ministry of Defence Art Collection

Observer's Post

1939

Watercolour and pencil

Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford

The floodlight of dawn illuminates a most peculiar scene. Leaving aside the sandbags and wires, these two men might be scientist friends of 18th century naturalist Gilbert White, studying some cosmic event in Selborne. It's hard to believe that they are the eyes and ears of Britain's air defence, observing aircraft with the aid of a sextant-like device called simply 'the Instrument'.

Morning on the Tarmac

1941

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

HMS Glorious in the Arctic

1940

Watercolour and pencil

Imperial War Museum

Produced during a voyage to Norway in the early summer of 1940, this painting shows Ravilious more interested in the marvellous Arctic light than in ships and aircraft. Light jags across the dappled surface of the water, playfully echoing the aircraft carrier's camouflage, while the sun itself is surrounded by a great yellow aura.

Midnight Sun

1940

Watercolour and graphite

Tate: Presented by the War Artists Advisory Committee

1946

Norway

1940

Watercolour and gouache

Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne (Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums)

Showcase labels (centre of the gallery):

Untitled: (Watercolour fragment; War Plan)

c. 1940

Watercolour and pencil

Private Collection, on long loan to Towner, Eastbourne

Illustrated letter to Helen Binyon from Eric Ravilious

10 September 1939

East Sussex Record Office

Letter to Tirzah Garwood from Eric Ravilious

30 May 1940

East Sussex Record Office

1. Chatham War Artist Pass issued to Eric Ravilious

15 February 1940

2. Sheerness War Artist Pass issued to Eric Ravilious

27 February 1940

3. Newhaven War Artist Pass issued to Eric Ravilious

September-October 1940

All courtesy of East Sussex Record Office