

GROSVENOR GARDENS.



John Nixon. Watercolour on paper. (12.4 X 17.2 cms.). Dated 1795.

This is a perfect example of the work of John Nixon who was the son of a wealthy Irish business man in London and obviously enjoyed coming to Bath as it is said that he was here frequently in the latter part of the 18th century.

Nixon was a prolific artist and we are fortunate to have quite a number of these little watercolours which reveal an astute, informative and humorous view of life in and around the city. Whilst they are, in the main, satirical images they are not so cruel as those of the rather better known Rowlandson and Gillray. They are perfused with a mild humour almost suggesting a fondness for his subjects.

We have a collection of pieces mainly thanks to the late Frank Brown of the University of Bath who left them to the Victoria Art Gallery, although others have been bought with the help of the Friends.

Grosvenor Gardens ran down from the London Road to the river and were laid out in 1791. They rivalled Sydney Gardens with a magnificent pavilion and hotel as well as numerous amusements. The façade of the hotel can still be seen incorporated in the middle of Grosvenor Place. It was designed by John Eveleigh, although the decorative stone carvings were never completed.

The watercolour shows arcades on the garden side with nanny either teaching the child to walk or removing it, protesting, as it was an irritation to the elegant grown-ups enjoying a bowl of punch.

The pleasure gardens had a chequered career and finally closed around 1803 with the ground given over to nursery gardens and sites for houses.