

Thomas Barker of Bath.



The Green seat in Lansdown Gardens



Boys Ferreting.

Thomas Barker, of Bath, (1769-1847) was a prolific artist and some of his large canvases are in the Guildhall. The finest in Bath are in the top Gallery at VAG. He has been given a reputation as a copyist but at worst, many of his landscapes are derivative or, more kindly, described as, 'influenced by other artists'. His landscapes are commonly confused with those of Thomas Gainsborough. Such a confusion was recently the subject of a Fake or Fortune programme on BBC TV.

His drawings are less frequently shown or discussed. The sepia watercolour, 'The Green seat in Lansdowne Gardens', (undated. 22.8x32.9 cm.) was bequeathed by Victor Thomson, who was a Trustee of FOVAG and who lived in the Doric House on Sion Hill. Barker built the house as his own home and gallery and perhaps the seat was in the original grounds. Victor also gave a complete and fine set of Barker's 40 lithographs for which VAG has the original engraved stones.

The sepia, 'Boys Ferreting', (undated) was bought from Agnew with the help of money from FOVAG and is one of his most attractive watercolour drawings. Barker created many images of working people and the poor rather than of the grandees of 18th century Bath. At the point at which he painted the double portrait of himself and his sponsor Charles Spackman, now in the top gallery, he was financially increasingly successful but by the end of his life he was in straitened circumstances.