

THE SECRETS OF ST ANNE'S

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A Guide to the Three Resin Blocks
in St Anne's Arts and Community Centre
Barnstaple

LESLEY KERMAN

St Anne's Arts and Community Centre
Paternoster Row
Barnstaple
Devon
EX3 1BH

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Little Silver

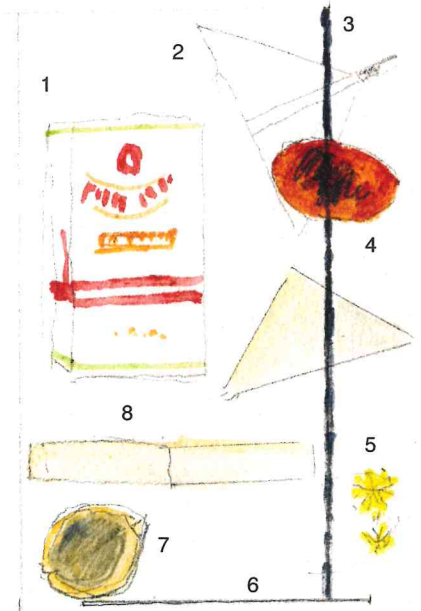


The restoration of St Annes Chapel was carried out during 2012 by Barnstaple Town Council with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Devon County Council. The Architect was David Wilson Partnership Ltd, the work was undertaken by Pearce Construction and the electrics were installed by James Electric Contracting Ltd. During the course of the restoration the builders discovered under the floor boards, in the eaves, behind the wainscot, a number of items dropped or placed or thrown by the former users of the building. Most of these items had been mislaid or hidden before 1910 when the chapel ceased to be the site of Barnstaple's Grammar School. At that time, the manager of St Annes was an archeologist, Peter Doel. Working with the builders he logged every fragment, nut, bead, broken pen, marble and dried pea. Gradually a picture emerged of the life of the building that brought into focus the historical facts known about the building since it was first constructed in the early part of the 14th Century.

THE WEST BLOCK



THE WEST BLOCK



- 1 Park Drive Cigarette Packet
- 2 Reconstructed Dart
- 3 Horse Hair Plait
- 4 Conker - Seven found
- 5 Huguenot Cross
- 6 Colour Compass - Lethaby
- 7 Walnut - the cargo of the ship that brought the Huguenots to Devon
- 8 Tangram Pieces - Lethaby

The most remarkable finds were in the eaves - where over 20 paper darts were found, built of recycled paper and weighted with broken pen nibs. Thrown up there before 1910, they must have been the champions of countless efforts to lodge a missile in the roof beams. One by one, as they were found, we began to hear the echoes of the cheers that had greeted their success. It was clear that these planes must have been made before Bleriot crossed the Channel in an aeroplane in 1909, a fact that fascinated James May, who included the discoveries in the eaves in the Christmas 2012 episode of 'Toy Stories', a BBC programme about toy planes. As he lifted the fragile monuments to the wish to fly, out between the roof beams, he marvelled that these planes were constructed and thrown maybe even 150 years before the invention of flight.

My interest in the building began on hearing that the restoration being undertaken had revealed a series of putlogs and that these putlogs were being retained. When the builders of the chapel had erected the building they built a wooden scaffold which passed right through the building. When the walls were complete, the scaffold was removed and the scaffolding wood was used to make the rafters. The holes then left in the building were blocked with stones and often builders put things into them, for luck, or for convenience - out of the way. It was an archeologist from English Heritage who first told me about these cavities and how builders in recent times had stuffed things into them, most commonly, Woodbine or Park Drive cigarette packets. One find in a putlog which was difficult to decipher was a strong 'thread' plaited and bent. Investigation into medieval building techniques revealed that the scaffolding had been tied together with plaited withies - the builder's life depended on their strength. As the scaffolding was taken down the builder had stuffed a strip of plaited withy into the putlog hole.

The very quality of the 2012 restoration honours the life's work of one of the schoolboys of the 1870s.

W G Lethaby attended the school and whilst he disliked his 'learning by rote' education at the grammar school, he loved the Gothic building of St Annes and seemed to acquire from the hours spent there, a deep love of architecture and of craftsmanship.

Lethaby believed in the religious significance of making a good thing well. He was a Founding Member of 'The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings' along with William Morris and Philip Webb. 'He became the recognised supreme authority on the care of old buildings' amongst the many influential books that he wrote were *Medieval Art* and *Westminster Abbey and the Kings Craftsmen* and in 1906, he became Surveyor of Westminster Abbey. He delighted in disinterring the long forgotten names of workmen such as John of Gloucester, Edmund of Westminster, and Robert of Beverly. 'Gothic Cathedrals are as natural as birds nests', he said.

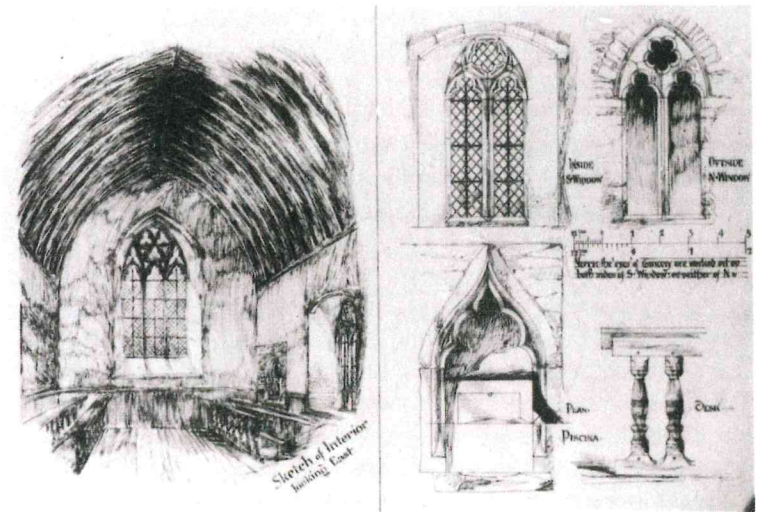
Lethaby's influence was very significant. After working as an architect, he became the founding principal of the Central School of Art in London from 1895 to 1911. The school was organised around craft skills. He disapproved of examinations, in his eyes making something to the best of one's ability is its own reward. The structure of Central (now part of Central St Martins in The University of the Arts London) contributed to the development of the Bauhaus in Germany. Lethaby was extremely attached to Barnstaple. He wrote:

I have found a view of my own town of Barnstaple - a kind little town seated in a smiling "landskip". There is something in these birthplaces and cradle homes which attacks our very heart strings, and I never look at this town of mine from the outside without that "O Jerusalem" feeling.

He had a rather strict religious upbringing and describes how it was transformed by a friend of his family, Mr Websdale, who would visit his parents and amuse him by cutting animals out of card - horses, cows with horns, camels with humps, and elephants with trunks. Together they rigged ships, made peepshows and Lethaby contrived a kaliedoscope and made a kite.

One of the rare presents he received was a game called Tangram This made a great impression:

This toy was a great joy to me and it made me familiar with notions about shapes, triangles, squares, divisions and fitting together; what we call geometry. It is quite wonderful the



Drawings of the interior of St Annes made by W G Lethaby

teaching that may be got out of it and it must have been designed by a mathematical sage.

In 1868 Lethaby, as a new member of the Barnstaple Literary and Scientific Institute, attended 'Night Drawing Class for Artisans and Children over the Age of Twelve' and he was on his way to a career in architecture and art and design education.

In 1897 Lethaby wrote *Architecture Mysticism and Myth* a very interesting work concerned with elemental, cosmological and mystical symbolism. He travelled to the near East and considered the relation of buildings to the experience and spiritual aspirations of the people who planned and built them. In that book he quotes M Muller's Gifford lecture of 1890:

In the mythology of Yucatan, the four Gods were supposed to stand one at each corner of the world, supporting like Caryatids, the overhanging firmament....The East was distinguished by yellow, the South by red the West by black The North by

white and these colours appear again in different parts of the world with the same meaning as representing the four quarters of the world.

Lethaby says:

If we arranged these colours for ourselves, white might stand for the East as a point of light, red for the meridian sun of the South, blue for the West of evening and black for North.

In the base of the West resin block I have set out this colour compass as Lethaby described it, believing that he might have imagined his coloured compass in this very space.

After establishing The Central School, Lethaby was appointed as the first Professor of Ornament at the Royal College of Art. A lady student went to the Principal in tears - The new Professor had wanted her to draw watercress!

Lethaby was a very modest person. He summed up his own life's work in a simple statement...

'The mark of civilisation lies in adding to what may be loved.'

The Huguenots

Barnstaple can be proud of the way in which it welcomed 'Englands first refugees', as they came to be called. In 1685 after a terrible voyage of eleven days the first Huguenot refugees landed in Appledore. They had run from La Rochelle for their lives, being persecuted as Protestants in France. One of their number Jacques (James) Fontaine recorded in his memoir, how they walked in to Barnstaple on a Sunday morning as the congregation were leaving church, and the first person that they met in the street, a Mr Downe, spoke to them and discovering that they were destitute immediately invited them to stay in his house. Other people crowded round and soon every refugee had somewhere to stay in Barnstaple and a new life began for them in England.

Mr Downe's sister took a fancy to the handsome Jacques (or so he describes himself) and he had to explain that he was engaged to a Mlle Boursiquot. Immediately a wedding was arranged.

We were married on the 8th. Febr. 1686. at the Parish

Church of Barnstaple. Mr. Fraine, at whose house my wife had lived from the day after our landing, prepared an excellent banquet and invited almost all the French Refugees in the neighbourhood to partake with us on our wedding day; and my friend Mr. Downe entertained us all in the same style on the following day.

The inhabitants of the town were generous in the extreme, they sent us all things essential for a small family, so that our house was furnished without costing us a farthing, and their liberality did not stop here; every market day meat, poultry, and grain came in abundance without our knowing to whom we were obliged, and during the six or eight months that we lived there, I only bought one bushel of wheat, and had two left when we removed.

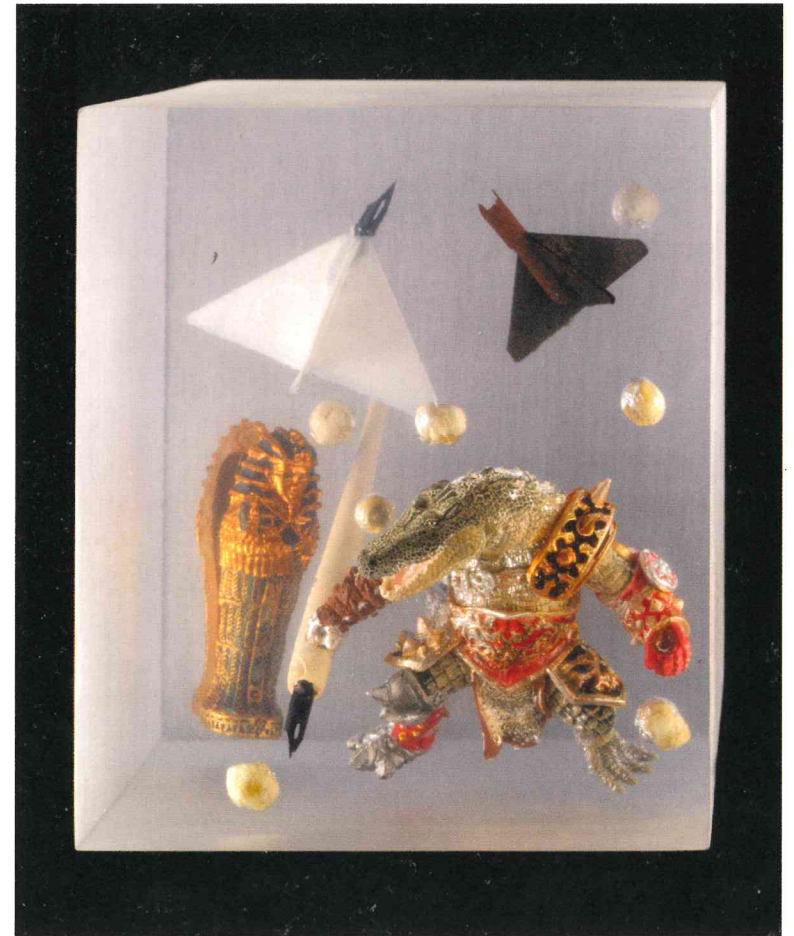
The refugees made an immediate contribution to the quality of life in the town. Some of them had skills in dyeing and weaving, others were entrepreneurs. Jacques Fontaine bought a ship's biscuit for half a penny and on realising that it would have cost him twopence in France was soon, with the support of his host Mr Downe, exporting grain himself. He was a preacher who experimented with weaving newly fashionable 'Calimanco' cloth, making Beaver Hats, importing raisins and brandy, teaching French, and, being lame himself, taught a weaver with one leg how to alter a loom so that he could continue to earn his living.

The people of Barnstaple, recognising that the refugees had their own style of worship, offered the refugees the use of St Annes Chapel on Sundays for their services. This continued until 1762. During the week it was still Barnstaple Grammar School.

The Huguenot Cross

The cross as an eminent symbol of the Christian faith, represents not only the death of Christ but also victory over death and impiety. This is represented also in the Maltese Cross. It is boutoné, the eight points symbolising the eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) Between the arms of the cross is the stylised fleur-de-lys (on the French Coat of Arms), each has 3 petals; the total of twelve petals of the fleur-de-lys signify the twelve apostles. Between each fleur-de-lys and the arms of the Maltese Cross with which it is joined, an open space in the form of a heart, the symbol of loyalty, suggests the seal of the French Reformer, John Calvin. The pendant dove symbolises the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). In times of persecution a pearl, symbolizing a teardrop, replaced the dove.

THE CENTRE BLOCK





- 1 Actual Dart - found in the roof of St Anne's Chapel. Thrown prior to 1910. Pen nib and recycled paper. Maker unknown
- 2 Mummy - See 'Three Hours After the Marriage' by John Gay
- 3 Crocodile - See 'Three Hours After the Marriage' by John Gay
- 4 School Pen 'The pen is mightier than the sword.' Very many found
- 5 Dried Peas - Twelve found, evidently shot by pea shooters
- 6 Reconstructed Dart - paper and pen nib

THE CENTRE BLOCK

John Gay is probably the most famous pupil ever to have attended the grammar school at St Anne's. His great work 'The Beggar's Opera' is still performed today. It gained further fame when Bertold Brecht wrote a version of the play, 'The Threepenny Opera' exactly two hundred years later. Gay's work was loved for its originality and wit – it was a fabulous success in London. Its 'topical references' still resonate today, where once again, we discover that the biggest crooks are the 'respectable' bankers and dodgy business tycoons and the small fry struggling to survive are the condemned criminals. Peachum sings at the start of the play:

Through all the employments of life
 Each neighbor abuses his brother;
 Whore and rogue they call husband and wife:
 All professions be-rogue one another.
 The priest calls a lawyer a cheat,
 The lawyer be-knaves the divine;
 And the statesman, because he's so great,
 Thinks his trade as honest as mine.

The schoolmaster when Gay was a pupil at Barnstaple Grammar School, was a poet named Rev. Robert Luck who later claimed that the amateur theatricals at the school had inspired Gay to write plays. Presumably these plays were performed in St Anne's Chapel. There is a definite aura of schoolboy humour in Gay's play 'Three Hours after the Marriage' which was first presented on Jan 16th 1717. This was a scandalous event – like the first night of Jarry's 'Ubu Roi', (also a schoolboy inspired production) where the audience rioted in response to the bizarre events on stage. It seems that the audience in 1717 were deeply shocked to see scurrilous humour and 'scenes that trespass on female modesty' in a play presented at the Theatre Royal.

The scene that caused the uproar was at the beginning of Act 3 : Gay wrote 'Now for a scene of love the like never shown on any stage before' and as Alexander Pope said – never would be seen again!

Enter Mummy in Heroicks...

Enter Crocodile in Heroicks

They compete for the Lady's favour

Mum. Madam I am a human creature. Taste my Balsamic kiss

Croc. A lover in swaddling clothes! What is his kiss to my embrace?

Mum. Look upon me Madam. See how I am embroidered with Hieroglyphics

Croc. Consider my beautiful row of teeth.

Mum. My balmy breath

Croc. The strong joints of my back

Mum. My erect stature

Croc. My long tail (here croc shakes his tail.)

Lady Such a Contest of Beauty! How shall I decide it?

Gay wrote to his friend and collaborator Alexander Pope, 'Too late I see and confess myself mistaken in relation to the comedy; yet I do not think had I followed your advice and only introduced the mummy, that the absence of the crocodile had saved it.'

The play was performed on seven nights and then withdrawn. It was dense with satirical references to society ladies, playwrights, scientists and other celebrated people. It was 29th January 1728 before Gay risked another play on stage – This was the immortal 'The Beggar's Opera'.

When Gay first left school he was 'apprenticed out to a "Stuff" man' in London in the hope of becoming a silk merchant. In 'The Beggars Opera' the thieves are discussing clothes stolen specifically for the prostitutes who were always keen to buy them. Gay's experience in the silk trade can be glimpsed in Mrs Coacher's speech 'I carried a silver flowered lute string (a fine quality taffeta) and a piece of black padesoy (a type of silk) to Mr Peachum's lock about a week ago.' Again and again in Gay's writing, moments of the actual experience of his life, things seen, jokes, memories and incidents jump out of the text.

As a result of the success of the publication of his poems in 1720, 'Poems on Several Occasions', Gay made a large amount

of money for the first time in his life. Against the advice of his friends he invested it all in the 'South Sea Company'. Consequently he lost everything in the first ever equivalent of a stock market crash. The poem that he wrote about the disaster finishes with an image that goes back to his days as a schoolboy in St Anne's Chapel – and one that as a consequence of the discoveries made during the recent restoration, brings the school days in Barnstaple Grammar School of the 1690s vividly to life.

The South Sea Bubble

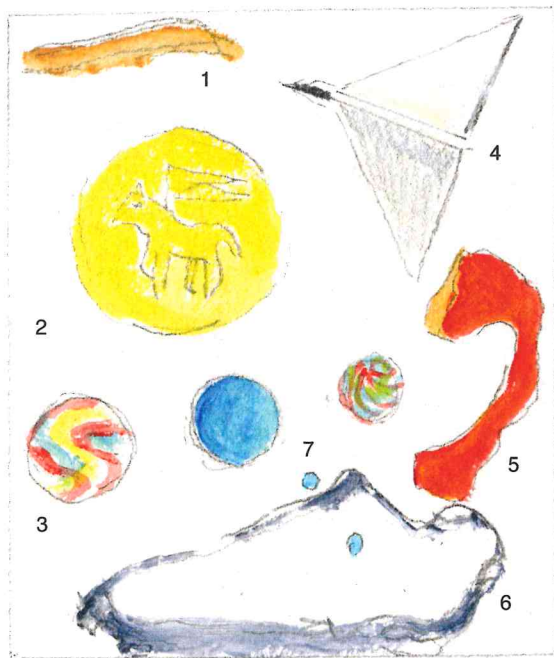
A Panegyric Epistle to Mr Thomas Snow, Goldsmith, near Temple Bar: Occasioned by his buying and selling of the Third Subscriptions, taken in by the Directors of the South Sea Company at a thousand percent published by Lintott in 1721.

O thou, whose penetrative wisdom found
The South Sea rocks and shelves where thousands drowned,
When credit sunk and commerce gasping lay,
Thou stood'st; nor sent one bill unpaid away
When not a guinea chinked on Martin's boards,
And Atwill's self was drained of all his hoards.
Thou stood'st (an indian king in size and line)
Thy unexhausted shop was our Peru.
Why did 'Change Alley waste thy precious hours
Among the fools who gaped for golden showers?
No wonder if we found some poets there,
Who live on fancy and can feed on air
No wonder they were caught by South Sea schemes
Who ne'er enjoyed a guinea but in dreams;
No wonder they their third subscription sold,
For millions of imaginary gold:
No wonder that their fancies wild can frame
Strange reasons that a thing is still the same
Tho' changed throughout in substance and in name.
But you (whose judgements scorns poetic flights)
With contracts furnish boys for paper kites.

John Gay

THE EAST BLOCK





- 1 Ceramic Fragment - Fishley
- 2 Agnus Dei - Saint Cuthbert Mayne
- 3 Marbles
- 4 Reconstructed Dart - Paper and pen nib
- 5 Orange Peel
- 6 Oyster Shell
- 7 Two Turquoise Beads

THE EAST BLOCK

Not many schools can say that a Saint was a pupil there. It is not known if Cuthbert Mayne was a saintly schoolboy. From the fragmentary evidence found in Saint Anne's Chapel he was educated in a whirlwind of peas being shot around the room, of names being carved on desks, and conker battles. He was certainly very clever and went to Oxford where he met other people who were secretly Catholics, and who saw the Pope as Head of the Church instead of the Queen of England. He went to Douai in France to be trained as a priest and when he returned to England, he was hidden by Frances Tregian in his house 'Golden' near Truro.

In England Catholic priests trained in Europe were seen as dangerous in the extreme, as it was thought that they would convert the population back to the old religion and then make way for a Catholic King such as the King of Spain to invade the country and depose Queen Elizabeth.

When Cuthbert Mayne was discovered at Frances Tregian's house, the sherrif and a group of men 'bounced and beat at the door'.

As soon as the sherrif came into the chamber he took Mr Mayne by the bosom and said to him 'What art thou?' He answered 'I am a man.' Whereas the sherrif being very hot asked if he had a coat of mail under his doublet? and so unbuttoned it and found an Agnus Dei about his neck, which he took from him, and called him traitor and rebel, with many other approbious names.

This was incriminating evidence. An Agnus Dei was a circle of wax made from the remains of the Paschal Candle and given by the Pope as a special token. It was impressed with the image of the Lamb carrying a flag. This was a representation of Jesus as the Lamb of God, and seen as doubly wicked in a country that was as iconoclastic as England at that time. There is only one known surviving example of a wax impression of an Agnus Dei, in the British Museum. Cuthbert was tried and found guilty, refusing to the end to acknowledge Queen Elizabeth as Head of the Church. He was sentenced to be hung drawn and quartered.

On November 25th, two nights before he was executed,

There was seen a great light in his chamber between twelve and one of the clock in so much that some of the prisoners that lay in the next rooms called unto him to know what it was for they knew very well that he had neither fire nor candle.

At his execution, he was not allowed to speak to the crowd, but only to pray quietly before he was hanged. Mercifully he died, hitting his head on a beam as he was taken down from the gibbet. His quarters were sent to Bodmin, Tregny, Barnstaple and Launceston and his head was set up on a pole in Wadebridge. This was to warn other Catholic sympathisers in Devon and Cornwall of the fate that might befall them if they were discovered. Frances Tregian, had all his property confiscated and was put in prison where he stayed for twenty eight years.

Cuthbert was canonized by Pope Paul VI on 25th October 1970 along with the other Martyrs of England – he became Saint Cuthbert Mayne.

John Ruskin believed that :

the characteristic or moral elements of the Gothic are the following, placed in the order of their importance:

- 1 Savageness.
- 2 Changefulness.
- 3 Naturalism.
- 4 Grottesqueness.
- 5 Rigidity.
- 6 Redundance.

These characteristics are here expressed as belonging to the building; as belonging to the builder, they would be expressed thus:- 1. Savageness or Rudeness. 2. The Love of Change. 3. Love of Nature. 4. Disturbed Imagination. 5. Obstinacy 6. Generosity.

In St Anne's Chapel we have an insight into how Gothic architecture was built. The revelation of the exposed putlog cavities



Warkworth Castle, Northumberland: oyster shells used for levelling voussoirs.

brought to life the image of the scaffolding, and the treadmill that hauled the stones up to the builders. The found oyster shells remind us of what the builders had for lunch, but also how they made use of the shells, tucking them in between the voussoirs (the shaped stones that made the arches) to make sure they had a perfect fit. The horse hair knotted at both ends to mark a measurement or describe an arc, the withies that tied the scaffolding together, these were the tools of the builders who believed that they were building a chantry chapel where priests would pray for the souls of the aristocrats who paid for the building. They simply could not have imagined the future uses to which the building has been put and the inspiration that it has provided for the people who have spent many hours of their lives in it. The restoration has revealed a myriad of clues, to the every day events, lost treasures, broken fragments, acts of defacement, inspiration, mischief, and devotion that have happened within the walls of this beautiful building.



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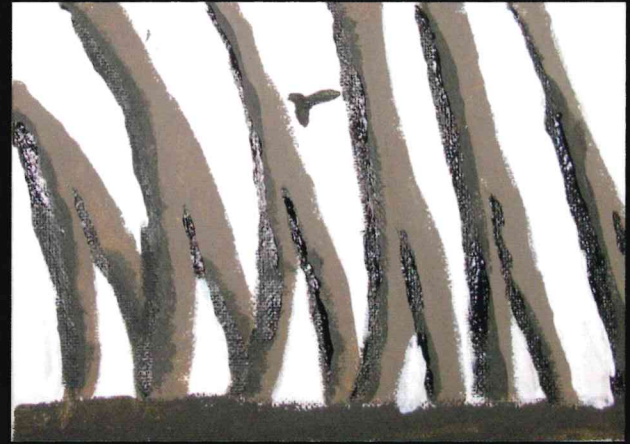


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Painting by Molly Davies - Orchard Vale Community School