

Dame Laura Knight Society



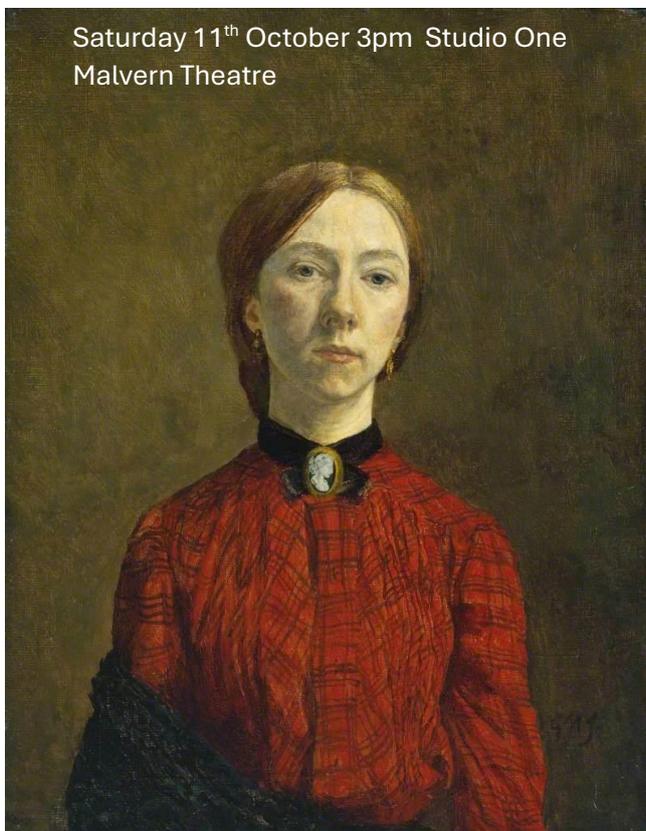
Summer Newsletter

July 2025

In this summer edition there is a fascinating article on **Harold Knight's tribunal in 1918**; the story behind a little-known work by Laura Knight 'The Test' – **painted in Colwall** recording an important event which had worldwide repercussions; exciting news about a 'first': a **biography of Harold Knight**; but **HOT PRESS news** to begin with.....

Tickets are now on sale for the Dame Laura Knight Society Art Lecture as part of the Autumn in Malvern Festival hosted by Malvern Theatre. Our speaker this year is Tim Batchelor, Assistant Curator at the Tate Britain, who will talk about the hugely successful exhibition at the Tate in 2024 '**Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain 1520-1920**'.

Saturday 11th October 3pm Studio One
Malvern Theatre



Work by Dame Laura Knight featured in the exhibition and other key artists included Mary Beale, Angelica Kauffman, Lady Butler and Gwen John.

Tickets are available on the Malvern Theatre website and at the Box Office. **There is a discount for members of the DLKS**. Use the promo code: **DLKS** for a concession price of £9 instead of the public price of £11. This promo code is valid both online and at the box office.

There is a block of seats reserved for members of DLKS.

You must either go to the box office or book by telephone to access these seats. You cannot access these reserved seats online. Only general public seats are available online. You do not pay a booking fee if you have theatre membership.

There is a change to our usual venue for this lecture. This year it will be at **Malvern Theatre in Studio One** which is on the first floor.

The Studio seats 100 people and as this lecture is likely to be very popular with the public, early ticket purchase is advisable. As Society members, please remember to **use your promo code of DLKS** for a concession ticket price.

As well as introducing the themes and structure of the exhibition, Tim will reflect on some aspects of organisation, revealing some of the behind-the-scenes stories.



Supporting the theme of female artists, **Malvern Theatre is showing the film 'Artemisia Gentileschi, Warrior Painter' on Tuesday 7th October 11am.** Artemisia is the most celebrated female painter of the 17thC and her courageous historical paintings challenged the way men had traditionally painted women.

Tickets are available from Malvern Theatre Box Office £8.50/£7.50

Important Dates for Your Diary

- **Tuesday 7th October 2025 11am** Malvern Cinema film 'Artemisia Gentileschi Warrior Painter'
- **Saturday 11th October 2025 3pm** lecture 'Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain 1520-1920' Studio One Malvern Theatre
- **Tuesday 14th October 2025 7pm** DLKS AGM Colwall Village Hall
- **Saturday 14th March 2026 3pm** Talk by Alice Foster 'Women at Work' Colwall Village Hall

TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Harold Knight Conscientious Objector WW1 by Alan Seddon

This year the UK has been remembering the end of WW2. Conscious of the continuing war in Ukraine and alarmed by threats from Russia, it raises the issue of how we in this day and age would respond nationally and personally if the Government had to declare war.

We have, tucked away in our DLKS archive, a one-page A4 photocopy of a full-size newspaper broadsheet reporting on Harold Knight's Tribunal as a conscientious objector in WW1. Unfortunately, the article has a totally unreadable half-column.

Now transcribed, this article does go some way to explaining Harold's fall from popularity given the very patriotic feelings of society at that time, and as exemplified by the verbatim report of the tribunal as follows....

The Cornishman and Cornish Telegraph

Wednesday June 12 1918

Penzance Artist Consciously objects to Combatant Service

Mr Harold Knight, artist of Lamorna, near Penzance, appeared before West Penwith Tribunal on Thursday afternoon as a conscientious objector.

Various questions had been submitted to Mr Knight on paper, and he had replied in writing. He objected to combatant services because he believed a human being was the highest manifestation of God on earth and to destroy even a body of a human being was to destroy a part of God. He believed killing man would be wrong to do as an individual and equally wrong in obedience to an order from the Government. He did not object to noncombatant service. He objected to participating in the use of arms in any dispute, whatever the circumstances, and however just, in his opinion, the cause. He would be willing to join some branch of service engaged in the saving of life but not military service, his objection to which was that to do so would be to become part of the military organisation and perhaps be expected to obey orders which might be against his conscience. He had held these views since 1912. He was of the Christian faith, but not a member of a recognised religious body. He had been offered work under the Ministry of Information for war records purposes which he had accepted. He was quite prepared to place his services as an artist at the disposal of the nation. He was quite willing to do agricultural work.

Asked if he could state any sacrifice which he had made at any time because of the conscientious objections he had put forward, Mr. Knight replied " I have lost the

friendship of several people whose friendship I valued, and my career as a portrait painter has been prejudiced by the attitude to war I have felt compelled to take.”

“Have you since the war broke out, been involved in any philanthropic or other work for the good of the community?” Mr Knight was asked. “I painted a portrait for the Canadian War Office Records,” was the reply.

Supporting the appeal was Mr Alfred Sidgwick, Trewoof Orchard, St Buryan wrote:” Mr Harold Knight, who has been a friend of mine for some years, asks me to tell you of my conviction that his views about the war are not a mere pretext for shirking duty,

I strongly disagree with his views on the grounds of practicality, but I am quite sure that he himself believes in them.” Rev N B Walke, vicar of St Hilary, wrote that he had known Mr Knight for the last four years and had known him to hold the strongest conscientious objections to military service in any form both on religious and ethical grounds. He (Mr Walke) regarded his views on this subject so deeply grounded that, while anxious to help the nation at this crisis, he could not accept military service without violating his most sacred convictions. (Blue writing below is HK’s responses)

Mr A H Laity: You are a great friend of Mr Walke’s aren’t you? – [Yes](#).

Mr Laity: You were at a pacifist meeting with him? – [Yes](#).

Mr Laity: I take it for granted that you are a pacifist as well. – [Well, naturally](#).

Mr Laity: I look on a pacifist as pro-German – [That is not so](#).

Mr Laity: He that is not for Me is against Me , surely – [I am willing to serve my country, but not in this particular way](#).

Mr Laity: Then you would like to escape military service and allow another man to lay down his life for your freedom, and you are not plucky enough to help them – [From my point of view it would not be helping, because I think fighting is wrong](#).

Mr Laity: Then if other men acted on your principles the Germans would be here and we should be under the Kaizer? – [That I cannot say. As I understand the teachings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount](#)

Mr Laity: A lot of people bring in Christ as a side issue.

The Chairman: If you saw a bully thrashing a woman, what would you do ? – [I should prevent him as far as I could, but not the extent of taking his life](#).

Mr Laity: Is it not a fact that you paint portraits and pictures for men at Porthcurno – [I see no objection to that](#).

Mr Laity: Of course not, it means a bit for yourself. I think you have been under the tuition of Mr Walke – [I do not think so. If you mean Mr Walke has dictated my opinions to me, that is not so. I held them before I knew Mr Walke](#).

Mr E.R.Care: Can you tell us why you have not assisted in some work to help your country since the war started? – [I have my own living to make.](#)

Mr Care: The Government would provide you with a living, Mr Knight. – [I have subscribed to the Red Cross and that sort of thing.](#)

Mr Laity: Mr Knight doesn't seem to care a hang who fights so long as he is clear.

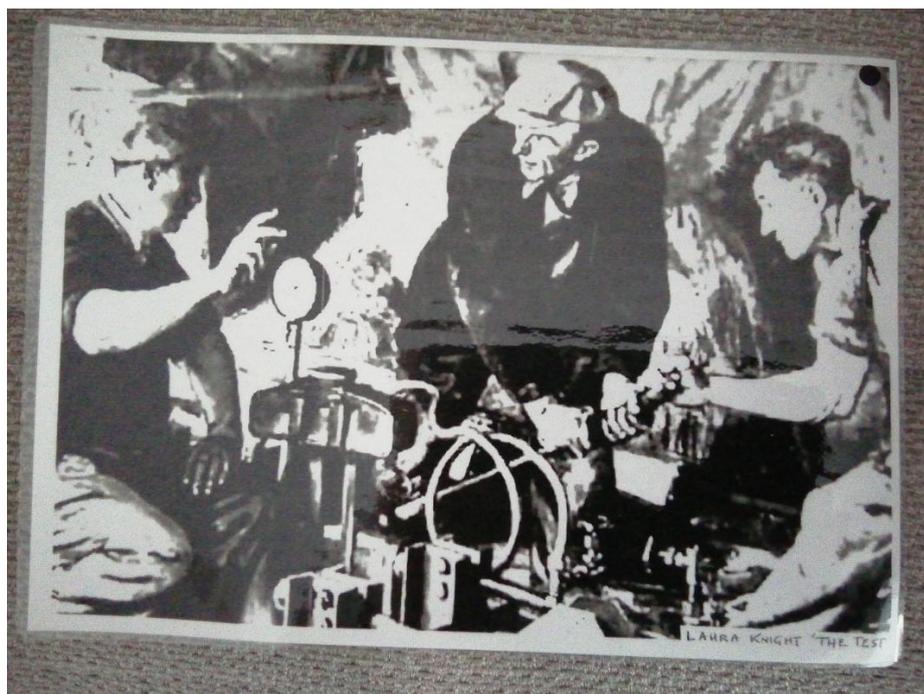
The tribunal dismissed the appeal, the Chairman remarking that if Mr Knight wanted to get clear he would have to appeal to a higher authority.

Harold Knight was forced to work as a farm labourer throughout WW1.

COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY LIFT THE LID ON WHAT HAPPENED IN COLWALL DURING WW2

An excellent and well attended exhibition was held in the village hall on 17th May to reveal the results of an extensive investigation into what happened at the home front in Colwall. Many topics were covered which included the Home Guard, military defences, evacuees, daily life, etc.

Of particular interest to the Dame Laura Knight Society was **the story surrounding Laura's painting of THE TEST** which was described by Heather Whately in her excellent book 'Laura Knight in the Malverns'.



The Test c 1942 Laura Knight

The surrounding facts are:

A company called Dowsett-Mackay started up in London in 1939 and quickly formed an engineering group but decided to relocate to central England for relative safety and space to expand. Hence the Group located its Headquarters and Central Control Unit in Colwall.

Dowsett- Mackay was initially created to help serve the vast rearmament and war production programme. Initially they purchased land which principally lay between the railway line and Walwyn Road, and then in 1942 purchased the Colwall Park Racecourse and associated buildings including the Park Hotel from Lt.-Col.Scott Bowden. He had not wanted to sell but Dowsett-Mackay made it clear that if necessary, they would apply for an order from the Government to requisition the property, so he was forced to submit.

Part of this land was to be used to establish a research, testing and small manufacturing unit for railway sleepers. The Park Hotel was initially used as offices for the Group and they built bespoke offices in the hotel grounds at the rear for their Central Control.

The hotel continued to operate normally run by a manager and manageress with ample accommodation for visitors.

With the shortage of timber in the war the search for an alternative railway sleeper solution became urgent. The use of reinforced concrete had been attempted since WW1 but was a failure.

Dowsett-Mackay in collaboration with the Board of Trade and Railway Authorities carried out experimental work in Colwall using prestressed concrete.

Laura Knight, who was staying at the Colwall Park Hotel and therefore knew intimately the managers of Dowsett-Mackay, was commissioned by them to paint a picture of the testing of the railway sleepers. Always ready for a challenge she set up on the racecourse site in bitter cold winter weather in an unwallled shed half filled with straw, with green canvas as a background, she painted a huge 5' x 6' picture which she called **THE TEST**.

These sleepers produced in Colwall were successfully tried on the West Coast Main Line in February 1943. It was recorded in 1993, that in the 50 years since this event over 50 million prestressed concrete railway sleepers had been made world-wide with over 35 million in use by British Rail.

Laura Knight would have had no idea when she tackled the painting that she was **recording a major event**.

Dowsett-Mackay employed over 300 people in Colwall during the War, but as they only had planning permits for the period of the War, when the War ended, they left Colwall.

We have no idea where the painting is now. It was initially hung in Dowsett-Mackay's boardroom but they were eventually taken over by Costains and then Tarmac who then ceased trading. Has anyone got any ideas?

Alan Seddon

And now, news from DLKS member, Helen Hyde, about a Harold Knight biography:

A Biography of Harold Knight

Hello everybody, my name is Helen Hyde. Some of you may remember me as the DLK fanatic who last year travelled up from Battle to join you on our wonderful holiday to the North East! It was on that holiday, and thanks to Virginia Seddon, that I had a light bulb moment. I was close to finishing my second book (an accessible biography of Reginald Pole) and looking for a new project. Virginia mentioned that someone needed to write a biography of Harold, and here we are.

I have just started my research but have found some very interesting things already. Given my academic background (PhD in art history, first book on a Renaissance cardinal, fellowship of the Royal Historical Society), I can cheerfully say that this is not going to be a coffee table book. I have a long list of archives (my favourite type of place) to investigate and people to contact and it will take several years (but if something is worth doing, it's worth doing properly).

Why Harold? The answer is simple: he is such a wonderful painter and very much deserves to be better known. The book's title 'The Forgotten Husband: the life and works of Harold Knight R.A.' says it all. Outside of the DLKS he has, I'm afraid, been very much forgotten and my book will hopefully rectify this.



William Frederick Mayor *Harold Knight Moonlit view of Staites in the background*

I had a very enjoyable meeting with John Croft (Laura Knight's great nephew) last week and he was very helpful and positive. I am, of course, very keen to hear from anyone who has information that they have come across about Harold or any reminiscences of their parents or grandparents of him (and, indeed, if you have any of his works), so DO please contact me on happy.cats@btconnect.com or feel free to ring me on 07506721866.

Above is my favourite painting by Harold. Yes, I am biased as it sits in our front room, but his 'Portrait of Fred Mayor' shows his skill as a portraitist and the warmth and affection in which he held the late Fred.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

With all good wishes,

Helen Hyde

Round up of other Society News



The DLKS sponsored the winner of the best professional landscape painting in the **En Plein Air Painting Competition** organised by Creatives Connect on 5th May.

The winner was Greta Vilidaite who painted the view from the Wyche Road over Malvern. Title 'Over the Rooftops, Malvern'.

With almost 100 artists painting in and around Malvern, the event was a great success, enjoyed by many DLKS members.

On a gloriously sunny day in April a group of Society members enjoyed a fascinating day at the Red House Glass Cone and the Stourbridge Glass Museum with its world class glass collection. Laura Knight was commissioned by Stuart Crystal to design a collection of glass tableware for the Harrods exhibition in 1934. The Society had privileged access to LK's original drawings, sketches and correspondence.



Cocktail decanter and stopper acid etched and enamelled in black and yellow with a band of dancing figures designed by Laura Knight 1934



Society members visited Worcester Art Gallery in June. Here is a report from member, Susan Edwards:

**A Lecture on Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes
Worcester Art Gallery 26 June 2025**

To complement Worcester Art Gallery's superbly curated Exhibition on Newlyn's 'Power Couple' Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes, we were treated, by newly appointed Fine Art Curator Natasha Wilcockson, to a skilfully presented and enthusiastic illustrated lecture in which Natasha sought to redress the balance between the couple's reputations. Natasha suggested that Stanhope's work was more well known in that he had established his style early in his career, so his work was more recognisable, while

Elizabeth had a more experimental approach, developing her techniques empirically.

As I attended the lecture before seeing the Exhibition, this knowledge really enhanced my appreciation of the works and I was able to clearly identify the stages of Elizabeth's work in particular.

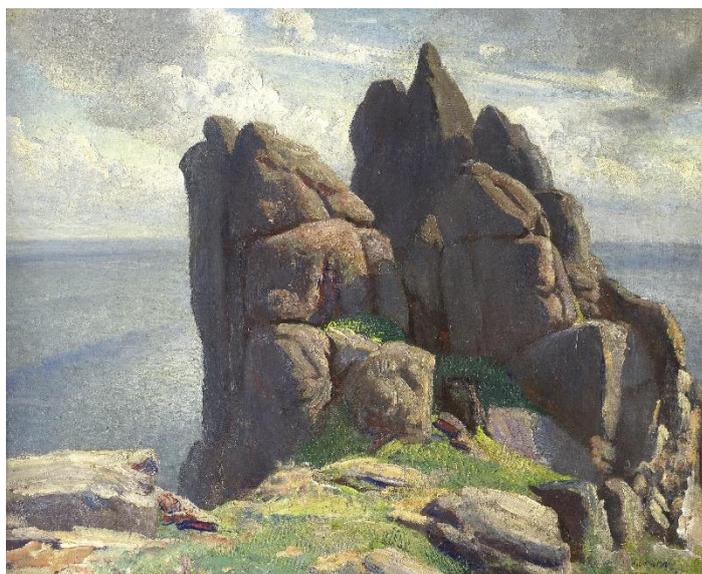
Natasha is excited to be working over the coming year, on an ambitious new project within The Museum and Art Gallery which will replace the Military Museum, now relocating to The Commandery, with a significant Art Gallery which will not only be a

permanent Gallery showcasing art from Worcester Art Gallery's Permanent Collection, but will be looking to grow the collection by acquiring work historically significant to Worcestershire, and in addition to commission new artworks by contemporary artists.

Watch this space – literally! I'm sure it will be a great success.

Susan Edwards MA FRSA

And finally, some examples of **Laura Knight's work sold recently at auction:**



Carn Bargis, Sennen Cove

signed 'Laura Knight' (lower right);

oil on canvas 63.5 x 76.2cm (25 x 30in).

Est: £15,000 GBP - £20,000 GBP

Sold: £15,000 GBP

[Bonhams](#) London, United Kingdom
March 26, 2025

Provenance

Sold by the Executors of the artist's Estate, Sotheby's, London, 26 November 1970, lot 99. With Julian

Simon Fine Art. Anon. sale, Sotheby's & Stephan Welz, Johannesburg, 2 November 1992, lot 314 (as *Cliffs on the coast*). Private collection, UK.

Exhibited: London, Royal Academy, 1935, no. 275.

Depicted, is a well-known Cornish outcrop, not too far from Lands End and close to Laura Knight's studio hut at Lamorna, which had been built specially for her by the local squire at the time, Colonel Paynter. As Knight herself notes: 'Close by my hut, Carn Bargis towered. No human hand could have fashioned so architecturally magnificent a pile of granite. On the flat rocks below were deep pools for swimming and pools in which to paddle.'



Dame Laura Knight (1877-1970) for Clarice Cliff, 1934

Est: £300 GBP - £500 GBP

Sold: £550 GBP

[Cheffins](#) Cambridge, United Kingdom May 22, 2025

A 'Clown' pattern plate from the 'Circus' series, polychrome painted and enamelled with three clowns to the well, the borders polychrome painted with spectators beneath gilded swags, printed factory mark, first edition and facsimile signature 23cm diameter.

TWO ROMANY LASSES ON ASCOT HEATH

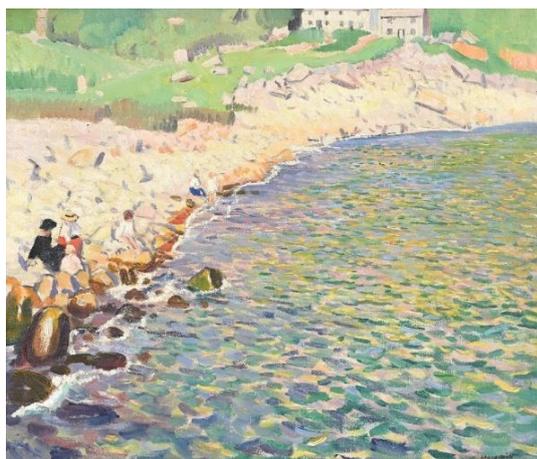
DAME LAURA KNIGHT (BRITISH 1877-1970)

Oil on canvas Signed (lower left) 63.5 x 76.2cm (25 x 30 in.)

Est: £20,000 GBP - £30,000 GBP

Sold: £20,000 GBP

[Dreweatts 1759 Fine Sales](#) Newbury,
United Kingdom March 12, 2025



LAMORNA COVE NO.7 (A STONY BEACH)

Oil on canvas Signed (lower right) 45.5 x 51cm (17 3/4 x 20 in.) Painted circa 1920.

DAME LAURA KNIGHT (BRITISH 1877-1970)

Est: £50,000 GBP - £80,000 GBP

Sold: £78,000 GBP

[Dreweatts 1759 Fine Sales](#) Newbury, United
Kingdom March 12, 2025



SUSIE 1928

DAME LAURA KNIGHT R.A. (BRITISH 1877-1970)
Etching, Artist's Proof, signed in pencil to
margin, editioned and inscribed with title in
pencil to margin [under mount], published
1928. plate size 25cm x 34.75cm (9.75in x
13.75in)

Susie is believed to have been the daughter of a
fisherman in Mousehole, Cornwall. She also
features in Knight's 1929 painting Susie and the
Wash Basin (Harris Museum)

Est: £400 GBP - £600 GBP **Sold: £550 GBP**
February 11, 2025

[Lyon & Turnbull](#) Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Evening Pool 1960

Knight (Laura, 1877-1970). charcoal on paper, signed, titled and dated lower left, a view of the countryside with a swimming pool in the foreground, gallery labels to frame verso, sheet size 34.4 x 25.5 cm (13 1/2 x 10 ins)

Est: £500 GBP - £800 GBP

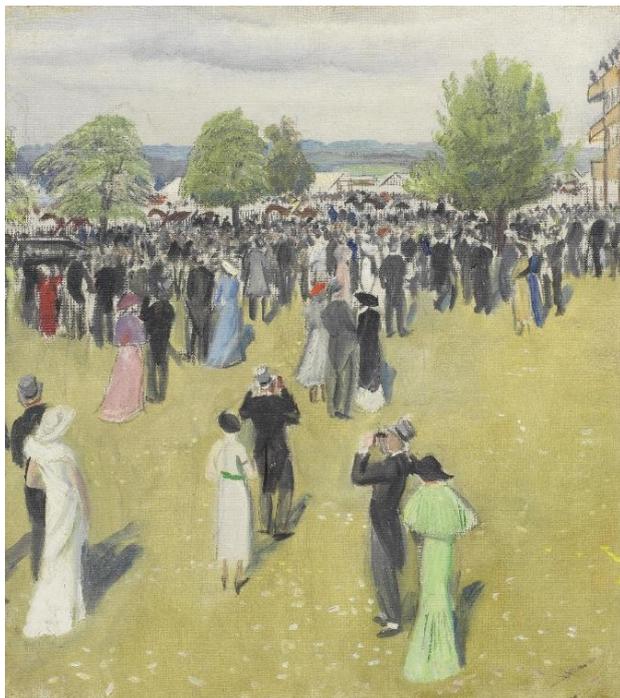
Sold: £500 GBP

[Dominic Winter Auctions](#) South Cerney, United Kingdom
March 12, 2025

This is a sketch of the swimming pool at Colwall Park Hotel where Laura and Harold were staying in 1960 with a view of the Malvern Hills in the background.



Paddock at Ascot



Dame Laura Knight, RA, RWS (British, 1877-1970) oil on canvas 63.5 x 56 cm. (25 x 22 in.) Painted circa 1936

Est: £40,000 GBP - £60,000 GBP

Passed [Bonhams](#) London, United Kingdom
March 26, 2025

Provenance

Sold by the Executors of the Estate of the artist, Sotheby's, London, 26 November 1970, lot 81. With Thomas Agnew. Harold Riley (artist) circa 1982. Geoffrey Waterhouse, 1994.

Private Collection, UK.

The work has been cut down at some point with the image extending around the stretcher and a partial signature 'Lau' visible on the canvas overlap (verso).

We thank you all for your support for the Dame Laura Knight Society. Please do get in touch with Helen Hyde if you have any paintings by Harold Knight or information about his life you are willing to share.

Have a wonderful summer.

Very best wishes

Evie Knight (Chair) and the DLKS Committee