

Creative Expressions

## Grey's Bridge, Dorset

Gaye Johnson



I was inspired to try my hand at drawing the above image after looking through the book *Hardy Country* by Tom Howard which contains photographs of the amazing scenery in the beautiful English County of Dorset. I decided to attempt copying the photograph of Grey's Bridge taken by A F Kersting.

I have always been more interested in the "arty" things in life rather than academia so out came my pencils and a start was rather shakily made. I began by using various graphite pencils to put a series of marks on paper, with thicker black ones indicating the foreground and lighter, more whispier ones, the far distance. The arches in the bridge were the most difficult part as the three spans are unequal and drawing the curves freehand was problematical.

Once the initial pencil drawing had been completed to my satisfaction on watercolour paper, 300 gsm knot, I inked over it using the old fashioned dip pen and Indian ink

method (much to the amusement of my daughter who had never seen this process before!)

When finished I was reasonably pleased with the end result and after encouragement from the art tutor, Louise Griffin, at a local "Learn to Draw" class I had recently joined, I took my courage in both hands and started to add a light watercolour wash. As I was pleased with the black and white line drawing I had created and not wanting to spoil it with my first foray into water colouring I decided to photocopy my original. I soon found out that copying on to a sheet of watercolour paper is well nigh impossible for a novice such as myself, so a sheet of cartridge paper was used instead, not exactly suitable for watercolour paint, but it would go through the copier!

To start with I wet (very sparingly) the entire image before adding my various colours, a technique called "wet in wet" I believe, but don't quote me on that! It was a distinct learning curve for me as never having used

watercolour paints before and not knowing what colours to mix together to achieve my desired effect proved difficult, and I hope I was successful with the outcome.

Whilst I shall never become a proficient artist I enjoy the process of putting pen to paper and it is a hobby which as life advances quickly I can take up and put down when time and my advancing years allow.

Since completing this project I have tried various other mediums such as soft and hard pastels, graphite pencils and coloured pencils but my first love will always be for pen and ink.

Here is a little information Grey's Bridge for those of you who have managed to wade through this write up and make it to the end. The bridge, which is Grade II listed, was built in 1748 and carries the London Road over the

Frome River outside the town of Dorchester. This is the bridge of the poem "Sitting on a Bridge" by Thomas Hardy, about girls sitting on the parapet flirting with soldiers from the Dorchester barracks so has therefore been immortalised into English literature. It has also featured as the location of key events in both *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) also by Thomas Hardy.

**Artist information:** Gaye Johnson, Wolverhampton, United Kingdom.

**Correspondence:** Email: [gabrielle.johnson@btinternet.com](mailto:gabrielle.johnson@btinternet.com)

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