

# **THE COMMON**

**An exhibition by Jenny Thorburn**

**Upstairs Gallery Berkhamsted 7 to 18 February 2017**

## **Artist's Statement**

I am a landscape artist; I work with what I find in my environment; observing, collecting, recording, scavenging, exploring, researching, analysing, imagining.

As I live in the suburbs of Berkhamsted, in the Chiltern Hills, my immediate, every day landscape is Berkhamsted Common, otherwise called locally 'Ashridge' – a larger area that includes most of the Common.

The Common is a wonderful subject: it is an expanse of open land about four miles long and a mile wide; woodland, heath, golf course, grassland. A complex, mazy place, criss-crossed by paths, a rich world of ancient gnarly trees, birch groves, owl trees, deer, furze and fern, dells, earthworks, fungi and lichen. It is a place to walk, to play, to release one's cares.

I've walked this place for quarter of a century, and over the last year have focussed on it, sitting for hours out in it drawing trees and taking long walks around it to exploring parts I'd never been. I've used my gatherings to make woodcuts, drawings, maps and other work I am showing in this exhibition, so I can share my responses to the Common with all who love this place.

## **My techniques**

I am interested in how art techniques have equivalence with processes in the 'real' world, including nature. Woodcuts are a particularly appropriate technique for this place, which is so 'woody'. I use boards made from birch wood; the same wood as covers much of the Common. The method of making the print block, carving out the wood, is reminiscent of the woodworking which was a major industry in the area.

The woodcuts are based on the pencil drawings that I make sitting in the woods - 'life drawings' of real trees. I sit for an hour or two, 'mapping' the tree, and in the process become immersed in the wood around and before me. I also translate some of my field drawings into studio work, using fine paper, Chinese ink and reed pens.

I need to bring words and intellectual ideas to my work to be fully satisfied by it, which I do through cartography and making books, using my own observations and what I read from old maps and history books.

Jenny Thorburn

February 2017