



Hibernia - Dwelling Acrylic on paper 51 x 68 cms 2021

## WINTERFLOWER

During the winter months of 2020 to 21, I took some walks in Epping Forest, which is within the 5 permitted Lockdown miles from my home. They were mostly grey and wet walks, though for a short time they were icy and snowy too. It was a lovely time to get acquainted with the forest and it became the backdrop to my thoughts. Hibernia is Latin for 'land of winter'.

These paintings revisit *The Family Wood* (2018). The family is back in the wood, its members are going about their tasks. It's a winter wood, so less accommodating and more reflective. It is a family like my own birth family, with a son and a daughter, of a similar era to my own. The painting titles are both nouns and verbs: *Dwelling, Being, Clearing, Building*, reflecting Heidegger's ideas about the intrinsic 'making' nature of human beings.

Perhaps as a response to the Covid shutdown around me, I was led to think about the post-World War II rebuilding programme and the desire of my parents' generation for quiet security and prosperity. My sources were illustrations of family life and childhood from that time, illustrations which informed my own childhood and which reflect this need for order, conformity and security.

In *Dwelling* the girl reaches for a Wood Anemone, the Windflower which appears in spring. Animated by spring winds, it takes its name from the word 'anima', Latin for 'soul'. Anima is also, in Jungian psychology, the unconscious feminine. In both *Being* and *Pupae* the children handle an over-sized chrysalis, the mysterious transitional developmental stage between caterpillar and butterfly.

So much of what was England at that time, so much of what the English assumed themselves to be, had been built on the suffering of others. It was the last time I think that we entertained these hopes and this vision of ourselves in the world. By the 1960s the bubble had burst and we were entering a new age of turbulence, doubt and uncertainty. In the last *Hibernia* painting, *Gathering*, we have moved on a decade and the buildings are now established. The children have grown. The butterflies have emerged. This is my generation and this image, from the Windsor Free Festival in 1974, reminds me both of that festival and also of my friends at the time.

These are the winterflowers of my lockdown.