

Benjamin Hold (1847-1917)

Brief biography

Benjamin Hold was one of the nine children of the artist Abel Hold. He was born in 1847 in Barnsley, Yorkshire. Unfortunately, but all too common for the time, two of his sisters died as babies but six boys and one girl survived to adulthood. Around 1852 the family moved to Cawthorne village, a few miles away. His grandparents were Wakefield Quakers but by this time it seems that his father was no longer a practising Quaker.

Ben was 22 years old when he was baptised, into the Church of England, at Cawthorne parish church in 1869. Several of his brothers were also baptised there as adults. In January 1875, he married Martha Ann Nichols, the daughter of a Cawthorne tanner. In the early 1880s he and Martha lived for a while in the Regent's Park area of London where he was employed as a house painter. By 1893 they had moved back to Beatson House, Cawthorne and Ben was working as an artist.

They later moved to Scarborough and lived first in Oak Road near Falsgrave Park and then a short distance away in Stepney Road. With Martha he had one daughter who married Harry Marshall and with him had 3 children, Victoria, Jenny and Richard. Jenny remembered Ben as being great fun whilst Martha was very strict. She went out with Ben on his painting trips and might be allowed to mix paints and pass brushes. It was in Scarborough that Ben died in 1917.

Ben was influenced by the art work of his father who chose his subjects from the local countryside. Abel had also served an apprenticeship as a house painter and several of Ben's uncles worked in artistic and creative jobs. Ben painted rural landscapes, animals and birds, in oils. Reflecting the subjects chosen by his father, they varied from the small, detailed studies of birds' nests to the wider landscapes of the English countryside. They were of a typical Victorian style and examples are held at Cawthorne Victoria Jubilee Museum and by Barnsley Arts, Museums and Archives Service. They also appear occasionally in auction sales.

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