



**DOERR DALLAS
VALUATIONS**



By Jonathan Horwich
Modern Art Specialist

HELEN BRADLEY (1900-1979)

Many of us promise ourselves that we will take up painting in retirement, few of us ever do and even fewer stick at it and only a tiny few achieve commercial and critical success with their Art. Helen Bradley was one of these tiny few and in her own uniquely British way she created a whole new life for herself with her Art when at the age of 65 she began painting pictures each one recalling a memory of her Edwardian childhood. To begin with her paintings were a way for her to show her grandchildren just how different a place the world was for her as a child in the Edwardian Era.

Born in 1900 Helen Bradley was like the late Queen Mother, the same age as the century she lived in. She was born in Lees just outside Oldham in Lancashire and showed enough early artistic talent for her to study Art but only for one year from 1913, when as for so many others the Great War intervened stopping her art studies in their tracks, then marriage and children followed.

At first glance you might think that Helen Bradley's paintings look a little like L S Lowry's figure compositions, however she had her own unique style and technique just as Lowry has his. Indeed the two artists met early on in Bradley's career, they got on well and Lowry continued to encourage Bradley in her work and the two developed a firm friendship. Neither artist followed or was influenced by the other and both held a strong admiration for each other's work.

The majority of Bradley's figure pictures depict specific remembered events and are often accompanied by a story handwritten in biro on a parcel label and usually attached to the back of the picture. These notes explain to some extent

what the viewer is looking at in the composition and the characters, Bradley sets the scene for us to share her memories and individual characters the most famous of which is Miss Carter. This excerpt from her online biography explains a little about her characters.

She mixed a little pink colour, she painted the dress of a tiny figure. From that moment was created the enchanting land that was to delight millions. The figure she painted was that of Miss Carter (who wore pink) who features in most of Helen Bradley's paintings. Other characters you will find are her mother, grandmother, her three maiden aunts, Mr Taylor (the bank manager) Helen herself with brother George and their dogs Gyp and Barney and many others.

These narrative paintings were first exhibited at The Saddleworth Art Society in 1965, followed by a London exhibition in 1966, and a sell out exhibition at the appropriately named Carter Gallery in Los Angeles in 1968.

In 1971 Jonathan Cape published the first of four books "And Miss Carter Wore Pink". This was an instant success. German, French, Dutch and Japanese editions were published, and a special edition produced for the U.S.A.

Requests for illustrations of her work were satisfied by the publication of 30 Signed Limited Edition Prints, 3 Unsigned Limited Edition Prints and 11 Open Edition Prints.

Magazine features, appearances on television and radio endeared Bradley to the general public and led to her being awarded the M.B.E. for services to the arts, unfortunately she died on the 19th of July 1979 shortly before she was due to receive her M.B.E. from Her Majesty The Queen.

Call us today to enquire about an appointment on **01883 722736** or email **enquiries@doerrvaluations.co.uk** or visit our website **www.doerrvaluations.co.uk**

The market for Helen Bradley's work is very well established and her work is regularly available at auction and in galleries and I hope that this little snapshot will whet your appetite for further investigation perhaps even a purchase. To start

with you could consider buying one of her beautifully illustrated books of story pictures, all are out of print but are available online or in specialist galleries for around £15 to 30, the signed limited edition prints start at around £350.



The Wakes Came to Leeds, signed with monogram and dated 1973, oil on canvas-board, 61 x 91.4 cm

Sold in 2020 for £75,000



This shows the back of 'The Wakes', top left you can see the artist's hand written label with the story commentary as follows:

The Wakes came to Lees and with it Big Bertha - the huge Traction Engine which was the joy of our life. Each year we waited for it to come clanking and puffing up the hill to our village square, and in no time at all the big Round-a-bout would be set up. Then the aunt Sally stalls and stalls with ribbons and beautiful fairings and goldfish in little bowls. Last of all the little round about would be unpacked. Then we knew we should soon hear the Big Organ booming away and Grandma, the aunts, Miss Carter (who wore Pink) and Mr Taylor (the Bank Manager) would call and Father, Mother, George and I would be ready to join in all the delights of the fair and for a special treat Father would lift George up so that he could see the works inside Big Bertha and the year was 1906/ Helen Layfield Bradley 1973.'



The Whitsuntide Procession in Manchester, signed and dated 1973, oil on canvas-board, 55.9 x 91.4 cm

Sold in 2019 for £112,500

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Oh it's the King and Queen, signed, oil on canvas, 96.7 x 183 cm

Sold in 2019 for £162,500



O Love is like a Red Red Rose, signed and dated 1966, oil on canvas-board, 38.1 x 22.6 cm

Sold in 2019 for £16,250



Buying Summer Hats, signed and dated 1967, oil on canvas-board, 61 x 76.2 cm

Sold in 2016 for £42,500



Oh Jane is it bad news, signed and dated 1971, oil on canvas-board, 38.7 x 34.3 cm

Sold in 2012 for £22,500



We loved our walks through the little woods, signed and dated 1975, watercolour, 27.3 x 38.1 cm

Sold in 2011 for £15,000



Armistice Day, 11th November 1918, signed, oil on canvas-board 52.7 x 73 cm

Sold in 2014 for £68,500