

**Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann
National Library of Ireland**

Prints and Drawings Collection List

Elizabeth Rivers Collection

PD 4246 TX

Collection comprised of sketchbooks and loose sketches, a small collection of proofs and prints from woodblocks, a collection of over forty woodblocks, as well as some miscellaneous material.

*Compiled by
Prints and Drawings Department
2008*

Elizabeth Rivers Archive

PD 4246 TX

INTRODUCTION

Biography

Born in 1903, Elizabeth Joyce Rivers training at Goldsmith's College, London from 1921-4, where she showed a keen interest in wood engraving. Having worked in a commercial art studio she gained a scholarship to the Royal Academy Schools, 1926-31, where she won numerous prizes and medals. During this time she illustrated several works including Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *The Day-Dream* (1928) as well as articles for the *Radio Times* [**Item 24** and **WB 13-18**]. Having spent three years studying in Paris, Rivers travelled to the Aran Islands in 1935, intending to visit for three months she stayed for a year. She returned in 1936 and remained there for seven years before returning to London to serve as a fire warden in the Blitz.

Rivers returned to Ireland after the war, in 1946 her book *Stranger in Aran* was the last work to be published by the Cuala Press. She also continued to illustrate others' works including her friend Ethel Mannin's *Connemara Journal* (1947) and Seán O'Faoláin's *The Man who invented Sin* (1948) [**WB 1-12**]. At this time Rivers also began a friendship and working relationship with Evie Hone. Incapacitated by illness Hone would pass inch scale designs to Rivers who worked them up to full size, the window in Eton College Chapel was developed in this way. Elizabeth Rivers continued producing art in various mediums, and exhibited works in watercolours, oils, stained glass, wood engravings and sculptures. She also continued to produce illustrations for works and published illustrated works of her own. Her last literary work, *Out of Bondage*, published in 1957 recorded a visit to Israel six years previously [**Item 15**]. Religion had played an increasingly important role in Rivers' life and works. In 1956 she was received into the Roman Catholic Church. She died at her home in Dublin on 20 July 1964. In 1966 a group of friends and admirers of Elizabeth Rivers staged a memorial exhibition of her works at the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin.

Archive

The National Library of Ireland acquired the Elizabeth Rivers Archive in 2003; it consisted of manuscript, photographic, printed and artistic material. The manuscript material is held in the Department of Manuscripts, it is catalogued in **Collection List 136**, available on the NLI website www.nli.ie/en/search-manuscripts-collection-listing.aspx. The small collection of photographic material is held in the National Photographic Archive, (**PC04 LOT16**). The seven periodical and printed books are catalogued on the library's online book catalogue, and their provenance clearly marked. In addition the library also holds several other books written or illustrated by Elizabeth Rivers, which can also be found through the online catalogue.

The portion of the Elizabeth Rivers Archive held by the Department of Prints and Drawings consists of sketchbooks and loose sketches, a small collection of proofs and prints from woodblocks, a collection of over forty woodblocks, as well as some miscellaneous material. The material has been listed in three main sections. The first section of the list deals with the sketchbooks and loose drawings. The works have been divided by theme, and then arranged chronologically. Where more than one theme is covered in a book this has been noted. The second section lists the proof and prints from woodblock; these have been listed chronologically. The third section lists the woodblock within the archive. Where identification is possible these have been listed by publication. As well as this archive the Department of Prints and Drawings holds considerable additional material by Elizabeth Rivers, and overview of this is given at the end of the Collection List.

Bibliography

Theo Snoddy, *Dictionary of Irish Artists 20th Century* (Merlin Publishing, Ireland, 2002)

Elizabeth River's Memorial Exhibition Catalogue (Dolmen Press, Dublin, 1966)

Harriet Wheelock
Archival Studentship
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COLLECTION LIST

I. Sketches and watercolours

This sections list the sketchbooks and loose drawing with pencil, ink, pastels or watercolours. The material has been divided thematically, where a sketchbook covers more than one theme, it has been placed in the section of the majority of the works, and a note made in the other section.

I.i. Rural landscapes and people

This section contains sketches and watercolours of rural scenes, many from the Aran Islands, as well as drawings of figures. See also **item 16** which contains one pencil landscape. Also **item 13**, which contains black and white photographs of rural life in the Aran Islands.

- Item 1** Sketchbook containing pencil and ink sketches [from the Aran Islands], including landscapes and men working with horses; 34pp
c.1935-43
- Item 2** Sketchbook containing pencil sketches and watercolours of rural landscapes. Also contains ink and pencil studies of Madonna and Child; 24pp
undated
- Item 3** Sketchbook containing pencil sketches of landscapes and ink sketches of figures swimming in the sea; 9pp
undated
- Item 4** Writing pad with pencil sketches of cattle and some landscapes, also contains some manuscript pencil notes; 27pp
undated
- Item 5** Sketchbook containing pencil and ink portraits, also contains loose leaves with sketches of landscapes and the Madonna and child. Also contains manuscript notes; 15pp with 6 loose pages
[front cover of sketchbook is detached]
undated
- Item 6** Portion of a sketchbook containing pencil landscape sketches; 6pp
undated
- Item 7** Portfolio containing a series of ink sketches of men chopping down a tree; 39pp
undated

- Item 8** Sketchbook containing pencil and ink sketches and one watercolour of landscapes and figures, some cycling or by the sea, also a small number of portraits. Includes manuscript notes; 23pp undated
- Item 9** Sketchbook containing pencil and ink sketches of landscapes and figures, also contains one landscape watercolour; 28pp with two loose items undated
- Item 10** Sketchbook containing watercolours of boats and landscapes, also contains loose sheets with pencil and ink sketches of various subjects including a man playing an accordion and men hauling nets; 26pp undated

I.ii. War Time London

This section contains an album of sketches made in London during the Blitz. Elizabeth Rivers had been living on the Aran Islands at the outbreak of war but in 1943 she felt compelled to return to London to play her part as a fire warden.

- Item 11** Album of *Notes and Sketches in War*, made during the Blitz in London, most sketches are drawn on scraps of papers, which have later been attached to the book, there are also some loose pages and one photograph. The main focus is the air raid shelters on the London Underground, sketches are all dated with a note on location; 46pp 1943-5
- Item 12** Mounted sketch of *Child in Underground Shelter*. AR 4320. Note on back sold to W. E. Dawe, Sevenoaks. There is also a note of this sale in the album of *Notes and Sketches in War* above; 1 item c.1943-5

I.iii. Travel Sketchbooks

This section contains three sketchbooks covering trips to Italy, France and Israel. The sketchbook from the Israel trip contains sketches that were later worked up for publication in *Out of Bondage* (1957).

- Item 13** Sketchbook containing sketches made during a trip to Italy, containing landscapes or copies of works of art in pencil or ink, also one watercolour. Contains eleven loose sheets with ink sketches and watercolours, and one design for a wood engraved [Christmas card]. Also includes twelve black and white photographs of life on the

[Aran Islands]; 12pp with 23 loose items
March 1934 and undated

Item 14 Sketchbook containing sketches made during a trip to France, mainly containing landscapes or portraits in pencil and ink. Also includes manuscript notes on various subjects, including a travel plan and accounts inside back cover; 41pp
[Feb – March 1949]

Item 15 Folder containing loose pencil, ink and watercolour sketches undertaken during a visit to Israel, most of the sketches has a brief note on content. Also includes articles on the discover of the fifth century *Madonna Glycophilousa* [our Lady of Tenderness] behind two later over-paintings; 30pp
[1951]

I.iv. Religious images

Religion had a strong role in much of Elizabeth Rivers' art, particularly in her later year, when she designed in stained glass, as well as a commissioned set of oil painted Stations of the Cross for the new church at Kilconeran, county Galway. In 1956 she was received into the Roman Catholic Church. See also **Item 2** and **Item 5** which both contains ink and pencil studies of the Madonna and child.

Item 16 Sketchbook containing pencil and ink studies of the Crucifixion scene and Celtic High Crosses. Also contains ink sketches of a cat and one pencil landscape; 11pp
undated

Item 17 Sketchbook containing studies of religious subjects in pencil and ink, including sketches for Stations of the Cross, also includes manuscript notes on art and the symbolism of the Catholic Church; 64pp
undated

Item 18 Portion of a sketchbook containing pastel drawings mainly of stained glass windows from French churches, some drawings give location of window; 30pp
undated

Item 19 Series of designs for Stations of the Cross, contains;

- Pastels drawings on squared background of Stations I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, [X]
- Pencil tracings of Stations I, II, III, IV, V, XI, XII, [XIII]
- Pencil drawing of Station I

19 items, with 7 blank sheets

undated

I.v. Miscellaneous

- In woodblocks
drawer 3** Medal from the Royal Academy of Arts presented to 'Elizabeth Joyce Rivers for a set of four drawings of a figure; 1 item
10 Dec 1928
- Item 20** Sketchbook containing sketches on various subjects including 'notes on abstract construction lesson' with related drawings, a religious design and a number of ink sketches of figures, also extensive manuscript notes; 27pp
undated
- Item 21** Loose pencil and ink sketches of various subjects; 12 items
undated
- Item 22** Portfolio contain six pencil and watercolour sketches, also contains two reproductions of other artist's works; 8 items
undated
- Item 23** Leather portfolio with initials on front of Elizabeth Rivers; 1 item
undated

II. Proofs and woodblock prints

- Item 24** Volume containing original proofs of wood engraved illustrations, including works for the *Radio Times* and various books including Helicon 1928 edition of Tennyson's *The Day-Dream*. Also contains proofs of book covers for the following works;
- Alexis Kivi, *Seven Brothers* (Faber & Faber)
 - Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (Macmillan)
 - *Introduction to Sally* (Macmillan)
 - John Fortescue (ed.), *Recollections of Rifleman Harris* (Peter Davis)
 - Charles Edmonds, *A Subaltern's War* (Peter Davis)
- 43pp with 5 loose items
1926-30
- Item 25** Folders containing incomplete page proofs of *Stranger in Aran*, and cards advertising the publication of the same. Also contains manuscript drafts of three poems, one entitled 'The Voices. To W. B. Yeats', and four ink and pencil sketches; 22pp
1946, 1948 and undated
- Item 26** Album containing proofs of wood engraved Christmas cards, with letterpress. Includes cards specially commissioned by Father M. E. Lynch and the Whitefriars of Faversham, the Irish Minister for Posts and Telegraphs and the National Blood Transfusion Service. Also contains a card designed by Rivers and sent to her by friends; 23pp
1959-60 and undated
- Item 27** Concertina sheet containing six wood engraved prints of religious scenes; 1 item
undated

III. Woodblocks

III.i. Ethel Mannin's *Connemara Journal* (1947)

This is an incomplete set, woodblocks are missing for the illustrations on p. 57, p.111, p.167 and colophon p.190.

Drawer 1	Frontispiece; 1 item
WB 1	1947
WB 2	Head of a woman, p.33; 1 items 1947
WB 3	Seagull on the rocks, p.41; 1 item 1947
WB 4	Books by the fire, p.81; 1 item 1947
WB 5	Street scene, p.93; 1 item 1947
WB 6	Man in a landscape, p.139; 1 item 1947

III.ii. Seán O'Faoláin's *The Man who invented Sin and other stories* (1948)

This is an incomplete set, woodblocks are missing for frontispiece and for the short story 'Innocence', p.59

Drawer 1	For the short story 'The Man who invented Sin', p.9; 1 item
WB 7	1948
WB 8	For the short story 'The Trout', p.65; 1 item 1948
WB 9	For the short story 'The end of a good man', p.81' 1 item 1948 On reverse is a partially cut image of a landscape with figures and a star, possibly the Flight into Egypt.
WB 10	For the short story 'A letter', p.97; 1 item 1948
WB 11	For the short story 'Teresa' p.169; 1 item 1948

WB 12 Colophon, p.183; 1 item
1948

III.iii. For the *Radio Times*

There are prints from most of these woodblocks in the volume of woodblock prints, **item 24**.

Drawer 2 'The Island', Tomlinson for the *Radio Times*; 1 item
WB 13 1928

WB 14 Blocks for advertisement for Granville Bantock's *Song of Songs*
WB 15 printed in the *Radio Times*; 2 items
c.1928

WB 16 For an advertisement for a performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in
the Royal Albert Hall, printed in the *Radio Times*; 1 item
c.1928

WB 17 [Graves], part of 'Musicians killed in the War' article in the *Radio*
Times; 1 item
1930

WB 18 'The parting of the Red Sea', produced for the *Radio Times*; 1 item
1935

III.iv. Christmas cards

There are prints from most of these woodblocks in the album of Christmas card, **item 26**.

Drawer 2 [Village scene]; 1 item
WB 19 1959

WB 20 'Madonna and Child'; 1 item
undated

WB 21 [Town from a distance]; 1 item
undated

WB 22 [Nativity scene]; 1 item
undated

WB 23 [Shepherds arriving in Bethlehem]; 1 item

undated

WB 24 Two uncut blocks with pencil sketches of [the Angel Gabriel]; 2
WB 25 items
undated

III.v. Others

This section contains woodblock that have not been identified with any specific publication, in most cases the design names has not been identified and so a short descriptive name is given. In addition there are two nineteenth century engravings belonging to Elizabeth Rivers, which were included with the collection.

Drawer 3 [Soldiers] by an anonymous engraver; 1 item
WB 26 c.19th century

WB 27 [Preacher] by an anonymous engraver; 1 item
c.19th century

WB 28 ‘The Ladder’; 1 item
c.1931

WB 29 ‘Psalm’; 1 item
c.1962-3

Drawer 4 [Woman standing in front of a boat under trees]
WB 30 undated

WB 31 Two blocks of [a dog in front of a cottage], one is damaged; 2 items
WB 32 undated

WB 33 Woodblock of [three birds] with a separate engraving of a stool on the reverse; 1 item
undated

WB 34 [Hen]; 1 item
undated

WB 35 [Birds]; 1 item
undated

WB 36 [Two men]; 1 item
undated

WB 37 [Books]; 1 item

- undated
- WB 38** [Phoenix]; 1 item
undated
- WB 39** [Artist in landscape]; 1 item
undated
- WB 40** [Village scene]; 1 item
undated
- WB 41** [Farm animals and birds]; 1 item
undated
- WB 42** [Fish]
undated
- WB 43** Two uncut woodblocks for Station XII of the Stations of the Cross
undated

IV. Additional material

In addition to this archive the Department of Prints and Drawings holds over two hundred items produced by Elizabeth Rivers. Many of these are single items and are catalogued individually, with a digital image, on the prints and drawing online catalogue, www.nli.ie/en/prints-and-drawings-introduction.aspx, there are also several small collections of works by Elizabeth Rivers; a brief overview of them is given below.

- PD 3013 TX** Illustrations for *Connemara Journal* by Ethel Mannin; 10 items
c.1947
- PD 3015 TX** Illustrations for *The Man who invented Sin* by Seán O Faoláin; 7
items
c.1954
- PD 3016 TX** Illustrations for *This Man* by Elizabeth Rivers; 10 items
1939
- PD 3018 TX** Artist's proofs for *Initium S. Evangelii Secundum Joannem*; 2 items
c.1953
- PD 3021 TX** Illustrations for *Out of Bedlam* by Christopher Smart; 20 items
1956
- PD 3022 TX** Illustrations for *Stranger in Aran* by Elizabeth Rivers; 15 items
c.1946
- PD 3023 TX** Illustrations for *A Picture Book* by Frank O'Connor; 25 items
c.1933
- PD 3024 TX** Preliminary sketches for *A Picture Book* by Frank O'Connor; 17
works in 1 volume
c.1933
- PD 3025 TX** Illustrations for *Out of Bondage* by Elizabeth Rivers; 31 items
c.1951-7
- PD 3026 TX** Sketchbook with preparatory drawings for *Out of Bondage* by
Elizabeth Rivers; 30 works in 1 volume
c.1951-7
- PD 3102 TX** Nine cards, one flyer and one exhibition catalogue mostly published
by the Dolmen Press; 11 works
undated
- PD 3147 TX** Miscellaneous prints; 6 items

undated

PD 4311 TX

Prints for *This Man, Out of Bedlam, The White Hound of the Mountain* and the *Radio Times*; 15 items
c.1928-56