'Only On Sundays' Ferry by Norman Wilkinson

Norman Wilkinson

£580



REF: 83907

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Height: 26.66 cm (10.5")

Width: 41.89 cm (16.5")

Description

A watercolour and gouache on board of a Paddle Steamship Ferry.

Only On Sundays may refer to its use on that day for pleasure trips as opposed to its usual commuter work. As the steamboats edged out the traditional watermen ferry services, so the trains entered the competition for commuters in the mid 19th century and other sources of income were needed. Various trips from Gravesend could be taken on a Sunday to other coastal towns such as Southend, Herne Bay, Sheerness and the Pleasure Gardens at Rosherville.

The back of the board has a label with a blue vertical line separating the notes '5 .R. 6" 8"' and 'Gravesend, 'Only On Sundays', Diamond. S.S. Company. .Kent.18/G/PS.'. The front of the picture is signed 'Norman Wilkinson' on the right towards the bottom corner. Written in pencil directly to the back of the board is 'Vesper, Ferry Service, 18##'. The Star Steam Packet Company, founded in 1833, had a wooden Paddle Steamship called Vesper. They were in direct competition with the Diamond Steam Packet Company.

The yellow paddle steamer has one funnel with a black crown to the top and a red flag with a yellow star. The boat is full of passengers with their best hats on enjoying a day out and the captain at the ship's bow. The yellow of the steam ship stands out against the grey of the water and the light orange of the sky. To the background, on either side of the ship, are the banks of the Thames Estuary with further ships moored.

It is probable that this is a retrospective illustration by Wilkinson, perhaps done for a cigarette card or book. As such he may have been either confused in his research of the Vesper and its ownership or amalgamated the information for the purpose of the picture. It is a fine painting and Wilkinson has captured the busy life of a Victorian Steam Packet on the Thames. Circa 1930.

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