Waiting for the Invasion

Thomas Rowlandson

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Description

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827)
Waiting for the Invasion

Pen and grey ink and watercolour over pencil
30.5 by 45.9 cm., 12 by 18 in.

Provenance:
With the Fine Art Society, 1946;
Anonymous sale, Christie's, 4th November 1975, lot 33;
Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, 14th July 1988, lot 74;
By descent to the present owner

This drawing is likely to date from between 1798 and 1805, when invasion of England by Napoleon and his army seemed at its most imminent. In 1798 these fears led to The Defence of the Realm Act, passed on 5th April, which determined how the country would be defended. A system of volunteer regiments was set up and beacons were installed along the coast as a means of fast communication. In the summer of 1803 when war resumed after the Treaty of Amiens of 1802, General Sir David Dundas set up his headquarters in Canterbury convinced that Dover was the most likely place for a Napoleonic invasion.

Another version of this watercolour is illustrated in Bernard Falk's Thomas Rowlandson, his Life and Art, a Documentary Record, 1949, p.165 and Adrian Bury's Rowlandson's Drawings, 1949, pl.81. It is likely to depict somewhere in south-west England.

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