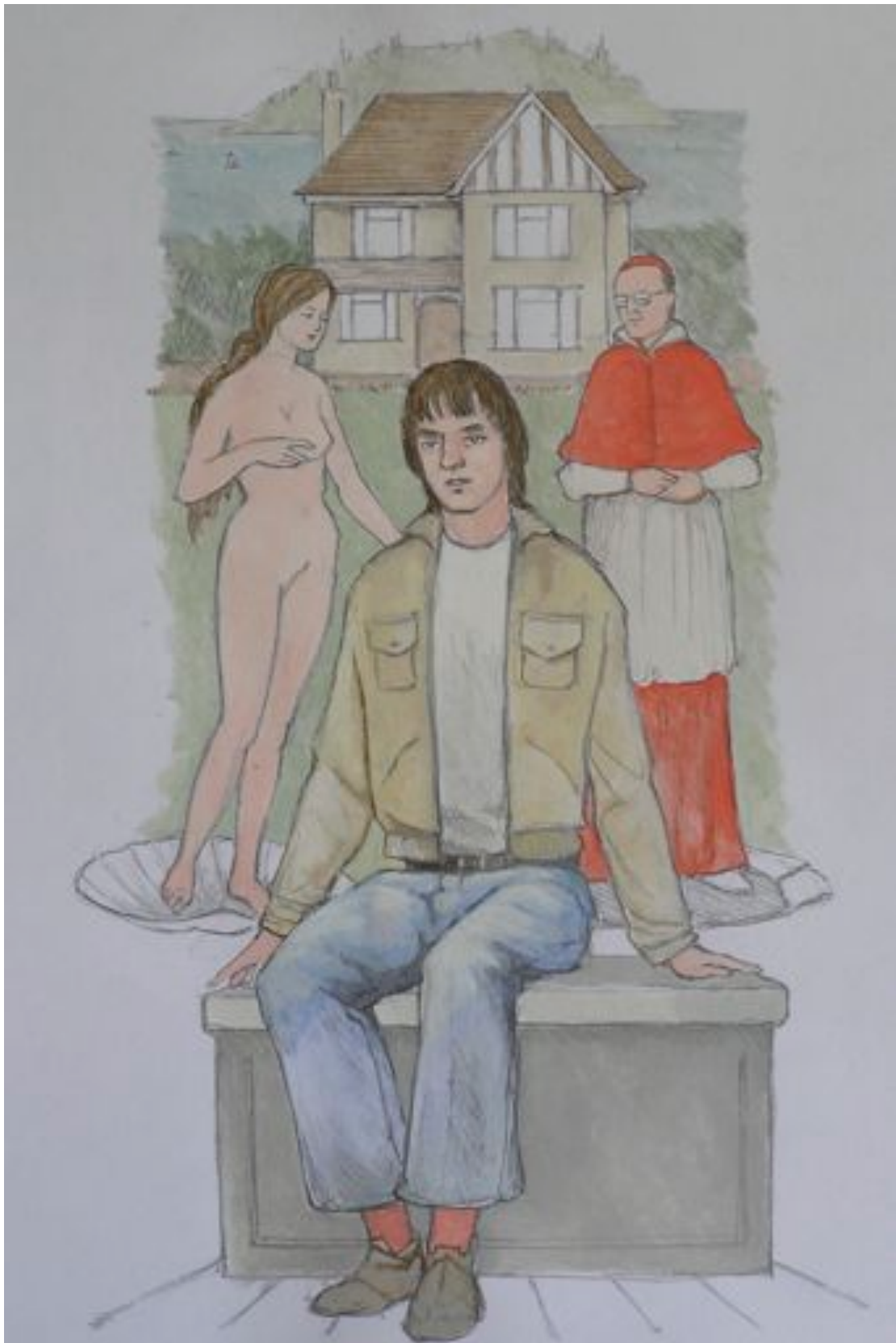


2. Teaching, marriage and fatherhood: 1970-1979



1. The Choice (1969 and 2010)

The ten years which elapsed between my leaving Oxford and taking up the post of Schools' Museum officer in Devon were in some ways the most momentous of my life. I trained as a teacher, got married, and became a father. My painting both reflected these challenges and provided an alternative to them, as if there were a second 'self' shadowing my public one, competing for the title of 'real me.' Yet the theme that predominates - the fate of love in a time of evil - reflects exactly what was happening to the 60s dream as terrorism came increasingly to dominate the news.

As if to herald this development 'The Choice' (1) showed a figure meant to represent me pondering the alternative paths his life might take. All are forms of escapism: on the left the naked girl standing on Venus' shell suggests one way of forgetting the real world for a while, whilst on the right the Pope, standing precariously on a spider's web meant to symbolise religious belief, represents another. Behind them the suburban house stands for domesticity - career, mortgage, family, pension - that comfortable, predictable existence which is death to a creative spirit. Finally, in the distance, there is a fantasy island - Cythera perhaps, as in the Watteau painting - yet another form of escape.



2. I Dream of Monsters (1970 and 2010)

'I Dream of Monsters' was the only large painting that I completed whilst qualifying as a teacher. The above version gives the girl a face which the original did not, although at that time I was experiencing my first real love affair. How could one enjoy such private happiness without behaving like the legendary ostrich? The affair ended as such affairs do, when sex and love are found to be

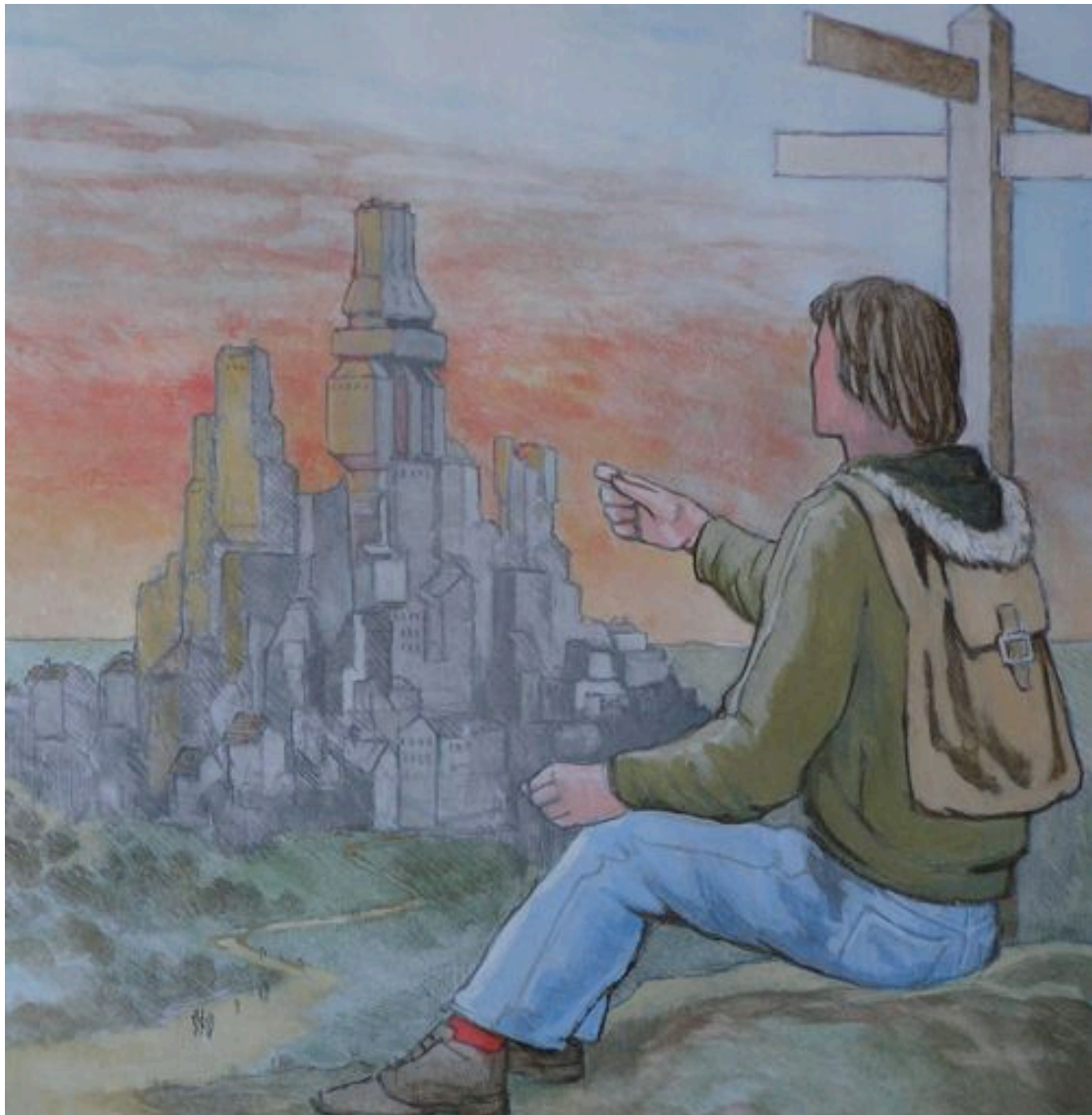
different things. The bleakness of the small painting below recalls the occasion when I made this discovery.. Anyone who has been through such an experience will know what is represented by the figure walking away.



3. The Heart is Frozen: 1970

I'd never intended to pursue a career in Education. Confronted with the need to earn a living whilst pursuing my ambition to be an artist I'd applied to do a PGCE at the last moment and my first two years as a teacher were a struggle, partly because I found myself forced to rely on the kind of authority which I'd despised during my time at university. How could I, a 'free' man, impose discipline on others? It is a dilemma I have never entirely resolved though I have come to accept the difference between means and ends. Fortunately the experiences were not all negative. I met my wife and I achieved promotion, taking on a leadership role outside the classroom which was much better suited to my temperament.

Busy as I was I never gave up my desire to create a 'book' which would reconcile my inner and outer worlds and somehow make sense of the complex life I was leading. In the large painting called 'The Crossroads' (4) a traveller rests by a signpost, clearly wondering which route to take. Before him lies a great city, building piled upon building, my standard metaphor for 'civilisation'. It has both a light and a dark side, the darker side silhouetted against a flaming sunset. Unlike 'The Choice' (1), it seems that the outcome is predetermined: the traveller will enter the city where, we may assume, he will lose what freedom he has enjoyed during his journey.



5. The Crossroads (1972 and 2010)

At university I had dreamed of being 'outside the world' yet within it. Now I was confronting the difficulty of such a pose. As a teacher, a husband and a father others I had to accept that love required engagement: there was no 'standing back'. From this time on, my talents as an artist would frequently be deployed in support of my career, to such an extent, indeed, that Ralph Henry, the headmaster of the school where I first taught, once asked me what I would have

done without my ability to draw - which so often helped me explain a point or set a more congenial task. When I did paint 'for myself' it was often on a small scale. The years of my youth were speeding by: there was a need to catch and hold on to the fleeting moment - to know that, when I looked back (as I surely would one day), it would not be with regret. In the drawing below (6) the diamond I am holding represents my allotted span of 'three score years and ten' Realisation of the inevitability of extinction brings a flash of insight that in turn leads to a kind of rebirth and with it the gift of second sight. I am back in the company of Dante, ascending to Paradise, but this time it is a worldly liberation that I celebrate - culminating in a self-coronation that symbolises my ability to be myself *and* what others expect me to be (7). Note that as I crown myself I recognise the sovereignty of others.



6. The Diamond: 1974

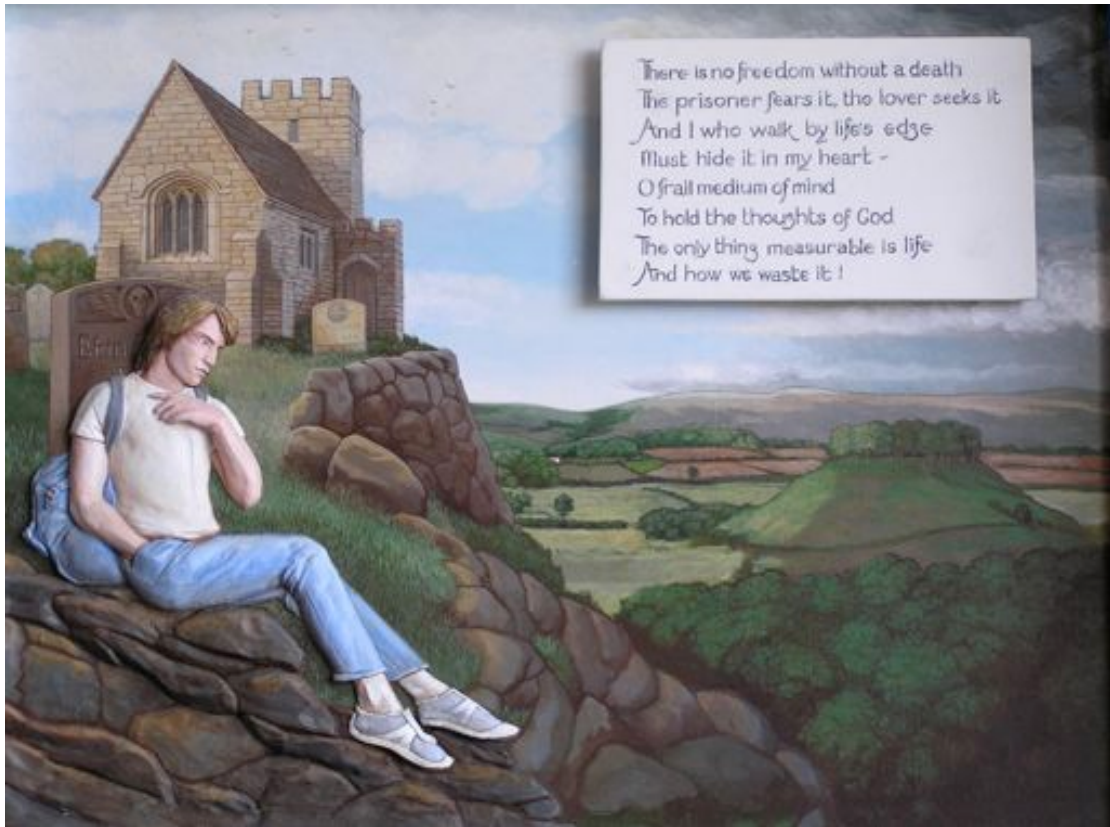
In all there were twelve drawings to the series of which these two drawings form a part. Amongst them was one I called 'The Garden of Statues'. (8) Inspired by Michelangelo's half finished apostles from the tomb of Pope Julius they represent men and women who are still imprisoned within the material from which they are made and have not therefore gained the freedom to think and act as fully rounded individuals. Death will take them before they have truly been born unless awareness of the brevity of life awakes them to the need to make the most of it.



7. Coronation: 1974



8. The Garden of Statues: 1974



9. Et in Arcadia Ego (1975 and 1982)

The same theme is pursued in 'Et in Arcadia Ego' (9). The quote comes from Ovid and is a reminder that however beautiful the life we make for ourselves on earth it will come to an end – probably in an anonymous hospital ward. In the version reproduced above that final scene has been replaced by a view of Denbury Clump, the hill in south Devon where I want my ashes to be scattered, and by a poem written during one of my many journeys across the county whilst I was its director of Educational Resources.

The irony expressed in this painting – in the midst of life we are in death – shows that I was beginning to take leave of the simple optimism of my university days. For many years I had believed in a human nature that could be redeemed by self-knowledge with evil the result of ignorance rather than malice. Now I was starting to see the mind as a battleground where intelligence and energy compete for dominance, with disaster the result if either secures a total victory. The outside world merely reflects this mental conflict, its bloody history the inevitable consequence of a system divided against itself. Thus the little boy with his bow and arrow playing a harmless game comes upon a dead soldier, the victim of similar games played with more dangerous toys (10).

The background to the scene is bleak but the dead soldier is heroic in appearance. Are we not often at our most noble whilst engaged in horrific acts? Do we not love and admire those who give up their lives in war whilst professing to hate war itself?

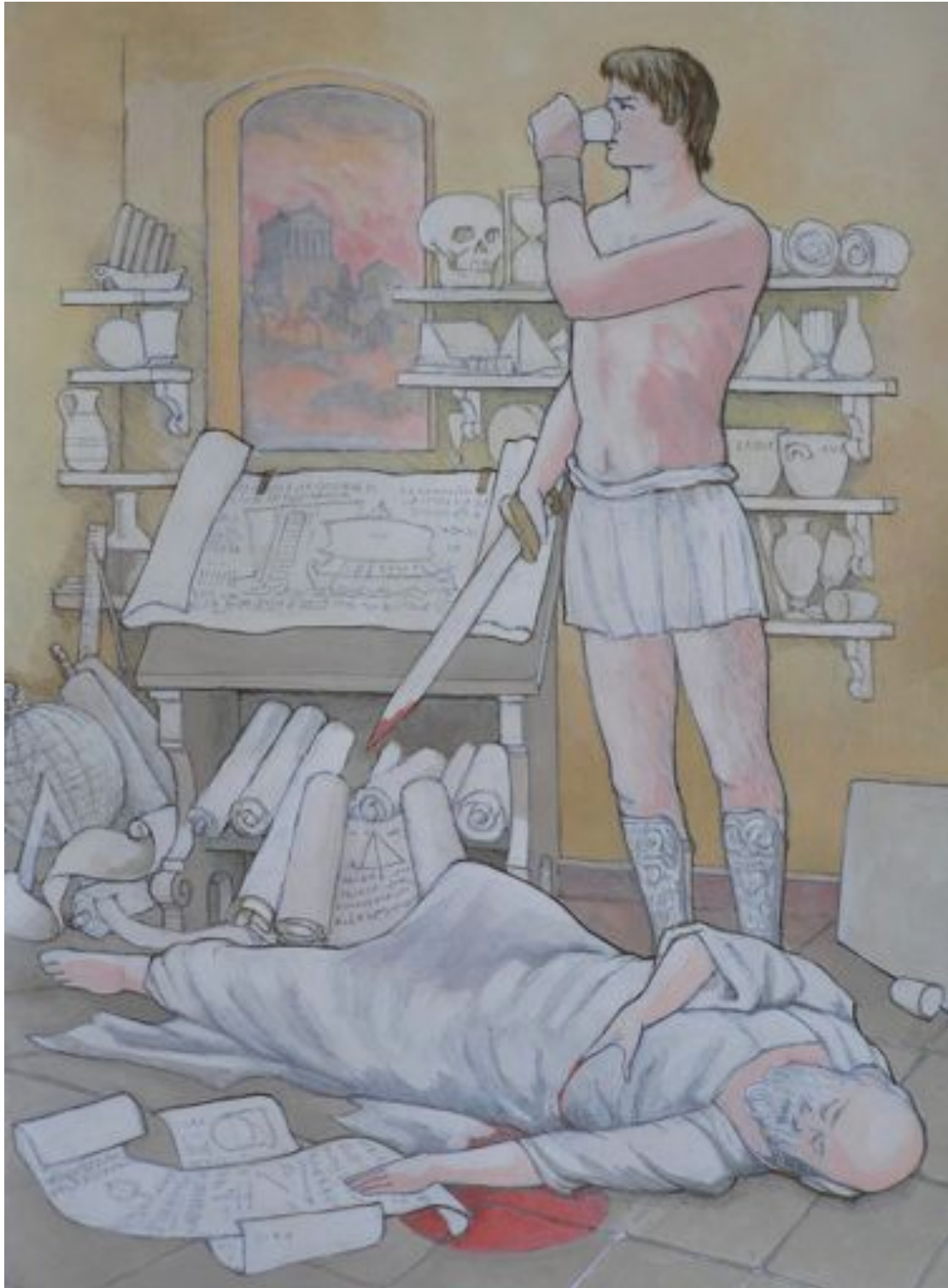


10. The Dead Soldier: 1982

The 'Death of Archimedes' (11) echoes the same idea. During the sack of Syracuse in 211 BC the brilliant engineer was killed by a drunken Greek soldier who did not know (or care?) who he was. Archimedes' wisdom and knowledge are symbolised by the scrolls and instruments that surround him in his study. The soldier cannot read the former and does not understand the purpose of the latter. Thus 'ignorance is strength...'

The child in (10) is my son John who was about six when the version illustrated above was completed. It is a reminder that I had much to be proud of in these years. Happily established in our first little house in Maidstone I painted my wife Kit as she pursued her favourite hobby of sewing – one of the few paintings from this time which has a date (12).

Kit was also the inspiration for the grandest project of this time, the still (2010) unfinished Marriage Box (13). Based on Memling's Shrine of St Ursula in the Hospital of St John in Bruges, it is nevertheless a wholly secular celebration of love in art and literature, with one long side featuring the story of Romeo and Juliet and the other Boccaccio's equally sad tale of Isabella and the Pot of Basil. The roof has roundels depicting our star signs and references to Magdalen College and Kent, as well as the Judgement of Paris and the Triumph of Venus, whilst the ends feature the Greek legend of Daphnis and Chloe and another version of Piero and Francesca from the Divine Comedy. Inside a smaller box contains our marriage certificate.



11. The Death of Archimedes (2010)



12. Kitty: 1974



13. The Marriage Box: begun 1978

Parenthood brings with it many joys but also anxieties, not least of them a heightened consciousness that the world into which one has brought children is a dangerous place with an uncertain future: this was particularly true in the 1970s when the 'cold war' between the USA and the USSR continued to raise fears of Armageddon. In the same year that I began the Marriage Box I pictured my family life with Kit and John as a ride through scenes of increasing chaos, an idea equally indebted to Brecht's 'Mother Courage and her Children' and to Ingmar Bergman's 'Seventh Seal.' (14) With capitalism lurching from one crisis to another and millions facing poverty whilst a few enjoy unimaginable riches, the picture is as relevant in 2010 as it was in 1978.



14. The Wagon: 1978

Shortly after this painting was completed we were indeed on the move, from Kent to far off Devon where I was to find challenges in the real world that took me still further from the idealism of my early paintings. However they also brought me increasingly into contact with professional artists and designers for whom a high level of technical competence was as important as artistic inspiration.