

The Curious Coincidence of the Picture on Instagram

By Jacqueline Pumphrey, Great Coxwell



What's your experience of coincidence? How do you feel about it? My strangest example is that when I got together with my now husband, my bank sort code was exactly the same as his date of birth. What are the chances?! I'm not saying that's why we got together, but I must admit to a certain sense of planetary alignment upon discovering this surprising fact. Fast-forward ten years, to another very surprising coincidence. I'm part of the Great Coxwell Artists Group, who have an annual exhibition during Oxfordshire Artweeks. Last year I wasn't able to take part due to time pressures but I did show a painting in the Swire Arts Competition run by the Friends of the Ridgeway in Uffington. At the end of the exhibition, I went along to collect the piece, entitled 'Winter Walk', only to discover that it had sold. I was curious about who'd bought it but had to content myself only with the warm glow of success.

Six months later, I'm idly browsing Instagram, looking at the ever-inspiring Oxfordshire Artweeks feed. I stumble across an account belonging to a local picture framer, Well Hung Framing. I usually frame my pictures very cheaply with vintage frames from charity shops, which is what I had done for the picture in the Uffington exhibition. I scroll through her feed and a very familiar image instantly jumps out at me: my 'Winter Walk' painting! How can this be? It has been framed in a distressed bright blue painted frame, which sets it off in a way I had never envisaged.

From the comments I learn that this framing was commissioned by local author, Baulking's Clover Stroud (Insta @Clover.Stroud), who bought the painting for her husband, so that they could take a little piece of home with them when they went abroad for two years.

You may think this is coincidence enough, but the fact is that although I have never met Clover, I know that I am related to her and her sisters Emma Bridgewater and the late Nell Gifford by marriage. They and my husband share the same great-grandparents, Ernest, and Iris Pumphrey.

I contact Clover on Instagram to point out this curious coincidence and she is as amused as I am. It's good finally to know who bought my painting – I thought its fate was forever to be a secret from me. It somehow brings me a great deal of pleasure that it should have been bought by someone with whom I am already tangentially connected.



Now you may say that the purchase was influenced by the recognition of the surname, or point out that both the artist, buyer and framer all live in neighbouring villages in a small corner of Oxfordshire – but still, really, what are the chances? I wouldn't normally have been exhibiting in Uffington. If Clover hadn't popped in on the hunt for a present, the picture might never have sold. If she hadn't taken it to Well Hung Framing, I would never have seen it. And if I hadn't been looking at Instagram, I would never have known the extremely satisfying outcome of this little tale.

The whole experience has inspired me to commit to working on a new series of pictures of the Ridgeway, which I hope to exhibit not only in the annual Swire Arts Competition but also in Oxfordshire Artweeks in May. Such is the galvanising power of satisfying coincidence.

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You can see Jacqueline's paintings in Great Coxwell (Artweeks venue 500).

Clover Stroud's new book *A Giant on the Skyline* which is inspired by the local landscape and a sense of home publishes on 9 May, during Oxfordshire Artweeks. Coincidentally, its beautiful cover shows a painting by Anna Dillon, another Artweeks artist who is opening her own studio in Aston Tirrold near Didcot as part of the festival (Artweeks venue 448).

