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Watercolour SECRETS

Tips & Techniques To Make Watercolour Painting Easier & More Enjoyable

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Index of Lessons

Watercolour Secrets
SECTION 1

CREATE WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH SIMPLE SHAPES

1. Using basic shapes to create any object, whether it's a flower, a figure, animal or anything else isn't new. It's been used for hundreds of years. Breaking down an apparently complex object to a series of basic shapes makes it a whole lot easier to draw before you even have to think about adding paint!

A
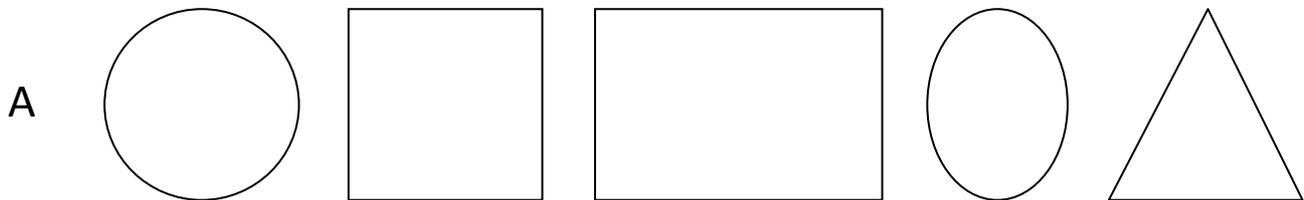
2. I just use five basic shapes – circle, square, oblong, oval and triangle, as (A) above. You can see how you can easily manipulate these shapes (B) below, by stretching or compressing them to suit your subject. And don't think you have to draw your basic shapes as neatly as I've achieved with these computer images. All that's necessary is something like my (very!) rough outlines (C) further down. These rough shapes are what I used in all of the *Watercolour Secrets DVD Course*© lessons to create the subject matter I happened to be working on....

B

C
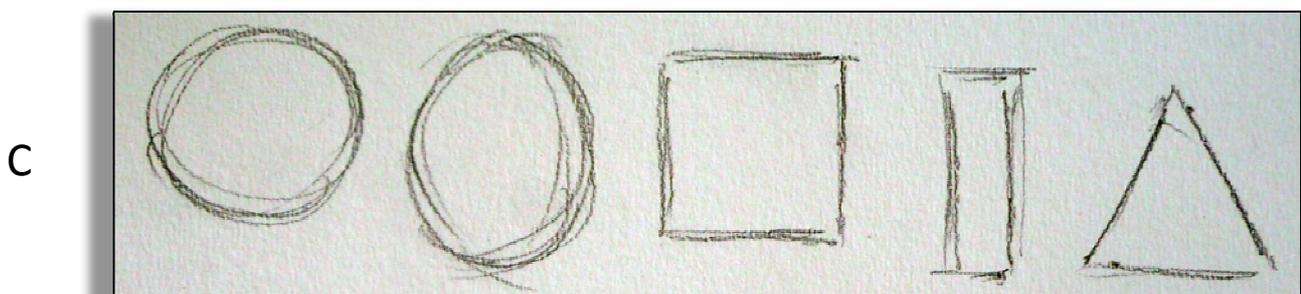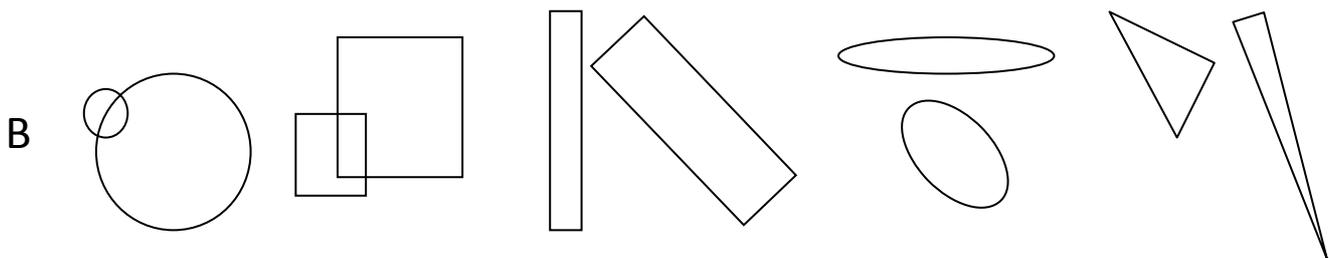
WATERCOLOUR SECRETS TIP:
I've deliberately drawn many guidelines throughout this short-course a lot heavier than they need to be, like the ones above. This is so you can see them easier. However, I recommend you keep your own guidelines as light as possible – just enough to be able to see them. Then, when you come to erase them having drawn your finished item, they'll be much easier to erase and this is less likely to damage your paper.

3. Here, you can see how, just by using triangles and ovals stretched in different ways, you can produce the ideal shape for two completely different flowers.
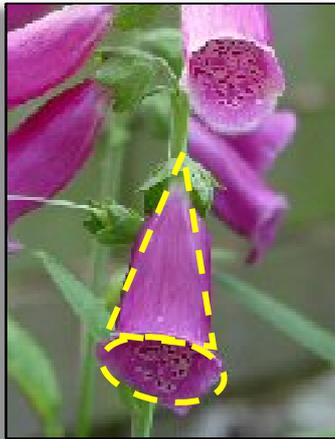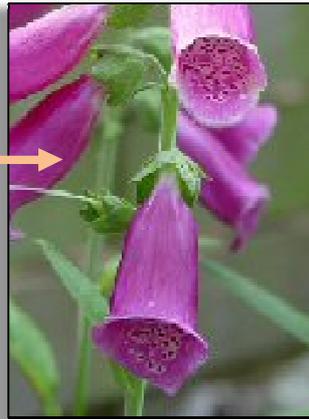
4. First you have the foxglove (left) with its long, distinctive trumpet shape and then below that, the tulip with its equally well known... erm... tulip shape!
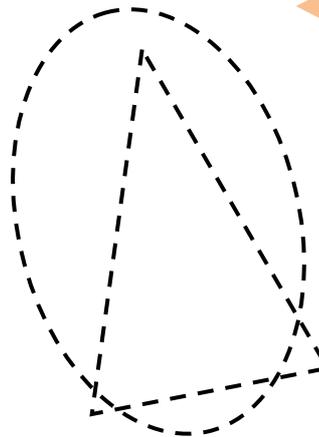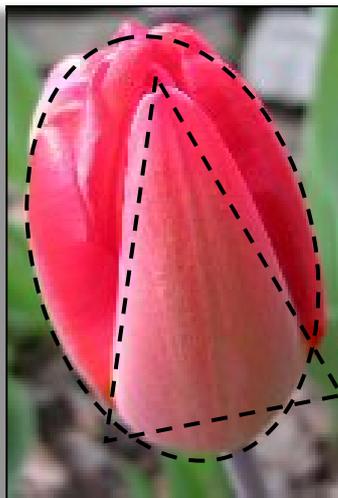
5. These shapes I've shown as dotted lines give you the perfect basis of 'scaffolding' to go on and draw more realistic outlines (bottom of page) , with all of the added the confidence that gives you, that you've 'caught' the right shapes, ready for painting.

6. And don't forget, you don't have to produce a detailed drawing - you only need an outline if you're going to add paint. In fact, as a general rule with watercolours, the less pencil marks the better, as too many can make things look cluttered and scruffy. The outlines, on the left are more than enough to give you an accurate basis for adding your paint.
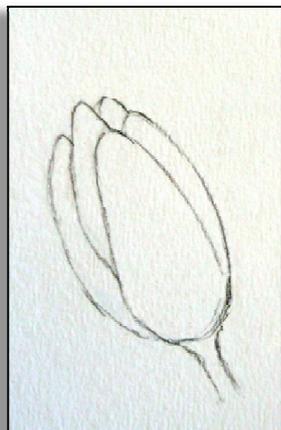
7. We can move this idea on easily to produce the same outcome for what might *appear* to be more complex subjects - but really aren't if you take it one step at a time. Animals are a case in point. See how I've put shapes round the main parts of the Kangaroo in the right hand photo. Take the photo away (below) and see how the red 'scaffolding 'already looks like a pretty good representation of the animal.
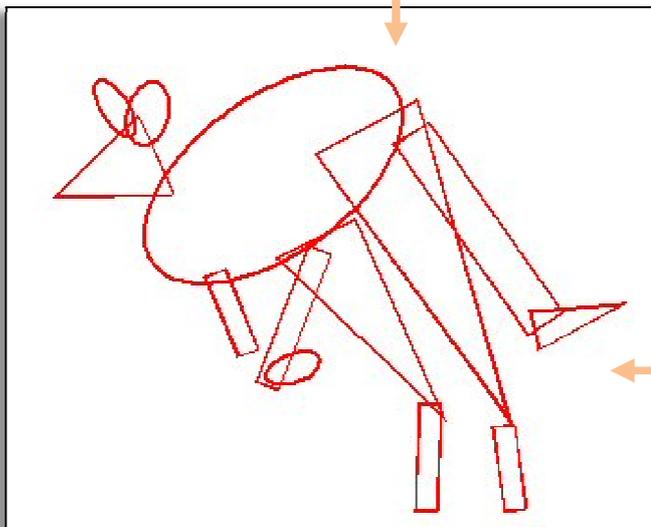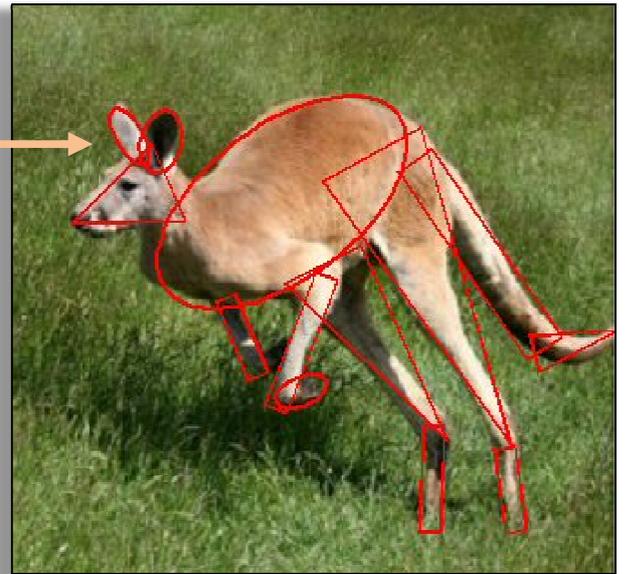
8. The beauty of this approach is that you can use whatever shapes suit you. You don't have to use the same ones I've shown - you could, for example, use various sizes of long ovals for the legs and an oblong for the face.

9. Remember, simple shapes are merely a means to get your basic outline correct - and it's much easier to erase and re-do a basic shape that's wrong, rather than rubbing out a detailed part of the body that you've laboured over for an hour, knowing all the time deep down that's it just not going right....!

10. In this next picture (right), I've started to outline the more realistic shape of the Kangaroo. The red guidelines have been paled off so this shows more clearly. I've also inked in the shape so it shows up better. Normally I would be doing this bit in pencil.

You can see from the pale red lines that I haven't tried to follow them very closely in certain areas – around the head and the top of the Kangaroo's back, for example. So always bear in mind *these are only guidelines to help you* to place features in the right position and correctly proportioned. If you get the guidelines wrong first time, simply rub them out and re-do them!
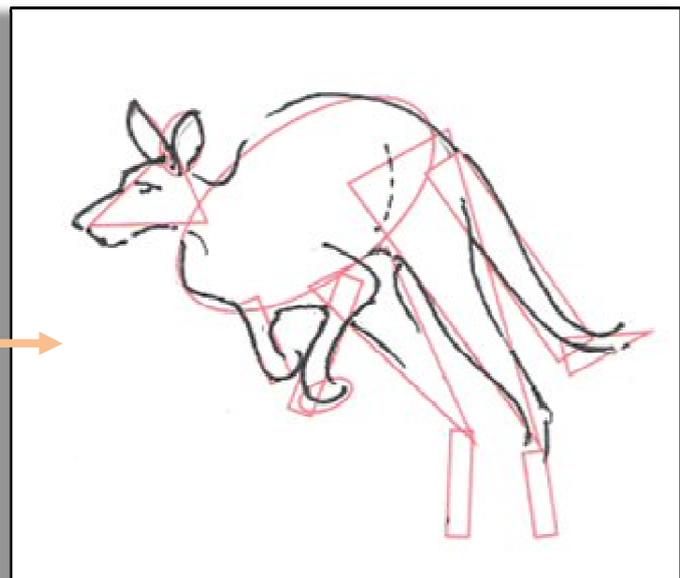
11. Now if I was just going to produce a pencil or ink drawing, the fully shaded sketch on the right is what I would produce. I could add some light washes of paint over this provided I'd used waterproof ink so it wouldn't smudge.

12. However if this was going to be part of a 'conventional' watercolour painting, I wouldn't put in this amount of detail – just a basic, lightly- sketched or traced outline on my watercolour paper.

WATERCOLOUR SECRETS TIP:
Here's the demonstration sketch I produced in one of the lessons in the _**Watercolour Secrets DVD Course**_^{©.}   However, don't try to draw this, complete with all the guidelines that will need erasing, directly onto your Watercolour paper.

The outline was developed exactly as I've described, but on cheap copy paper and _then_ I traced it onto Watercolour paper to ensure I was painting over a clean image on an undamaged painting surface. See next page for how to do this.

Watercolour
Paper

Graphite
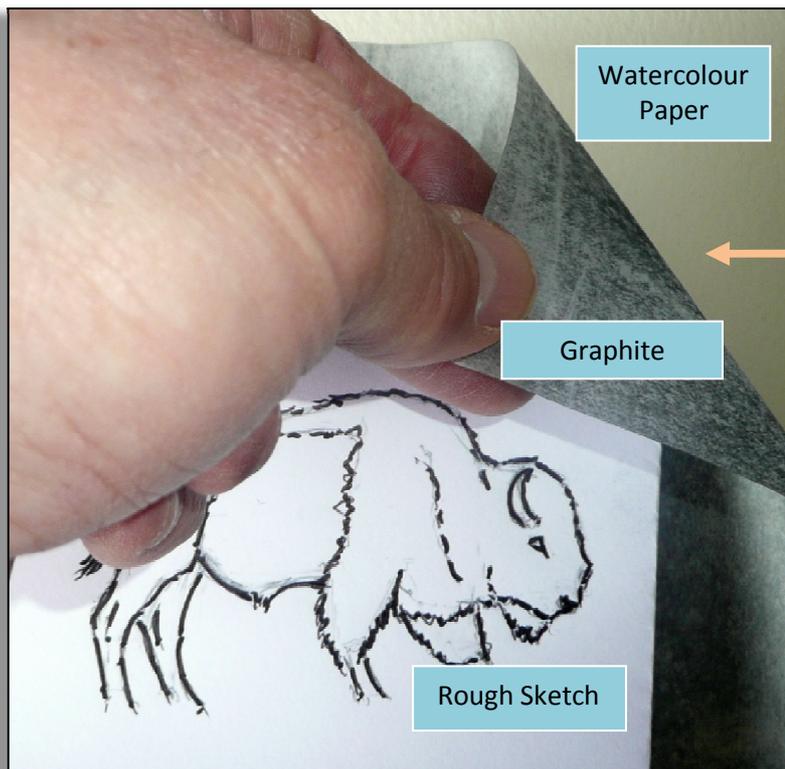
Rough Sketch

1. I've mentioned several times in this tutorial about 'tracing down' from a rough sketch to your watercolour paper.

2. There are two main ways to do this. First, as in the photo on the left, you can buy special graphite tracing paper.

3. This is used exactly as you would use carbon paper, i.e. you put it, graphite side down, between the original rough drawing and the watercolour paper.

4. Then draw lightly over the outline of your original sketch and the image is transferred onto the watercolour paper to give you a clean, tidy image to paint on without damaging the painting surface.

5. The second way is slightly messier but much cheaper. Here on the left below we have our rough sketch of a bison. Turn the sheet over and take a fairly soft pencil such as a 2B and scribble on the back of your rough sketch as in the right hand picture. There's no need to scribble all over the sketch - just the parts where you have drawn any lines. If you look carefully, you can just see the image showing through from the other side of the sheet here.
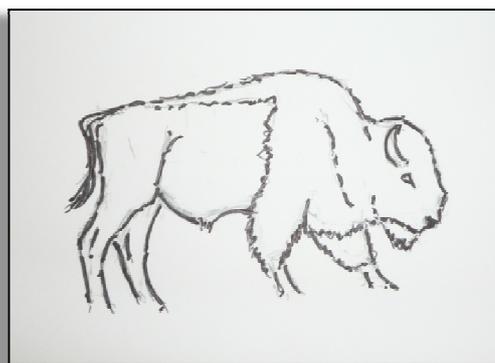
Rough Drawing

Reverse Side

6. Now place the sketch the right way round on your watercolour paper and draw over it as described when using the trace-down paper above. Either method should transfer a good enough image that will allow you to paint. Don't press too hard when tracing over your sketch as it will put grooves into your watercolour paper which may fill in with paint and cause an unwanted outline.

Watercolour Secrets
SECTION 10

BRINGING IT ALL
TOGETHER (Part B)

26. A light wash of Ultramarine and Permanent Rose and just a dab of Light Red produce a lovely 'sunny' shadow colour. Here, it's been added to the front of the house. In the picture, below, after it has dried, I've added a line to represent the really dark shadow under the eaves. I'll also put in this colour for the windows and door. Notice how a simple letter 'E' on the side wall of the house gives us the required shadows for that window and window-sill.
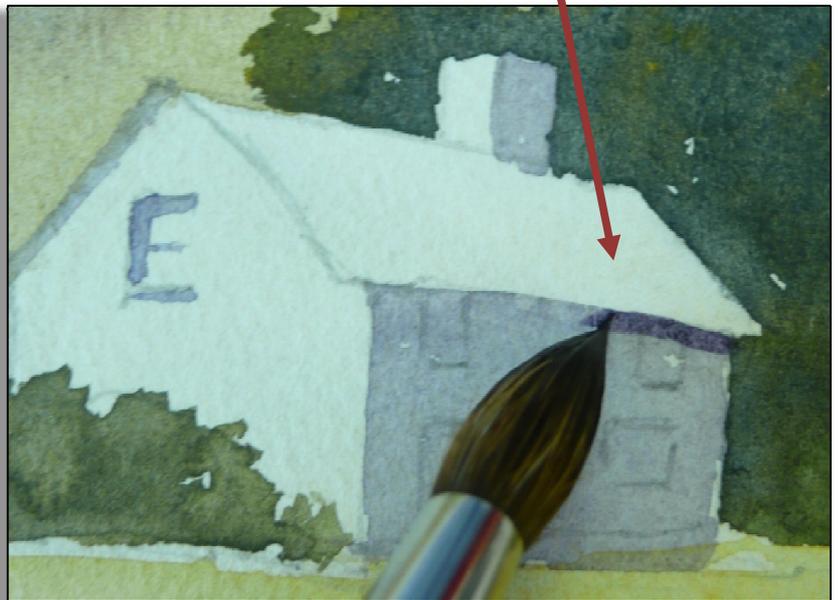
27. In the photo below, the fence has been painted with a pale grey created with Ultramarine and Light Red. By painting separate lines for the two visible faces of the fence posts, see how the thin white line left in between creates a natural highlight. In the lower right close-up, I've waited till the fence colour dries then added the same mix on the shadow sides. The posts have been deliberately placed at random distances and angles to create more interest than a line of 'soldiers'. The broken cross piece immediately below the couple has been intentionally included as this creates a 'way in' for the eye to move across to the figures.
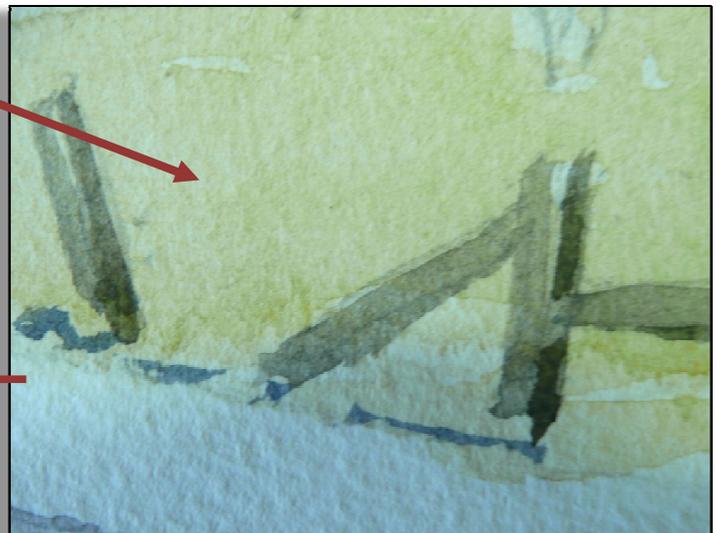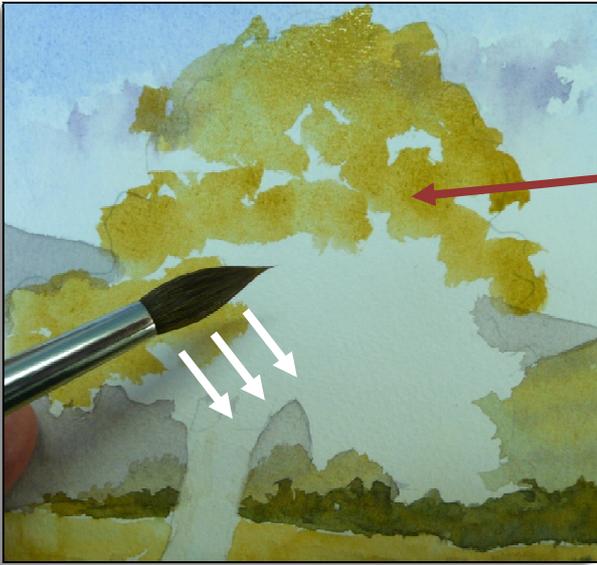
**28.** We now come on to the large tree where a base coat of Yellow Ochre is scraped on sideways with the brush creating several overlapping banana shapes. You can see I'm only using the pencil outline of the tree foliage as a guideline. I'm not worried about going over it here and there; otherwise I'd get too deliberate and tight in applying the paint.

29. Below left and while the base coat is still damp, I've started to add the mid-tone colour, which is more Yellow Ochre with just a touch of Ultramarine. I'm putting touches of this colour over the top of the unpainted areas I've left in the tree as this would be where the shadows would appear. Below right, this is what the tree looks like after this second coat. There's less of it on the left hand side as this will be catching the sun.

30. The darkest coat is now added in the same way as the second, wet-in-wet. The darkest areas of trees tend to be in the centre and underneath where the trunk disappears into the leaves. This mix is Ultramarine and Light Red with just a touch of Yellow Ochre to bring out some green. In the close up below right see how, by adding a few dark leaves across the background fields and trees, it pushes them back into their proper place in the picture.
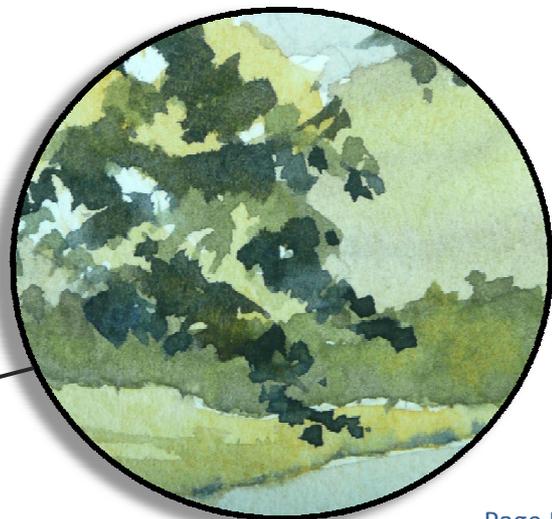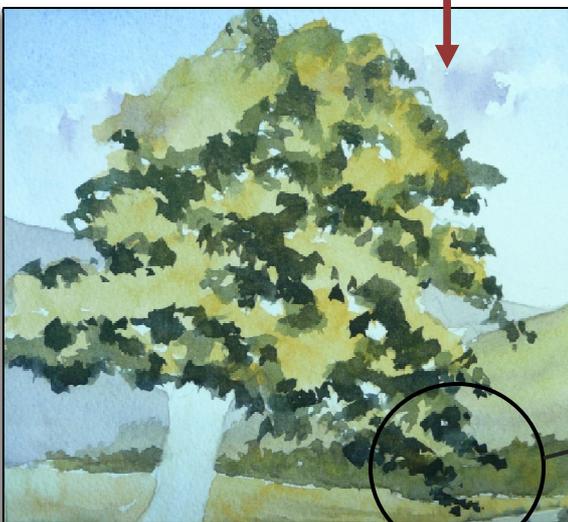
31. On the left, I've added a pale mix of Ultramarine and Light Red for the grey of the trunk and visible branches, blending it into the still-damp leaves. I've also run in some branches within the leaf clusters as they appear and disappear in the middle of the tree.

32. When the trunk has dried, I've painted a stronger mix of the same colours on the right hand side to represent the shadow. Note that I've also taken this up and underneath the leaves as this area would not catch the sun either.

33. Before this shadow strip dries I've run a brush with a little clean water down the edge to blend it and create the three-dimensional roundness of the trunk.

34. If you want to, you could also lightly scrub out a lighter strip down the left side of the trunk to further emphasise the sunlight playing on it. This is exactly the same technique as I used to remove unwanted paint in Step 25.

35. I've now added the tree shadow across the road. It's important, once again, to keep the brushstrokes horizontal so the shadow sits flat on the ground. Don't worry about taking it across the fence as this would be partially shaded by the trees and therefore have a dappled effect.

36. The cottage roof has been streaked downwards with a medium strength Light Red, using a brush dried off slightly on the paper tissue to take out excess paint. This allows me to deliberately create plenty of unpainted streaks to emphasise the sunny day. Following this, in the lower photo, I've done the same with just a tiny streak or two of Ultramarine and let it all blend.


37. The bushes to the left of the cottage have been darkened with Ultramarine and Yellow Ochre and slightly raised. This allows me to put a medium strength mix of the shadow colour on the side wall, emphasising the sunlight on these trees.

38. Not far from the finishing line now. The figures have been painted very simply with touches of Light Red and Ultramarine to create impact as they are lead the eye to the focal point. The dark grey trousers on both have been painted with a mix of Blue, Yellow and Red. I was going to paint the lady on the left in a skirt, but the pale colour of her legs wouldn't have shown up against the light grass. The dog was created using the same colours as for the figure's trousers with a lighter area on its left side in the sunlight.

39. When including animals and figures in the middle distance like this, even in a large picture, they're only going to be about 1" tall - probably 1½" maximum, so there's absolutely no need (or room) for detail. This picture we're doing is approximately 14" x 10" and the figures are only about ¾" (18mm) tall. Even in this cruel close-up they look perfectly OK in the context of the picture. Remember what I said about not painting shoes and blending the shadows into the bottom of the legs, as we've done here....
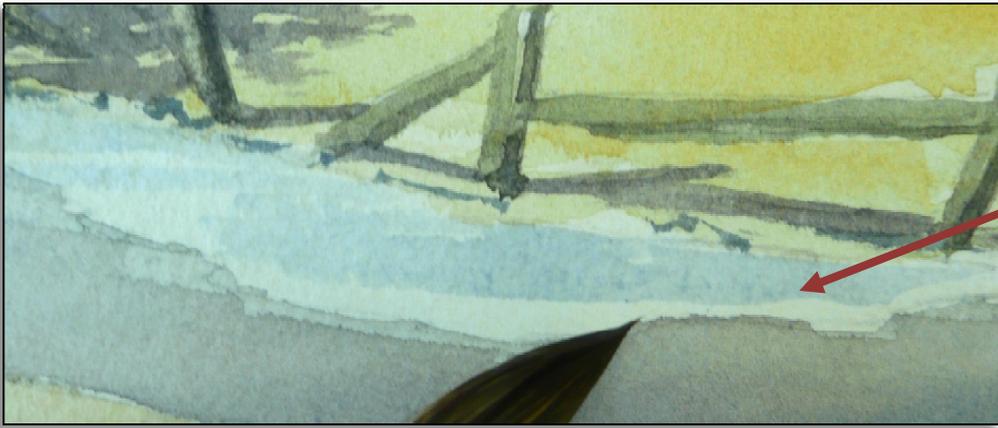
40. With a very pale wash of Ultramarine, I'm putting in the puddle. It's particularly important that the brush strokes are horizontal when you paint water, otherwise it will look as if the water is running downhill.

41. Once this is dry, I've added the reflections. Two things I hope you remember from the tutorial in Section 7. First, note the direction of the reflections, especially where the posts are angled. Second, the dark areas reflect lighter and the light areas reflect darker - or put another way, the tonal contrast is less.

42. I've dabbed in some dark green colour to define where the edge of the road is beyond the puddle, as well as grass that grows around the base of the fence posts. Notice how I've left it as a hit and miss effect. You want this sort of detail to appear random and uncontrived.

43. While it's still wet, I've spread out the hairs on the brush as you can see in the close-up and lightly dragged the green paint upwards to simulate grass. Don't forget to drag the paint downwards as well to create the reflections. In fact, if you have a puddle and can't 'engineer' an item above it to be reflected, using short, grassy tufts like these is an excellent way to confirm that the viewer is looking at water. Note also from the photo above that the figures and dog don't have a reflection as they're too far beyond the puddle.
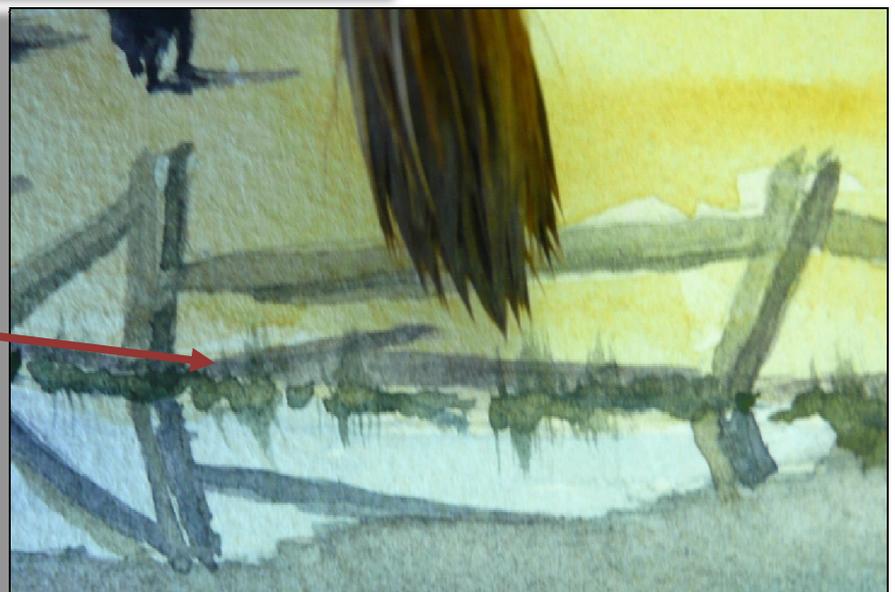
44. Right, we're done - except for one more thing.... Walk away from the picture and leave it for an hour or two. When you return you will invariably see little details you've missed or feel need adjustment. I noticed a couple of the shadows needed strengthening very slightly as did one or two branches in the big tree. However, this is a danger period as you can, through over-enthusiasm, start fiddling and spoil the final painting. Once you start *looking* for things to change, instead of them jumping out at you, then that's the time to really stop and sign it. I always feel that signing a painting is a way of telling me that it's finished and I'm not allowed to add any more. Incidentally, don't overlook the signature in your composition. Your signature in the bottom right or left corner may well help to add balance to a picture that lacks some sort of detail in this area.

Well there we are - the finished picture. Although it's taken 44 steps, they've all been fairly small and gentle ones to navigate. Everything has been based on what we've looked at in the previous 8 Sections and it just shows how perfectly possible it is to create your own minor masterpiece. The way ahead now is clear. More practice and enthusiasm = more success, which = the desire to keep at it. All the time you will be improving without realising it, so my final piece of advice in this short course is not to throw away any of your early works or perceived disasters. Look at them in a few weeks or a few months and you'll be heartened by the progress you've made.

I hope this short course will help you develop your watercolour landscapes and you find it as enjoyable to follow as it has been to produce. Remember practice as often as you can and you *will* make progress. Happy painting!

WHAT IS WATERCOLOUR SECRETS?

I hope you've enjoyed this e-book. There are enough lessons and tips within its pages to get you off to a great start AND keep you going for some time...

And, when you're ready, if you'd like to take things a step further, please take a look into our Watercolour Secrets DVD home study set.

It covers all the essential aspects of painting beautiful watercolour landscapes through step-by-step video instruction.

Each DVD covers an individual landscape element (such as skies, water and buildings) making it easy for you to learn at your own pace. Plus, it currently comes with Bob's free bonus DVD called *'Drawing For Painting'*.

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