

LADEN TAKE TIME OFF FOR ART

Away from it all - from the boards of Bloomsbury and the corduroys of Chelsea - art takes to the open countryside of lovely Leith Hill, Surrey. Under expert tutors like Academy Exhibitor William Watkins, paint-happy students (as well as art teachers and industrial designers) put landscapes on paper and a bloom in their cheeks. Weekend sketching parties, popular pre-war, are now back in favour with those who like seeing nature at close quarters.

Edward Swann, pioneer of the "Art-in-the-Open" movement, lectures on the technique of charcoal drawing. Since the idea is to combine creation with recreation, nobody gets a hundred lines if first attempts aren't up to Academy standards.

Britain's beauty-spots captured on sketch-pad or canvas, satisfy the artist-in-a-girl in a way that out-of-focus holiday-snaps never could, even when you can get the film.

When the party's over, tutors criticise the weekend's work. Quality, in general, is surprisingly high.

For less than the train-fare to Paris, a Spring weekend - and no hangover.