



VAL & AL

Photo Brochure

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Val and Al

We are scenic photographers living in Glastonbury, Somerset. We both love the natural and historic beauty of Somerset especially the Somerset Levels. We're very fortunate in having the Natural England reserve at Shapwick Heath and the RSPB nature reserve at Ham Wall right on our doorstep. Many of our images, in particular the spectacular starling murmurations, are taken at these beautiful locations. During their displays the starlings make amazing shapes, this fantastic aerial ballet has been described as natural bird art. All photos in this brochure are © avalonprints.uk.com

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If you are planning a visit to Somerset, why not come along and visit the Avalon Marshes Centre, Shapwick Road, Westhay, BA6 9TT.

There we display a large selection of our work at **Somerset Crafts** which is situated on the Avalon Marshes Centre, website: <http://somersetcrafts.com/> email: info@somersetcrafts.com. phone: 01458 860426

Somerset Crafts is open 7 days a week, 10am to 5pm

All our photos featured in this brochure are available to buy or order directly from us or from Somerset Crafts, either mounted or framed.

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Also at the Avalon Marshes Centre you can partake of delicious hot and cold refreshments from Sally and her team at the Marshes Hub Tea Stop, with both indoor seating (inside Somerset Crafts) & outdoor seating. And then you could visit the beautiful local nature reserves of Shapwick Heath, Ham Wall or Westhay Moor.

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The images in this brochure are divided into sections each covering different themes

A - Sunrises, Sunsets & Landscapes, B - Flood Landscapes, C - Somerset Starlings, D - Wildlife, E - Local Interest & Heritage,

F - Photographs taken in areas other than Somerset.



# (A) Sunrises, Sunsets & Landscapes



Sunrise across the flooded Somerset Levels near Pomparles Bridge, Glastonbury



(A)



Sunrise across the Somerset Levels





(A)



Sunset on the Somerset Levels



'Swan footsteps on the ice'

(A)



Sunset across the Somerset Levels in Glastonbury





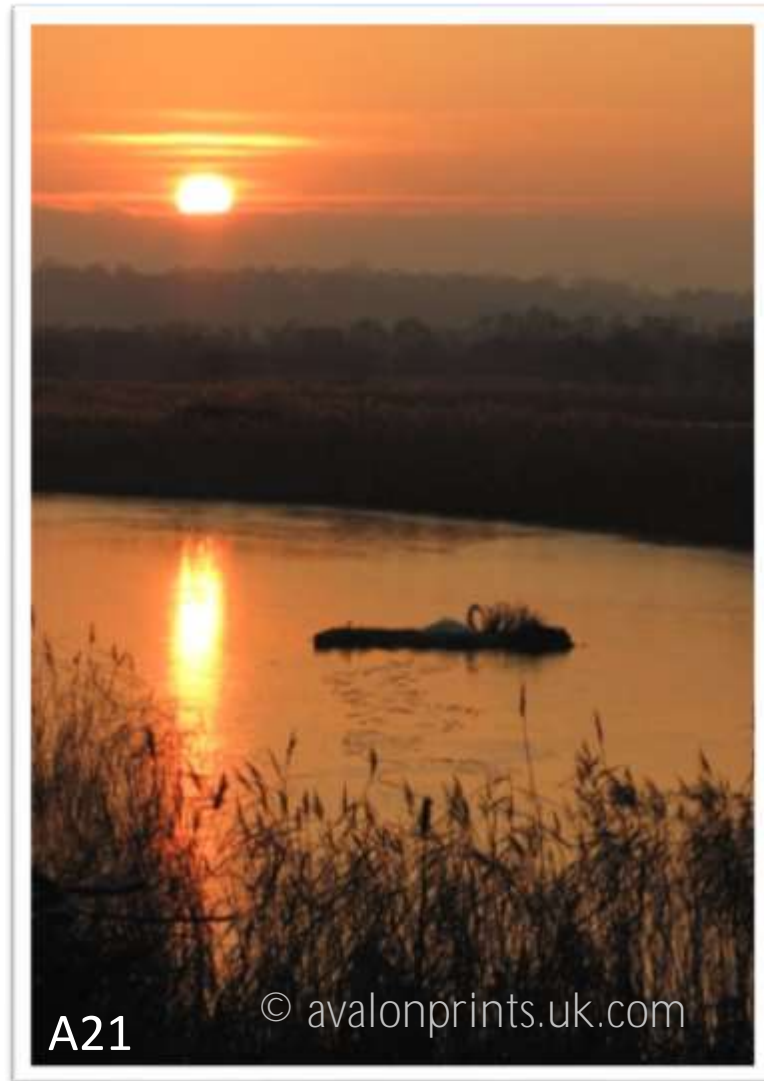
(A)



Starling Sunset in Glastonbury



(A)



‘Swan footsteps on the ice’



Sunset on the Somerset Levels



(A)



Sunset on the Somerset Levels



(A)



Sunset on the Somerset Levels



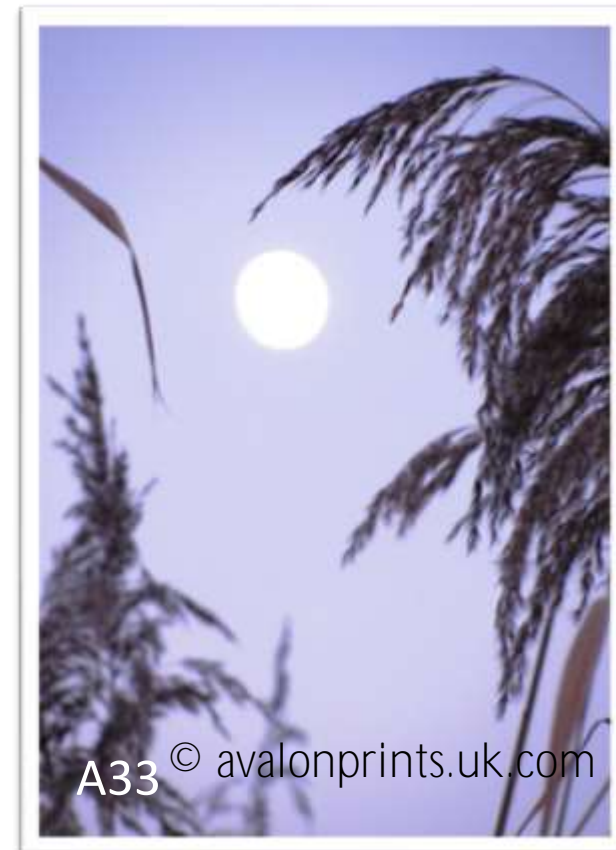
'Swan footsteps on the ice'



(A)



Moonlight at the reed beds



Waxing Gibbous Moon  
over Glastonbury



(A)



The river Brue in bloom



Sunrise across the frosty Somerset Levels



Sunset on the Somerset Levels





(A)



Sunset on the Somerset Levels





(A)



The tranquil beauty of the Avalon Marshes





(A)



Evening Clouds on the Avalon Marshes



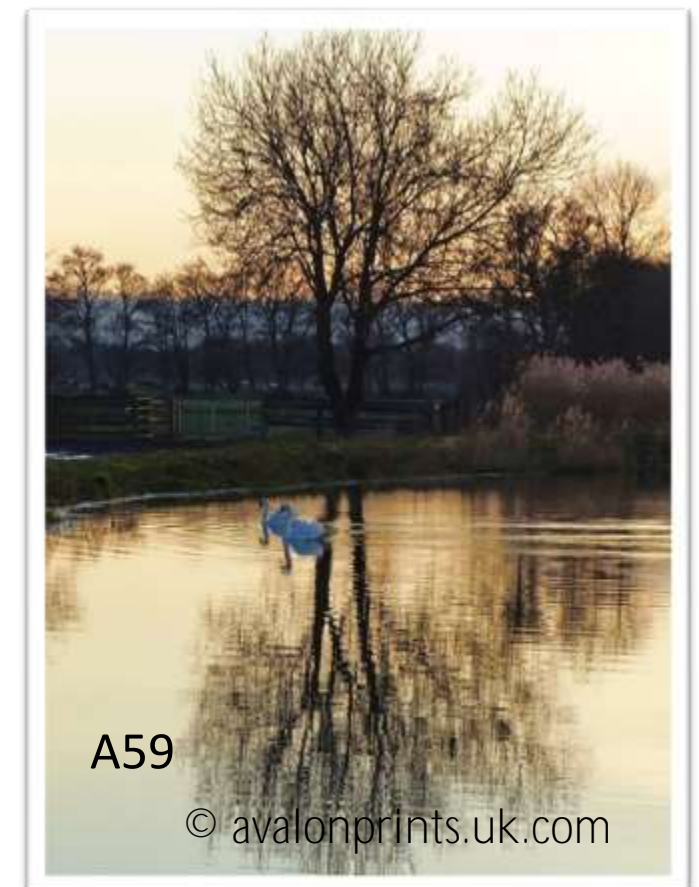
Sunrise on the Avalon Marshes



(A)



Sunset on the Avalon Marshes





## (B) Flooded Landscapes- Reflections



Moonlight on the flooded fields in Glastonbury



Early morning in Glastonbury



Early morning in Glastonbury



## (B) Reflections



'Dancing Trees'



# (C) Somerset Starlings

During their displays, when the starlings make their amazing shapes, this fantastic aerial ballet has been described as natural bird art.

## **WHAT IS A STARLING MURMURATION?**

'Murmuration' is the name given to the shapes the large groups of Starling flocks make. These huge flocks of birds gather together to roost through the winter months.

## **WHY IS IT CALLED A MURMURATION?**

One that we have heard is that the noise of the countless starlings wings as they fly overhead sounds like a murmur. It is an amazing and breath taking experience.

## **WHY DO THEY DO THIS?**

No-one knows for sure. It could be a form of protection from predators, huge numbers together could look threatening and also mean that it is more difficult for predators to single out one bird as prey. In some of our photos a predator can be clearly seen. Or it could also be a way of signposting a roost, some of the large murmurations can be seen from a long distance. Roosting together in huge numbers means that in the cold of winter, the body heat from thousands of starlings close together will raise the surrounding air by a few degrees. This could be life or death during the bitter cold winter nights.

## **WHAT TIME OF YEAR DOES THIS HAPPEN?**

The Starling murmurations (the displays in the skies) happen during the winter months, roughly from mid/late October to mid March. The peak in numbers is usually December to January when more birds come over from Europe.

## **WHERE DO THE BIRDS ALL COME FROM?**

The Starlings can fly for miles to get to their specific roost site, but while some of the birds are UK residents, the majority will be migratory birds coming over from northern & eastern Europe. It seems the colder the winter is in Europe, especially if there are good Easterly winds assisting them, then that is when more numbers will appear and gather here.

## **WHAT TIME OF DAY DOES THIS OCCUR?**

Most people associate Starling Murmurations with the evenings. Thousands of birds dancing together in patterns across the skies before dropping down in to their roost sites. These displays happen around the time of sun set each evening. During the evening roost time it is never guaranteed that the flocks of birds will dance or display, or even turn up in huge numbers all together. in fact sometimes they come in low over the ground and go straight to roost. If you do however go to one of the larger roost sites the following morning you are almost guaranteed a huge explosion of starlings as they take off in either one, two or three huge groups.

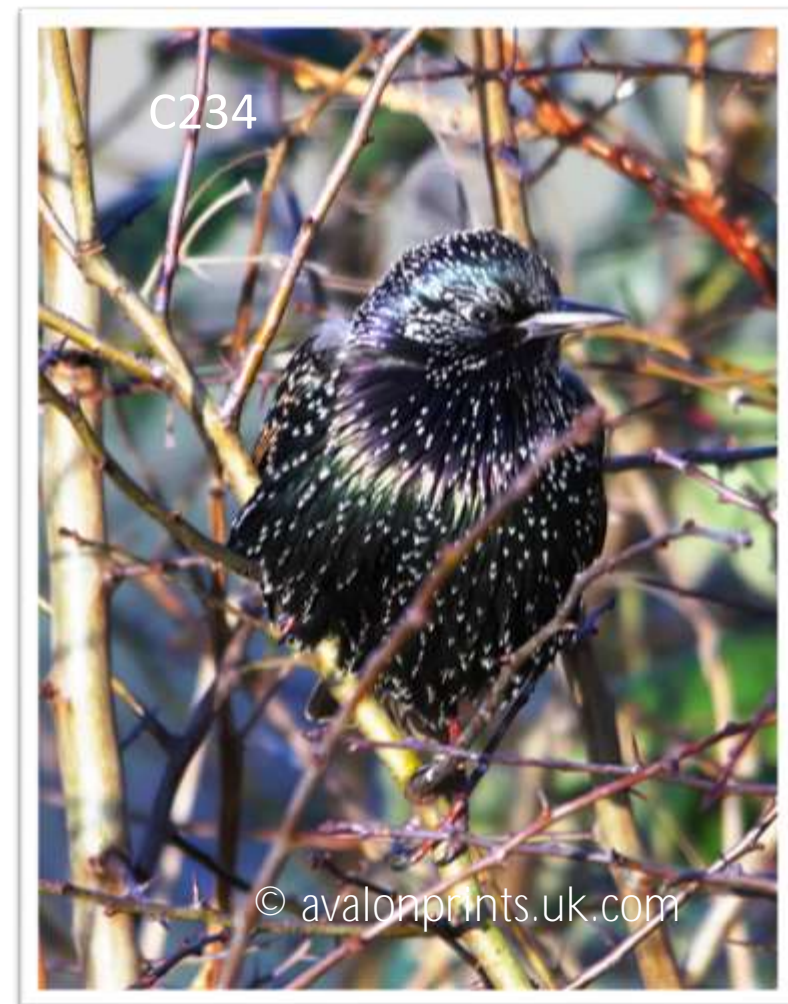
## **WHAT TIME DO THEY COME TO ROOST?**

The time they come in and settle is around sun set. That time changes throughout the winter so an actual time cannot be stated, plus the time can vary due to several factors. Dull and cloudy evenings can make the birds come in a lot earlier whereas cloudless bright evenings will sometimes make them later. If we were giving anyone advice it would be to get in position at least an hour in advance of the sun set time, sit back, relax and wait.

## **DOES IT DEFINITELY HAPPEN EVERY NIGHT DURING THE STARLING SEASON?**

Roosting Yes, but dancing murmuration patterns, No.

(C)





(C)





# (C) Somerset Starlings



## Skyful of Starlings





# (C) Somerset Starlings



Skyful of Starlings



The Starlings 'go to bed', in the reeds



(C)



The 'Hare'



The 'Mermaid'

Somerset Starlings Murmurations



The 'Swan'



The 'Flamingo'



(C)



### Somerset Starlings Murmurations



(C)



### Somerset Starlings Sunset Murmurations





(C)



Somerset Starlings Murmurations



A field full of Starlings



(C)



Somerset Starlings Murmurations





(C)



### Somerset Starlings Murmurations



(C)



### Somerset Starlings Murmurations





(C)



### Somerset Starlings Murmurations



### Clouds of Somerset Starlings



(C)



Sunsets of Somerset Starlings





(C)



An 'exploding tree'



A skyful of Starlings over Glastonbury Tor



Somerset Starlings going down to roost on the reeds





(C)



Starling Sunset on the Somerset Levels



A Peregrine in the Starling flock



(C)



Starling Sunsets on the Somerset Levels





(C)



### Somerset Starling Murmurations





(C)



Starlings over the Tor



Starling sunrise - 'Whilst the swans still sleep'



Starlings going to roost



(C)



Starling Murmurations on the Somerset Levels





(C)



Starlings over Glastonbury Tor



Somerset Starlings Murmuration



Starlings or Dolphins?



(C)



### Somerset Starling Murmurations





(C)



### Somerset Starling Murmurations





(C)



The 'dancing ant'



The 'fox'



The 'elephant'



The 'mouse'



(C)



The 'heart'



The 'ballerina'

Somerset Starling Murmurations - making shapes





(C)



Somerset Starling Murmurations





(C)



Somerset Starlings Sunset





(C)



### Somerset Starlings Sunset





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Somerset Starlings





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### Somerset Starlings





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Somerset Starlings Murmurations





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### Somerset Starling Murmurations





(C)



### Somerset Starling Murmurations





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### Somerset Starling Murmurations





(C)



### Sunset of Somerset Starling Murmurations





(C)



### Somerset Starling Murmurations





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### Somerset Starling Murmurations





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### Somerset Starling Murmurations





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### Somerset Starling Murmurations





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### Somerset Starling Murmurations





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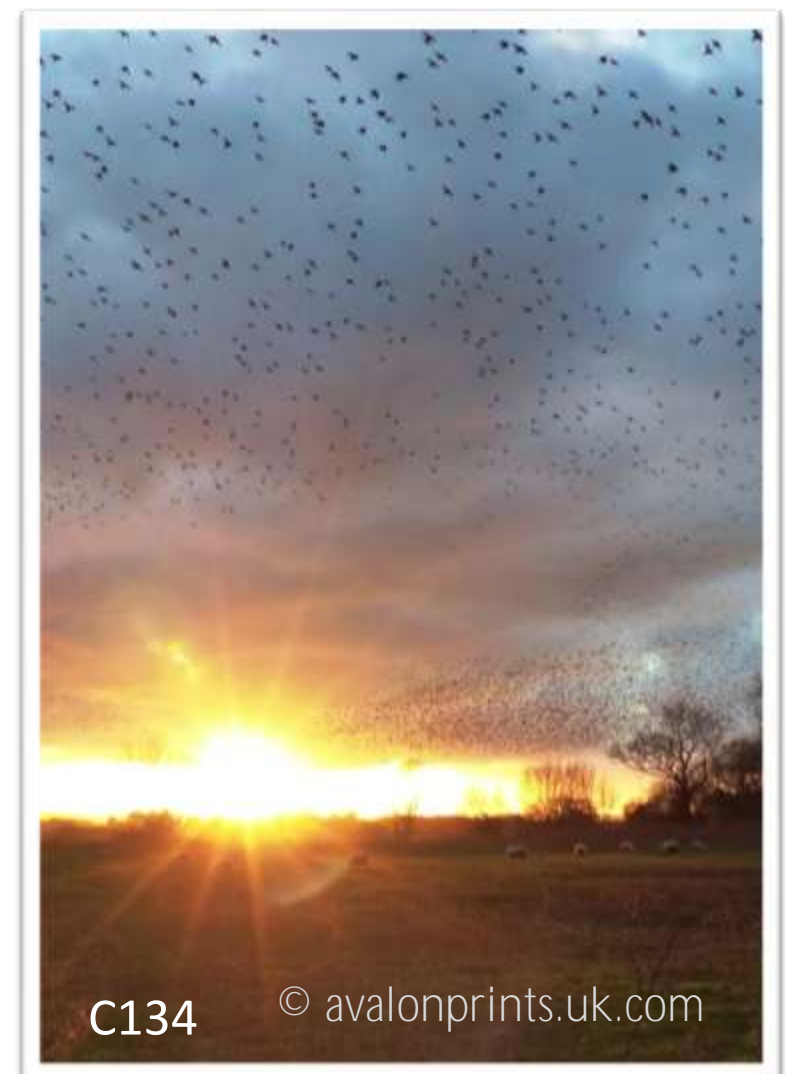
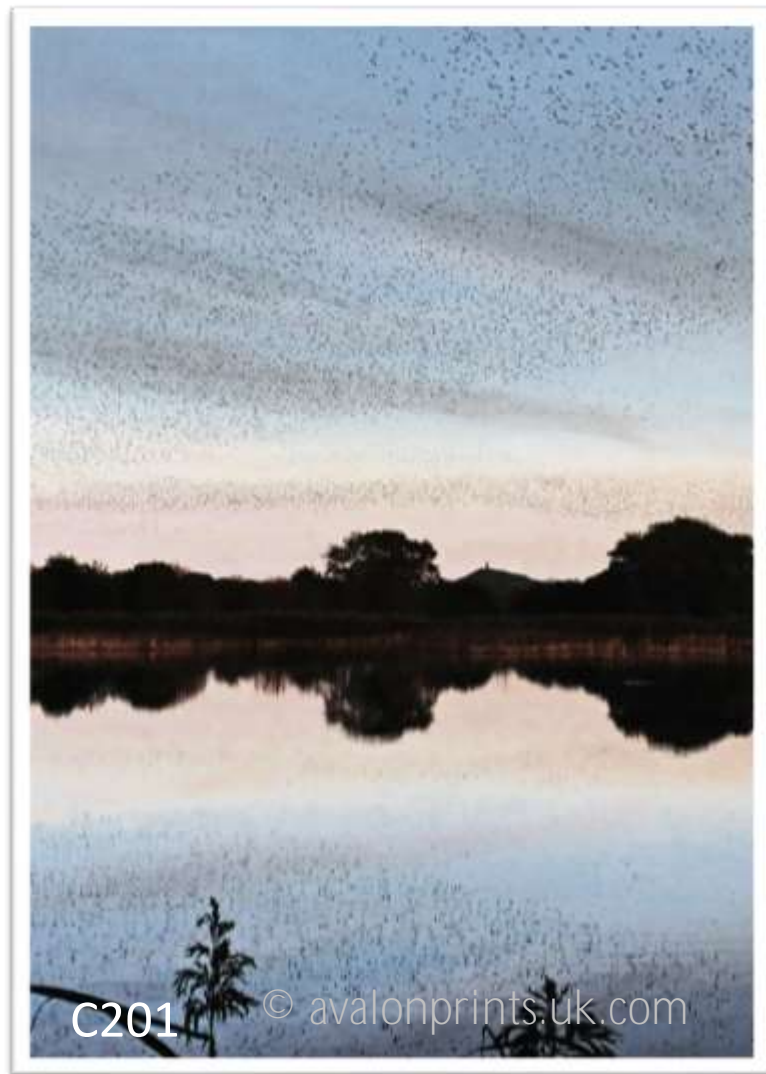


### Somerset Starling Murmurations





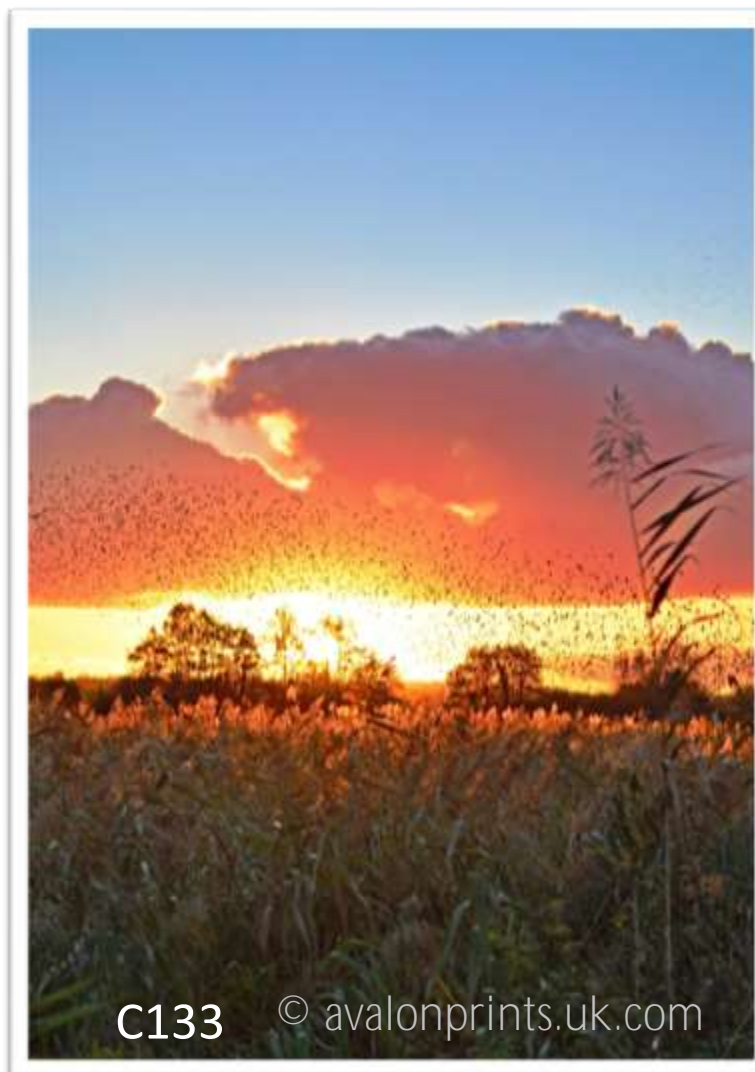
(C)



A Sky full of Starlings



(C)



Starling sunsets



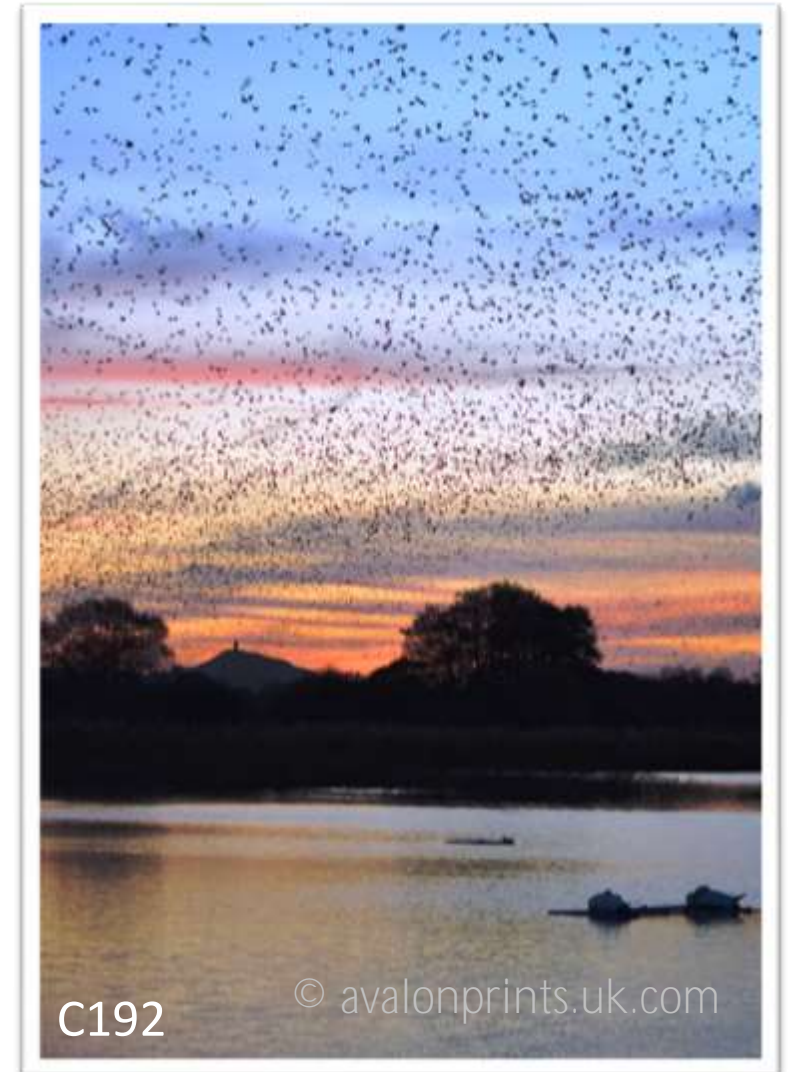
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Somerset Starling Murmurations



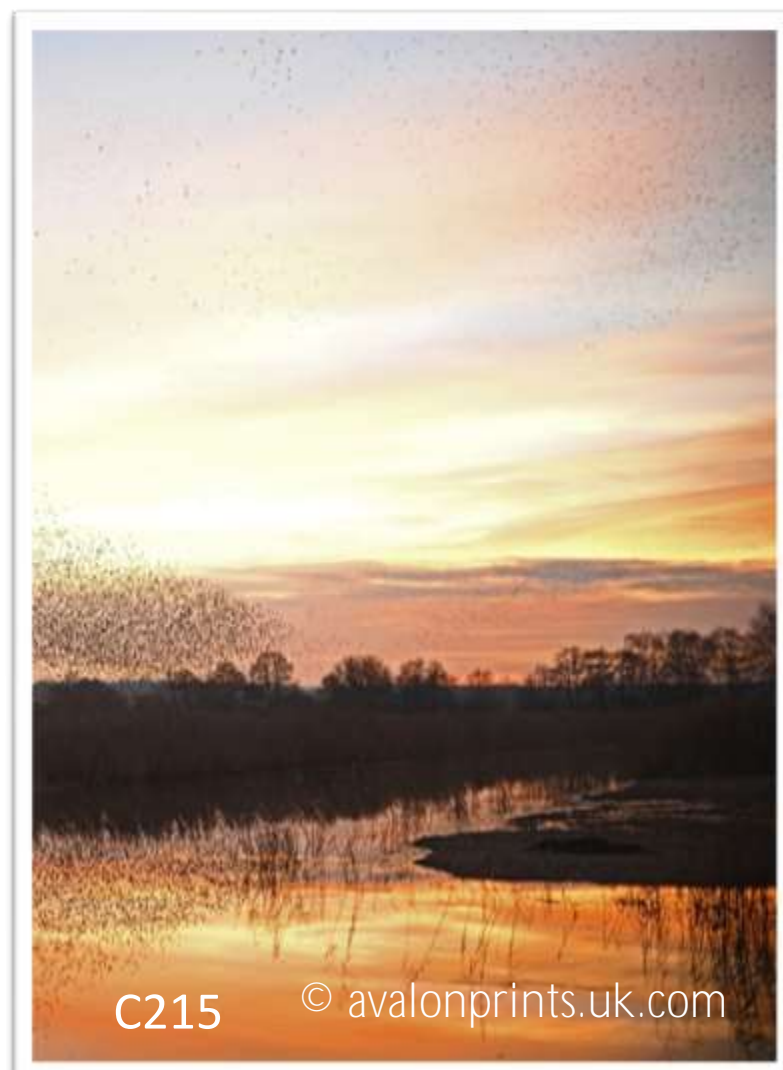
(C)



Somerset Starling Murmurations



(C)



Somerset Starling Murmurations



(D)



The Common Hawker Dragonfly



The Comma Butterfly



The Common Hawker Dragonfly



(D)

## Somerset Highland Cattle





(D)

## Somerset Highland Cattle





(D)

## Somerset Highland Cattle





(D)



Herons on the Avalon Marshes



(D)



Egrets on the Avalon Marshes



(D)



The friendly young Roe Deer at Shapwick Heath Nature Reserve

The friendly Heron



Proud Peacock



Peek-a-boo



(D)



Buzzard & Bitterns on the Avalon Marshes



(D)



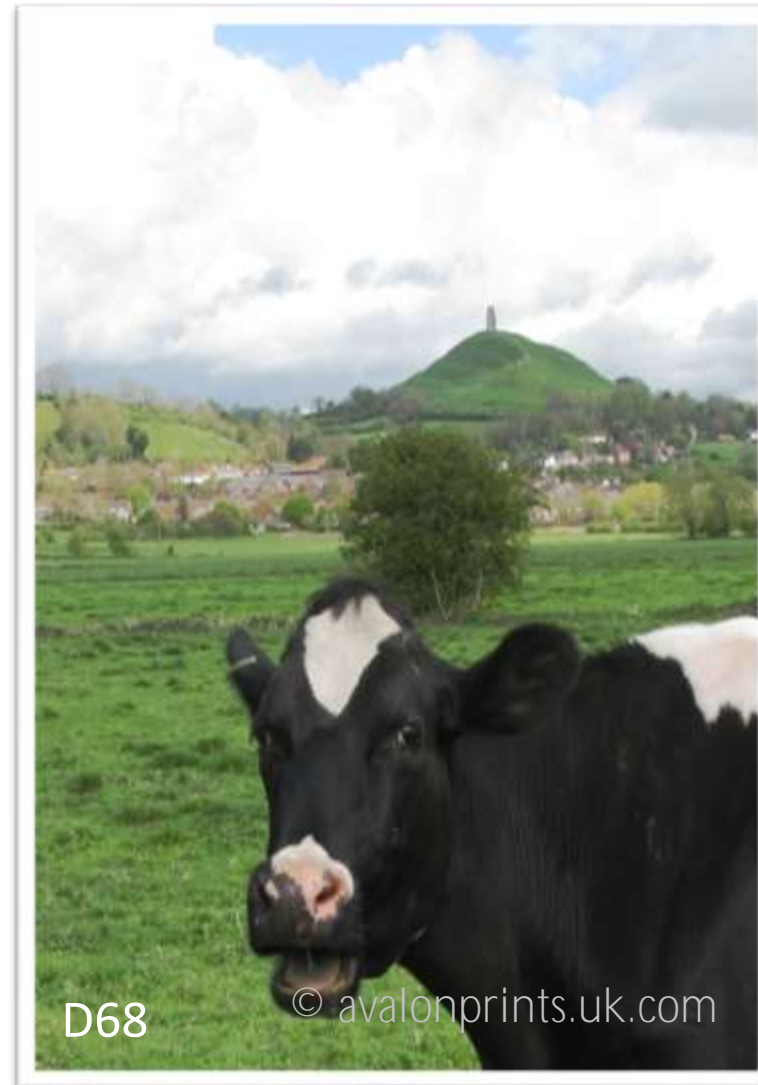
The little Kingfisher at Canada Lake, Shapwick Heath



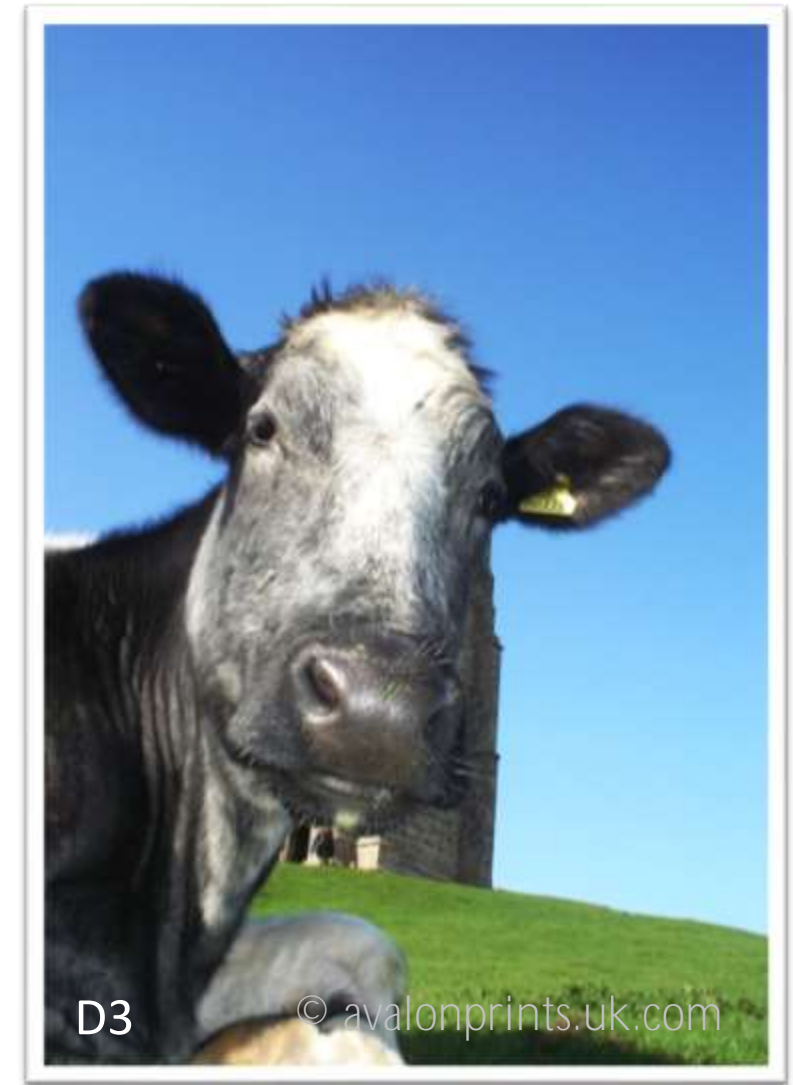
(D)



‘The Lady of Glastonbury Tor’



‘Welcome to Glastonbury’



‘The Lady of Glastonbury Tor’



(D)



‘Listen, do you want to know a secret?’

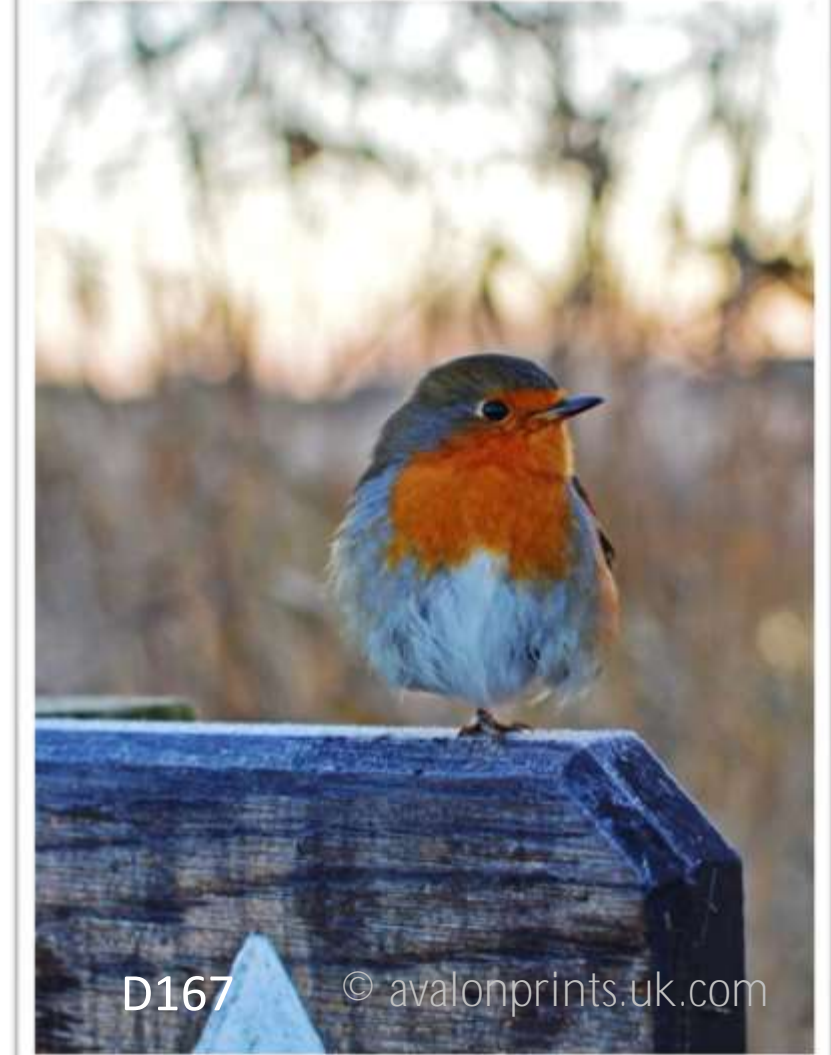


‘Made in Somerset. Hand Wash with care, colours may run’





(D)





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Swans of the Somerset Levels





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Swans of the Somerset Levels



Nature's own Concorde over Ham Wall Nature Reserve



(D)



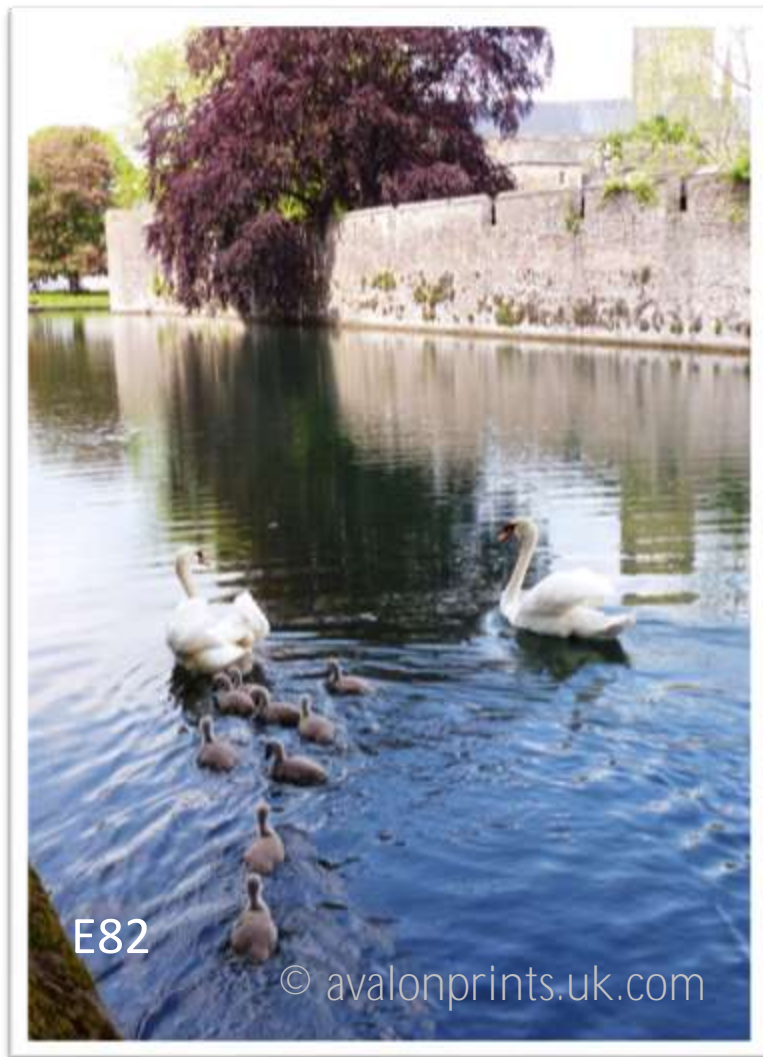
### Swans of the Somerset Levels





(E)

## The swans of Wells





(E)



First outing for new cygnets



The clever cygnet rings the bell for food



Ringing the bell for food



First Flight



(E)



The  
swans  
of  
Wells





(E)



'Rainbow Tor'



Glastonbury Tor



'Rowan Tree Tor'



Glastonbury Tor by moonlight



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Winter scenes on the Somerset Levels





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Glastonbury Tor in the snow



‘Moody Tor’



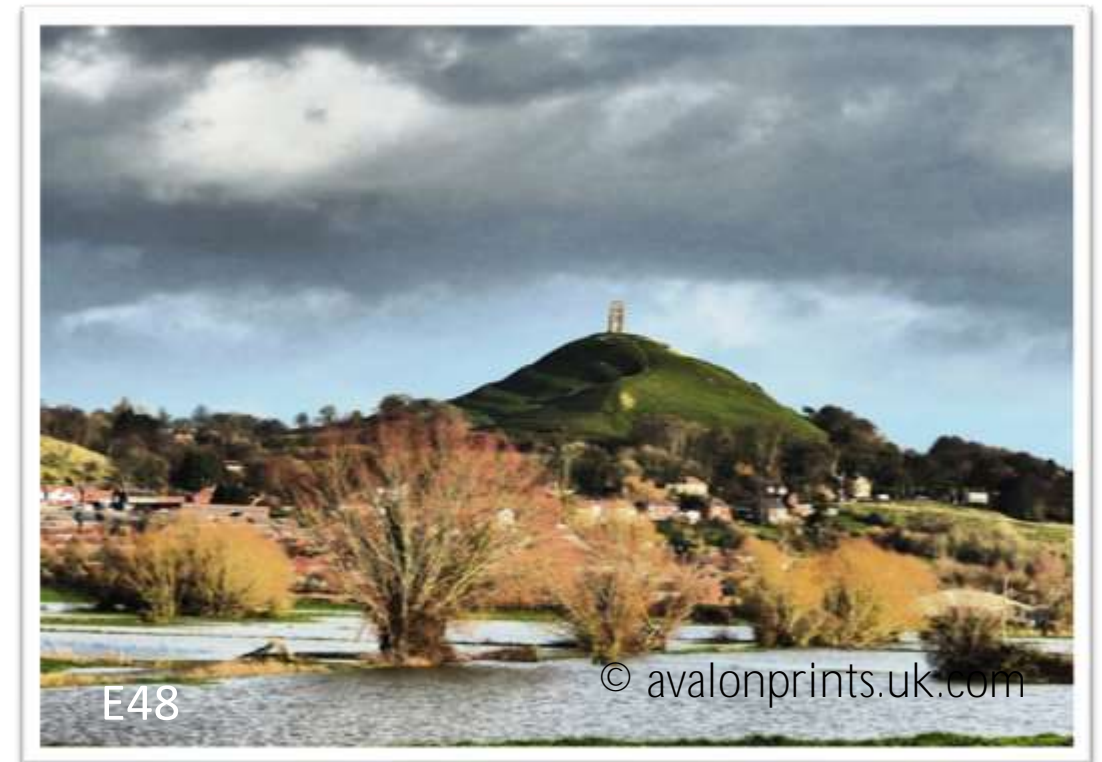
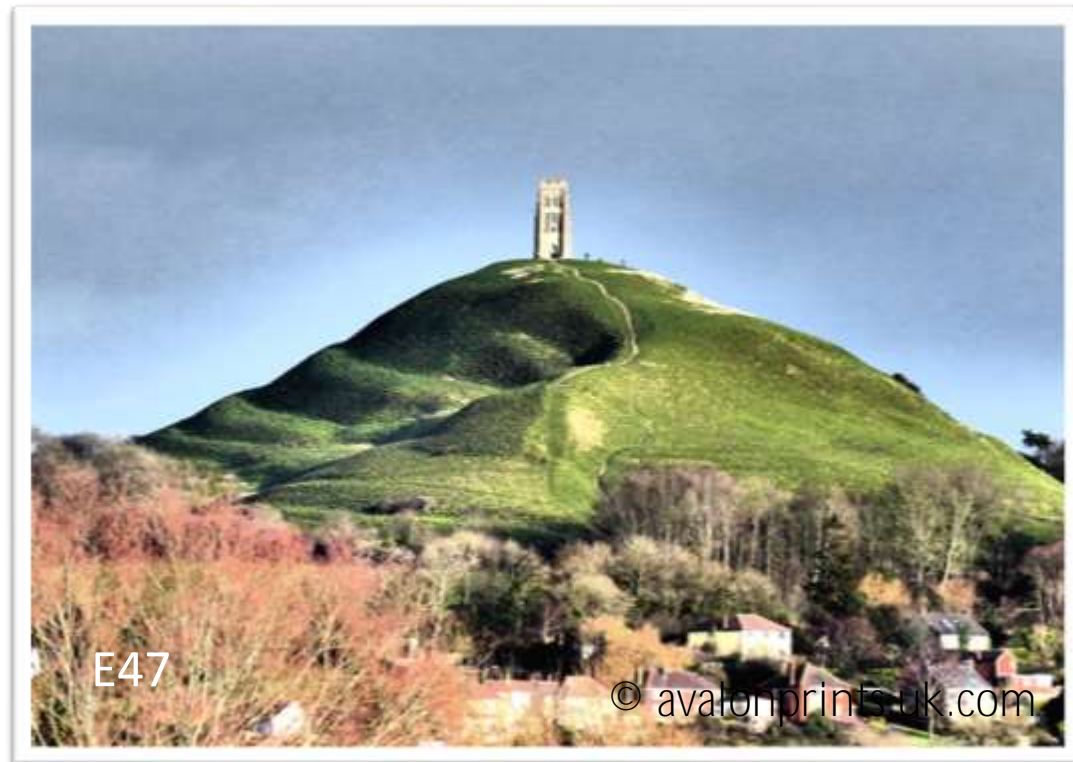
‘Tor Sunrise’



The Brue floods the levels



(E)



The Magnificent Glastonbury Tor





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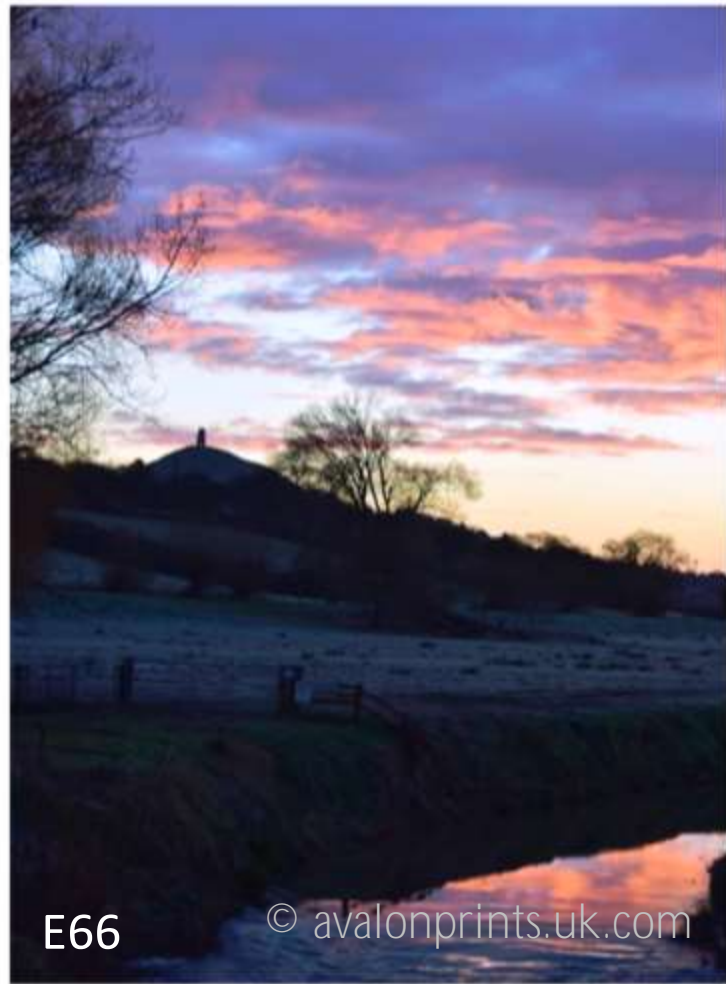


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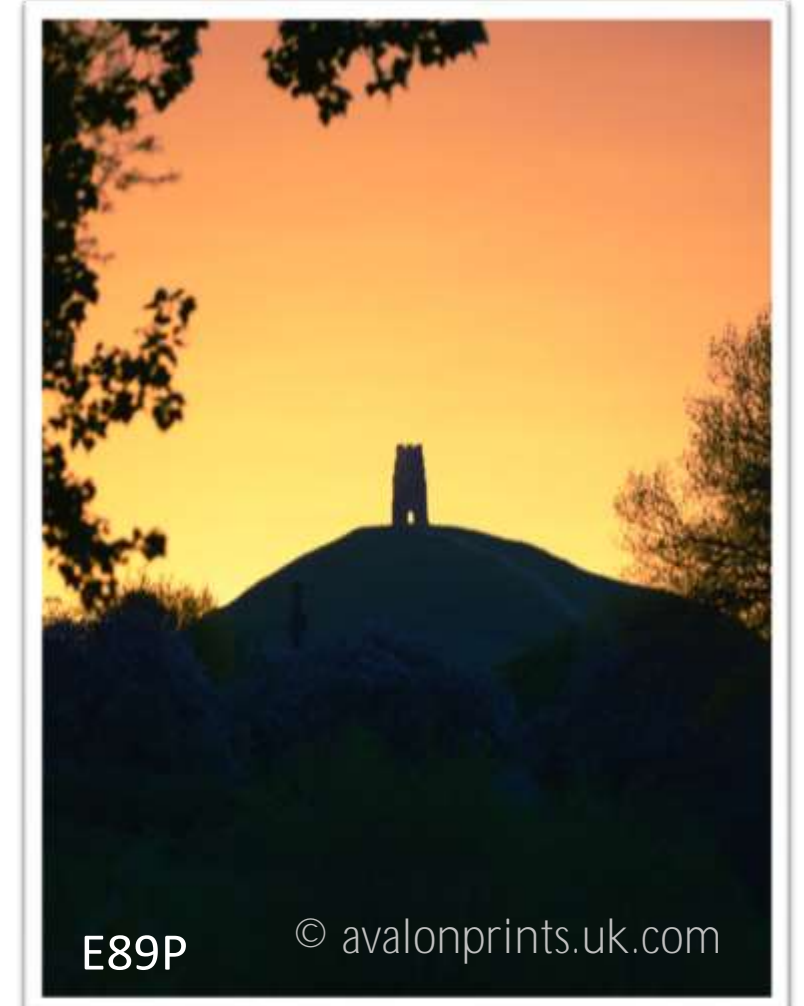
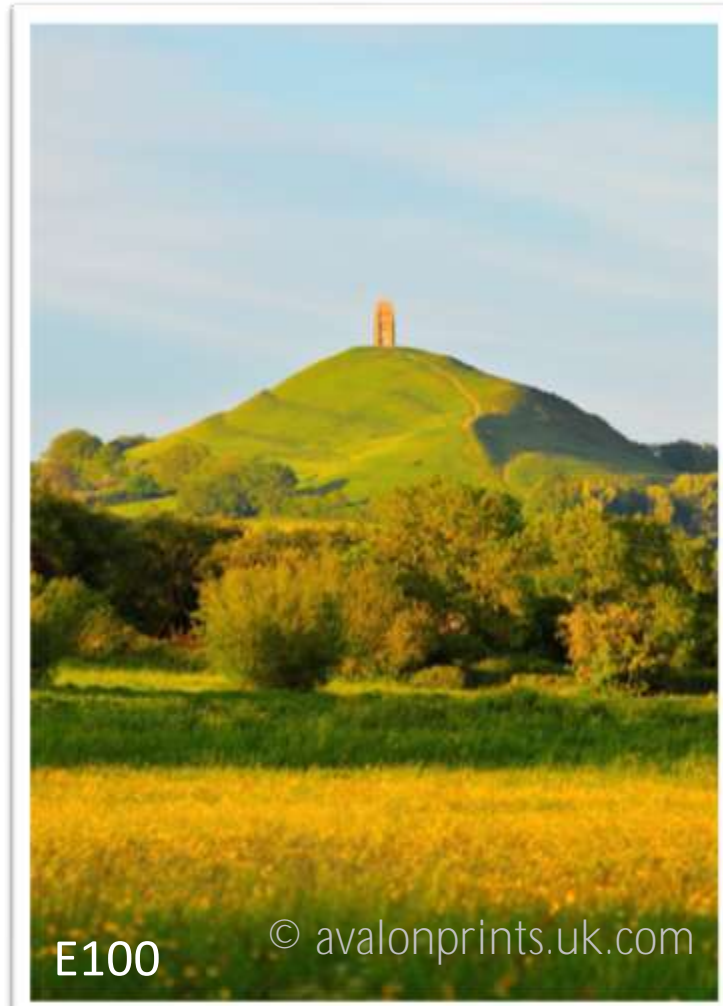
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Glastonbury Tor



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Glastonbury Tor



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Glastonbury Tor



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Vicars Close, Wells



Wells Cathedral



Wells Cathedral

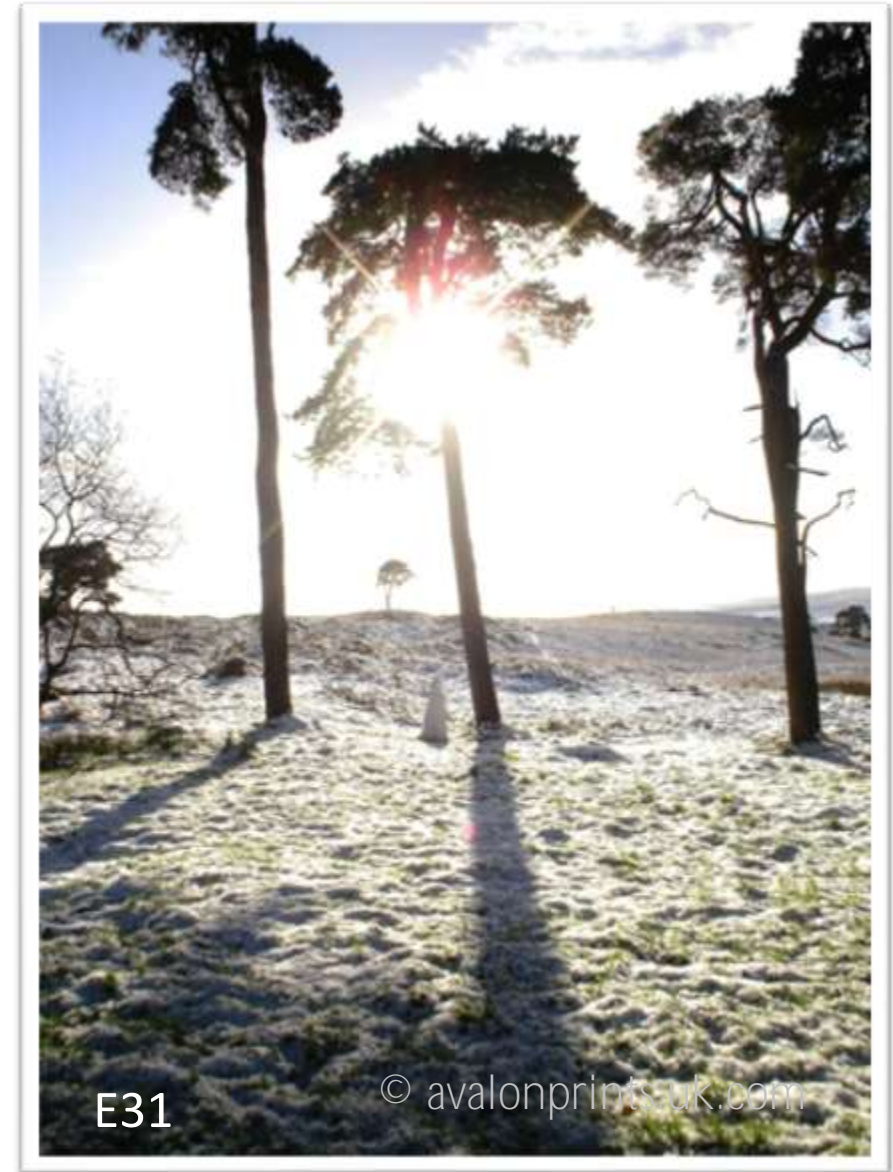


(E)



‘The Dragon’

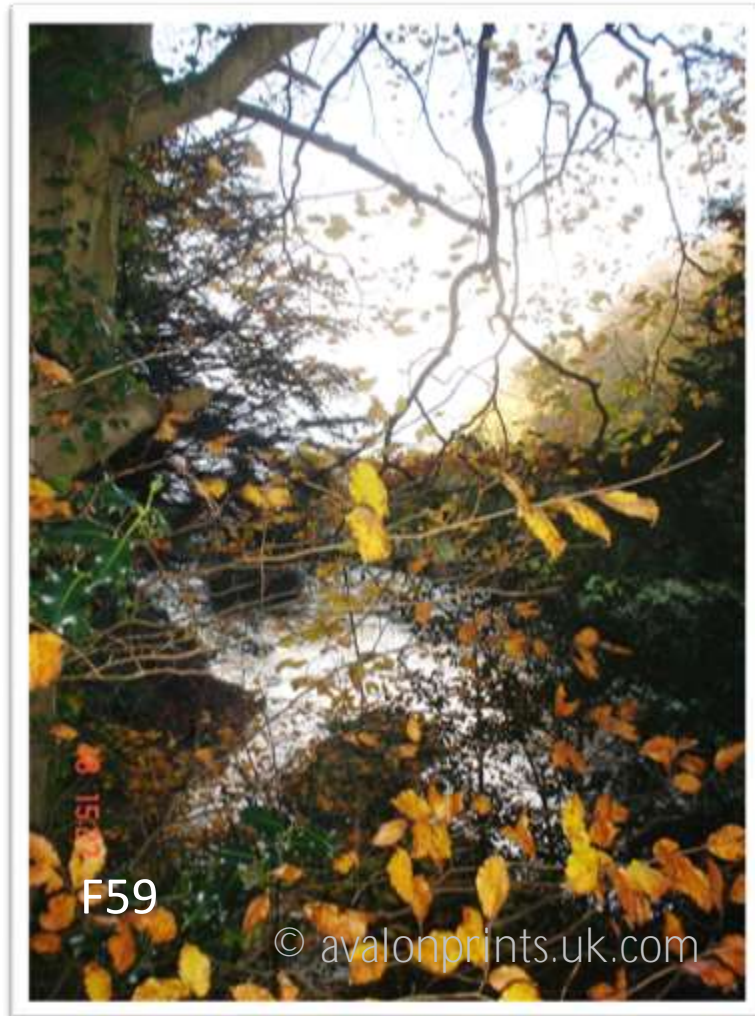
Snow scenes at Priddy, Somerset



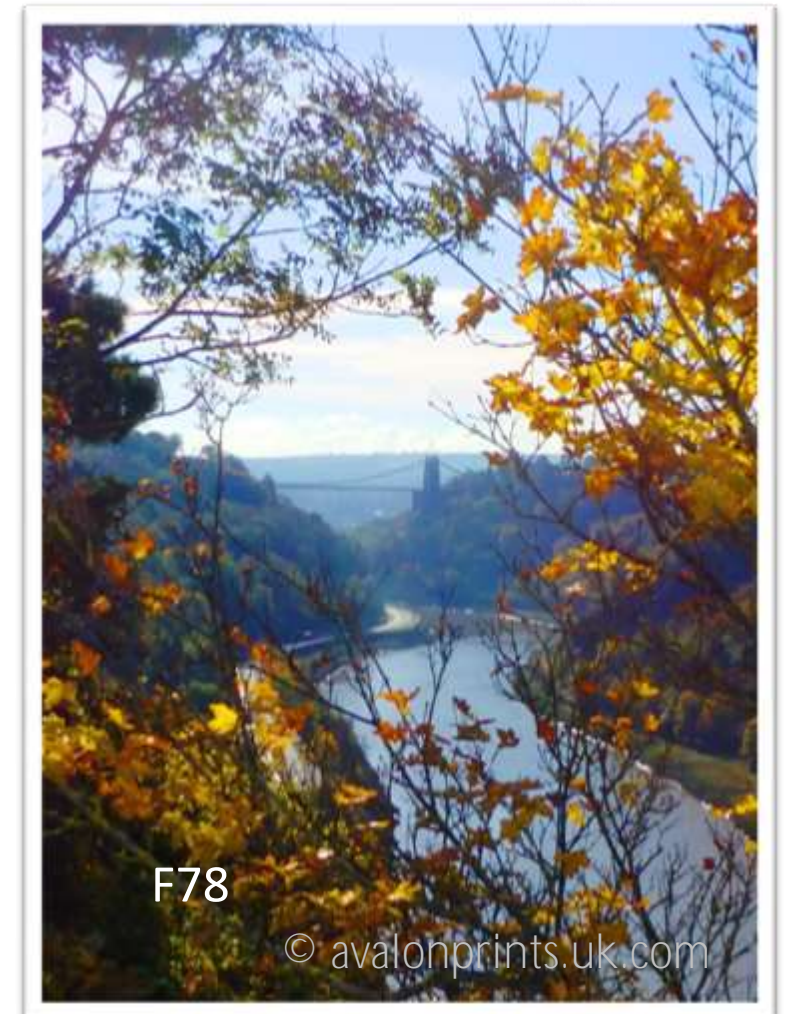
‘The Snowman’



(F)



'Autumn Leaves'  
The River Avon





(F)



Chesil Beach, Dorset





(F)



Sunset on the water



(F)



Sunset on the water





(F)



Pebble beach



‘Footsteps in the sand by the mussel rocks’



Sandymouth, Cornwall



The mussel rocks