

200 Years of Suffolk Art

*An Exhibition exploring the Legacy of
John Constable over the last two Centuries*



Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of John Constable's birth

Part 3. The Suffolk Artists

CONSTABLE 250

2026 celebrates the 250th anniversary of the birth of John Constable, Suffolk's most famous landscape painter. Many exhibitions have been held during the year to celebrate the event, including 'The Hay Wain: Walking Constable's Landscape' at Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich. (open until October 4th, 2026). In addition to the magnificent 'Hay Wain' this major exhibition features many other important Constables, including 'Dedham Vale' from the National Galleries of Scotland, and 'A Boat Passing a Lock', which the artist chose as his Royal Academy diploma work. The opportunity to view this group of world-class paintings locally provides an ideal time to consider the development of painting in the Suffolk region over the past 200 years. Constable started to be fully appreciated as an artist in the 1820s, mainly due to his series of famous 'Six Foot' canvases produced at that time. The 'Hay Wain' was awarded a Gold Medal at the Paris Salon in 1824, and the artist achieved his ambition of attaining full membership of the Royal Academy in 1829.

In 1832 a group of local artists founded the Ipswich Society of Professional and Amateur Artists. The surviving minute books from Society meetings offer an insight into the activities of the group, which did not survive for more than five years. Another less well documented society of artists was formed in 1850 but also appears not to have been active for long. By 1874 there were more professional artists in the town who, together with invited outsiders, formed the Ipswich Fine Art Club (I.F.A.C.). After various name changes this survives to the present day, and is now known as the Ipswich Art Society. In the late 19th century the I.F.A.C. was regarded as one of the England's major regional groups of painters.

Walberswick and Southwold served as seasonal centres for visiting artists, and here Philip Wilson Steer, Charles Rene McKintosh and Joseph Southall produced some of the most sought-after examples of East Anglian Art. Suffolk women artists including Rose Mead, Amy K. Browning, Anna Airy and the Zinkeisen sisters achieved recognition for female artists in the county, producing some notably fine work during the first half of the 20th century.

Sir Alfred Munnings settled just over the Essex border in Dedham, creating many atmospheric landscapes in this locality made famous by John Constable. Munnings' friend Edward Seago worked in Suffolk, the River Orwell proving an ideal subject for his skill at capturing light. Cavendish Morton, a gifted artist who bridged the traditional and modern styles, lived for many years in Eye and also painted many views near Snape and Aldeburgh.

By the mid-20th century Suffolk had changed noticeably, becoming popular not only with visitors as a holiday destination but also attracting several significant artists to make it their permanent home. John Constable's work continues to exert an underlying influence on painters active in Suffolk, demonstrated in this Exhibition by the small group of contemporary pictures.

In 1968 Harold Day wrote and published Volume 1 of his trilogy 'East Anglian Painters', a book which later became known as 'The Suffolk School' when reprinted, thus establishing a descriptive term for the group of artists born or working in Suffolk from around 1750 up to the mid 20th century. Many of the works in the present exhibition are on loan from the Harold Day Collection, started by my father and grandmother in the late 1950s. The Collection is still maintained and actively curated.

East Anglian Art has always been highly regarded, with Suffolk artists attracting great acclaim, a situation which looks set to continue well into the future. John Day, 2026

Dedicated to my mother Sheila, 1927 to 2026, who enjoyed living with Suffolk pictures for most of her life

The Landscape Tradition

The history of landscape painting in Suffolk is built on foundations laid by Thomas Gainsborough in the mid 18th century, reinforced by Constable who lived until 1837.

Their influence and inspiration is often visible in the works of the later 19th and 20th century Suffolk artists. Many of these paintings by local artists were exhibited at the Ipswich Fine Art Club, established in 1874.



1. Robert Burrows 1810-1883

'The River at Dedham' (Traditional title)

Oil on canvas 14x18in. Signed

Burrows would have been aware of Dedham's Constable connection. He exhibited at least two paintings of Dedham subjects.



2. Thomas Smythe 1825-1906

'Summer'

Oil on canvas 20x30in. Signed

Illustrated: East Anglian Painters Vol.1 (EAP Vol.1)

This picture was purchased by Harold Day in 1964.

In a catalogue from 2016 it was noted the picture owes a debt to John Constable's 'Hay Wain'.

The similarities of subject include working horses in water, figures, a house and distant vista.

John Constable's mezzotints were known to the Smythe brothers.



3. Thomas Smythe 1825-1906

'At the Crossroads'

Oil on board 12in. dia. Signed. Original frame.

A good chance for a gossip (a 'mardle' in Suffolk) at the crossroads.



4. Thomas Smythe 1825-1906

'Cottager Gathering Fuel'

Oil on board 12in. dia. Signed. Original frame.

An example of Thomas Smythe's later work combining an interesting subject with his admired painting style.



5. Thomas Smythe 1825-1906

'Returning from Harvest'

Watercolour 16x13in. Signed



6. Henry George Todd 1847-1898

Triptych of Landscapes,
one shown, framed as one
Oil on board, each picture 8x6in. Signed



7. Isaac Sheppard 1842-1899

'A Peep at the Orwell' 1882
Oil on canvas 19x25in. Period frame
Probably exhibited at Ipswich Fine Arts Club in
1882. The far boat is the 'Orwell' aka the 'Black Rat',
a paddle steamer plying from Harwich to Ipswich.



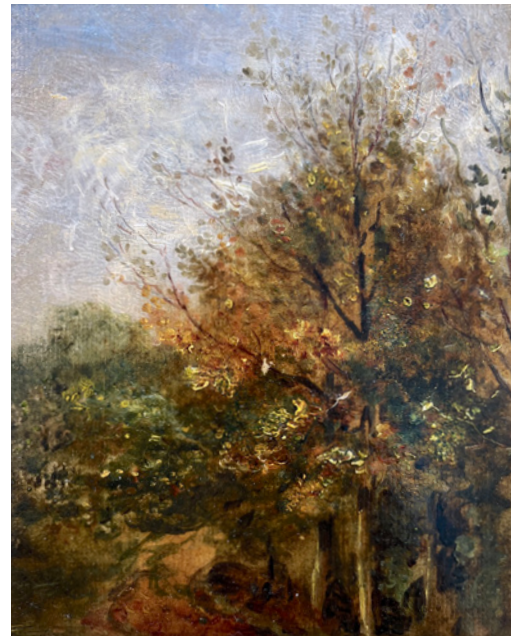
8. Thomas Churchyard 1798-1865

'Willy Lott's House'
Oil on board 10x12in.
Copied by Churchyard from a Constable painting he
owned, circa 1860.



9. Thomas Churchyard (detail) 1798-1865

'St John's Church, Woodbridge with the River Deben'
Oil on panel, edged with timber strip 6x8in.
This work illustrates how Churchyard could achieve
great fluency, not unlike Constable's abbreviation
of touch.



10. Thomas Churchyard 1798-1865

Wooded Lane Scene
Oil on panel 7x5.5in. Inscribed Anna Churchyard



11. Thomas Churchyard 1798-1865

'Extensive Landscape, possibly the Malvern Hills beyond'
Oil on panel 6.5x8.25in. Signed and inscribed Kate



12. John Moore 1820-1902
Illustrated: East Anglian Painters Vol.1

'River Landscape, Distant Windmills'

Oil on panel 10x14in. Signed



13. John Moore 1820-1902
'Cottage near Sutton Hoo'
Oil on panel 10x14in. Signed
Illustrated: East Anglian Painters Vol.1



15. Edward Seago 1910-1974
'Windmill'
Oil on panel 8.5x10.5in. Signed with initials
Early works by Seago are often signed 'S' or 'ES'



14. George Thomas Rope 1846-1929
'A Roadway near Snape'
Oil on canvas 17x22in. Signed



16. George Thomas Rope 1846-1929
'Monks Eleigh'
Oil on canvas 14x18in. Signed



17. Cavendish Morton 1911-2015

'Tide Mill, Woodbridge'

Oil on board 12x16in. Signed 1971

The building is shown with the corrugated iron cladding, before restoration.



18. Cavendish Morton 1911-2015

'Plough and Sail at Snape Maltings'

Oil on board 10x15.5in. Signed 1968

The artist spent time at Snape Maltings recording the rebuilding of the Concert Hall after the fire of 1969.



19. Cavendish Morton 1911-2015

'Little Japan, Alde Estuary'

Watercolour 14.5x21.5in. Signed 1970

The Alde estuary widens before Aldeburgh Quay and Little Japan overlooks this expanse of water from the Sailors Path. This picture captures the simple beauty of the scene.



20. Cavendish Morton 1911-2015

'Sunset on the Alde at Snape'

Oil on board 18x24in. Signed 1970

Painted at the time of the rebuilding of the Concert Hall. Constable studied sunsets and his painting 'A Hay Field East Bergholt' c.1809 features similar tonal values to those found in the present picture.

21. Attributed to Cavendish Morton 1911-2015

'Church in a Landscape'

Watercolour 6.25x8.25in.



22. George Rushton 1868-1948

'Blythburgh Church'

Oil on panel 9.5x13.5in. Signed

Rushton was an art teacher at Ipswich, influencing many future artists including Lennard Squirrell.



23. Stuart Somerville 1908-1983

'At Felixstowe'

Oil on board 8x20in. Signed

From the 1930s onwards this artist produced many paintings, almost exclusively still life studies of flowers.



24. Leonard Squirrell 1893-1979

This is a fine work conveying the airy feel of the north Norfolk coast with clever use of sunshine and shade. Squirrell admired John Sell Cotman's watercolours and achieved a similar block colouring effect.

Watercolour, 13x20.5in. Signed 1968
Royal Society of Painters in Watercolours.



25. Leonard Squirrell 1893-1979

'Lane to Dedham Vale'

Watercolour 10x16in. Signed 1965

Royal Society of Painters in Watercolours, London,
October - November 1965.

Squirrell was a pupil of G R Rushton, and they were both very respectful of Constable's heritage. The subject may be an homage to the master, showing a view from near East Bergholt down Fen Lane.



26. Leonard Squirrell 1893-1979

'A Country Pub, Summer Evening (the Barley Mow)' 1956

Watercolour 7x9.5in. Signed 1956

Royal Society of Painters in Watercolours.

This was probably a commission to capture the character of a typical English country pub, perhaps as a poster or for advertising copy. He used the name of his local inn for the pub sign.



27. Graham Crowley

'Small Blue Lott'

Oil on board 7x9in. Inscribed

Graham Crowley attended St. Martin's College of Art 1968-72 and the Royal College of Art 1972 -75, where he was later the Professor of Painting.

Represented in many Collections.

Four books published on his work.

First prize winner 2023 John Moores Painting Prize.



28. Kate Giles

"Logdance" (Holkham)

Oil on board/oak box 7.25x9.25in.

A contemporary Norfolk-based landscape artist, Kate Giles is strongly influenced by John Crome and particularly John Constable, her paintings echo earlier masters.



29. Julian Perry

Oak at Covehithe, near Southwold

Oil on panel 11.25x9.25in. Signed 2026

To honour the great John Constable, the colour palette is as near as is practical, exactly that used by the great man when sketching. No ultramarine, no yellow ochre, just exactly the pigments he used.

Animals and People

Although the region was not renowned for portrait painting in the 19th century, working people were often depicted, and by the 20th century specialist portrait artists were active. Animals often featured in paintings by Suffolk artists as they were essential both in farming and for transport.



30. Fred Russell 1813-1869

'Mary Hardwick, Stranger'

Pencil 12.5x10in. Signed 1853

With much smaller populations than in recent times new faces in town were noticeable. Russell recorded several Ipswich characters he saw on the streets.

31. Fred Russell 1813-1869

'The Hurdy Gurdy Man'

Pencil 12.5x10in.



32. John Duvall 1815-1892

'The Shepherd Boy'

Oil on canvas 16x24in.

Bought by Harold Day c.1970, in Ipswich.

33. John Duvall 1815-1892

'Boy with Game'

Oil on canvas 16.75x21in.

Thomas Smythe and John Duvall competed to achieve the best depiction of game; both artists at their best produced the highest quality work.



34. John Duvall 1815-1892

'Watching the Sheep'

Oil on canvas Oval, 9x11in. Signed

Illustrated: East Anglian Painters Vol.7

Note the string around the knees of the old shepherd's breeches.



35. John Duvall 1815-1892

'Donkeys'

Oil on canvas Oval, 9x11in. Signed

Illustrated: East Anglian Painters Vol.7

The shoes on the donkey signify he probably pulled a small cart on the road.



36. John Duvall 1815-1892

'Girl with Parrot'

Oil 11x11in.

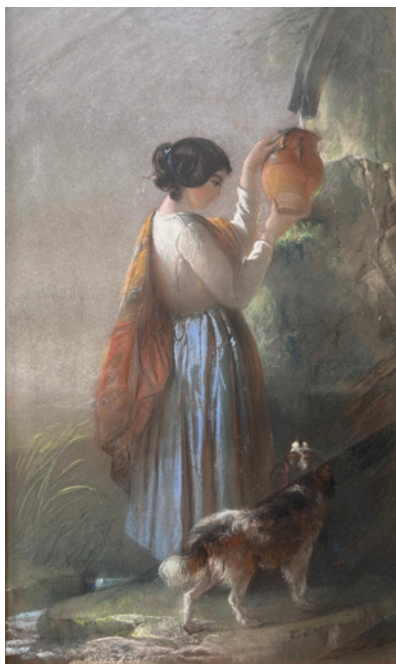
Illustrated: East Anglian Painters Vol.1



37. John Duvall 1815-1892

'Camp Scene'

Oil on canvas 12x16in. Signed



38. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Girl with Pitcher'

Pastel 17x10in.



39. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Stable Interior'

Oil on canvas 13x17in. Signed



40. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Cottage Interior'

Ink 8.25x7in. Signed 'E Smyth' before the 'e' was added to Smythe in circa 1850.

From an album of E.R.Smythe drawings.



41. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Three Horses near a Barn'

Pastel Signed 9.5x15.5in. Signed



42. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Horse and Grey Pony'

Oil on panel 11½ x18in. Signed

The paint texture and confident handling is reminiscent of John Constable's oil sketches of horses.



43. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Woolpit Horse Fair'

Oil 9x12in.



44. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Punch and Judy'

Oil on canvas 9.5x12in.

This fine pair of paintings were repatriated from Australia where they had probably been since the mid 1800's, purchased from the collection of a Club in Adelaide. Many similar works were taken by immigrants as a memento of their homeland. The treatment of the figures in the 'Punch and Judy' makes an interesting comparison with those in the Thomas Smythe painting of the same subject.



45. Thomas Smythe 1825-1906

'Punch and Judy'

Oil on panel 10x15in. Signed



46. Anna Airy 1882-1964

'Night Riding'

Watercolour

11x11in. Signed

Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours.

Exhibited Ipswich Exhibition number 96.

A romantic interpretation of the days of highway men. The candle (reflected in the window) has attracted various moths.

Airy's father, when told of her ambition to be a painter, declared he would secure for her the best training possible. These works display confidence, romance and great skill.



47. Anna Airy 1882-1964

'The Varmint'

Watercolour 15.5x17.5in. Signed 1948

Exhibited Ipswich Exhibition

This young lad has secured 'two for the pot' when at the time food was scarce. Airy's confidence is demonstrated by tonal values.



48. Harry Becker 1865-1928

'Gathering Harvest'

Black chalk 8x8in.

Most of Becker's works were small chalk or pencil field studies. His lithographs were produced in editions, but it is the original unique works on paper which show him at his most intuitive.

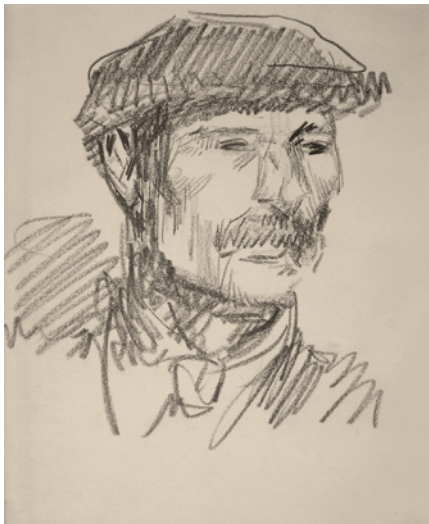


51. Harry Becker 1865-1928

'Horses' Heads'

Graphite and sanguine wash 22x14in.

This work has a strong presence, showing a subject close to Becker's heart.



49. Harry Becker 1865-1928

'Man Wearing a Cap'

Pencil 8x6.5in.



52. Harry Becker 1865-1928

'Haystacks and Heavy Horses'

Graphite on paper 15x24in.

An unusually large and impressive example.



50. Harry Becker 1865-1928

'Head of a Man I'

Graphite on paper 11x11in.

This subject, a farm worker from near his home, is said to be a member of the Napthine family of Wenhaston.



52A. Harry Becker 1865-1928

Figure and Horse studies

Pencil 9.5x13in. Signed

Loftus Collection

Illustrated in Becker literature;

Harry Becker from the Artist's Studio 2010

Harry Becker's Suffolk, hardback, 2013



54. Cor Visser 1903-1982

'Mrs. Cor Visser (Emmy)' 1936
Charcoal 10.5x7in.

An excellent draughtsman, Visser became well known for his portraiture. This work is reminiscent of Augustus John's heads, but possibly more carefully finished.

53. Amy Katherine Browning 1881-1978

'Love Me'

Oil on canvas 24x20in. Signed

Royal Academy London, 1924

Exhibited Paris Salon, 1930

John Constable's 'Hay Wain' appeared at the Royal Academy in 1821 and the Paris Salon in 1824. 100 years later 'Love Me' was exhibited at the same esteemed establishments.

55. Colin Moss 1914-2005

'Ipswich Character with his Dog'

Chalk 21x17.5in. Signed

East Anglian towns have always attracted interesting characters who were often recorded by local artists. This man and his dog would not have been out of place 200 years earlier.



The Suffolk Coast

Constable painted views of Harwich and Great Yarmouth, also the South Coast, including at Brighton and Weymouth. Suffolk School artists depicted various maritime activities both on shore and at sea.



56. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Yarmouth Pier'

Pastel 12x16in. Signed

Smythe excelled with the difficult medium of pastel, here displaying great confidence.



57. Edward Robert Smythe 1810-1899

'Waiting for the Boat' (detail)

Oil on canvas 12x10in. Signed



58. Henry Bright 1810-1873

'Beach Scene, Early Morning'

Chalks 5x7in.

Prov; Harold Day of 'Eastbourne Fine Art' in the 1960s



59. Joseph Southall 1861-1944

'Boats on Southwold Beach'

Watercolour 3.5x6.5in. Signed 1925

Southall was a regular visitor to Southwold, and his works capture the atmosphere.

60. Joseph Southall 1861-1944

'A Girl on Southwold Beach'

Pastel on grey paper 4.25x6in. Signed 1913

61. Cavendish Morton 1911-2015

'Beach at Aldeburgh'

Mixed media 16x29in. Signed

Whilst absorbing the contemporary influence of artists such as John Piper, Morton managed to retain traditional values in his work.

Image below



Still Life and other Subjects

Constable painted very realistic foliage studies, and the occasional still life composition.



62. Henry George Todd 1847-1898

'Still Life of Fruit with an Orange'

Oil on canvas 12x10in. Signed 1897

H. G. Todd excelled at the rendition of dark grapes and peeled citrus fruit.



63. Rose Mead 1867-1946

'Anemone Flowers' 1936

Oil on panel 14x16in. Signed and inscribed

After training in London and Paris, Rose Mead set up a practice in Bury St. Edmunds, producing portraits, landscapes and still life paintings.



64. Anna Zinkeisen 1901-1976

'Little Orchids'

Oil on canvas 14x12.25in. Signed 1970

Anna Zinkeisen, together with her sister Doris, made their name as society painters with theatrical leanings. Once settled in Suffolk they enhanced the county's artistic reputation.



65. Stuart Somerville 1908-1983

'Flowers in a Vase'

Oil on panel 13x10in. Signed



66. Stuart Somerville 1908-1983

'Primroses in a Vase'

Oil on board 10x14in. Signed



68. John Moore 1820-1902

'Handford Bridge, Ipswich'

Oil on canvas 13x20in. Signed



67. Stuart Somerville 1908-1983

'Tulips and Flowers in a Vase'

Oil on panel 19x24in. Signed, 1951

One of Somerville's finest works. He was a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy from 1925 to 1961.



69. George Rowe

1804-1883

'Carburton Street, London'

Oil on panel 8x6in.

Rowe left Suffolk for London, as did John Constable.



70. George Rowe

1804-1883

'Still Life of Flowers in a Vase'

Watercolour with highlights

8x6in.

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