





Using art to tell the story of our changing coastline

The paintings shown here provide us with a fascinating insight into how the Exe Estuary would have looked to our great, great, great grandparents. Long before cameras were commonplace a considerable number of artists lived in and travelled to Exmouth to capture its beautu on canvas.

Some 60 artists producing works in Exmouth between 1700 and 1910 have been identified by the Exmouth Historical and Archaeological Society for the Living with a Changing Coast (LiCCo) project. This rich artistic legacy helps to tell the story of coastal change around the shores of the Exe Estuary — a story of an ever changing, dynamic interface between land and sea. It shows that over time our coastline has never stayed the same and it never will.

'The visual delights of Exmouth'

During the nineteenth century pointers were entranced by the During the inteteeth century pointers were entrenced by the broad estuarine views from the town, with a backdrop of Miss, and by the quality of light over the sea and river, especially at sames. Some artists chose to settle in the town, whilst others visited regularly or included Exmouth in their tour of the picturesque sites of Devon.

visitors and residents alike was the mildness of the climate and the health-giving properties of the air and seawater. For artists who wanted to work outside in the open landscape this fine weather was a very particular advantage.

Devon and the fact that it was becoming the "handsomest and most fashionable of watering places" meant that there was likely to be a ready market for artists' work.

Artists resident in Exmouth before 1910

The artist whom many people associate with the town is Francis Danby who lived in Exmouth from about 1842 until his death in 1861. Danby lived first at Rill Cottage overlooking the river Exe and later at Shell House on the Maer, where he devoted time to bootbuilding.

Another notable inhabitant was Conrad Martens (1801-78), the official artist with Charles Darwin on HMS Beagle in 1833, who painted in Exmouth from 1822 until 1832.

James Bridger Goodrich (1826-1905) Richard Thomas Pentreath (1806-1869), William Henry Hallett (1810-1858), Richard Beavis (1826-1896) and Charles Edward Strong (1815-1859).

Artists portraying Exmouth before 1910

the map when he travelled around the coastline of Britain

The coastline depicted of yesterday looks very different in parts to the one we see now. For example, the steep bluff visible in paintings at the end of Dawlish Warren was washed away by a hurricane which hit the local area in 1859 and the wrecks shown here may tell of devastating storms and exceptional high tides - known to have occurred in 1869, resulting in abandoni of local oyster beds.

Whilst we cannot be absolutely certain of the future challenges posed to our coasts by climate change and sea level rise we do know that the forces of nature - of tide and wind and wave will continue to shape our shores for many years to come.

to paint watercolours for his book "A Yoyage Round Great Britain". Many more notable critists pointed landscapes nad coastal scenes in Exmouth around the time, often exhibiting their works at the Royal Academy.

Of particular note were William Widgery (1826-1893) who is best known for his Dartmoor scenes but also painted the Exe Estuary coastline and James Bruce Birkmyer (1834-1899) who was head of both the Exeter School of Art and 1899) who was had of both the Exter School of Art and Exmouth art school. He was involved with the preliminary discussions, in 1862, for the proposed maseum and public library building in Exter (pow the Royal Albert Memorial Museum) and was a mamber of the Devon & Exter Graphic Society. At the end of his career a diploma from the Royal College of Art was conferred on him.

or a continuum. In exceptional advantages which exmount had to offer still held (and hold) good: it is still true that "The situation of Exmouth is a fine one. It stands on the slope of a somewhat steep hill at the mouth of the Exe, and commands not only a fine coast view, but an extensiv

range inland over the curretees country in most on a war the barren moors in the distant background. The Haldon ridge, at an elevation of 800 feet, is about eight miles of, and forms a great feature in the landscape." The quality and forms a great feature in the landscape." The quality of the light bouncing off both the sea and the estuary and the mildress of the climate - where "the sun seems to shine brighter and longer than in most parts of England especially towards evening when the sky frequently assumes an Italian lustre" - are elements which continue to entrance both

























and that there were now six breaches through it. On proceeding to





© Roual Albert Memorial Museur

watercolour, c.1820-25.
© Royal Albert Memoria and Art Gallery, Exeter



















