

# Landscape Art in Support of River Management In England

## *Final Report for the Environment Agency*





William Fraser Garden

*St Ives Bridge on the Great Ouse, Huntingdonshire*

Watercolour. 1895

Courtesy: Chris Beetles Gallery, London



## DOCUMENT CONTROL GRID

**Project Name:** *Landscape Art in Support of River Management in England*

**Company name:** Coastal & Geotechnical Services

**VAT Registration Number:** n/a

**Charities commission Number:** n/a

**Author(s)** ..... Professor Robin McInnes OBE  
Chloe Stanford-Clark  
Coastal & Geotechnical Services  
..... Catherine Hudson  
University of Portsmouth

**Lead Author Contact details:** [rgmcinnes@btinternet.com](mailto:rgmcinnes@btinternet.com)

**Tel:** 01983 854865

### Front Cover Images:

**Top Left:** *The Cuckmere Valley, Seaford* by Alfred Robert Quinton. c.1925. Watercolour. Courtesy: Salmon's.

**Top Right:** *High Force on the Tees, Yorkshire* by Harold Sutton Palmer. c.1919. Watercolour. Private Collection

**Bottom:** *Wallingford from the River Thames* by George Gordon Fraser. Watercolour. c.1880s. Courtesy: Chris Beetles Gallery, London.

**The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of any other individual or organisation. Where third party copyright material has been identified, further use of that material requires the permission of the copyright holders concerned.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The assistance of the following organisations and individuals who have all contributed to the completion of this study is most gratefully acknowledged:-**

Jim Barlow, James Addicott & Jo Noel of the Environment Agency; my co-authors Chloe Stanford-Clark of Coastal & Geotechnical Services & Catherine Hudson of the University of Portsmouth together with Environmental Scientist Eleanor Burke who assisted me with background research, Maggie Gray, writer, editor and art historian; my designer and secretary Cheryl Taylor, & Sylvia McInnes who took many of the present-day photographs.

I would also like to thank Agnew's; Alexlott; ArtUK; Martin Beisly Fine Art; The Chris Beetles Gallery, London; Birmingham Museums Trust; Bridgeman Images; Charles O'Brien of Bonham's; The British Library; The Trustees of the British Museum; D Blenkinsop; Rodney Burton; Rachel Tait & The Trustees of Carisbrooke Castle Museum; N. Chadwick; P.L Chadwick; Lewis Clarke; Creative Commons; Harriet Drummond & Sarah Reynolds of Christie's, London; Commons Wikimedia; Nigel Cox; Scott Pettitt, Devon Archives & Local Studies service; Dorset Museum; Dorset Heritage Service; David Dixon; Victoria Howson, Durham County Council Art Collection; en.Wikipedia; Eastbourne Fine Art; The Exe Estuary Partnership; Mat Fascione; The Fine Art Photographic Library; Grant Ford; Geograph Images; Glasgow Museums Resource Centre; Gnesener; The Government Art Collection; Mr & Mrs M Gould; Grosvenor Prints, Covent Garden, London; Phillip Halling; Derek Harper; Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston; Isle of Wight Heritage Service; Tom Jolliffe; The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne; Charles Lane; Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum; Clare Cooper of Leicester Museum & Art Gallery; Rupert Maas of Maas Gallery, London; Marathon; John Peel of Manchester Art Gallery; Derek Newman Fine Art; Oliver Blackmore of Newport Museum, Wales; Oast House Archives; HM Ordnance Survey; P.J Photography; Guy Peppiatt Fine Art, London; Guy Percival; The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery; The Red House Museum, Christchurch; Toby Robinson; John Rowlands, Water Management Advisor; Royal Collections Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022; The Russell-Cotes Museum & Art Gallery, Bournemouth; Salmon's; Shutterstock Images; Andrew Smith; David Smith; Somerset Heritage Service; John Spink Fine Art; Charlie Minter & Emma Gordon of Sotheby's; Tate Images; Torre Abbey Historic House and Gallery; Peter Trimming; Emily Burnham of Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery; ViewIW; V&A Images; Derek Voller; Robin Webster; Chris Whippet; Suzanne Ceirlog-Hughes & The Warden & Scholars of Winchester College; Sue Wood; Victor Fauvelle & Hannah Farthing of Woolley & Wallis Auctioneers, Salisbury.

**Suggested Citation:** McInnes, R.G; Stanford-Clark, C. & Hudson, C. *Landscape Art in Support of River Management in England*. Coastal & Geotechnical Services, Isle of Wight, UK. Report for the Environment Agency.

**This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium. It may only be re-used accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged giving the title of the publication. Where third party copyright material has been identified, further use of the material requires permission from the copyright holders concerned.**

## Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	5
2. Study Objectives and Approach .....	7
3. The Portrayal of England's Rivers through Art Since 1770 .....	21
4. Validating the accuracy of Artworks .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5. English Rivers Case Study Sites .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.1. River Dart .....	46
5.2. River Exe .....	58
5.3. Somerset Levels .....	71
5.4. The Dorset Stour .....	74
5.5. Western Yar, Isle of Wight .....	84
5.6. Eastern Yar, Isle of Wight .....	90
5.7. The Sussex Rother .....	100
5.8. River Arun .....	107
5.9. River Medway .....	117
5.10. River Thames (Abingdon to Windsor) .....	127
5.11. River Great Ouse .....	145
5.12. River Bure .....	157
5.13. River Blyth .....	164
5.14. River Severn .....	172
5.15. River Wye .....	183
5.16. River Wharfe .....	194
5.17. River Ure .....	200
5.18. River Tees .....	204
5.19. River Eden .....	208
6. Analysis .....	211
7. Conclusions .....	237
8. Recommendations .....	238
Appendix 1. Biographical information on some key artists who depicted English River Scenery most accurately between 1770-1960 .....	239
Appendix 2. Key Websites and Information Sources .....	249



**Figure i.1:** Edmund J. Niemann

*Richmond on the River Swale, Yorkshire*

Oil. c.1860

Courtesy: Fine Art Photographic Library

**Figure i.2:** Edmund J. Niemann

*Windsor from the Thames*

Oil. c.1865

Courtesy: Fine Art Photographic Library





## 1. Executive Summary

What lessons can we learn from observations of changes that have affected the physical form, environment and character of England's rivers over the last 250 years? How and to what extent have these landscapes been affected by both natural and anthropogenic influences over that time? Increasingly sophisticated technologies now allow us to observe and monitor changing conditions, but such innovative approaches have been introduced relatively recently and there are few locations across England where systematic monitoring have been undertaken for more than fifty years.

Alongside other technical tools we can now also take particular advantage of a vast additional resource of historical imagery that is becoming increasingly available online, and which allows a much longer-term perspective to be gained of all aspects of physical and environmental change; such insight can helpfully inform both future planning and the day-to-day management of flood risk and the natural environments of river systems.

Rivers are a key component of the English landscape and they have fulfilled a vital role in its culture, development and history over the centuries. Many of England's sixty-three major rivers have been developed progressively in recent centuries. They have been widened, obstructed or re-routed, and their waters dammed or diverted to suit changing agricultural, industrial, trade and commercial requirements over time. Rivers not only make a very important contribution to the economic wellbeing of the Country, but they also provide opportunities for relaxation, recreation and enjoyment within a diverse range of outstanding natural and heritage-rich environments.

Over the centuries, buildings and other structures including mills, weirs, water wheels, water supply infrastructure, monasteries, castles, churches, locks, bridges, fish ponds, water meadows, industrial and residential development, have been constructed in what have often become vulnerable locations, which are now increasingly affected by inundation, undermining or, in some cases, total loss. Climate change impacts, including more extreme weather events, are exerting an increasing influence on river systems. Both inland and within coastal zones these events will become more severe with increasing flooding and erosion in future decades; in fact, the last two decades already provide numerous examples of such devastating consequences.

Risk management can be achieved most effectively by gaining an improved understanding of the nature and the extent of risk, and by building capacity to deliver solutions to support improved management (Defra & Environment Agency, 2021<sup>1</sup>; Environment Agency, 2021<sup>2</sup>; Moore & McInnes, 2021<sup>3</sup>). However, risk reduction is just one component of a wider need to achieve an improved understanding of the nature and character of our rivers, which can be achieved through a *discovery, identification and understanding* approach (McInnes & Stanford-Clark, 2018<sup>4</sup>).

Around the coastline of Great Britain, the *State of the British Coast* study utilised historical artworks to review the nature, scale and rate of coastal change at thirty-two case study sites (McInnes & Stanford-Clark, 2018<sup>4</sup>). The study also concluded that a similar approach could be very valuable in terms of informing science in relation to other environments such as river systems. Such a study could use art imagery to provide valuable additional data and information in support of our understanding of river catchments in line with the government's and the Environment Agency's research objectives (Defra & Environment Agency, 2021<sup>1</sup>; Environment Agency, 2021<sup>2</sup>).

This study will illustrate the multiple benefits to be derived from the use of historical artworks (1770-1950) to improve understanding of long-term river change across England since the late eighteenth century. Extending back a century before the introduction of black and white photography river art, in full colour, can provide a detailed record of the physical changes and human influences that have

shaped rivers, from source to sea, over the last 250 years. In particular often highly detailed artworks record river change over time, first in their natural, unconstrained forms and later often showing extensive riverbank and in-channel developments, encroachments and modifications.

Such images provide a chronology of the physical, environmental, cultural heritage and social changes that have affected riverbanks, rivers and flood plains over time. These additional and currently under-used art resources allow us to take advantage of the wisdom of hindsight when planning for risk reduction and management more widely in a changing climate.

The art resource, including works by many of England's finest artists, can, therefore, inform consideration of, and support:-

- our understanding of river morphology
- patterns of land use and development change within river catchments;
- sustainable flood risk management;
- opportunities for rivers restoration;
- the chronology of river bank development, environmental, cultural heritage and social changes over time to inform planning policy-making and risk management.

The study has utilised and refined a ranking system for confirmation of the topographical accuracy of artists and their works developed previously by the authors for *The State of the British Coast* study (McInnes & Stanford-Clark, 2019<sup>4</sup>).

## References

1. Defra, Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales & Welsh Government. 2021. *Evaluating the Effectiveness of flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Governance in England and Wales*. Report FRS17186/1.
2. Environment Agency. 2021. *Research on Using Flood Risk Information in Spatial Planning*. Evidence Report: Developing Good Practice Criteria. Version: FRS18204/R2.
3. Moore, R. & McInnes, R.G. 2021. *Coastal Erosion and Climate Change – Guidance for Policymakers, Planners and Politicians*. Report for Jacobs. 86pps. [www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com](http://www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com)
4. McInnes, R.G. & Stanford-Clark, C. 2018. *The State of the British Coast 1770-Present Day. Observable Changes Utilising Art Imagery*. [www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com](http://www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com)

## 2. Study Objectives and Approach

### 2.1. Introduction

The Environment Agency plays the central role in managing flood risk from both rivers and the sea. Its aim is to minimise the harm caused by flooding by reducing both the likelihood of flood events and their impacts when flooding does occur. Scientific research and analysis under-pins everything that the Environment Agency does. It assists improving understanding and helps it to understand and manage river environments more effectively (Environment Agency, 2021a<sup>1</sup>). The impacts of climate change including predicted sea level rise and changing weather and rainfall patterns encourage an increasing need for adaptive management (Moore & McInnes, 2021<sup>2</sup>) and this is also placing an increasing emphasis on working with natural processes as a part of river management (Environment Agency, 2021a<sup>1</sup>).

In support of these key policy objectives landscape paintings, watercolour drawings and prints can be used as evidential proof of the changing characteristics of river landscapes and features over time in a novel way. The extensive and continuing contribution of England's rivers to the science of fluvial geomorphology stems from a heritage of scientific endeavour into areas of geology, botany and zoology. Although many eminent 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century scientists recognised the importance of rivers in shaping landscapes despite this *"The arts have sometimes been perceived as having little practical application but, in fact, they can form valuable components of the wider study and comprehension of the complexities of landscapes if they are brought together rather than being considered as separate entities"* (Koff,1999<sup>3</sup>). For example, in geography the visual arts can aid environmental problem solving because they integrate physical and human aspects of the discipline by offering interpretation of the human-landscape interaction. *"Art can be used to reinvigorate interpretation of landscapes because art has been generally been under-used by scientists compared with other art forms such as photography and cartography"* (Koff,1999<sup>3</sup>).



Figure 2.1: John Brett ARA

*The River Yare at Great Yarmouth*

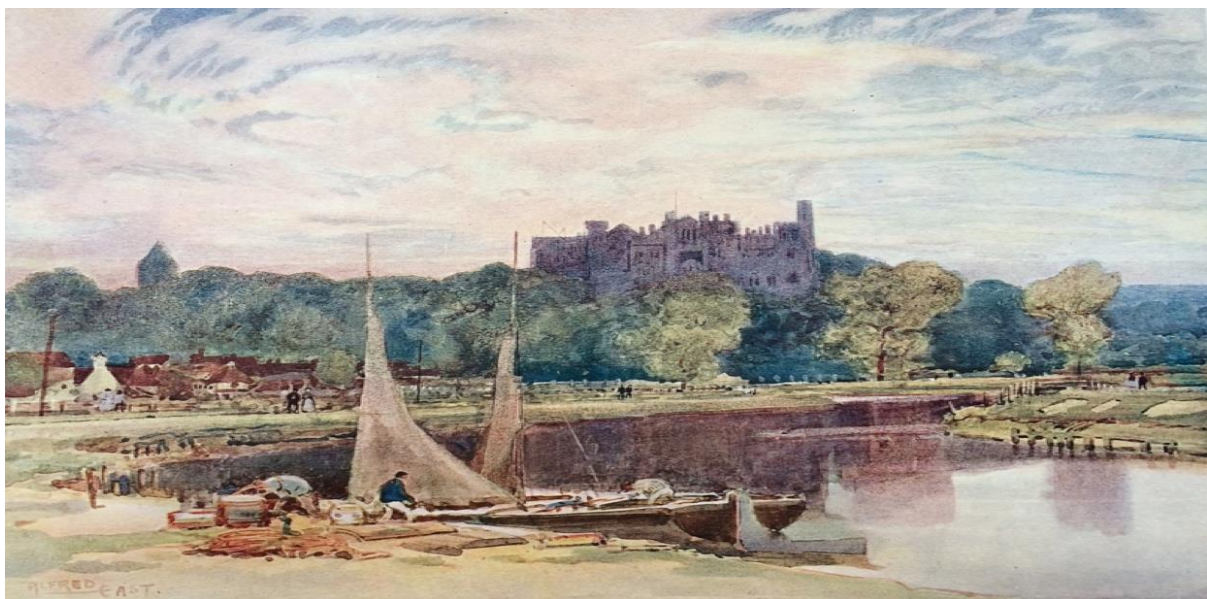
Oil.1865. Private Collection



Despite the importance of rivers to the English landscape, the subject of their illustration has received relatively little attention from authors in recent years, with a lack of river books being published since the early 20th century. The portrayal and description of our great rivers by some of our leading artists, including Turner, Girtin, Sandby, De Wint and others, have provided a wealth of illustrations, and this rich art heritage, often with accompanying letterpress, continued through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Stark & Robberds, 1834<sup>4</sup>; Tomblason, 1834<sup>5</sup>; Wyllie, 1905<sup>6</sup>; Bradley & Sutton Palmer, 1909<sup>7</sup>). Alongside scientific papers a few more recent publications have been devoted to river landscapes but were illustrated with colour photography including, *Rivers of Britain* (Muir & Muir, 1986<sup>8</sup>), *Rivers in the British Landscape* (Pooley, 2005<sup>9</sup>) and *Rivers* (Holmes & Raven, 2014<sup>10</sup>). These books describe river scenery in general but they make no mention of the wealth of artistic images of rivers, which have often depicted these past environments so vividly.

Works of art, together with old photographs also represent media that are familiar to a wide range of riverside stakeholders, and which they can immediately relate to. Rivers have an historical fascination and attachment for many of their residents as well as visitors. Therefore, art images are of immediate interest by offering a comparison to present day situations; for example, by illustrating the extent of flood storage lost that has taken place over time (Environment Agency, 2021b<sup>11</sup>). This research by the authors has confirmed that a very rich, currently under-used archive of such images exists for river systems. The study can assist a wide range of users by diagnosing the effects of historical river management over time, assessing the nature, scale and rate of change and the resulting impacts through the series of well-illustrated case studies. The study has also provided, for the first time, a list of those artists and their works that have been ranked in terms of the value of the contribution they make to improving understanding of river catchments and in terms of supporting river management.

In order to quantify the contribution that art imagery may make to the gaining of an improved understanding of rivers the study involved an assessment of works of river art contained within public and private collections nationally, regionally and locally. The results of this research allow the development of a shortlist of those artists whose works present the most reliable record of river conditions at the time they were painted, as well as the extent of the art resource itself. The application of a tried and tested ranking system provides a methodology for accurate assessment of the relative value of this evidence to support our understanding of change since the 1770s.



**Figure 2.2:** Sir Alfred East

*Arundel Castle from the Arun*

Watercolour. 1905

## 2.2. The Extent of the river art resource

Over the last fifteen years the Public Catalogues Foundation (PCF), a registered charity, in collaboration with public art galleries, museums and other owners of artworks arranged the photographing of nearly all Great Britain's 212,000 oil paintings; these are now available for research and interrogation on the ArtUK website (<https://artuk.org/>). In 2016 a new charity, *Watercolour World* ([www.watercolourworld.org/](http://www.watercolourworld.org/)), was founded to create a visual online topographical record of the world through watercolours spanning the period from 1600-1900. *Watercolour World* displays watercolours recording topography, architecture, flora and fauna, drawing on the estimated 6.5 million watercolours in public collections in Great Britain, as well as those contained in many important private collections. These are indexed geographically on its website and already include over 130,000 images.

In view of the fine detail of the watercolour painting technique this medium provides the opportunity to reappraise not just the physical changes that have affected the British rivers but also changes to their natural environments over the last two hundred and fifty years in both qualitative and quantitative terms. The selected case studies illustrate how art images can provide what can be sometimes the only records of river features, in full colour, since the late eighteenth century.

There were several reasons for the focus on art in particular for this study. The medium of photography as a tool is far better recognised by the wide range of professionals involved with coastal and inland management, and because photographs largely represent a true record of past conditions, there are not generally issues relating to the accuracy of this medium. However, partly because of lack of information on the breadth of the art resource and concerns about whether artworks represent true depictions of the subject at the time they were painted, art has been much less used as a medium to explore the subject of changes affecting landscapes, habitats and species. An art ranking system that has been progressively developed by the author over the last ten years has highlighted watercolour drawings and lithographs in particular, as the most accurate and consequently valuable mediums in terms of illustrating scenery.

Museums, art galleries, local authority collections, archives and private collections throughout Great Britain contain a wealth of artistic images, whilst many others are contained in extensively illustrated topographical publications. Until recently, the availability of the art resource has been relatively unknown except for more famous works, which often hang on the walls of public art galleries. However, this situation changed in 2004 when an initiative by Dr Fred Hohler led to the foundation of a charity, *The Public Catalogues Foundation*, which was established to create a complete record of the national collections of oil, tempera and acrylic paintings in public ownership and to make them accessible to the public.

This new approach, bridging the disciplines of the arts and science, is particularly important for those interested in all aspects of river management because, by their nature, watercolours tend to allow very detailed images of river scenery to be produced. An art ranking system that has been progressively developed by the author over the last ten years has highlighted watercolour drawings as one of the most accurate and consequently valuable mediums in terms of illustrating river scenery. The online art resources now available on these two websites have allowed access to thousands of oil paintings and watercolours, which were previously relatively unknown except to specialists; they are now available for research by the full range of professionals and the wider public who may have an interest in different aspects of environmental planning and management within river basins across England.

Watercolours represent a fragile art resource and their recording, preservation and dissemination in this way provides a new, unrivalled resource available for scientific purposes. In view of the fine detail of the watercolour painting technique this medium provides the opportunity to reappraise not just the physical changes that have affected our river landscapes but also changes to their natural environments and cultural heritage over the last two hundred and fifty years.

### 2.3. Study Objectives

The key study objective has been to inform policy-making by providing an additional, easily accessible tool for use by scientists and practitioners. The study seeks to support the Environment Agency's *National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England* (Environment Agency, 2020<sup>12</sup>) by:-

- providing a new source of data and evidence to help inform the decisions made by risk management authorities at a range of spatial scales;
- providing evidence and advice to planning authorities on how they can plan and adapt to all sources of flooding change in the face of climate change;
- supporting nature-based solutions to flooding problems by drawing on artistic evidence of historical management practices in, for example, hinterlands, upper reaches, water meadows and flood plains; more widely supporting ecosystem services, natural solutions to support conservation, increased biodiversity and green recovery;
- providing an improved understanding of river geomorphological change as a basis for more sustainable management including river restoration;
- providing additional evidence to support making the best choices for management of flood risk within river catchments;
- providing new non-technical community engagement tools that easily illustrate river change over time and the impacts on riverside communities.

In order to allow the most comprehensive use of the river art resource this report demonstrates how a wide range of topographical/geomorphological features from eighteen case study sites across England's rivers have been illustrated over time; these can be compared with the present-day view.



**Figure 2.3:** Robert Mann

*The River Severn near Bewdley*

Oil on Canvas. c.1875

Courtesy: Bridgeman Images/Torre Abbey Museum & Art Gallery



## 2.4. Typical fluvial geomorphological features that may be available within artworks for Identification and interpretation of change

### In-Channel

- Channel type; straight, meandering, straight, braiding or anastomosing (or dynamically between two states)
- Channel width (and width variation within image)
- Number of channels within image
- Presence of pools
- Presence of riffles
- Presence of secondary channels and nearby waterbodies (backwaters, oxbow lakes, ponds, lakes)
- Presence of mid-channel bars (indicating braiding), vegetated bars (indicating stable braiding)
- Presence of natural dams

### River Bank

- Evidence of planform migration
- Bank height
- Bank slope
- Presence of meanders
- Sinuosity of meanders
- Vegetation cover (type and density %)
- Adjacent land cover type
- Bank material (eg: clay, silt, sand, Gravels present in bed only, not visible in images)
- Erosional features (bank failure, rills, gullies)
- Proximity of artificial structures (bridges, dams, weirs, fencing etc.)



**Figure 2.4:** English School

*The River Wharfe at Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire*

Chromolithograph.1887



**Figure 2.5:** Alfred Robert Quinton

*The Thames from Streatley Hill*

Watercolour. c.1920

Courtesy: Salmon's

## 2.5. Approach adopted to this Study

The approach to this rivers' study has comprised five main activities:-

**2.5.1 Confirmation of the choice of eighteen case study sites from across England.** These were selected after a review of their interest from physical, environmental and cultural perspectives and the range of art images available:-

- **South-West River Basin** – Dart, Exe, Somerset Levels, Dorset Stour
- **South-East River Basin** – Eastern Yar, Western Yar, IW, Sussex Rother, Arun, Medway
- **Thames River Basin** - The Thames from Abingdon to Windsor
- **Anglian River Basin** – Great Ouse, Bure, Blyth
- **Severn River Basin** – Severn, Wye
- **Humber River Basin** – Tees, Wharfe, Ure
- **North-West River Basin** – Eden

**NB:** The main body of this report also includes images drawn from many other rivers.





**Figure 2.6:** Joseph Farington RA

*Tewkesbury on the Severn*

Oil on Canvas. c.1788

Courtesy: Woolley & Wallis Auctions

**Figure 2.7:** C.S. & R. Twopenny

*Rochester Castle on the Medway*

Watercolour. 1836

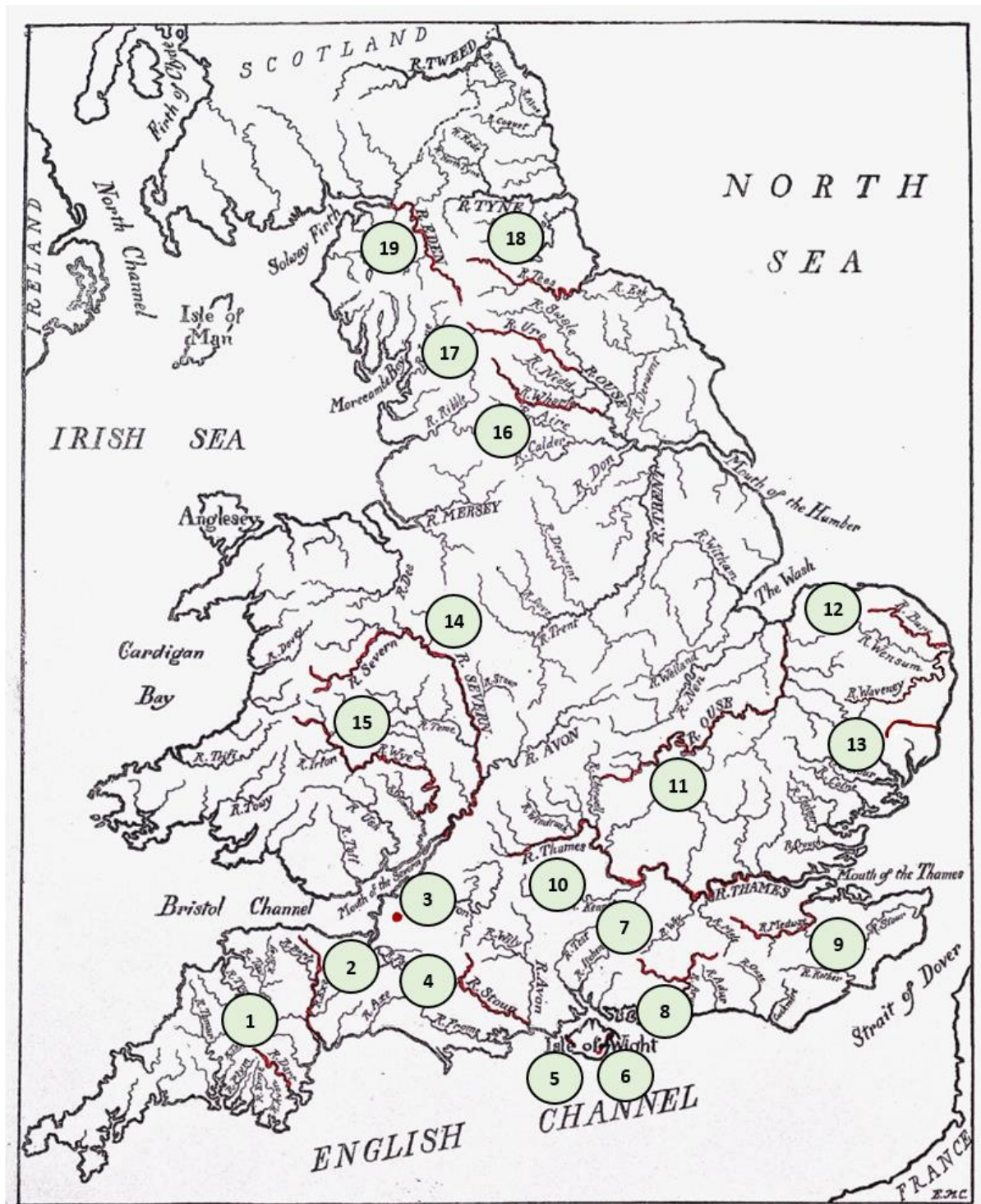
Courtesy: Christie's © 2021





# CASE STUDIES MAP

Map 2.1: Case Studies Map



Case Study sites: 1. Dart. 2. Exe. 3. Somerset Levels. 4. Stour, 5. Western Yar. 6. Eastern Yar. 7. Rother. 8. Arun. 9. Medway. 10. Thames (part). 11. Great Ouse. 12. Bure. 13. Blyth. 14. Severn. 15. Wye. 16. Wharfe. 17. Ure. 18. Tees. 19. Eden.

Base map from 'Rivers and Streams of England' by H. Sutton Palmer and A. G. Bradley. 1909.

**2.5.2. Image searches for oil paintings, watercolour drawings and prints depicting rivers.** This task involved searches at the websites of *ArtUK* (for oil paintings), *Watercolour World* (for watercolours) preliminary research identified 3,240 river images from across the case study sites. Other sources of images included Internet searches, The National Archives, the Victoria & Albert Museum (for watercolours), the British Museum (for watercolours), the Courtauld Institute (for watercolours), the Witt Library, the auction catalogue archives of Sotheby's, Christie's and Bonham's, regional art galleries (for watercolours and drawings), local authority collections, picture libraries and personal collection(s).

The author is also in regular contact with most of the major auction houses, image libraries and other major collections. For the purposes of this study England's rivers have been explored and evaluated through study of the works of a number of key artists or artistic groups that form *benchmarks* spanning the study time period (1770-Present Day). These comprise:

**2.5.3. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century topographical artists, authors and diarists including Rev. J Swete, P.O Hutchinson, Rev. W. Gilpin, William Daniell RA, William Payne, John White Abbott, Paul Sandby and other leading painters and engravers.**

**2.5.4. Works by Victorian landscape artists including the Pre-Raphaelites and their many followers.** John Ruskin, a geologist and botanist by training, and one of the greatest art critics of the nineteenth century said in his Edinburgh lectures *"Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything down to the most minute details, from nature and from nature alone"* (Ruskin, 1853<sup>13</sup>). On account of their focus on truth of depiction and artistic accuracy, the short-lived Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but also particularly their followers, who painted up until the last decade of the nineteenth century, provide a rich resource of detailed views that were painted in both oils and watercolour.

**2.5.5. Postcard artists and colour plate book illustrators including the watercolours of Harold Sutton Palmer, Ernest William Haslehurst, Alfred Heaton Cooper and Alfred Robert Quinton's numerous views (c.1900-c.1934),** which were painted for reproduction as colour picture postcards and as book illustrations by J. & F. Salmon Ltd of Sevenoaks, Kent. Quinton's watercolours are highly detailed and he re-visited many as towns and villages expanded during the first three decades of the twentieth century, as well as painting celebrated beauty spots (Belloc, 1907<sup>14</sup>).

**2.5.6. Twentieth century artists such as David Addey** whose watercolours painted who between 1991 and 2005 retraced William Daniell's *Voyage Round Great Britain* (Daniell & Ayton, 1814-25<sup>15</sup>), the River Medway and other river scenes painting the present-day view from the vantage points chosen by artists nearly two centuries before. (Addey, 1991<sup>16</sup>), other post-war artists.

**2.5.7. Present Day Photographs** will bring the sequence of views up to date and allow comparisons to be readily made to inform the findings of this study.

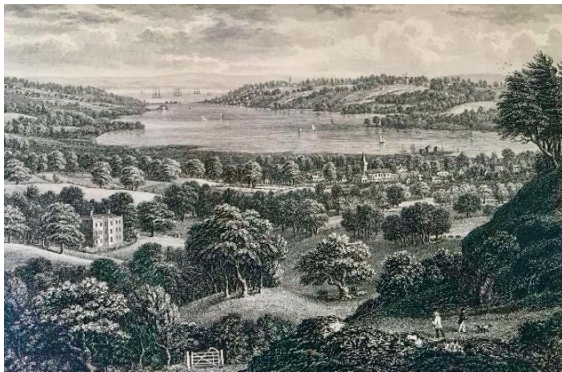




**Figure 2.8:** William Daniell RA *Brading, IW* 1823



**Figure 2.9:** Clarkson Stanfield *Brading, IW* 1834  
Courtesy: Agnew's



**Figure 2.10:** G. Brannon *Brading, IW* 1839



**Figure 2.11:** David Addey *Brading, IW* 1996



**Figures 2.8-2.12 (above)** illustrate the chronology of changes to the river landscape at the mouth of the Eastern Yar, Isle of Wight recorded through a sequence of artworks between 1823 and the present day. The views show the impacts of human intervention in particular following the construction of a causeway between St Helens and Bembridge to create a rail and road link, and the drainage of the original harbour for agricultural purposes.





**Above left:** *Lynmouth* by Rev. J. Swete. 1796. Watercolour. Courtesy: Devon Archives & Local Studies. **Above right:** *Lynmouth* by William Daniell RA. 1814. Aquatint. Private Collection.



**Above left:** *Lynmouth from the Pier* by George Rowe. c.1840. Lithograph. Private Collection. **Above right:** *Mars Hill, Lynmouth* by Alfred R. Quinton. 1925. Watercolour. Courtesy: Salmon's.

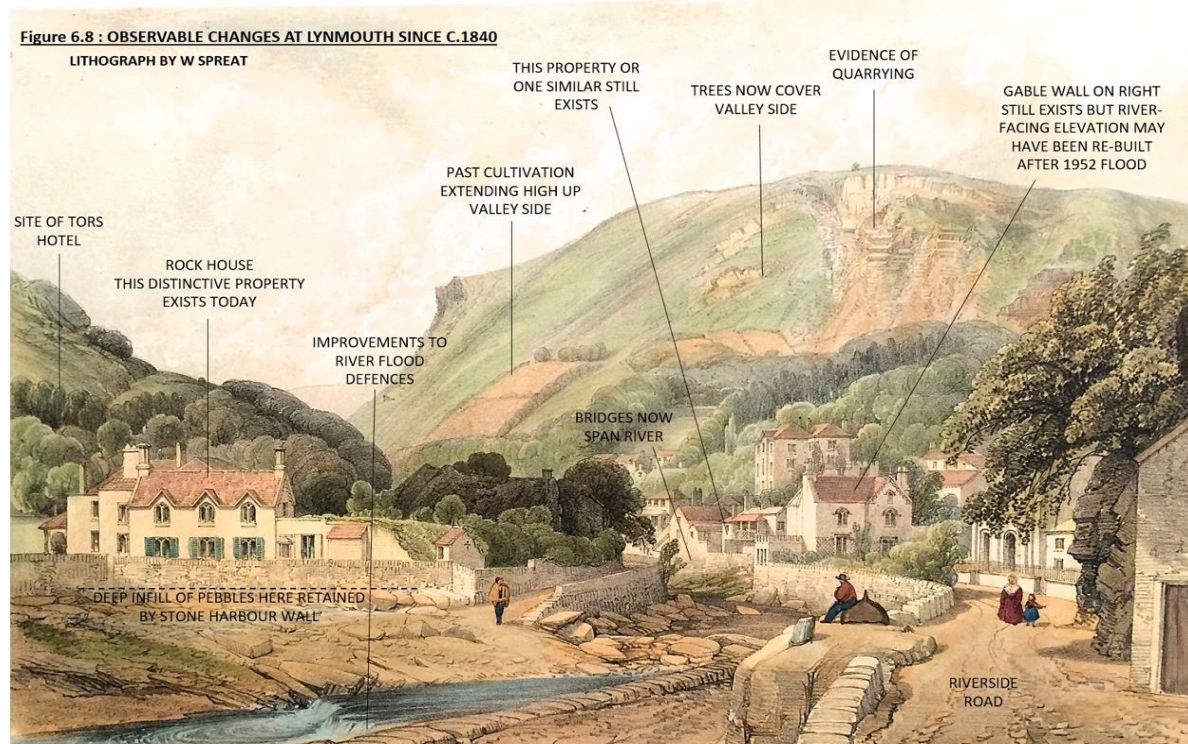


**Left:** *Lynmouth* by David Addey. 1990. Watercolour. **Above right:** *Lynmouth* – Present day view.

**Figure 2.13 (above):** These series of views illustrate an historical sequence of artworks showing the mouth of the Lyn at Lynmouth on the North Devon coast produced between 1796 and 1990 together with a present-day photograph. The town was devastated by river flooding in 1953 and again in 2013.



- 2.6. Listing and ranking key river artists** in terms of the accuracy of their depictions providing the titles, date, medium and location of each of the artworks.
- 2.7. Providing succinct descriptions of a diverse range of rivers case study sites** where the potential of artworks to support the study objectives are illustrated. The study sites were evaluated under the headings: *Location; Why was this case study site selected? Summary of geology, fluvial geomorphology and processes; How can the art imagery resources inform us of river change? What are the key issues that can be learnt from this study site? References.*



**Figure 2.17:** This figure illustrates how quite detailed artworks such as this of Lynmouth on the North Devon coastal allow comparisons to be made with conditions existing today. Historical artworks can provide details of geomorphological change and human intervention and the resulting impacts over time, positive or negative.

- 2.8. The preparation of this comprehensively illustrated technical report** suitable for online and hard copy publication describing the results of the research and how art can be used in practice by helping to fulfil the needs of a wide range of users.
- 2.9. The results of this research:-**
1. demonstrates through the nineteen case studies demonstrate the value of historical artworks to support planning and management of English rivers from source to sea; the case studies include river frontages that appear to be sensitive to physical and environmental change.
  2. assists in providing a chronology of river change over time through the use of colour artworks extending back to the 1770s (nearly a century before the wider availability even of black and white landscape photographs).

3. provides a list of the key artists who can be relied upon for their truthfulness in depicting river scenery most accurately.
4. illustrates historical river management practices down through river catchments to assess whether lessons that can be learnt.
5. provides valuable information on the original state of rivers where river restoration or removal of defences may be under consideration.
6. comprises a comprehensive illustrated record of how river heritage and other assets have been portrayed accurately through art since the late eighteenth century.

## References

1. Environment Agency. 2021a. *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Governance in England and Wales*. Report No: FRS171186/1.
2. Moore, R. & McInnes, R.G. 2021. *Coastal Erosion and Climate Change – Guidance for policymakers, Planners and Stakeholders*. Jacobs. 86pps. [www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com](http://www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com)
3. Koff, S.R. 1999. *The Role of Arts in Undergraduate Education*. Journal of General Education. 48:9-16.
4. Stark, J. & Robberds, J.W., 1834. *Scenery of the Rivers of Norfolk*. Private Press.
5. Tombleson, W., 1834. *Tombleson's Thames*. 80 steel engraved views.
6. Wyllie, W.L., 1905. *London to the Nore*. A. & C. Black. London. Sixty colour plates.
7. Bradley, A.G. & Sutton Palmer, H., 1909. *Rivers and Streams of England*. A. & C. Black. London. Seventy-five colour plates from watercolours by Sutton Palmer.
8. Muir, R. & Muir, N., 1986. *Rivers of Britain*. The National Trust. ISBN: 1-85471-017-6.
9. Pooley, C. (ed.), 2005. *Rivers in the British Landscape*. Carnegie Press. ISBN: 185936120X. 243pps.
10. Holmes, N. & Raven, P., 2014. *Rivers*. ISBN: 978 0 95649 025 4
11. Environment Agency. 2021b. *Research on Using Flood Risk Information in Spatial Planning*. Report No: FRS18204/R2.
12. Environment Agency. 2020. *National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England*.
13. Ruskin, J. 1853. *Lectures on Architecture and Painting at the Philosophical Institute, Edinburgh*.
14. Belloc, H. 1907. *The Historic Thames*. Illust. A.R. Quinton. J.M Dent & Co. London.
15. Daniell, W. & Ayton, R. 1814-1825. *A Voyage Round Great Britain*. Longmans. London.
16. Addey, D. '1998. *The Medway – Sketches along the River (Since 1793)*. Prospero Publishing.





**Figure 2.18:** Frederick William Watts

*Dedham on the Stour, Suffolk*

Oil. c.1850

Courtesy: Sotheby's

**Figure 2.19:** Alfred Robert Quinton

*The Cuckmere Valley, Seaford*

Watercolour. c.1920

Courtesy: Salmon's



### 3. The Portrayal of England's Rivers through Art Since 1770

#### 3.1. An Introduction to Landscape Art

##### 3.1.1. Origins of Landscape Art

*Landscape* is a term used to describe the scenery and environment of the English countryside and coastline. Landscape paintings depict the natural beauty of the landscape and its environments, often encompassing a broad view of the scenery, the sea and the sky, together with elements such as the weather and human activities. The word *landscape* started to be used in the English language from the early seventeenth century and is derived from the Dutch word *landschap*, which means *an area of cultivated land*. Those landscape paintings, which depict specific subjects such as river systems, buildings and structures, are called *topographical views* and are commonly seen in various types of prints (engravings, aquatints and lithographs) as well as in pencil or pen & Ink drawings, watercolour drawings and oil paintings (McInnes, 2014<sup>1</sup>).

The origins of landscape painting date back to the fifteenth century when landscape scenery was incorporated in the paintings of early artists including Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1515) and Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). Later, in the Netherlands, Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525/30-1569) also developed stylised panoramas depicting life through the seasons, as well as the daily activities of residents of the countryside and coast. The interest in art in this country was accentuated by the desire of royalty, such as King Charles I (1600-1649) to collect works of art. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wealthy young gentlemen were starting to travel more widely and they took the Grand Tour, gaining education and aesthetic inspiration from the classical remains and Renaissance art and architecture of Italy and Greece. Drawings began to be made out of doors and these would form the basis of the paintings that would start to depict the landscape in its true form.

In the eighteenth-century English painting was influenced strongly by collectors and artists returning from the Grand Tour. However, later, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars prevented travel across large parts of Europe from 1789 until after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. This led to an increased interest in the exploration and discovery of the more remote landscapes of the British Isles. In fact, from the middle of the eighteenth century, a number of British writers and travellers such as William Gilpin (1724-1804), sought to define and categorise human responses to natural phenomena such as landscape scenery. Gilpin was less concerned about the topographical accuracy of the scene than with capturing the atmosphere of a *picturesque landscape* (Gilpin, 1786<sup>2</sup>). An enlightened educationist, Gilpin defined picturesque as "*that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture*" and began to expand his principles of picturesque beauty through travels across the British Isles often following the course of rivers such as the Wye.

##### 3.1.2. Early River Art

Such tours by Gilpin and many followers resulted in a new-found appreciation of the wild and open landscapes that existed outside the cities. In the 18th century watercolour drawing became a popular medium and something of a speciality of English artists. Artists including Francis Towne (1739-1816) and John White Abbott (1763-1851), Paul Sandby 1725-1809) and Thomas Girtin (1775-1802) were leaders in the field of watercolour drawing; A decade later Thomas Rowlandson RA, the most important watercolour caricature artist of the Georgian period embarked on numerous painting expeditions across England accompanied by artist friends. Other great names of the early school of watercolour painting included John 'Warwick' Smith (1749-1781), John Varley (1778-1842) and Joseph Farington (1747-1821) made tours and included many river scenes in their output.





**Figure 3.1:** Joseph Farington RA      *The Windings of the River Thames below Culham*      Aquatint Engraving. 1793

**Figure 3.2:** Francis Towne      *A View of the River Exe from Exwell looking towards Topsham, Devon*      Watercolour. 1779  
 Courtesy: John Spink





J.M.W. Turner RA (1775-1851), continued the English tradition of taking artistic tours around many parts of the country painting numerous views of river scenery in watercolour and later oils. As interest grew in the English landscape fine publications started to appear and the river Wye and the Thames were particularly well illustrated. C. and T.H Fielding wrote and illustrated *Picturesque Illustrations of the River Wye* (Fielding & Fielding, 1822<sup>3</sup>) and in the same year *Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire Illustrated* (Fielding, 1822<sup>4</sup>).

On the Thames there are numerous fine illustrated and rare volumes including Joseph Farington's *Views and Scenery of the River Thames* (Farington, 1796<sup>5</sup>) and J. & J. Boydell's *An History of the Thames* with 76 views (Boydell, 1794-1796<sup>6</sup>). Later William Daniell produced fine Thames views for his *Views of Windsor Castle* with twelve aquatint plates in 1830 (Daniell, 1830<sup>7</sup>). Between 1814 and 1825 Daniell with his co-author Richard Ayton produce their *Voyage Round Great Britain* (Daniell & Ayton, 1814 - 1825<sup>8</sup>) comprising 308 coastal aquatints many of which show river mouth and estuaries before the Victorian development period. Elsewhere T. Harral and Samuel Ireland travelled the Severn producing *Picturesque Views of the Severn* illustrated with fifty-two lithographs in 1824 (Harral & Ireland, 1824<sup>9</sup>).

William Daniell's cousin, William Westall, wrote and illustrated *A Picturesque Tour of the Thames* with Samuel Owen in 1828 (Westall & Owen, 1828<sup>10</sup>). Whilst Daniell was, without doubt, the finest producer of aquatint engraved views, Westall excelled in the art of steel engraving and the works of both artists are, therefore, particularly important on account of the level of detail of river scenery that they provide.

In north-east England Yorkshire was illustrated in *The Rivers, Mountains and Sea Coast of Yorkshire* by J. Phillips with 35 lithographs in 1853 (Phillips, 1853<sup>11</sup>) whilst *Scenery of the Rivers of Norfolk* by J. Stark and J.W Robberds was published in 1834 (Stark & Robberds, 1834<sup>12</sup>).

### 3.1.3. The Victorians and River Art

Where the aristocracy explored artists and engravers followed, recording river images at the request of their masters. Before the days of photography large numbers of artists painting in watercolour and oils captured the river and coastal scenery of England and they found a ready market with these often relatively wealthy clients. Purchasers were seeking images that provided an exact reproduction of the views they had enjoyed so much. As a result, many fine and accurate topographical paintings were produced of England's rivers during the nineteenth century in particular. Even after the introduction of photography in the late 1850s works of art were still required because it was to be many decades before the innovation of colour photography became widely used, and therefore, landscape paintings in full colour continued to fulfil a very important role.

Edward Duncan (1803-1882), John F Salmon (c.1814-c.1875), A.V Copley Fielding (1787-1855) and William Turner of Oxford (1789-1862) painted river views across England whilst Francis Danby (1793-1861) painted the Avon and Bristol area. The Fraser Garden Family painted meticulous watercolours the River Great Ouse at St Ives and Hemingford-Grey in the Pre-Raphaelite tradition as did Charles Robertson (1844-1891) and the prolific Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899) both of whom captured the river and estuary scenes in finely detailed watercolours.

Other artists painted in oils, which although not always being able to capture the scenes is as much details as in the medium of watercolour, nevertheless provided us with many grand and sweeping views of river art. The masters of painting river scenery in oils include Alfred De Breanski (1852-1928), George Vicat Cole (1833-1893), Edmund John Niemann (1813-1876) and William Mellor (1851-1931). It is this rich legacy of topographical art that can help to illustrate the story of England's rivers over the last two and a half centuries.

John Ruskin (1819-1900), the celebrated English art critic, believed that landscape painting was the most important artistic creation of the nineteenth century, leading to an increased appreciation of the natural beauty of the countryside and coastline. In his book *Modern Painters* (Ruskin, 1843<sup>13</sup>) he argued that the principal role of an artist was to achieve “*truth to nature*” and to “*observe the reality of nature and not to invent it in the studio*”. Ruskin also encouraged the development of a number of artists who became influential in the mid-nineteenth century and were known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. These artists wished to capture nature in its precise detail and beauty, often through painting out-of-doors. They were unrelenting in their quest for detailed realism and would spend the majority of their time working outside and not within the confines of a studio. John Ruskin, a geologist and botanist by training, said during his Edinburgh Lectures of 1853 that “*Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything down to the most minute details, from nature and from nature alone*” (Halsby, 1986<sup>14</sup>). Indeed, one of the founding members William Holman Hunt is quoted as saying: “*I purpose...to paint an out-of-door picture...with every detail I can see, and with the sunlight brightness of the day itself*” (Payne & Brett, 2010<sup>15</sup>).

These artists produced detailed views of England’s often dramatic or tranquil river scenery and they found a ready market with these often relatively wealthy tourists. Purchasers were seeking images that provided an exact reproduction of the views they had enjoyed so much on their travels and holidays. As a result, many fine and accurate topographical paintings were produced. Even after the introduction of photography in the late 1850s works of art were still required because it was to be many decades before the innovation of colour photography became widely used, and therefore, landscape paintings in full colour continued to fulfil an important role.

#### **3.1.4. Watercolour Postcards and Colour Plate Book Illustrations**

In 1894 British publishers were granted permission by the Royal Mail to manufacture and distribute postcards, which could be sent through the post. Postcards produced between the 1890s and the 1920s often provided views of river scenery. Specially commissioned watercolour artists including Henry Wimbush (fl.1888-1904) and the prolific Alfred Robert Quinton (1852-1934) fulfilled the demand for illustrations, some of which provide very accurate portrayals of conditions existing at that time.

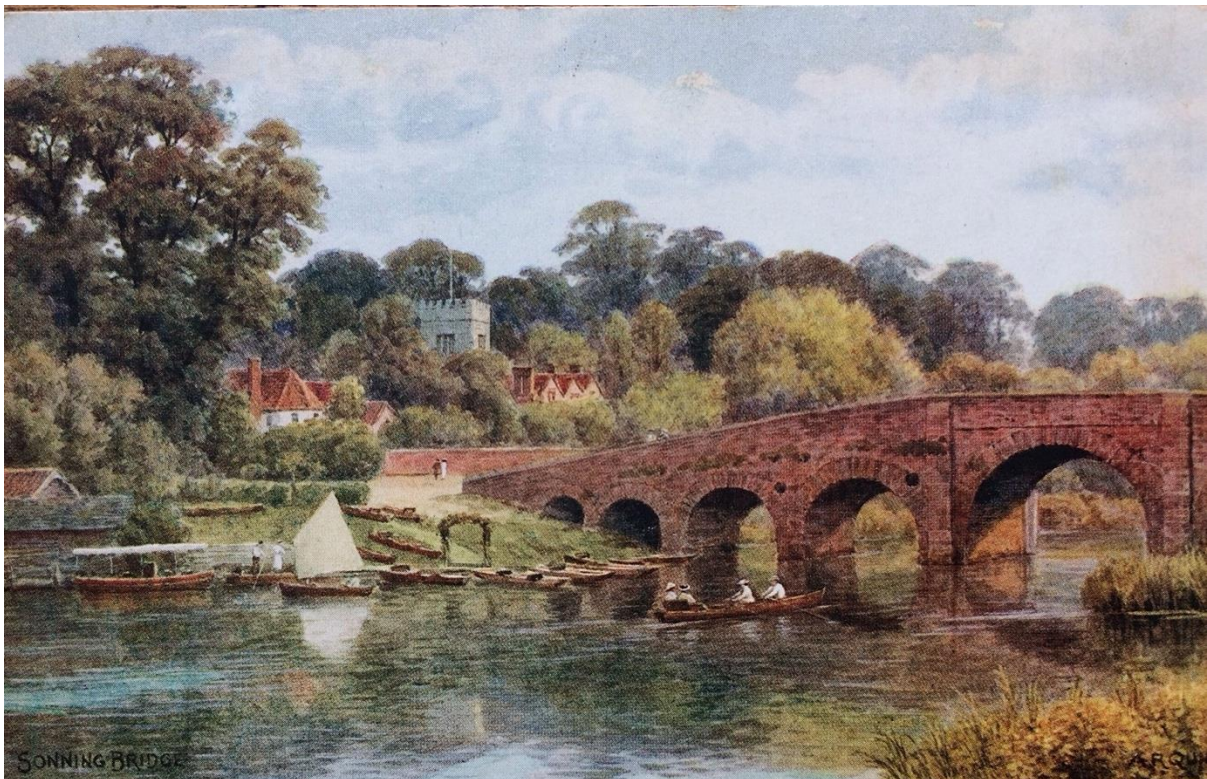
The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw steadily increasing numbers of tourists travelling throughout England with rail journeys often following river valleys. This led to a greater demand for illustrated books alongside colour picture postcards depicting landscape scenes. Three artists, Ernest William Haslehurst (1866-1949), Harold Sutton Palmer (1854-1933) and Alfred Heaton Cooper (1864-1929) together with Alfred Robert Quinton (1853-1934), were particularly prolific in their production of attractive watercolours for regional colour plate guidebooks published by A. & C. Black between 1900 -1920 (Clinton-Baddeley, 1925<sup>16</sup>; Thomas *et al.*, c.1910<sup>17</sup>) and for J. & F. Salmon of Sevenoaks. Although such artists continued to flourish through selling their works for colour plate book illustrations and postcards the First World War signalled an end to the public interest in detailed oil paintings and watercolours that were favoured by their Victorian predecessors. They were replaced by Modern Art, which saw less interest in topography as a subject although since the 1970s there has been a significant revival in interest for topographical art.





**Figure 3.3:** Henry Gastineau      *Near Watersmeet, Lynton, North Devon*      Watercolour. c.1836  
 Courtesy: Birmingham Museums Trust

**Figure 3.4:** Alfred Robert Quinton      *Sonning Bridge on the River Thames*      Watercolour. c.1925  
 Courtesy: Salmon's







**Figure 3.5:** Harold Sutton Palmer

*The River Arun at Amberley, West Sussex*

Watercolour. c.1919

**Figure 3.6:** Harold Sutton Palmer

*The River Avon near Salisbury*

Watercolour. c.1915







**Figure 3.7:** A selection of colour-plate books published in the early twentieth century and illustrated with watercolours by leading artists including (Left to Right) Harold Sutton Palmer, Alfred Robert Quinton and Alfred Heaton Cooper.

## References

1. McInnes, R.G. 2014. *British Coastal Art 1770-1940*. Cross Publishing, Chale, IW. 260pps. ISBN:978-1-873296-46-5
2. Gilpin, W. 1786. *Observations Chiefly Relating to Picturesque Beauty*. Publ. R. Blamire. London.
3. Fielding, C. & T.H. 1822. *Picturesque Illustrations of the River Wye*. 28 Engraved Views. London.
4. Fielding, 1822. *Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire Illustrated*. 44 Engravings.
5. Farington, J. 1794- 1796. *Views and Scenery of the River Thames*. 76 Aquatints. London.
6. Boydell, J. & J. 1796. *An History of the River Thames*. J. Bulmer & Co. London.
7. Daniell, W. 1830. 'Views of Windsor Castle'. 12 Aquatint Plates.
8. Daniell, W. & Ayton, R. 1814-1825. *A Voyage Round Great Britain*. 308 Aquatints. Longmans.
9. Harral, T. & Ireland, S. 1824. *A Series of Picturesque Views of the Severn*. 52 Lithographs.
10. Westall, W. & Owen, S. 1828. *A Picturesque Tour of the Thames*.
11. Phillips, J. 1853. *The Rivers, Mountains and. Sea Coast of Yorkshire*. 35 Lithographs. London.
12. Stark, J. & Robberds, W. 1834. *Scenery of the Rivers of Norfolk*. Norwich & London.
13. Ruskin, J. 1843. *Modern Painters*. Private Press. London.
14. Halsby, J. 1986. *Scottish Painters 1740-1940*. Batsford.
15. Payne, C. & Brett, C. 2010. *John Brett – Pre-Raphaelite Landscape Painter*. Yale University Press.
16. Clinton-Baddeley, V.C. 1925. *Devon*. Illust. H. Sutton Palmer. A. & C. Black Ltd. London.
17. Thomas, E; Heath, S. & Danks, C. c.1910. *Our Beautiful Homeland*. The Gresham Publishing Co.





**Figure 3.8:** Harold Sutton Palmer

*Stapleford on the River Wylfe*

Watercolour. 1913

**Figure 3.9:** Harold Sutton Palmer

*The Swale near Easby Abbey, Yorkshire*

Watercolour. c.1913

