

‘THE STATE OF THE BRITISH COAST STUDY’

Observable Changes Through Imagery 1770-Present Day



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Approach to the Study	1
3. Application of the Study Results.....	2
4. Collaborative Working	3
5. Transferability of Approach	3
6. Study Deliverables	4
7. References.....	4
8. Potential Partners and Supporters	4
<i>Appendix 1: William Daniell Coastal Views</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Appendix 2: Alfred R. Quinton Coastal Views</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Appendix 3: David Addey Coastal Views.....</i>	<i>11</i>

Front Cover Images:-

Top Left: *'Llandudno, North Wales'* c.1850
Private Collection

Top Right: *'Brodict Bay, Arran'* by Waller Hugh Paton. 1884
Courtesy of Bourne Fine Art

Bottom: *'Sidmouth, South Devon'* by Hubert Cornish. c.1815
Private Collection

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1. Introduction

What lessons can we learn from observations of changes affecting the British coast over the last 250 years? How and to what extent have our coastal landscapes, natural environments and cultural heritage been affected by both natural and anthropogenic influences over that time?

Increasingly sophisticated technologies now allow us to observe and monitor changing conditions within our coastal zones, but alongside these tools we can now also take particular advantage of the wisdom of hindsight by interrogating a vast additional resource of historical imagery that is becoming increasingly available online.

Over the last decade the Public Catalogues Foundation (PCF), a registered charity, in collaboration with public art galleries, museums and other owners of artworks arranged the photographing of all the nation’s 212,000 oil paintings; these are now available for research and interrogation on the ArtUk website (<https://artuk.org/>). In 2016 the founder of the PCF, Dr Fred Hohler, established a new charity, *The Watercolour World* (www.watercolourworld.org/), the aim of which is to create a visual online topographical record of the world through uploading watercolours spanning the period from 1600-1900. *The Watercolour World* is honoured by the joint patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall.

The Watercolour World is collating and will display watercolours recording, for example, topography, architecture, flora and fauna drawing on the estimated 6.5 million watercolours in public collections in the United Kingdom, as well as some private collections; these will be indexed geographically on its website. Watercolours represent a fragile art resource and their recording, preservation and dissemination in this way will provide a new, unrivalled resource available for scientific and educational purposes. In view of the fine detail of the watercolour painting technique this medium provides the opportunity to reappraise not just the physical changes affecting the British coast but also changes to the natural environment and our rich cultural heritage over time.

Alongside other reference works such as illustrated topographical books, the changes that have affected the British coast since the 1770s (when coastal painting started to become more popular) can be observed in full colour commencing long before the introduction of both black and white and colour photography. Recognising that a thorough understanding of long-term coastal change is fundamental to sustainable coastal management this study, through assessment of the imagery, will carefully appraise each frontage of the British coast noting the observable changes that have affected coastal landscapes, environments and heritage.

2. Approach to the Study

The *State of the British Coast Study* will be undertaken by *Coastal & Geotechnical Services*, which has a long-standing experience of both coastal management and the interpretation of historical artworks and other imagery following studies supported by the European Union (Momber *et al.*, 2012¹), The Crown Estate (McInnes *et al.*, 2010-2015^{2,3,4,5,6,7}) and Historic England (McInnes, 2016⁹). Importantly this previous research allowed the development and refining of an art ranking system, which allowed the preparation, for each section of the British coast, of a short-list of those artists and their works that are deemed to be most accurate in their depictions of the coast (McInnes, 2014¹⁰). The

year long study will commence in June 2018 and will be undertaken through close collaboration with a wide range of coastal organisations, interest groups, museums, art galleries, arts charities and other stakeholders in England, Wales and Scotland.

Alongside the images of oil paintings that are available online through the ArtUk website, and increasingly those being uploaded onto *The Watercolour World* website as it develops, this study will also take advantage of the artistic output of three great British artists whose views of our coastline represent key benchmarks since the early nineteenth century; where any gaps exist these will be filled by other highly ranked artists (see item 4 below). The artists are:-

1. **William Daniell's 'Voyage Round Great Britain' (1814-1825¹¹)** comprising 308 colour aquatint engravings of British coastal scenery. William Daniell RA was generally very accurate in his depictions. Importantly his views show the coastline before the Victorian development of many parts of the coast and the construction of most coastal defences. Prideaux (1909¹²) said '*Such a succession of beautiful colour plates is scarcely to be found anywhere, and they are unsurpassed both in delicacy of drawing and tinting*'. (See a selection of examples of Daniell's works at Appendix 1).
2. **Alfred Robert Quinton's Coastal Watercolours of England & Wales (c.1900-c.1934)** comprising over 3,000 watercolours, which were painted for reproduction as colour picture postcards for J. & F. Salmon Ltd of Sevenoaks. Quinton's watercolours are highly detailed and he re-visited many of the locations repeatedly as the coastal towns and villages expanded during the first three decades of the twentieth century. (See a selection of Quinton's works at Appendix 2).
3. **David Addey's Watercolours in the Footsteps of William Daniell RA.** Between 1995-2002 the architect and distinguished watercolour painter, David Addey, retraced Daniell's tour and painted the present day view from the vantage points chosen by Daniell nearly two centuries before (Addey, 1995-2002^{13,14,15,16}). Addey's tour provides a new dimension to Daniell's work with many interesting changes to be observed (see Appendix 3).
4. **Works by key British topographical artists.** Where gaps exist in the historical depictions of parts of the British coastline (for example, A. R. Quinton produced very few Scottish coastal views) works by other highly accurate coastal artists will ensure continuity over time (see Appendix 4).
5. **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.

3. Application of the Study Results

3.1. Coastal Management & Planning

- Improved understanding of long-term coastal evolution and the rate and scale of coastal change;
- Establishing the commencement and chronology of coastal defences and noting their impacts over time;
- Identification of *Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMA's)* in support of Planning;
- Understanding the changing patterns of coastal development over the last 200 years;
- Informing local land use planning including Conservation Area Statements and Development Control.

Users: *Local Authority Coastal Engineers; Coastal Defence Groups; Environmental and Nature Conservation Organisations; Coastal & Estuaries Partnerships; Coastal Land Owners, Coastal Scientists and Researchers.*

3.2. Nature and Earth Science Conservation

- Improving understanding of long-term environmental changes affecting coastal land;
- Observing habitats and species changes, gains and losses;
- Informing Landscape Character Assessments, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Plans and Countryside Management.

Users: *Nature Conservation Organisations; AONB Partnerships; Countryside Managers.*

3.3. Heritage and Culture

- Establishing the chronology of coastal heritage sites;
- Assisting identification of heritage at risk;
- Informing Historic Environment Records;
- Supporting the recording of coastal development – alteration and losses of Listed Structures;
- Raising awareness of local/regional art history;
- Identification of locations of previously unknown artworks;
- Supporting fine art research;
- Bridging science and art;
- Encouraging art history studies and coursework at the full range of academic levels.
- Raising awareness of the work of ‘*The Watercolour World*’ initiative.

Users: *Culture and Heritage Bodies; Researchers; Local Authority Historic Environment Services; Museum and Art Gallery Curators; Schools.*

4. Collaborative Working

In order to ensure that the study results are most informative and of real practical value to end users Coastal & Geotechnical Services is anxious to work with a wide range of key statutory bodies, groups, networks and cultural and art heritage interests throughout the project. These include those with interests in environmental protection, nature conservation, coastal planning and management, cultural heritage and arts heritage. The project will also work with selected schools from England, Wales and Scotland and a summary of the best students’ project work will be included in the Final Study Report.

* Because William Daniell, Alfred Robert Quinton and David Addey did not paint the coastline of Northern Ireland this study is restricted to mainland Great Britain. However, readers may wish to read the report published by The Crown Estate in 2015 ‘*Art as a Tool in Support of the Understanding of Coastal Change in Northern Ireland*’ (McInnes & Benstead, 2015⁷), which is available at www.thecrownestate.co.uk

5. Transferability of Approach

The author believes that the imagery that will become increasingly available through, for example, *The Watercolour World* initiative will attract multiple users and have wide transferability value across the United Kingdom and abroad. Apart from examination of the British coast, as described in this paper, this methodology can be applied to the thousands of artworks and subjects portrayed by

travelling artists across Europe, the British Empire and the world. For example, the Daniell family of artists travelled and painted extensively in India and the Far East.

6. Study Deliverables

1. An extensively illustrated '*State of the British Coast*' Technical Report, which will be available online and with hard copies for partner organisations.
2. Illustrated presentations to partner funding organisations across Great Britain.
3. *State of the British Coast* Exhibitions to be mounted in England, Wales and Scotland.
4. Schools educational packs and essay competitions.

7. References

1. Momber *et al.*, 2012. '*Arch-Manche*'. Final Report of the European Union Interreg IV Project. Maritime Archaeological Trust. Southampton.
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10. McInnes, R.G. 2014. '*British Coastal Art 1770-1930*'. Cross Publishing. ISBN:978-1-873295-46-5. www.rmcinnesbooksandimages.com
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14. Addey, D., 1997. '*A Voyage Round Great Britain – Land's End to the Clyde*'. Spellmount Press. ISBN:1-873376-97-9.
15. Addey, D., 2000. '*A Voyage Round Great Britain – The Highlands & Islands of Scotland*'. Spellmount Limited. ISBN: 1-86227-110-0.
16. Addey, D., 2002. '*A Voyage Round Great Britain – Orkney to Southend-On-Sea*'. Spellmount Limited. ISBN:1-86227-184-4.

8. This Study is being undertaken with the support of:

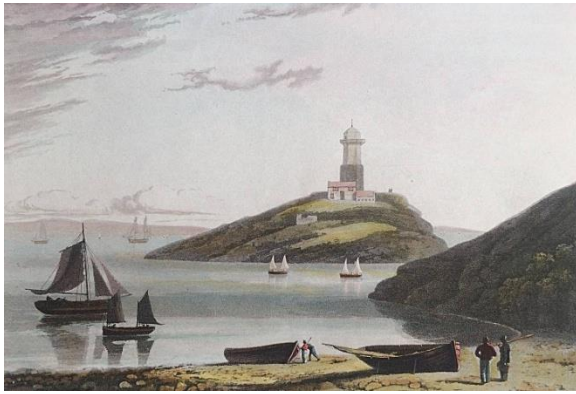
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Natural England
- Historic England
- The Environment Agency
- The National Trust
- The Coastal Partnerships Network
- The English Coastal Groups
- The Standing Conference On Problems Associated with the Coastline (SCOPAC)
- University of Southampton
- ArtUk
- The Watercolour World
- The Bridgeman Art Library
- Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh
- The Local Government Association Coastal Special Interests Group

Most confirmations of support are expected shortly.

Professor Robin McInnes OBE FICE FGS FRSA
Coastal & Geotechnical Services
Isle of Wight, UK

Tel: 01983 854865
www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com

**APPENDIX 1 - A selection of views from “A Voyage Round Great Britain”
by William Daniell RA (308 Aquatint Engravings 1814-1825)**



The Mumbles



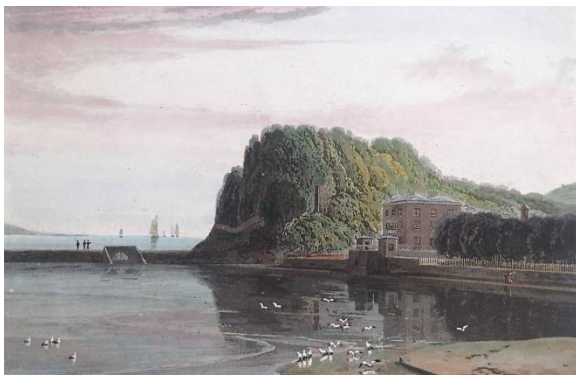
Tenby



Penmaenmawr



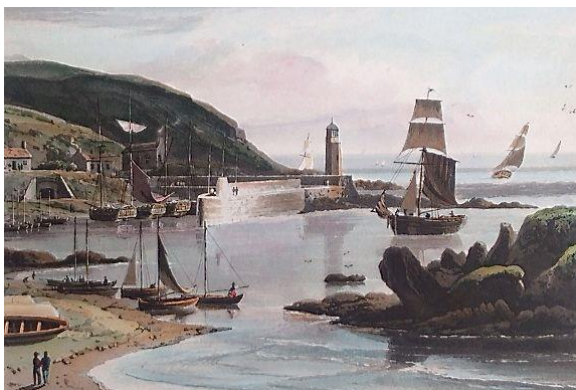
Liverpool



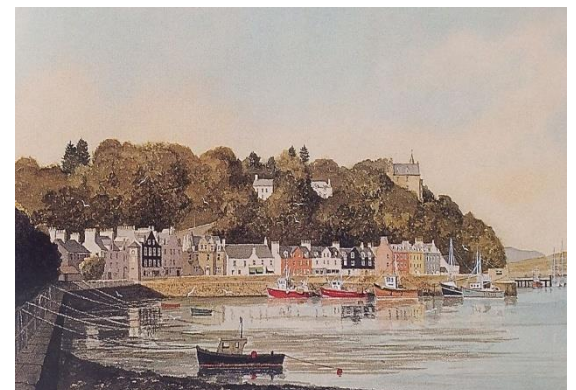
Castle Head



Whitehaven



Port Patrick



Tobermory

APPENDIX 1 - A selection of views from "A Voyage Round Great Britain"
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Ayr



Loch Duich



Rispond



Aberdeen



Leith



Dunbar



Whitby



Lowestoft

**APPENDIX 1 - A selection of views from “A Voyage Round Great Britain”
by William Daniell RA (308 Aquatint Engravings 1814-1825)**



Southend – on – Sea



Southwold



Deal



Rye



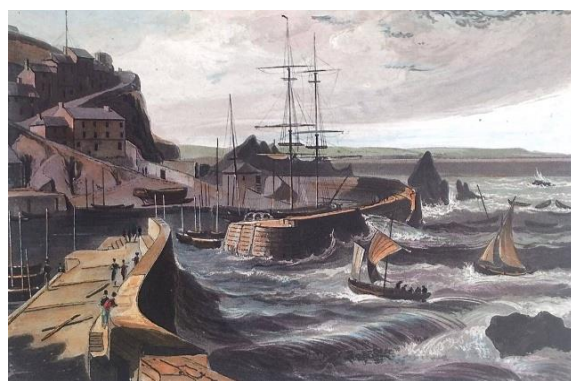
Reculver



Brading, IoW



West Bay



Mevagissey

**APPENDIX 2 - Views of the Coastline of England and Wales
by Alfred Robert Quinton (1900-1934, 3,600 views)**



Whitby



Skegness



Sheringham



Walberswick



Seaford



Westcliffe-on-Sea



Bournemouth

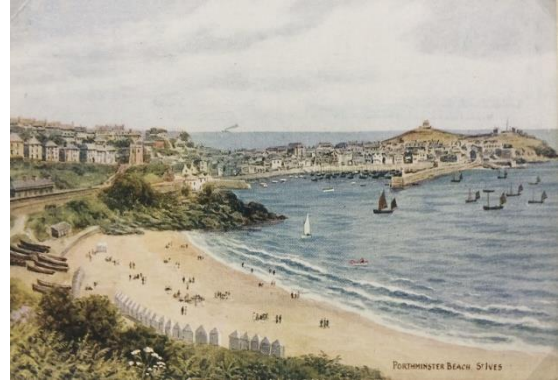


Lyme Regis

**APPENDIX 2 - Views of the Coastline of England and Wales
by Alfred Robert Quinton (1900-1934, 3,600 views)**



Torquay



St Ives



Minehead



Weston – Super – Mare



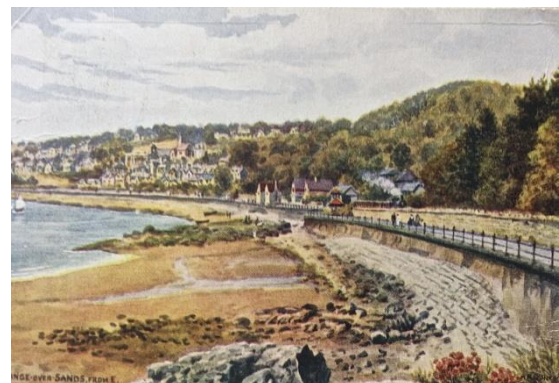
Tenby



Aberystwyth



Southport



Grange Over Sands

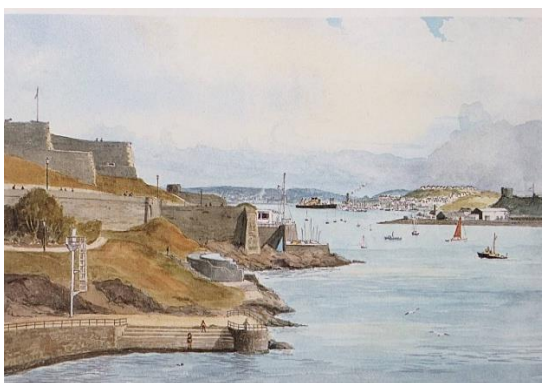
**APPENDIX 3 - David Addey, In the Footsteps of William Daniell's Voyage.
308 Watercolours (painted 1988-2000)**



Hastings



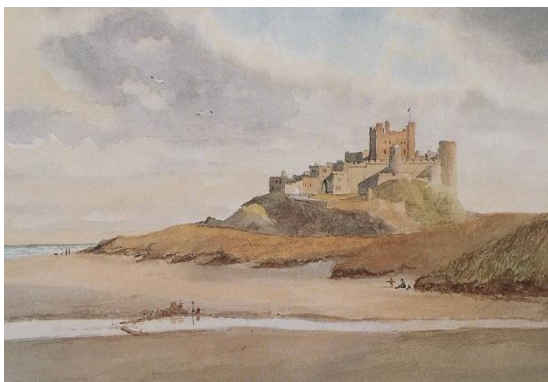
Lulworth Cove



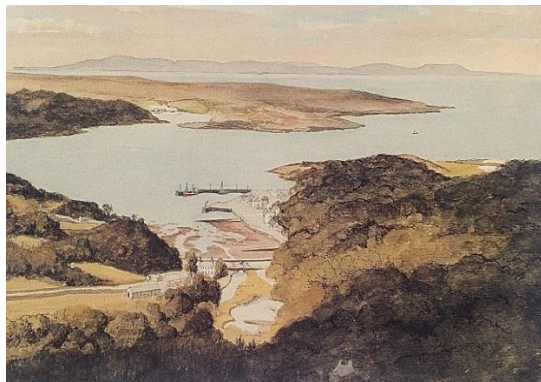
Plymouth



Conwy



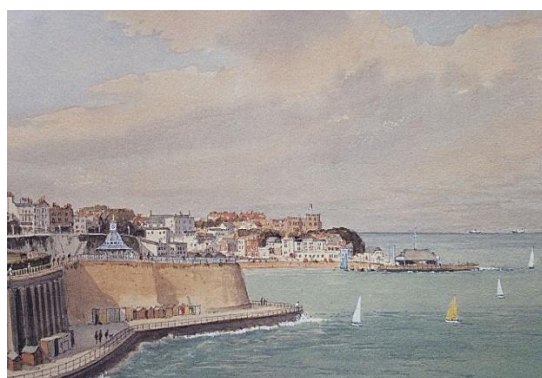
Bamburgh Castle



Charlestown, Gairloch



Poole Harbour



Broadstairs

APPENDIX 4 - Some Masters of British Coastal Art



*"Pegwell Bay". 1858 William Dyce RA.
Courtesy Tate Images 2018*



*"The Lizard". 1876. John Brett ARA.
Courtesy of Maas Gallery*



*"Beer Head, Devon". 1858. E.W. Cooke RA.
Private Collection*



"St Agnes' Point, Isles of Scilly". 1858. E.W. Cooke RA. Courtesy Martyn Gregory Gallery



*"Loch Ranza" 1891. John Mac Whirter.
Courtesy Fleming-Wyfold Art Foundation*



"Among the Shingles, Clovelly" 1864. C.N. Hemy RA RWS. Courtesy The Laing Art Gallery



*"Sidmouth, Devon". c.1834. H. Cornish.
Courtesy Woolley & Wallis*



*"Scarborough". c.1830. F. Nicholson Courtesy
V&A Images*