

ARTISTS' COLONY

Recreating realistic water on canvas is notoriously difficult. Many brushes have been thrown aside, and canvases abandoned by artists defeated by the watery challenge. In the 1870s, James Hook, regularly visited Clovelly on the North Devon coast to paint. Others followed, lured by the promise of a healthier lifestyle and the term "art colony" was born. The new national railway network linked these obscure coastal reaches and at Staithes the trains took away the fish and brought back painters. Their occasional visits turned into lengthy stays and the Staithes Group emerged.

Husband and wife Harold and Laura Knight spent 10 years in here among what Laura called "the freedom, the austerity, the savagery, the wildness". But the regularity of disasters at sea forced her to quit. She wrote in later life, "I could not contemplate more tragedies among the wild race of fisher people I loved so well".

By the onset of the First World War, the group had ceased to exist. Today's artists have a new shop window. A couple from York, Dave and Alison Milnes, recently opened the excellent Staithes Gallery on High Street, in a fascinating old building which has its own smugglers' tunnel.



Dave Milnes pictured in the Main Gallery at the Staithes Gallery in Staithes.

Picture: Simon Hulme.