

The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing



Cedric Morris and Lett Haynes c.1930

The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing in Dedham, started by the painters Cedric Morris (1889-1982) and Arthur Lett-Haynes (1894-1978) who lived at Higham, was an immediate success. It opened on 12 April 1937 in a house in Mill Lane, between the present Essex Rose Tea House and Octagon House. Morris was the Principal and Lett-Haynes the organiser. The teaching was on radical *cours libres* lines, like the liberal training on offer at the private academies in Paris where Morris himself had studied. The fees ranged from 26 guineas a year to 2 guineas a week and by the end of the first year there were nearly sixty students, who found lodgings in the village. The School had a side-line producing pub signs, including one painted by Joy Collier for the Sun Inn.

Lucian Freud who enrolled aged



The house in Mill Lane between the Essex Rose tea room and Octagon House, as it appeared in the early 20th century before it became the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing

seventeen in the early summer of 1939 believed that he may have been responsible for the destruction of the



In this view of the Dedication of the War Memorial in 1921 one can see the house with a glazed front porch which was to become the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing in 1937

school building on 26 July 1939, only two years after it had opened. Attributed at the time to an electrical fault, the fire which engulfed the house that night may well have been started by an unextinguished cigarette, accidentally left burning after he and another student had been working late the evening before. No one was hurt. The only person who slept in the building was the School's Chinese model who jumped twenty feet to safety.

It took the firemen seven hours to put out the blaze. The following morning it was business as usual. Morris and the students painted the burnt-out

wreckage and classes then went on in the billiard room of the Marlborough Head opposite. After setting up a temporary studio in the village bus station, the School soon moved to Benton End at Hadleigh, where it flourished until 1978. Its many distinguished pupils included Suffolk artists Maggi Hambling, Lucy Harwood and Valerie Thornton. The artist Kathleen Hale, author and illustrator of popular children's books about Orlando the Marmalade Cat remembered participating in the move to Benton End and working on her illustrations there. She used likenesses of Cedric Morris and Lett-Haynes for

two of the characters in her stories.

The School's site in Mill Lane remained an overgrown wilderness for thirty years until the present Songsters was built around 1970. Its fire-blackened garden walls show the far greater extent of the earlier building.

In 1930 when he was considering setting up the School, Morris had

written in his diary that *"there would be grief among the resident painters I expect"*; so it was no surprise that the painter and Royal Academician Alfred Munnings who lived at Castle House was openly delighted by the building's destruction and is said to have had himself driven up and down the street shouting *"Down with Modern Art!"*

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Cedric Morris's painting of the burnt-out Art School the morning after the fire in July 1939