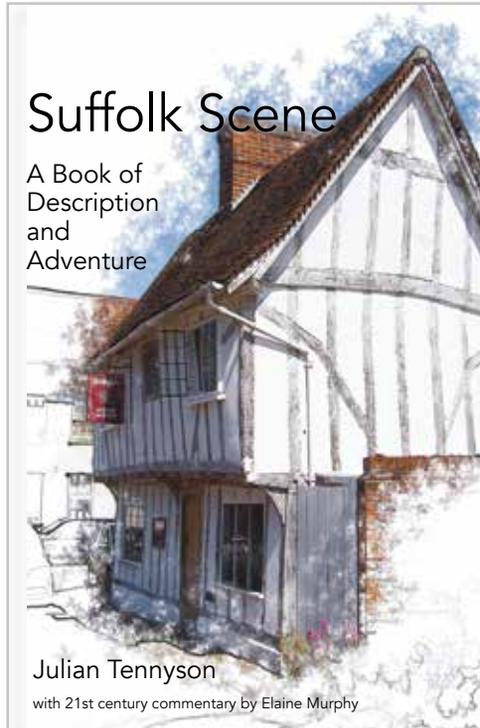


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Remains of World War II defences at Minsmere, 2019.

Poppyland Publishing is pleased to announce *Suffolk Scene: A Book of Description and Adventure* by Julian Tennyson with 21st century commentary by Elaine Murphy.

Tennyson's *Suffolk Scene* was originally written in 1938 and published in June 1939, on the eve of the Second World War. Well-received with tellingly enthusiastic reviews, this young man's unsentimental love of the Suffolk countryside and its people spoke to the yearning of a nation preparing for war reminding them of everything they feared might be lost.

In this new edition, Elaine Murphy, a well-known local historian, was given access to some 1,000 of Tennyson's letters written to his wife during the war. This enabled her to provide a unique biographical introduction to the author followed by a critique for each chapter with regard to the changes over the past 80 years. In doing so, she notes the timeless quality to much of Tennyson's Suffolk that resonates into the early twenty-first century.

About the author

Julian Tennyson was a young man, just 23yrs old, when he wrote this book, and by the time it had found popularity he had already signed up to go to war, with a fierce youthful optimism that he would survive and return to his budding literary career as poet and author. His passion for the idea of 'England' was his driving ideology, something born from his privileged family background, Eton and



Cambridge and what he felt to be his inescapable inheritance as a great grandson of the Victorian Poet Laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. He was serving in the army when 'Suffolk Scene' was reprinted in 1940, 1941, 1943 and 1944 but killed in action by the time the last two editions of the 1940s were published in 1945 and 1946.



Targeting on The Ancient House, Clare, 2019.



The RSPB Visitors' Centre at Minsmere, 2019.



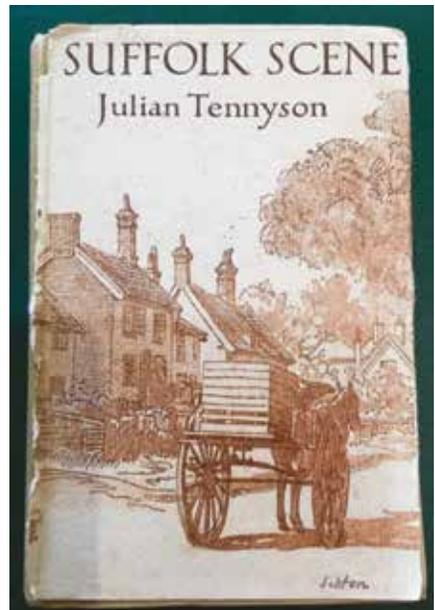
The Great Doom, Wenhaston, 2019.



WINDMILL, PEASENHALL

R. Schwabe

Peasenhall post mill by Randolph Schwabe (used in the original book).



Cover of the original book.

Contents

Publisher's Preface	vi
Biographical Introduction	7
Foreword	23
Prologue: Suffolk To-Day	31
John Constable and The Stour	45
The West Country	63
The Rivers	97
The Coast	145
Duck, Fishermen And Marshes	176
The Fame Of Suffolk	199
Epilogue: Suffolk's Rise And Fall	235
Index	250

21st century commentary:

Suffolk Today 2019	26
John Constable and The Stour	43
The West Country	60
The Rivers	93
The Coast	140
Duck, Fishermen and Marshes	174
The Fame of Suffolk	195
Epilogue	232

The West Country

Long Melford horse fair is long gone but has re-emerged as a one-day annual street fair in July, attracting 15,000 visitors in 2018. Nearly all the traditional Suffolk trading fairs established in medieval days have gone, to be replaced by 'destination' shopping days out for local tourists. The traditional agricultural shows begun in the 19th century are in decline too as the internet provides a place where best practice is shared and it is easier for farmers to meet and exchange wisdom and see new machinery. Long Melford and Clare have become quiet backwaters full of antique shops, although they too are now in decline as online sales and large fairs take over from small shops.



Clare railway station, 2019 and 1959.

Clare's railway line sadly no longer runs through the castle ruins. Opened by the Great Eastern Railway in 1865, the station was closed in 1967 along with the other stations on the line between Shelford and Sudbury. Miraculously though, the platforms, station building, waiting room, and a goods shed have survived within the Clare Castle Country Park. I cannot help feeling Tennyson would be disappointed at the railway's loss. Clare has slipped back to sleepy perfection.



The Arc, Bury St Edmunds, 2013.

I wonder if Tennyson would be appalled or heartened by the transformation of Bury St Edmunds, his perfect town. It was very much worse twenty years ago when badly planned cheap concrete and glass shops dominated the centre. Most of these have now been demolished and in 2008 the opening of the Arc Shopping Centre on the

former Cattle Market now provides a mixture of bog-standard shops and restaurants that differ not one whit from the shopping centres of every other medium size town. On the other hand, the slightly Scandinavian design is attractive and in scale with the town, if the fabric of the buildings can be maintained. The future rather depends on whether retail centres like this can survive at all now that online shopping can be done comfortably at home.

Tennyson's perfect town remains one of the most attractive places to live. The preservation of the Abbey gardens and much of the old town around the cathedral and older churches is still undeniably beautiful. One garden



Appleby Rose Garden, Bury St Edmunds, 2019.

especially may have interested him. At the back of the cathedral, the Appleby Rose Garden, originally an orchard, is now a colourful rose garden with over four hundred roses. The garden is named after John Tate Appleby, an American serviceman who served with the 487th Bomb Group in Lavenham. The last mission of the Eighth Air Force flew in April 1945, just after John Appleby's arrival, so during the seven months that this Kansas native spent in Suffolk, he travelled around exploring East Anglia, mainly by bicycle. He fell in love with Suffolk just as Tennyson did a decade earlier. Appleby's book, *Suffolk Summer*, is a complementary volume to *Suffolk Scene*. Sitting under the old yew trees near the new rose garden, Tennyson's 'place to dream on a summer evening' feels just right.

And here's a cheery thing: since March 2015, Bury St Edmunds has been the home town of the government's London and South East Regional Divorce Unit and the Maintenance Enforcement Business Centre for pursuing fathers reluctant to part with child support payments. Bury is the commercial and civic centre of west Suffolk and prosperously employed. The town is planned to expand by another 13,000 homes over the next decade. Let us hope the town can maintain its lovely face for future generations.

Breckland is now totally transformed and unrecognisable from Tennyson's description of a desolate blasted heath. Soon after his visits, wartime military

training grounds came to west Suffolk and Norfolk. Parts of Thetford Forest have never been decommissioned, some villages lost forever. And those tiny Forestry Commission saplings he was unsure about, that were beginning to transform the Brecks into pine forests, are now fully grown dense black depths covering a huge part of the Brecks. For many years the new lowland forest was resented by local people but gradually over the last half of the 20th century the amenity opportunities of this vast recreation area have become an appreciated resource for walking, cycling and various modern 'attractions' like zip-wire and Segway trails.

One other wartime introduction was the USAF base at RAF Lakenheath, which cuts a mighty swathe of acreage out of the heathland, an inaccessible 16-20 square miles chopped out of the landscape but bringing much needed local employment. Miraculously, the air base still allows for the preservation of part of Lakenheath Warren, the largest remaining area of heath in the Brecks, used for sheep grazing and as a rabbit warren from the 13th century until the Second World War and now a special conservation area for birds and rare lichens and moss. The other nearby USAF base at Mildenhall, a refuelling base, will close by 2023, but RAF Lakenheath is one of the largest USAF bases in Europe and will increase in size and continue to be used by both RAF and USAF in the next two decades.

Other areas of southern Breckland have been transformed into new arable land as a result of improved farming techniques and huge irrigation machines. The soil remains sandy and dry, poor by comparison with other areas of Suffolk and it seems counterproductive to fight nature's desire to leave the Brecks as heathland. Perhaps rabbit breeding could make a comeback. Breckland is a poorer place than most of Suffolk. It is largely flat and when the sun fails to shine it wears a desolate, rather miserable air. The town of Brandon is now a semi-abandoned place in a state of recession with a tell-tale Tandoori house and Chinese take-away witness to an economy with little circulating cash. The town square has a pub named The Flint Knappers but there are now no knappers left, the five remaining in Tennyson's day dwindled down to the last man standing in the 1980s. A large gun-flint industry was created here in the 1790s and quickly became the centre of world gun-flint manufacturing. Brandon's heyday was relatively short, the industry declined after the Napoleonic Wars. The flint building trade is still booming today, especially in north Norfolk and parts of Suffolk but not sadly in Brandon. And the lovely stone bridge on the main road that spans the Little Ouse, photographed for Tennyson's first edition, was replaced in 1954 with a wider more serviceable one, although this time appropriately made of flint.

Chapter Three

The West Country

THE boundary between east and west Suffolk is, roughly, a line running north and south of Needham Market, which is a small town on the Ipswich river, the Gipping, lying right in the centre of the county. I will risk the jeers of everyone living on one side of that line by saying that the west, taken as a whole, simply does not compare with the east. That is my own opinion; perhaps I am prejudiced, for the east is my country; but I have explored most corners of the west, and I still would not change for all the corn in Suffolk. It took me years to find the reason; I kept thinking it over, putting forward a score of different arguments, but none of them satisfied me. And then it came to me suddenly, as I was sitting one spring morning in a field near Woolpit, thinking of nothing in particular, and certainly not of the differences between the east and the west. It is simply this: the west is more civilized.

I don't mean that the people are more sophisticated or more progressive, or that the villages are more modernized. Neither modernization nor the comparative nearness of London has anything to do with it. But the country itself gives the impression of being more orderly, more controlled; it has never run wild in the same way as has the east, and for that reason it has neither the same depth nor the same charm. You cannot lose yourself in it, you cannot feel such a real and overwhelming solitude.

Hedges—the hedges are really responsible. I have already spoken of their effect on the country; but in west Suffolk there are many long stretches with literally no hedges at all, or at the best hedges that are kept to, and often below, their proper size. And as the fields are larger—they are very large in some places—and the country is flat, there is often nothing to break the view. I am not saying that the west is monotonous; around the borders of the county there is every kind of variety, and wherever you find anything approaching a stream or a river the whole appearance of the country alters at once; but there is a high, flat belt of

land running through the centre that lacks both hedges and trees in any number. Trees add so much to a landscape; in the east they are everywhere, springing out of the hedges, lining the roads—tall ones, little ones, trees of every shape and size; but on this large belt of country in the west they are confined to woods and clusters and copses, so that they have no ascendancy over the country.

I do not know whether or not the borderline between east and west Suffolk exists officially; but it is a strange thing that when you cross that line which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, you might be going into a different county. You can see the change as well as feel it. Everything becomes more tidy, more open, and certainly richer—for here are some of the best corn lands in England. Unfortunately, corn alone does not make a landscape. Once you get away from the big fields of the plateau, however, that old wildness asserts itself once more.

It is the same thing with the villages. Some of them are really quite uniform, they look more reputable, and they are too tidy and compact to straggle. And then you do not find those isolated, ramshackle farmhouses and cottages, miles from the nearest village, doggedly pitting themselves against the inexorable force of nature; they belong to east Suffolk. If a farmhouse turns up in the wilds of west Suffolk, the chances are that it is a robust one, well cared for, as bright and unblemished as the yellow corn itself.

Give me east Suffolk for beauty and wildness, both of country and village; but when it comes to towns, west Suffolk puts us to shame. Its small towns—almost small enough to qualify for villages—are incomparable. The only two that I do not care about are Stowmarket and Needham Market; I find them both rather dull. In fact, according to an old diary of mine, Needham is a great deal worse than dull. "A horrible little place, disagreeable people—awful!" is how I described it; but this is quite undeserved and only due to the circumstances of my visit. I arrived there one evening in March, many years ago, when I was walking from London to my home. It was a cold, rainy night, I was lame and blistered and utterly weary, caring about nothing but a cup of tea, a slice of bread and cheese and a warm bed. Not one of these could I find in Needham Market, though I knocked up at least three-quarters of the inhabitants. Nor could I even get a lift to Stowmarket, but had to wait an hour for a bus. Hence the entry in my diary, which I now retract. Needham is no worse than unexciting.

Apart from these two, the small towns of the west are as near perfect as can be. The best of them is Lavenham. Lavenham, with its glorious church and its sturdy old cottages, is one of the most beautiful towns in all England. At that I will leave

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