

The saga of the Blue Plaque for Frank Daniell
by Rosemary Jewers, Researcher.

In October 2013 I was sent correspondence and photocopies relating to the Colchester artist and portrait painter, Frank Robinson Daniell. The object was for me to take on the task of organising a blue plaque to commemorate his life and achievements. I was starting at a disadvantage, because I had never heard of him, but I soon realised that I had heard about two of his paintings, the Blue Coat Boy and Blue Coat Girl.

All I had to do, I thought, was to confirm that he had once lived at No. 8 East Hill and check if there had been any renumbering of the houses in that street. I did find that the houses were renumbered in about 1892 and after much frustration, I was able to confirm that Frank Daniell was living at No. 8 East Hill in the 1930's.

I later discovered that Frank Daniell at the age of 14, and his family were listed in the 1881 census as living in West Stockwell Street, (no house address) and later he advertised a studio in the same street. In Kelly's 1902 edition (about the time of when the portraits were being commissioned for the new Town Hall) Daniell was advertising his premises as St Martin's Studio. There was no indication if he ever lived at the studio or where the studio was and this mystery still remains.

One Royal Academy of Arts archive book lists that in 1903, "Daniel, F., St. Martin's Studio, Colchester-" he exhibits four paintings No's. 385 A Blue-Coat Boy, 520 La Parisienne, 687 A Dish of Tea and 701 Dear Lady Disdain. I was able to consult other online books that list more of his paintings that were exhibited at the R.A.

Frank Daniell is listed under Artists in Kelly's in 1906, 1910, and 1912 at an address at 15A High Street, Colchester.

The 1911 census confirms Frank Daniell and his wife were living at 15A High Street, Colchester. Under children he lists one child who has died. This entry has been crossed out.

I then discovered that Whybrow Estate agents are selling three newly refurbished flats at 15A High Street Colchester. These are above the shop Hughes (near to Waterstones). The top flat could have been one room before it was modernised. It would have been ideal as a studio with ample light coming in from windows near to roof height and from windows in the wall.

Daniell died on 11th March 1932. Probate was granted in London on 28th April to Ethel his wife. Effects shown as £410 : 3s : 11d. Probate confirmed that at the time of his death he was living at 8 East Hill.

I found that the East Hill numbering is still very confusing as there have been some recent changes. When approaching East Hill from the High Street, No. 8 East Hill is located on the right hand side of the road just after the junction of Priory Street and East Hill.

This short account mentions only a few details of the life and work of the extremely talented artist, Frank Daniell.

In 2014 it is the intention of the Civic Society to honour him and his work with a blue plaque, this also coincides with 50th anniversary of the Colchester Civic Society.