

Inspired and Direct Watercolour Landscapes



The location of many of John Constable's paintings, Flatford Mill runs over 120 Natural History and Arts courses in a unique and tranquil learning environment.

Course Description

Tuition will focus particularly on the importance of observation, composition, simplification and interpretation of a subject, and especially achieving correct tonal values.

Subjects will likely include buildings, foliage, sky, water and more. There are many excellent subject options around the Flatford Mill site and close by.

A fairly 'direct' approach to handling the medium will be demonstrated, and some boldness encouraged. Watercolour can create fear in the student, but many of the best results involve a bit of 'risk-taking'. Jem believes there is nothing to lose and much to be gained by treating everything as just practise, and that taking some chances can lead to quicker progression.

Jem will offer a full demonstration painting on most days spent entirely outdoors, which can take approximately 45 minutes. He will then offer guidance and support to each student equally through the remainder of the day as they complete at least one painting, and perhaps more.

Some students may wish to work smaller or in a more 'sketchy' way than others and hence may get more individual paintings done.

Outdoor work will be complemented by tuition in the studio where there will be a focus on technique through discussion, demonstration, exercises and perhaps

step-by-step painting as appropriate. This may include how to successfully mix strong darks, achieve more expressive mark making, combine soft edges with hard, or many other things.

We will also lay out some of our work, so that the breadth and variety of approach and outcome can be shared within the group. It is usually the case that students will learn a lot from each other, and seeing the work of fellow students in this way can be inspiring.

Throughout his demonstrations and overall guidance Jem will be referring to the underlying principles and considerations that are applicable however differing a painter's 'style'. Negative painting, tonal contrast, soft and hard edges, mark making, and a personal choice of colour are just some of the aspects of interpreting a subject (even a still life or portrait) that always apply. An individual's 'style' evolves over time through practise, and this could be a point for discussion.

IMPORTANT:

Please consider the outdoor aspect of the course carefully, as to whether this will suit you at this time of year. We WILL be going out as a group together, unless it is very windy or raining, usually spending *at least* half of each day outside. Come prepared for the wide variations in weather and underfoot conditions that this time of year can bring. In particular the fields immediately surrounding Flatford can flood a bit when the river is high, so do expect some mud! Walking boots or wellies and warm clothing are essential to bring, even if we are lucky enough not to need them in the end.

The course is aimed at those having experience of watercolour but wanting to improve, particularly in terms of completing paintings 'on the spot' outdoors. In this environment the subject can be at its most inspiring, but sometimes a bit overwhelming, too. Since painting outdoors brings some additional challenges the course is not suitable for watercolour beginners and knowledge of the absolute basics is assumed.

Please do contact Jem, the tutor, in advance of booking if in any doubt about the suitability of your current experience level, or if you have any other query.

What the Fee Includes

Residential course fee includes:

- Full board, sole occupancy accommodation including cooked breakfast, picnic lunch, homemade cakes and an evening meal. Vegetarian and other dietary option available.
- Up to 8 hours teaching time a day, plus relaxing breaks for meals and

refreshments.

- Tea and coffee making facilities available throughout the day.
- Use of resources including library, workrooms, studios and the Centre grounds.
- Transport during the courses.
- Insurance to cover cancellation, personal belongings, personal accident, legal liability and medical emergency.

If you choose to be a non-resident on a residential course, the fee will include all the above except accommodation and breakfast.

What to Bring

Students need to be self-sufficient and provide all materials. Please read all the following carefully. Jem recommends you bring all the watercolour materials you usually use and are familiar with, but hopefully these would include the following:

BRUSHES

At least one large wash brush, such as a squirrel or other natural hair, ideally a Round although if you don't have one a Flat will do.

A medium size Round synthetic, or natural hair *with a good point*. Descriptions of 'medium' vary, as do numbered sizes between brands, but this may be about 6 – 8 mm across at the ferrule, depending on the scale at which you wish to work.

Synthetic (generally less soft) brushes have their advantages, such as when you want to pick up less water and more pigment in your mix, and this will be useful during the course.

In general, larger brushes will be more useful than small ones.

PAINTS

Again, bring your usual preferred colours and brand. For information in case you wish to use similar (though he stresses that it is not at all necessary!) Jem often uses mainly the Winsor & Newton Professional range in the following colours:

French Ultramarine, Winsor Blue (Red Shade), Light Red, Indian Red, Burnt Umber, Raw Umber.

Jem strongly recommends tubes rather than pans, for ease of mixing and to obtain strong darks.

PAPER

Your own choice of brand and size watercolour paper of a decent quality. At

least 140lb (300g) and Not (Cold-pressed) or Rough surface. Hot-pressed is generally less appropriate for landscape work. For information again, Jem often uses Bockingford 200lb Not. (See also MISC below, re. method of affixing paper.) Bring enough for potentially 2 or more finished paintings per day, plus some extra sheets for exercises and mishaps. Also some small bit of scrap for testing on.

MISC.

Digital camera, smartphone camera or tablet. This makes an excellent viewfinder and is also useful for gathering reference material. Alternatively, a simple card viewfinder (approx A4 size mount card) can suffice if necessary, though is less easy to use.

Palette ideally with several large mixing areas. Very small palettes are a hindrance, not a help for landscape work, and this includes when working outdoors.

Soft pencil (Jem uses 8B), soft or putty eraser, board for paper and a method of holding down the paper ('Framer's tape' or wide masking tape, etc) or pre-stretched with gum tape if you prefer. Alternatively a watercolour 'block' can be a good solution. Working within a pad can be okay but only at quite a small scale, otherwise it can be better to tear sheets out and tape them to a board. Kitchen/toilet rolls/rag for drying brushes on (important!). Jem uses an old pair of socks.

Portable water container/pot, and bottle (plastic being the lightest to carry) for transportation of water. 1 litre size useful, such as a squash bottle.

Peaked or wide-brimmed hat.

Sun lotion/insect repellent, etc.

Bag (e.g. a rucksack) for carrying all of the above, plus lunch.

Easel, unless you wish to work with paper/board on your lap, in which case a portable lightweight seat/stool instead.

The Centre does have small sketching stools and easels for hire at a modest charge if required. If you have your own it is usually for the best to use what you are familiar with.

Weather-proof clothing and wellingtons are also available to borrow from the Centre.

If you have any questions relating to materials and equipment, or anything else, please feel free to contact Jem in advance (jembowdenwatercolour@gmail.com) or the Centre as appropriate.

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About the Tutor

Jem Bowden is a watercolour specialist and award winning artist, who paints in a direct and 'impressionistic' way. Working outdoors on location (or 'en plein air') is core to his practice.

As a tutor, Jem works hard to pass on all that he believes most important for successful landscape watercolours, helping students to develop skills from whatever their current level.

He gives demonstrations and runs workshops at art societies, groups and teaching centres around the country, and tutors on residential painting holidays. He's also written for various magazines and is currently a regular contributor to Leisure Painter.

Please take a few moments to look at his work at:

www.jembowdenwatercolour.co.uk

Start and finish times

Check in is from **1600**, but the first formal activity is dinner at **1830** (with the bar open from **1815**) followed by an evening classroom session.

Residents: Please aim to arrive between **1600 and 1800** on Monday to allow us sufficient time to show you to your accommodation and around the communal areas.

Non-residents: You do not need to arrive quite so early but please can you be here by **1800** as we need to show you the communal areas as well.

The course ends at **1200** on Friday.

Special Offer

Bring a friend!

If you are attending a course at Flatford Mill at the sole occupancy price, we are offering a special rate for a friend or partner not enrolled on the course to also stay at £50 per night for dinner, bed and breakfast.

How to book

Bookings can be made by telephoning the Centre; we are open 0930 – 1700 weekdays and most weekends. Alternatively, bookings can be made via our website: www.field-studies-council.org.