

Arty Facts Visit To Open Studios

Do you know what a loke is? Neither did we until..... Undaunted by the cancellation of our latest speaker at short notice, we decided not to let the opportunity to indulge in some art go by. We noticed that the Norfolk Open Studios event was still available on 7th October and so a few of us set off to visit a couple of studios in the delightful little town of Reepham.

If you have never been there before it is worth your time. It is the enterprising kind of place that makes a great deal from what it has got. Despite the fact that a huge fire destroyed a lot of the mediaeval buildings, the town has got a wealth of 18th century houses, pretty streets and a lovely open market square. It has also got, very unusually, three churches all clustered close to each other.

But back to the loke. Our first studio was in a tiny cottage entered through the green door. It was almost like going into a magical cave. It took a few moments to adjust to the room which was burgeoning with artistic creations of all kinds. The lovely brick fireplace was crammed with lamp bases – sycamore, pine, oak carved by Simon Tebbutt.



There was Sue Johnston's fine needlework covering the alcove in the form of representations of dandelion heads, Emily Longhurst's sea themed work, Gloria Davis's photographic interpretations and ceramic jewellery by Kate Johnston. Sue's workbook was also there to see – a fascinating record of how her pieces had been developed from sketches, threads and paintwork. Colours shone from every corner of the cottage leaving a mind memory of gems of creativity.

And the loke? Well Sue told us it is Norfolk's own local name for an alley, a ginnel, a snicket or a jitty. And Emily backed this up saying her cottage is named Loke Cottage as a loke runs right by it.

After a coffee in the square, we walked up to our next studio where we found beautiful ceramics by Jane Bygrave, jewellery by Alison Varley and prints by Sarah Bays. Sarah had produced small affordable prints on wood of birds and little animals which could hang straight on to the wall.

One of the reasons surely for the prosperity of Reepham was the railway which was brought here in 1882. The railway buildings still stand on the outskirts. Now the railway track is part of Marriott's Way (named after the engineer who built the line) used by cyclists and walkers. The station itself has been converted into a popular café. Here we had lunch sitting outside. We had had a very different day from the one planned for October 7th but despite our disappointment that Andrew Taylor had been unable to come and speak, our small group carried home with it a deep impression of the richness of artistic wealth which exists in our county. And next year Open Studios will be available again and we might try a different part of Norfolk in which to dip into the imaginations of our resident artists.



Report and photos by Margi Blunden