

Francis Danby ARA



A boatyard, possibly at Exmouth Point, Devon

Reference: 10983

Dimensions:

Height: 12.60 cm / 5 in

Width: 19 cm / 7½ in

Oil on paper

12.6 x 19 cm; 5 x 7½ inches

Provenance:

James Danby, the son of the artist;

With Anthony Reed, London, 1978;

Christie's, London, 7 June 2007, lot 97;

With WS Fine Art, summer 2009, no. 19;

The Flannery collection, UK, and by descent until 2018.

Exhibited:

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Anthony Reed and Davis & Long, London and New York, English Sketches and Studies, 1978, no. 86;
WS Fine Art, London, summer exhibition 2009, no. 19.

Danby was a very keen sailor and also had a life-long interest in building boats. This dramatic sketch of an untidy boat yard under a heavy, brooding sky, drawn on the spot, may well record work on one of his own boats, The Chase .

Danby lived on the Maer near Exmouth from 1846. It has been suggested that this work shows The Point in Exmouth, where the flag flew next to Ferry Cottage to indicate when and where the ferry crossed from Exmouth over to Starcross. 1 There were two boat building firms listed at The Point, on the other side of Ferry Cottage, one owned by John Hayman, where Danby's boat The Chase was constructed in 1847-1848. This yacht provoked comment due to its innovative and unusually broad hollow keel. 2 Danby later built himself a yacht called the Dragon Fly in which he was shipwrecked off Axmouth in August 1860, the year before he died.

Another oil sketch of a boat building shed, of a similar size and reminiscent of the work of Corot, is dated by Francis Greenacre to c. 1840. 3 Stylistically the present work may also be compared with a group of spontaneous sketches of the Exe and Exmouth dating from c. 1855. 4 They appear to be records of landscape and atmospheric effects done on the spot or very shortly afterwards. This group, many of which had inscriptions saying 'Francis Danby ARA' on the verso in James Danby's hand, were bought from a member of the Danby family who lived near St Albans by a local dealer around 1930. 5

1. April Marjoram, by email communication with the author, October 2018.
2. Western Times, 30 June 1849.
3. F. Greenacre, 'Francis Danby 1793-1861', exhibition catalogue, City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery and Tate Gallery, 1988, no. 52, p. 121.
4. Ibid., nos. 53-8.
5. Eric Adams, Francis Danby: Varieties of Poetic Landscape, 1973, no. 58; see F. Greenacre, op. cit., p. 123 (under no. 57).