

Alice Gunyon and Lionel Percy Smythe R.A.

Brief biographies

Alice enjoyed sketching, - so we are told in a book written about Lionel. Neither she nor Lionel were born in Barnsley, so why then include Alice and Lionel in this project?

A census consulted whilst involved in other research, showed Alice Smythe born in Barnsley married to Lionel Smythe, artist, in the same household in London as William Lionel Wyllie, Lionel's half brother, who was to become perhaps England's greatest maritime artist.

How did Alice become the wife of Lionel Smythe R.A and sister-in-law of William Wyllie?

Alice was born in Wakefield. Her parents William and Eliza (Saville) were china dealers on Cheapside, Barnsley, who moved to Wakefield. On her father's death, Eliza with her two girls moved to London and Eliza became the housekeeper to the Wyllie family.

The bird-like Alice and Lionel fell in love and they married in 1869. Lionel's mother was known as Mrs. Smythe. As she did not marry a Mr. Smythe, who was Lionel's father? Did Lionel and Alice know? Having established through research for this project a likely candidate, one can't help view Lionel differently.

Lionel's work can be seen at the Royal Academy, the Tate, the Victoria and Albert Museum and in many galleries throughout the country. He was noted especially for his watercolours and for rural and maritime scenes.

The Wyllies holidayed in France and Alice and Lionel moved there permanently with their three children. Lionel chose a medieval chateau outside Boulogne which may have been an inspirational place for an artist to live, but not an artist who worked slowly and carefully with little sense of commerce and one senses that the bailiffs were never far away.

Barnsley saved the day for the family as Alice's inheritance of property on Cheapside prevented the family from going under completely.

The beautiful Alice features in some of Lionel's work. She died in 1916 and Lionel in 1918, both in France.

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