

John Spence Ingall (1850-1936)

Brief biography

John Spence Ingall was the first of his family to be born in Barnsley. His parents John and Elizabeth had moved there to run a herbalist and grocery business at 12 Market Street. Spence Ingall was born in 1850 and had an older brother and sister. When his father died, his mother was left to continue running the business to support the family.

As a young man he became a printer compositor and later a designer of damask linen for the local linen industry. Studying at the Barnsley Science and Art School in its early days, in 1876 he won a Government- sponsored 3rd prize for damask design. He is also said to have studied art at the Académie Julian in Paris but he was well into middle age before he began to style himself an artist.

He regularly visited the Runswick Bay and Staithes area on the Yorkshire coast, just north of Whitby, to paint in the open air. Continuing to live in Barnsley, he became a respected business man and freemason. Finally, around 1900, he moved permanently to Runswick Bay. He was a founder member of the Staithes Group of Painters whose first exhibition was held in Staithes in August 1901. His winters were spent in Tangier. Spence Ingall never married and he died in Runswick in 1936. Probate for his estate was granted to a friend, Timothy Patton, who ran a grocery business in Runswick.

The Staithes Group of artists gathered from all over the country, at the turn of the 20th century, to take advantage of the beautiful scenery and wonderful light of the moors and coast. Travel had been made easier when the railway reached Staithes in 1883. Spence Ingall would have had contact with the members of the group and their work. He would also have known of the award winning Victorian photographer Franks Meadows Sutcliffe who photographed life in Whitby between 1875 and 1910.

Spence Ingall painted in watercolour and oils and his subjects vary from the beautiful scenery of North Yorkshire to the more exotic people and scenery of Tangier. They are impressionist in style and he captures colour well. Some of his paintings have a quite ethereal quality. His paintings appear occasionally for sale in auctions and galleries and some are held locally at the Pannett Art Gallery, Whitby.

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