

'Painting was my way of communicating - now it's my job'

Autistic artist David Downes has worked and exhibited all over the world - but is coming home to roost with a show dedicated to Hadleigh and surrounding villages. By **Danielle Lett**

This month, a talented local artist will be exhibiting works highlighting the wonder and beauty of some of our county's most picturesque villages and towns.

David Downes currently lives in Manningtree but spent his formative years in Suffolk.

Diagnosed with high functioning autism at the age of 32, he has been immersed in the arts practically his whole life, tracing his passion all the way back to early childhood.

"I've been drawing since I was about four. Before I could communicate properly, I would draw with mostly felt tips and biro before I began painting when I was in my 20s. Art was my way of communicating, and now it's my full-time job alongside being a dad," he says.

David's talents have taken him all over the world to study and exhibit, including stints in Brighton, London, and California.

In 2012, he was commissioned by The Savoy Hotel to paint the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant from the roof, which can be seen in the entrance hall of the hotel, and in 2019 he was selected by ITV to paint a public mural for the launch of period drama Sanditon.

After moving back to the area a few years ago, David became reacquainted with his favourite local spots, and soon started drawing and painting the likes of Hadleigh, Kersey, Dunwich, and the River Brett.

Working from Ardleigh Studios, he says: "I grew up in Eye and I've always done drawings of Suffolk. As a kid, I would also draw imaginary towns and places. Later in life, my family and I moved back to Suffolk, and when I used

to take my daughter to swimming classes in Hadleigh every week, I thought how beautiful the town was, and what a nice place it be to paint and have an exhibition there."

He cites his favourite landmark as the Hadleigh's Deanery Tower - a 15th century brickwork structure that was originally the gatehouse to the archdeacon's house.

"It's such an unusual structure. A lot of the buildings in Hadleigh especially are unique, and you've got the church and the churchyard, too."

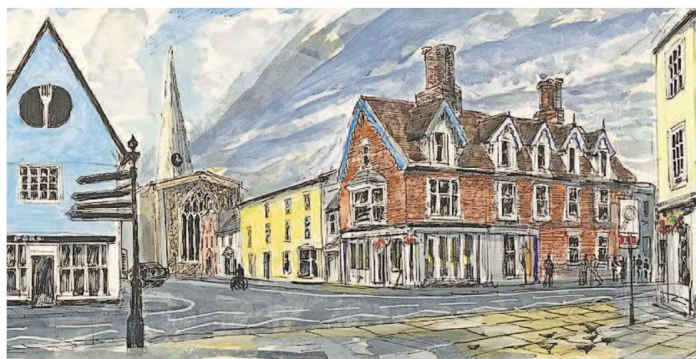
David visited Hadleigh several times while sketching his works, also capturing its High Street through the medium of pen, paper, and paint.

His landscape scenes have become known for their dramatic skies (perhaps a nod to the work of Constable), and bold use of colour, and are so revered locally that he was previously artist in resident at Snape Maltings, painting more than 40 land and seascape pieces during his time there.

His upcoming exhibition, 'Visions of Suffolk: Town & Country - New Paintings', at Hadleigh Old School has just opened, and will run until Sunday, October 16.

"It's always exciting to have another exhibition in a new place and I'm really excited to see what the people of Hadleigh think of my art. Hopefully, they will feel positive about it and like what they see."

To find out more about David, visit daviddownes.co.uk. He can also be found on Instagram at [instagram.com/davepowerdraw71](https://www.instagram.com/davepowerdraw71)



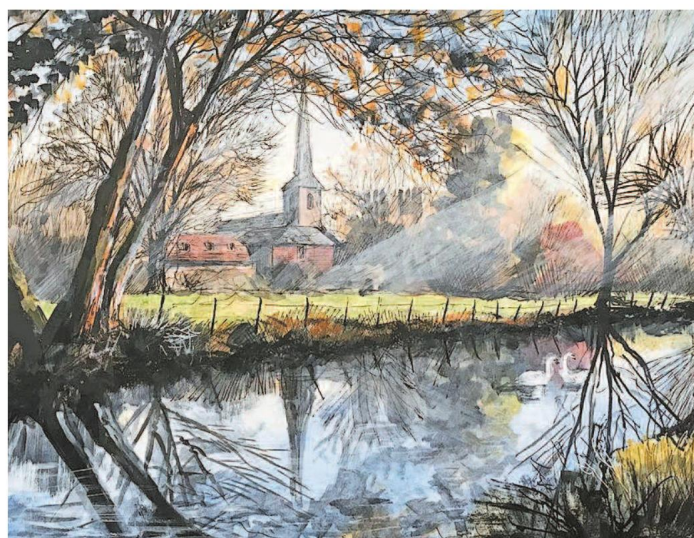
Hadleigh High Street



Artist David Downes at his Visions of Suffolk exhibition
Picture: IAN GRUTCHFIELD



Hadleigh Deanery



River Brett



Kersey

we need a new home...



Shane and Brian

Picture: RSPCA SUFFOLK CENTRAL

Shane and Brian, male ferrets, four- to five-years-old

This handsome pair came into our care after they were removed from a property with a large amount of ferrets.

They have not had too much handling in the past and both lack some socialising skills and manners, so are looking for an experienced ferret home who can continue to work with them in the future to make them more comfortable around people and handling.

They have improved a lot

since they arrived in our care, and now absolutely love having a good run around in our enclosed play area. They are so entertaining to watch and will play together for hours, finally firing themselves out and curling up for a snooze together.

If you think you can offer Shane and Brian a home, or any other pet in our care, then please get in contact with our reception team by emailing info@rspca-suffolkcentral.org.uk or by calling 0300 999 7321 between 9am-4pm and we will be happy to help

ask the vet

Nina Downing, PDSA veterinary nurse



My dog, Rosie, has been coughing for several days. Is this something I should be concerned about?

There could be several reasons for Rosie's cough, so I'd advise taking her to see a vet, especially as it's been going on for several days. It is possible that Rosie may have caught kennel cough, which is an airway infection easily spread through direct or indirect contact with other dogs. Until you're sure it isn't something contagious, keep Rosie away from other dogs and public spaces. It's important to let your vet know in advance that Rosie has been coughing, so that you can wait outside for your appointment and enter away from the waiting room. For more information on kennel cough, and how to prevent it, you can go to www.pdsa.org.uk/kennelcough

The fur around my Bichon Frisé, Jake's eyes keeps turning a reddish-brown. Is this normal or does he need to see a vet?

What you're seeing is most likely tear staining. This is common in dogs and more obvious on those with white or light-coloured fur. It can be brown or brown/pink and generally originates from the inner corner of the eye. You can

reduce the appearance of tear staining by keeping the hair around the eyes and nose shorter. Regularly remove any dirt, tears, or crust that has built up using cotton wool soaked in warm water and then, once the fur has dried, apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly to protect the skin and fur from further staining. However, if this is something that has recently started or is causing Jake any discomfort, pop him along to see your vet to check for any other eye problems.

My rabbit's head keeps leaning to the side. Is this normal behaviour or does he need to see the vet?

Head tilt in rabbits is a sign that something is wrong so, yes, he does need to be examined by your vet. Head tilts can be caused by something affecting the ear, and/or the brain. Inner ear infections, or a tiny parasite that causes swelling in the brain called *E.cuniculi*, are the most common causes of head tilt. However, there can be other reasons for your bunny's head tilt, so it's important that he's seen by a vet who will be able to get to the root of the problem and administer the necessary treatment. For more information on head tilts in rabbits you can visit www.pdsa.org.uk/head-tilt

Nina Downing is a veterinary nurse at the PDSA, answering questions on pet-related concerns

