

“Cottage in a Cornfield 1815-1816”; seeking the context.

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Cottage in a Cornfield 1815-1816 is in the collection of Manchester Art Gallery. Having bought a postcard in November 2014 I readily recognised a scene close to Lavenham, Suffolk, where I regularly walk with my dog. To date I have not seen the original painting. The best representation I have found is at

<http://media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/b0/75/a1/b075a1a68f5d2697638312c16991d47c.jpg>

It has been explained to me that the painting is unsigned, and was described as being by John Constable, probably when it came to a saleroom in 1817-18, and that the attribution has been withdrawn.

These notes explain my opinion that the painting shows a view towards Lavenham Church from the north. I suggest a provenance, and have identified links to Constable.

This paper is intended as a discussion document for staff of Manchester Art Gallery and their professional colleagues, and not for publication in the current form. It is neither popular journalism nor an academic paper, but might be edited for either purpose.

Appendix 1 summarises information from maps. Appendix 2 summarises the sequence of main events. Appendix 3 is an account of “what the servants saw”. A Google Earth screenshot indicates the points from which photographs were taken.

Setting the scene – locality and history

The area under discussion lies to the north of Lavenham, on the parish boundary with Alpheton. It overlaps the boundaries of two current Ordnance Survey maps, Explorer Series numbers 196 and 211.¹

West Suffolk is characterised by gently rolling landscape, with small hills and river valleys and small to medium-sized arable farms, with some sheep being kept also. Field boundaries are commonly drainage ditches and/or hedges. Marks in the landscape can be enduring; it has been asserted that ditches and their corresponding banks predate the boundaries of many Suffolk parishes². While elms have disappeared from the landscape mature oaks are a common feature in the hedgerows. “Higher Suffolk” is on boulder clay, providing a fertile soil which is hard to cultivate, and was consequently the last area to be reclaimed from primeval forest. Since clay is relatively impermeable to water effective drainage systems are essential for agriculture³. The Suffolk system of hollow draining involved burying straw in trenches to make a compressed arch, and persisted after the introduction of industrially-produced clay pipes in the 1840s.⁴

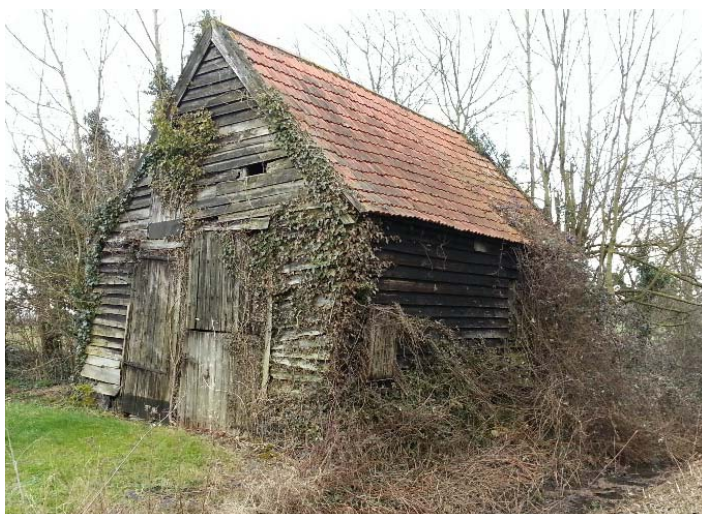
Dairy farming was prominent until around 1750, due to the drainage problems, and the requirement for fewer workers. Rises in population, grain prices and land rents encouraged farmers to convert some grassland to arable and the region was at the forefront of agricultural innovation of the late eighteenth century; six- or four-year rotations were used. Dairy farms were ploughed to make room for more profitable wheat which constituted up to 80% of land-use during the high-demand year of the Napoleonic wars; the fall in demand from 1813 led to an agricultural depression of more than 15 years, in which “some farmers abandoned their farms altogether for want of means to pay the rates”. Cattle stocking densities fell from sixteen dairy cattle per hundred acres in the 1780s to ten in 1803.^{5 6}

Suffolk was characterised by “open villages” in which agricultural workers lived in small towns and village centres, rather than on farm premises. It has been speculated that this pattern of residence lead to looser social ties than in comparable agricultural areas, contributing to the social unrest, “a protracted rural war” that accompanied the depression following the Napoleonic wars⁷.

Until the nineteenth century, and in common with much of southern England, traditional dwellings available to the majority were constructed without foundation on a wooden frame with lath and plaster infill, around a brick chimney. Soft red bricks have been fired at Bulmer, near Sudbury, since Tudor times. Roofs thatched with long straw are still to be seen. Barns were made of oak planks, stained dark with tar preservative. A source of drinking water, such as a well or spring, would be essential to the survival of a dwelling, while a farmer keeping horses and a cart would need access to a shallow stretch of water, such as a stream or pond, not only to water and wash the team, but also to drive the cart into to tighten the metal rims of the wheels in hot weather (as depicted in Constable’s *The Haywain*).



A small farmstead, possibly near Lavenham: engraving attributed to Isaac Taylor (1759-1829)⁸.



Example of a small barn, Alpheton

The village of Lavenham flourished in the medieval era due to processing and export of woollen cloth, such as “Lavenham Blue”. As is typical of other East Anglian wool towns, the church appears disproportionately large, to display the wealth and generosity of the merchant benefactors. It is situated on high ground to the north and west of the village; there is very little development beyond in these directions. The stocky tower is described as the tallest village church tower in England, at 43 metres, and makes a significant mark in the landscape. The collapse of the wool trade in the mid-sixteenth century impoverished the village; consequently most dwellings remained unimproved, resulting in a picturesque appearance which now attracts tourists in large numbers.



Lavenham church seen from the north, and partially obscured by a barn.

Lavenham Airfield (USAAF Station 137) was constructed on an elevated plateau (88 metres), extending over parts of Alpheton and Lavenham, and was used by the 487th Bombardment Group for only 18 months from March 1944 to August 1945. The large area, around two miles across, was designed to make it less likely to be destroyed by the enemy and fields and their boundaries disappeared in the making⁹. The area has now reverted to farmland and some light industry, most of the buildings, roads and runways having been demolished.¹⁰ The larger part, Lavenham Lodge Farm, is the property of John Pawsey of Shimpling Park Farm, Shimpling; the southern part belongs to Tim Partridge of Park Farm, Lavenham; and the south-western corner to Trevor Rix of Clapstile Farm, Alpheton.

The painting

The painting shows a rural scene in high summer, the central feature being a wheatfield ripe for harvest. Heavy storm clouds have just passed, swept by a south-east wind, and forming deep tones in the upper corners, echoed in the lower corners by shadows on puddles, and a spoil heap, on which grow poppies and common yarrow. The central ellipse of warm yellows depicts the cornfield, and sunbeams cutting through the clouds to shine down on a shimmering field of barley in the mid distance. A foot path leads through the wheatfield from left to right, and two shirt-sleeved figures display flashes of red, crossing towards a small farmstead on the right. This features a dark barn and a thatched dwelling house with a long roof-line and which seems to lie lower than expected in relation to the profile of the standing corn. (There may be a small northern wing, which I find hard to discern from the reproductions available to me.) We cannot see the walls beneath the thatch and

do not even know if the building is inhabited, or whether there is a yard or garden beyond. The eye is drawn to a sturdy church tower on the horizon and on the right we see hedges and trees in field boundaries. Wheeling gulls provide movement in the sky.

Photographs towards Lavenham

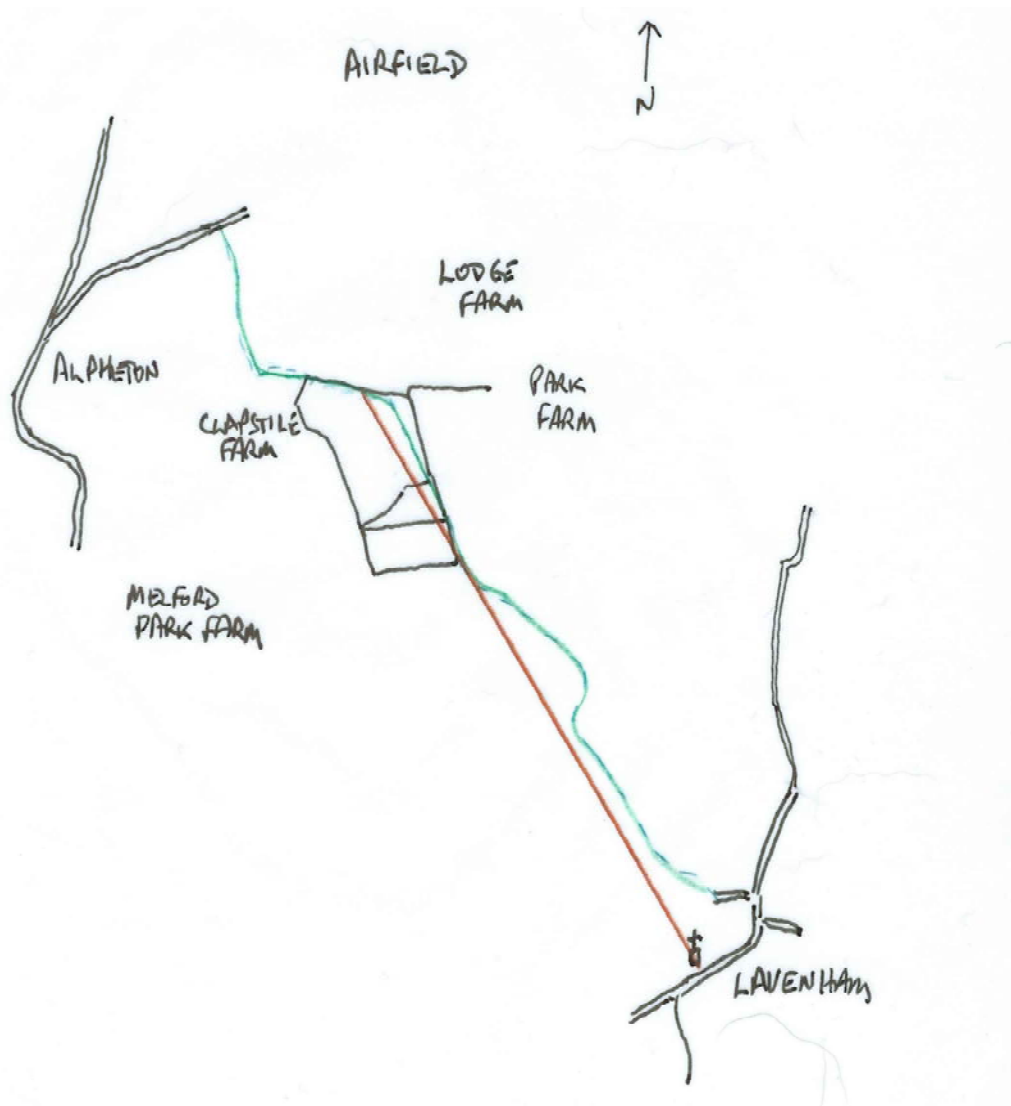


Viewpoint A toward Lavenham across Big Field, Park Farm.



Detail of the above photo

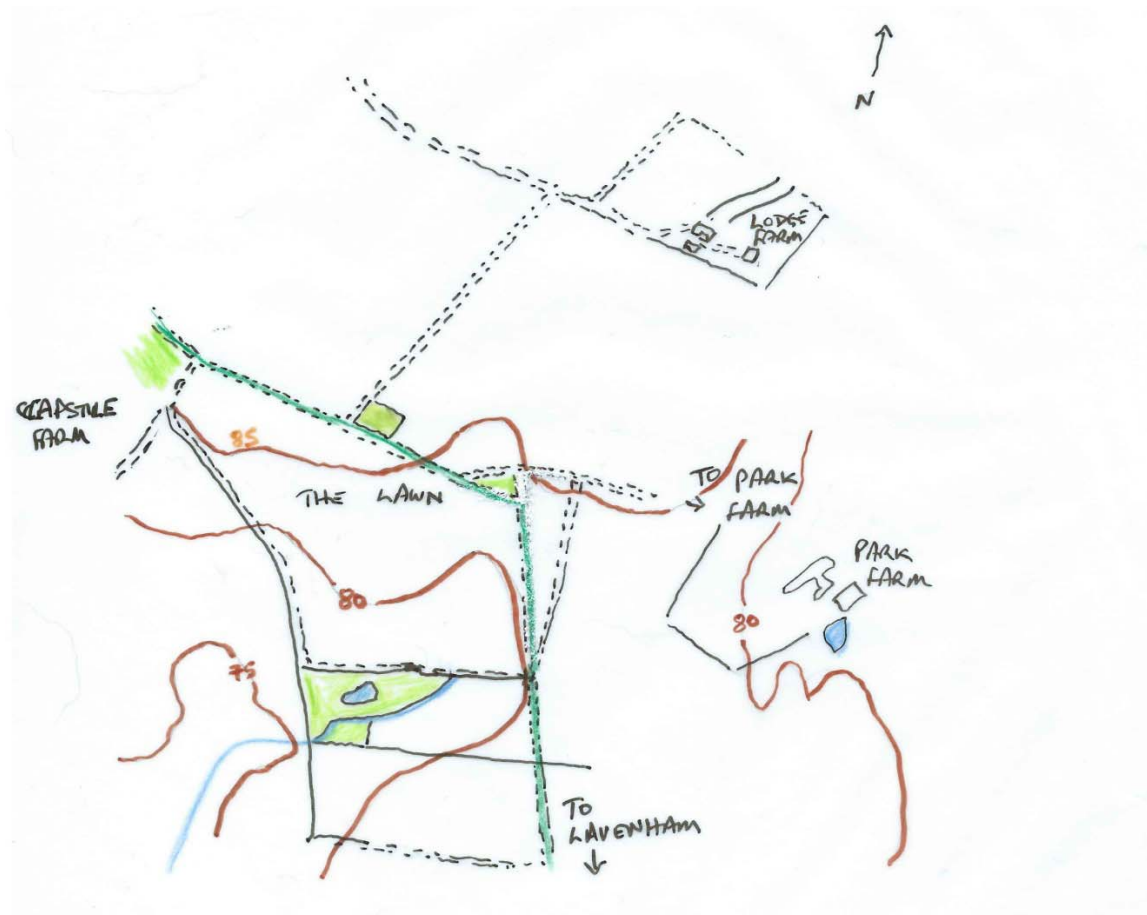
The first photograph, from Viewpoint A, was taken on a December afternoon from the point $52^{\circ}7'28.61''N$ $0^{\circ}46'21.26''E$ and on the public footpath, now designated St Edmund Way, which connects Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury. This point is 1 1/2 miles north of Lavenham Church and overlooks fields belonging to Park Farm. From left to right, my photograph show distant high ground in Brent Eleigh on the eastern side of the small River Brett as it runs south. The view is partially obscured by trees and hedges. Two structures remain from the former airfield, including the tower of a pumphouse (marked F on the [airfield map](#)). The profile of the church tower is distinctive on the horizon. There is a diagonal path from left to right across the winter wheat in the nearest, very large field, known by the current owners as the Big Field. The diagonal route across the field is clearly marked by a waypost, and the path can also be seen clearly in the stubble using Google Earth (illus). To the north, i.e. to the rear of the viewer, an extended line would border the triangular copse and then proceed directly to Lavenham Lodge Farm. (While a northern extension to the path is lost it seems evident that the path would have been a direct route between the village and the latter farm; it might even predate the establishment of a lodge as part of the Norman deerpark.¹¹) The concrete road which rings the field, a legacy of the American airfield, cannot be seen in this photo. To the right we see a very large expanse of winter wheat, and a gradual slope towards an area of woodland. There are also some large trees to be seen on distant field boundaries.



The relationship between the Big Field, Park Farm, and Lavenham Church, showing the footpath, St Edmund Way, in green, and the sightline in red.

In comparing the painting and the landscape of today the features that convince me that the one is based on the other are the line of blue ground to the left of the horizon, the relation of the near to the far field, the prominent church tower and the diagonal footpath. Rather obviously, the hedges and trees don't match after the passage of two hundred years, but seem to be in more or less the right places. The large oak tree to the right of the painting is probably two to three hundred years old, and likely to have been felled shortly after for the valuable timber. The distance across the field has been foreshortened to make the central features more accessible.

The buildings are no longer extant. The absence of a cottage in the modern landscape caused me concern. The smooth surface of the field yielded no clues, even in the aerial view on Google Earth, and not even of the airfield which had been so efficiently tidied away. Without a cottage would anyone sympathise with my ideas?



The Big Field, Park Farm, as it is today, copied from OS Explorer 211.

I started to look at the maps. This area was enclosed early and consequently there are no enclosure maps. The earliest map I could identify was the OS First Series of 1837 which showed no field boundaries, a hatched oblong, which I take to signify a ruin, near Park Farm, and a stream rising between Park Farm and Melford Park Farm. The field took the modern form, except that there was no indication of the current woodland at the southern end. Other maps confirmed that the woodland was recent (summarised as Appendix 1). I obtained a poor quality photocopy of the 1842 tithe map and a list of field names and learned that the kite-shaped Big Field had once been four fields. The south-western part was number 1, Eighteen Acres Arable; the north-eastern part was 238, Twelve Acres; the north-western part disappeared into the damaged border of the map, but by process of elimination I deduce that it was 240, Upper Clapstile, and I cannot distinguish the number of the small field appended in the north-east corner?¹²¹³ A small oblong, possibly a pond, showed at the south western perimeter, right at the corner, in the area that is now wooded.

Visiting the private wood I found a small yellow-brick building left over from the airfield, two large spoil heaps which were clearly of airfield debris, a small mossed-over pile of old red bricks and a large shallow pool. I have not seen this pool on any maps. At the time I was puzzled that the red bricks were on the southern perimeter of the wood, but I now understand that the area was under cultivation at the time that they were dumped, and that the wood grew after the airfield buildings had been cleared.



Viewpoint C. Bricks in woodland, Park Farm.



View D. Pond in woodland, Park Farm.

Now I was more confident that there had been a building visible to the artist, but where? Further study of the maps suggested the answer. The next field to the south was oblong in shape, yet the woodland extended into it, with a curved southern edge. Why? And why did one of the four fields on the tithe map also have a one curved edge connecting with a straight edge? The answer had to be that the boundaries were following a natural barrier, in this case a water course which arose as a spring in the middle of the big field.

I conclude that there once stood a small farm within field 238 "Twelve Acres", depending on water from the spring and that it existed as a ruin in 1837 and had disappeared by 1842. There might be many reasons for its abandonment; agricultural innovation, rural depopulation or simply a catastrophic fire. I think the most likely explanation is that the water table dropped and the spring dried up in the same period that pasture was being converted to arable cultivation. Since the small farm had by then been incorporated into Park Farm the house was not essential anyway. Support for the theory was added when I noted that the contour line crossing the field on an east-west axis took a wavy line, suggesting that water had once carved out a shallow course as it ran south. A field drain enters the ditch which runs westwards to cross under the Bury-Sudbury road to join the Chad Stream just north of Bridge Street, and thence flows to join the River Stour at Long Melford.



Water draining from lower end of The Big Field, believed to follow the line of the original spring; viewpoint F looking north.

The present appearance of the woodland and pond may also have resulted from changes in the water table; a plantation could have been laid deliberately as a response to land that had become too wet to cultivate, or just allowed to grow. If not cultivated for timber it would in any case have offered shelter to game and was a satisfactory outcome for an area rendered hideous by debris from military buildings.



Detail of field boundaries from 1842 tithe map; the buildings and boundaries of the supposed earlier 50 acre farm are superimposed.

The bottom edge of a thatched roof might be as low as 1.8 metres, or less if the base plate had rotted.¹⁴ Today's wheat has been bred to be shorter by 50% than in the nineteenth century, when a height of 1.4 metres was usual. (In Constable's picture *The Cornfield* the corn reaches the height of a man's chest.) While the fall in the land is not obvious to the casual view, the contour lines show a drop of 5 metres between the viewpoint and the supposed site of the farm. The artist may or may not have been seated when he observed it. Therefore it is very possible that he portrayed his view, the wheat obscuring the wall of the house, accurately.



Second view towards Lavenham; the spoil heap and field boundary may have shown on the right (Viewpoint B)

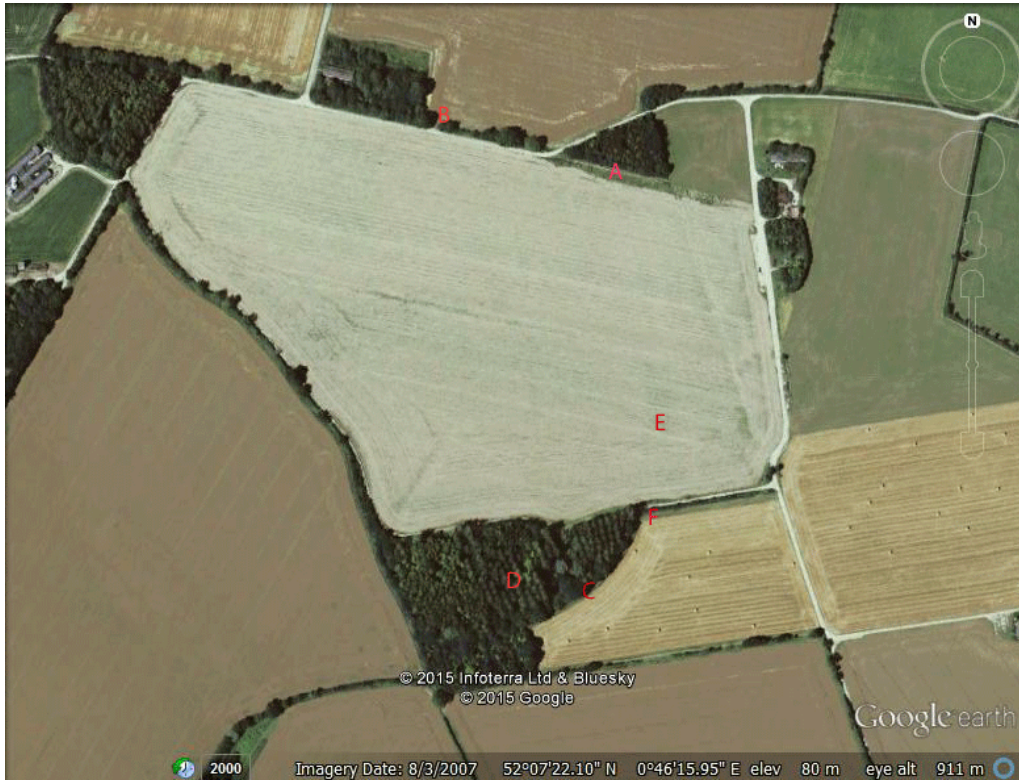
The spoil heap would seem to be an insignificant detail, which might be readily conjured up for the sake of the composition. But if the artist was observing from my second viewpoint, $52^{\circ}07'30.27''\text{N } 0^{\circ}46'12.20''\text{E}$, he may have seen it as part of the south-eastern boundary of field 240, Upper Clapstile. There is a striking resemblance between the mound of earth in the painting and one recently raised in the course of trenching for water mains at Lavenham Lodge Farm. The heap in the painting may have existed in actuality as part of the prevailing measures for improvement of drainage. If the field boundary was thus marked by a ditch the likelihood is that pipes were buried and covered over when the fields were combined into one before the 1842 map.



Spoil tip, Lavenham Lodge Farm. The tower of Lavenham church can be glimpsed through trees to the right of the electricity pole. Viewpoint not shown.

Consequently I became confident that the painter intended to account for exactly what he saw, allowing for some foreshortening for the purposes of composition. I believe that in order to accommodate the selected features of the landscape he would have moved back and forth between the two observation points until he had settled on the composition.

Finally we come to the two figures. It is easily assumed that figures were depicted for aesthetic reasons. So, for example, Constable might paint countrymen in red waistcoats to provide a contrasting colour and focal point. I suggest that this may have been what people actually wore; this was the era of the Peninsula War and the good-quality red woollen cloth of jackets brought home by returning soldiers may have been a ready supply for recycled clothing.



Google Earth screenshot to show The Big Field, Park Farm. The footpath is seen to cross north-south on the eastern edge of the field. A viewpoint 1; B viewpoint2; C pile of red bricks; D pond; E supposed site of spring and farmstead; F drain emerging into ditch.

Speculations on provenance, and links to John Constable

Kentwell Hall¹⁵ is one of two Tudor mansions in the nearby village of Long Melford, about four miles from my nominated viewpoint. In 1782 it was inherited by Richard Moore, aged 13¹⁶, descendant of a prosperous family from Leicestershire, one of whose members was Sir John Moore¹⁷, 1620-1702, Lord Mayor of London. Richard spent his inheritance lavishly, improving sanitation, redesigning the gardens and decorating the interior of the hall, while his role as High Sheriff of Suffolk committed him to expensive entertaining¹⁸¹⁹. Evidently he also enjoyed his absences, gambling in London. From a notice warning that poachers would face prosecution we learn that in 1807 he owned Park Farm, and that his steward was Peter Firmin²⁰.

GAME.

WHEREAS in former Seasons the Game upon the several Manors of Earl's-hall, in Cockfield; Cockfield-hall, and Glemsford, in the county of Suffolk; and upon the several farms in the occupations of Mr. Daniel Mann, Wm. Mannistre, Wm. Biddell, Wm Ayton, and Wm. Kemball, called Glemsford Park, Cockfield-hall, Earl's-hall, Lavenham Lodge, and Lavenham Park, in the several parishes of Glemsford, Cockfield, and Lavenham aforesaid, the property of RICHARD MOORE, Esq. have been much destroyed by unqualified persons and others, without leave of the Proprietor, Notice is hereby given to all whom it may concern, that all persons who shall after the date hereof sport on any of the said Manors or Estates without leave will be prosecuted, not only as trespassers, but under the several statutes requiring qualification and game certificate. By Order, **PETER FIRMIN,**
Dedham, 22^d Sept. 1807. Steward.

The farm was sold in May 1808, having been postponed from March. Wheat prices had started to fall after the long boom²¹, and the sale may have been impelled by financial problems, but the tenant, William Kemball was by then aged 81²², so the timing may have suited all parties²³. Prospective purchasers could view the details and plan of the farm at Peter Firmin's office in Dedham²⁴.

SUFFOLK—LAVENHAM PARK FARM.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,

By LINTON & LAVALLIN,

At the Angel Inn, in Bury, on Tuesday, the 31 day of May next, at four o'clock in the afternoon,

ALL that desirable FREEHOLD ESTATE, called LAVENHAM PARK, situate in Lavenham, in the county of Suffolk, containing by admeasurement of arable, meadow, and pasture, 460 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and of wood-land 41 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres, together 502 acres or thereabouts, now in the occupation of Mr. William Kemball, tenant at will, from whom possession may be had at Old Michaelmas next.

This farm is divided into well proportioned inclosures, and has a convenient and well adapted dwelling-house, barns, stables, and outbuildings, and is free of all tythes, being liable only to a modus of 22l. per ann.

Lavenham is situate ten miles from Bury, twelve from Hadleigh, four from Melford, and seven from Sudbury, all good market towns.

Mr. Kemball, the tenant, will shew the estate on application, and particulars and conditions of sale may be had in due time, at the principal inns in the neighbourhood; of Mr. Firmin, Dedham; Mr. Skinner, Dale Hall, Lawford, near Manningtree; and of the auctioneers, Colchester.

Firmin had his own problems. He suffered from anxiety and depression and early the following year he was saved from impending bankruptcy by the intervention of friends, although he was still a wealthy man after the debts were repaid²⁵. One can only guess how his affairs and those of Richard Moore may have been entwined, but this alarming episode was likely to have been the reason for the appointment at Kentwell of a new steward, John Miller, in 1810; the young man moved into the household while an estate house was being prepared for him. He collaborated with Richard's wife, an admiral's daughter and mother of ten children, Sydney Arabella, over the book-keeping. Only after she threw a jug of barley-water over her husband in the course of an argument did Richard learn from servants of her adultery, and he sued for divorce in the House of Lords in May 1812²⁶. The effects of this expenditure led to ruin²⁷; there was a period of some years in which he negotiated loans, and at one point tried to sell the magnificent avenue of limes to a piano-maker. The Norwich Union Insurance Society foreclosed and sold the estate in 1823; he was admitted to debtors' prison in 1825 and died in 1826.

Peter Firmin has variously been described as an attorney, a solicitor, and, on the bankruptcy papers, as a money-scrivener²⁸. He collected rents and other dues, arranged loans and property sales, and acted as steward to a number of East Anglian landowners. He was a business partner of Golding Constable, prosperous miller and merchant, and the father of John. Evidently he was well-known in the family, as Mrs Constable made a comment in a letter to John about his misfortunes²⁹, and they may have gossiped together about the sale of the farm. (Since Golding was described as "living like a squire", and served on a Grand Jury of the Suffolk Assizes in 1804 he and Richard Moore may even have been acquainted already.³⁰) It is significant for the current narrative that Peter Firmin is known to have successfully recommended John Constable to Lord Dysart of Helmingham in 1807, as a copyist of the Tollemache family portraits³¹.

We can readily imagine the two powerful men, Richard Moore and Peter Firmin, on a hot summer's day³² in 1808, riding back from a business meeting with William Kemball, and halting their horses for a moment to look over the fertile fields towards Lavenham. Regrets may have been expressed about the breaking up of lands belonging to the manor of Lavenham³³, the rapid pace of change in the countryside, or anticipation that the new owner would demolish the small farmhouse. And Firmin was alert to promote his partner's son, a competent painter who was struggling to find work, whether out of sympathy for his financial embarrassments, or to cement his business relationship with his father; while Richard could have the view enshrined on the wall of his splendid mansion.

A second version of the story might suggest that Richard Moore was generous as well as extravagant, and wanted to make a gift to the elderly and respected farmer to mark his long tenancy as caretaker of the land, and that the bent figure depicted was in fact the stout and ageing William Kemball, accompanied by a younger man who helped him run the farm.³⁴ If the small farm had been absorbed into Park Farm in their time it would have been Kemball who had overseen the transition of these fields from pasture to arable. The ripe golden corn may carry symbolism, representing the success of the region and the enterprise. All the parties I have named depended on it to some degree, and prices were still high.

In the light of the ensuing chaos in the affairs of both Moore and Firmin it could be that the picture was never paid for and delivered; subsequently it might have been sent for sale in 1817 or 1818 as part of an effort to cash in on non-essential chattels of Kentwell; or it might have earlier been given up to creditors in order to settle a debt. (Or could this be John Constable's *Landscape: a recent shower*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1812, of which the whereabouts are unknown?³⁵)

What of John Constable? The scale of scholarship on his work is daunting and many details of his life are known through correspondence, which, in the surviving examples, only became prolific in the lovelorn years after he had met his future wife. In 1808 he was aged 32, an experienced painter, funded grudgingly by an impatient though wealthy father, and still developing his artistic direction. He lived frugally while contending with wartime inflation and was unwilling to admit that he could not yet support himself. We know from correspondence that his mother, Ann, and brother, Abram, intervened on his behalf and Golding released more funds in June³⁶. He spent the early part of the year in London, improving his skills for depicting the figure,

and the later months, when he had returned to the parental home in East Bergholt, have been described as the phase when he first developed oil sketching out of doors³⁷. This is not to say that he might not have painted a finished landscape in oils however, as he had exhibited such pictures at the Royal Academy as early as 1802.

Helpfully, he recorded that on Aug 18th 1808 he had made a sketch of “an upland park”³⁸. The location has not been identified. It is likely that he would have referred to a landscaped park such as became fashionable in the eighteenth century, rather than a medieval game park, although the former was often developed from the latter. The park at Kentwell, reputed to have been designed by Humphry Repton, would have been a candidate for this description, as would the even grander park behind Long Melford Hall, just the other side of the road. Perhaps he did not name the park because he was uncertain of success in the commission that he was about to begin.

We also know that Constable was in London on August 17th³⁹. Unsurprisingly, I cannot find a timetable for the stage coach in 1808, but if he boarded in London at 8.30 the following morning, a Thursday, and took the coach service to Bury via Chelmsford, Halstead and Sudbury he might have alighted at The Ram or The Bull in Long Melford⁴⁰ in the early evening, missing a four o’clock dinner at Kentwell, but allowing enough time to view the park while the light lasted. Records show that the 18th was “clear”, a fine day for travel, although the following day, when we may suppose the picture was started, was “cloudy at times, some showers of rain”⁴¹. When the task was completed the journey to his parents’ home in East Bergholt was only 13 miles and he was there by September 8th⁴². He may already have been familiar with the view over Park Farm towards Lavenham from venturing into the countryside with a sketchbook during his short and unhappy period at school there, and may even have had relations in the area⁴³. Rosenthal suggests that Constable’s social status implied that in wandering around the countryside (East Bergholt) he would be immune from the suspicion extended to the rural poor⁴⁴.

We are now used to seeing the harvest come in in July, but the spring-sown crop in the nineteenth century was gathered later in the year; late August was normal even in the 1950s. So there is no difficulty in claiming that the wheat would have been ripe and standing at around August 19th⁴⁵. The wheatfield in this painting is depicted with left-handed strokes, difficult for a right-hander to manage without turning the canvas. Although John Constable was right-handed it has been noted that wheat is painted as with the left hand in the painting “Stoke-by-Nayland 1815-16”⁴⁶.

A recent exhibition drew attention to the influences on Constable’s landscape style⁴⁷. He is known to have possessed and copied at least one work by Jacob van Ruisdael (1629-1682). Several of Ruisdael’s landscapes, like the picture towards Lavenham, show silhouetted features on the horizon and illumination of the land through dark clouds in the mid-distance, for example *View of Egmond aan Zee* and *View of grainfields with a distant town*.

Conclusion and personal views

I am confident that I have identified the painter’s viewpoint; I have also shown circumstantial evidence that John Constable might have been commissioned by Richard Moore to paint the scene.

Inevitably this document includes a deal of speculation and, not being an art historian, I have allowed myself this liberty. In any event the painting is clearly a work by an experienced painter, who understood the conventions of composition and how to handle chiaroscuro, the use of warm and cool colours and, significantly, was excited by the transitory effects of light on the landscape. By these methods, and by compressing the main features and foreshortening the foreground he gave life and drama to what is, today at least, a rather bland view.

Visitors to the nominated viewpoint may walk from Lavenham, starting from Park Road. The nearest access by road is via Old Bury Rd, Alpheton. Drive to the end of the village and park beyond the national speed limit sign. Take the marked footpath to the right and follow the concrete road, a walk of about ten minutes. Visitors should keep to the public footpaths and be prepared for the possibility of mud. There is no road access from Lavenham.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1 Information relating to the Big Field, from various maps

Date	Map	Scale	Details relating to The Big Field
1837	OS First Series, 49 ⁴⁸	1:63,360 (One inch to one mile)	Field boundaries not shown. Tributary appears to east of Melford Park Farm. A hatched rectangle to the west of Park Farm and oriented north-south, may represent a ruin.
1842	Lavenham tithe map ⁴⁹	Not known	Fields nos 1, 240 and 256 distinguished within The Big Field. No woodland depicted anywhere. No buildings within these fields.
1885	OS County Series Suffolk ⁵⁰	1:2,500	The field is unified as one big field, apart from the small north-eastern area. It includes a north-western part which is now woodland. Individual trees shown at boundaries. Neighbouring farms retain smaller fields.
1926	OS County Series Suffolk (partial) ⁵¹	1:2,500	Similar to the above, with a small copse at the southern edge.
1958-9	OS Plan (partial) ⁵²	1:10,560	Woodland, as today, in the north-western corner. Features airfield roads and uncultivated areas with airfield buildings on the western boundary.
1992	Lavenham Airfield ⁵³	Not known	Represents airfield features c.1945, with key. Field encloses USAAF "Site 12" and 1685 th Ordinance Detachment.

1999	OS Explorer 211 Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket ⁵⁴	1:25,000	As exists today, save that the pool within woodland is not shown on this or any other map.
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Appendix 2 Table of main events

1807 September	Park Farm is owned by Moore and Firmin is his steward	Documented
1807	Firmin recommends Constable to Lord Dysart	Documented
1808 Early summer	Constable is short of funds	Documented
1808 May 3rd	Sale of Park Farm	Documented
1808 Summer	Firmin recommends Constable to Moore	Deduced
1808 August 18 th	Constable travels to Kentwell	Deduced
1808 August 18 th	Constable sketches a country park	Documented
1808 August 19 th	Constable starts painting	Deduced
1808 September 8 th	Constable is in East Bergholt	Documented
1808 before October 10th	Park Farm is vacated.	
1809 October	Peter Firmin avoids bankruptcy	Documented
1810	John Miller replaces Peter Firmin as steward	Documented
1812 May	Richard Moore divorces	Documented
1813 July 5 th	Richard Moore's creditors meet	Documented
1817-18	Painting appears in a saleroom	?
1823	Kentwell Estate is sold	Documented
1825	Moore in debtors' prison	Documented
1826	Death of Richard Moore	Documented

CONSISTORY COURT, DOCTORS' COMMONS.

MOORE v. MOORE.

This was a proceeding for a divorce, instituted by Richard Moore, Esq. of Long-Melford, Suffolk, against his wife, Mrs. Sidney Arabella Moore, on the ground of adultery.

It appeared in evidence, that the parties were married in the year 1796. They lived very happily together till the introduction of a Mr. John Miller into the family, as steward and assistant to Mr. Moore, in his farming concerns in the spring of 1810; shortly after which, the servants in the family observed a great familiarity of subject between Mrs. Moore and Mr. Miller, particularly in Mr. Miller's room, on which occasions they were frequently closeted

alone for a considerable time together; and were observed kissing and using *fond expressions* towards each other. Upon one occasion, when Mr. Moore was from home, Mrs. Moore desired a spare bed to be got ready, saying she would sleep in it instead of her own, in order to air it; and likewise directed a china closet adjoining the bed-room to be cleared out. The suspicions of the servants being excited by these unusual preparations, added to what they had previously observed, they determined to watch Mrs. Moore's conduct that day very closely. Her mother and Mr. Miller having dined with her, in the evening, about ten o'clock, one of the servants looking through the key-hole of a door commanding a view of the staircase, saw Mrs. Moore come out of the drawing-room, and, after looking to see if any one was near her, go softly up stairs, beckoning to some one to follow, and in a few moments Mr. Miller stole softly after her. She came down again soon afterwards, and returned into the drawing-room: two of the servants then went up stairs, and searched all the rooms, but without finding Mr. Miller. The china-closet alone withstood their search, being locked, which was a very unusual circumstance, and they missed one of the chairs from the adjoining room. Mrs. Moore's mother having taken her leave, she retired to her dressing-room, and from thence to the spare bed-room she had had prepared for her. The servants then listened, and heard a creaking heavy step, like that of a man with boots on, go from the china-closet to Mrs. Moore's room. They continued watching for a considerable time, but finding no one return from the room, they retired for the night. The footman took an opportunity the next day to raise a ladder against the china-closet window, and, upon looking into it, he discovered the chair that was missed the preceding day. These circumstances were afterwards communicated to Mr. Moore, by the servants; he immediately had their evidence taken before a Magistrate, and brought an action against Mr. Miller, in which he recovered heavy damages, and he then commenced the present suit.

No evidence was offered in opposition to the charge: the only defence set up was, that the evidence was only circumstantial, and that of the slightest nature, being nothing more than the mere surmise of the servants, who were very young, and therefore liable to be easily deceived by appearances. It was likewise urged, that the servants not disclosing the transaction to Mr. Moore, for a considerable time afterwards, and his then obtaining their oaths before a Magistrate, to hold in terrorem over them, were circumstances tending to throw a great discredit upon their evidence; and therefore, with all these considerations combined, the proof was not sufficient to justify the Court in granting a divorce between the parties, after an uninterrupted happy intercourse of near 14 years. The Learned Judge, (Dr. ARNOLD, surrogate of Sir WILLIAM SCOTT, and presiding for him, in his absence at the Admiralty Sessions,) observed that the evidence had been objected to as insufficient, because further facts had been pointed out which would have made it more conclusive; the question was not, however, whether all the evidence possible had been adduced, but whether what actually had been, was sufficient to sustain the charge. Evidence of facts like these in the present case was in its very nature mostly circumstantial, positive evidence being seldom to be expected, and it was therefore sufficient, if of such a nature as to raise the presumption of guilt. He then recapitulated the principal points at considerable length, from which all the witnesses inferred the actual commission of the crime; and observed, it would require a great degree of scepticism in any one, not to arrive at the same conclusion. He did not think there was any thing to shew they had been tampered with, or to affect their evidence in any sufficient degree. With the result of that evidence, therefore, in his mind, it only remained for him to pronounce the husband entitled to the remedy he sought, and the divorce was accordingly pronounced for.

Notes and references

Abbreviations used

BNP – *Bury and Norwich Post*. (Bury St Edmunds)

Bury Record Office – Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds.

JCC I - *John Constable's Correspondence: The Family at East Bergholt 1807-1837*. Ed. with intro. and notes R. B. Beckett. Suffolk Records Society, Vol. IV. Historical Manuscripts Commission Joint Publication No. 3. London: HMSO, 1962. Reprinted with corrections to map, footnotes and index by the Boydell Press, Ipswich, 1976.

JCC IV - *John Constable's Correspondence IV: Patrons, Dealers and Fellow Artists*. Ed. with intro. and notes R. B. Beckett. Suffolk Records Society, Vol. X. Ipswich, 1966.

JC: FDC - *John Constable: Further Documents and Correspondence*. Ed. with notes Leslie Parris, Conal Shields, and Ian Fleming-Williams. Suffolk Records Society, Vol. XVIII. London: Tate Gallery, and Ipswich, 1975.

¹ Ordnance Survey (1999) *Sudbury, Hadleigh and Dedham Vale, Lavenham and Long Melford* (Explorer 196) and *Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, Debenham and Elmswell* (Explorer 211) 1:25000.

² Scarfe, Norman (1972) *The Suffolk landscape*. (The Making of the English Landscape). London, Hodder and Staughton. P 31.

³ Lavenham Farmers' Club. A report on the half-yearly meeting and annual land-draining and sheep-shearing matches. "The draining competition came off on a very stiff piece of land on the Lavenham Park Farm in the occupation of Mr Halls – so stiff indeed that it was calculated to try somewhat severely the strength and endurance, as well as the skill, of the men." "Lavenham Farmers Club". *BNP* 12 May 1868:6. 19th Century British Newspapers. Viewed 19 Feb 2015.

⁴ Rev Copinger Hill. Evidence on the antiquity cheapness and efficacy of thorough-draining or land-ditching, as practised throughout the county of Suffolk, Hertford, Essex and Norfolk, collected by Ph Pusey... *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society IV* 1843 pp23-33 quoted in Thirsk, Joan and Imray, Jean eds. *Suffolk Farming in the nineteenth century*. 1958. (Suffolk Record Society, Vol 1. Redstone Memorial Volume). Ipswich.

⁵ Thirsk, Joan and Imray, Jean eds. (1958) *Suffolk farming in the nineteenth century*. (Suffolk Records Society, Vol 1. Redstone Memorial Volume.)

⁶ Theobald, John. Changing agriculture in High Suffolk, 1650-1850 In Dymond, David and Martin, Edward, eds. (1999) *An historical atlas of Suffolk*. 3rd ed. Ipswich: Suffolk County Council

⁷ Archer, John E. Rural protest, 1815-51 In Dymond, David and Martin, Edward, eds) op.cit.

⁸ Taylor, Isaac (1759-1829) attrib. *The cottage field*. Published London, Charles Taylor, 1787. The Taylors of Ongar and Lavenham were a family which included several engravers and writers of children's books. Isaac Taylor lived in Lavenham 1786-1796, and his brother Charles published many of his engravings. This may be a view near Lavenham. The engraving is in a large family archive held at Bury Record Office.

⁹ "Destruction of the countryside was on a large scale... Nothing was sacred, nothing was spared. It all went to hell and nothing came back. No, and nothing did come back, not ever." Mott, J. (2011) *Alpheton Hall; diary of a Suffolk countryman*. Alpheton: Serpenpan.

¹⁰ Map of the former airfield at <http://www.lavenham.co.uk/airfield/fieldmap.htm>

¹¹ Rackham estimated that there were about 3,200 deerparks in England by 1300. Rackham, Oliver. (1986) *The history of the countryside*. London: Dent.

¹² *Lavenham. Apportionment of tithes*. (1842) Seen at Bury Record Office.

¹³ *Lavenham tithe map*. (1842) Seen as above.

¹⁴ Conversation with Jenny Bishop, RIBA.

¹⁵ Kentwell Hall, see <http://www.kentwell.co.uk/>

¹⁶ Dunmore, Richard (nd) *The Moores of Kentwell Hall and the dissipation of Sir John Moore's fortune*. (Appleby History in Focus, Chapter 16.) [www.applebymagna.org.uk/appleby_history/in_focus16_kentwell.htm Viewed 2 March 2015] Richard Dunmore's source is the privately-printed *My dear Sophie and Great Grandmama used to say* (1990) by Ursula Brighouse, her husband having been a descendant of Richard Moore. I have been unable to trace either individual to ask more.

¹⁷ Grassby, Richard (2004) "Moore, Sir John (bap 1620, d 1702)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP; online edition, May 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19125> accessed 2 March 2015.]

¹⁸ Richard Moore was nominated for sheriff 1809. *BNP* Wednesday November 15th, 1809. Issue 1429.

¹⁹ He was lord of the manors of Cockfield and Lavenham, *BNP* Tuesday 26 November 1809. and he was commander of the Babergh (i.e. district) troop of yeoman cavalry. *BNP* Wednesday 02 November 1803.

²⁰ *BNP* Wed Sept 30th 1807, p1, Issue 1318 Retrieved from Gale Cengage Learning, March 20th 2015.

²¹ Wheat was priced per quarter at 53s in 1789, 114s in 1800, and 102s during 1810-14. Hilton, Boyd. (2006) *A mad, bad and dangerous people? England 1783-1846*. (The New Oxford History of England). Oxford: OUP.

²² William Kembal was aged 83 at the time of his death in 1810. *BNP* Wednesday 25 July 1810.

²³ William Kembal had a two-day sale on Oct 4th and 5th. Scheduled for sale were "the whole of the live and dead farming stock and implements, cows, dairy, brewing and backhouse utensils with part of the household furniture of Mr William Kembal at the Park Farm Lavenham, retiring from business". Thus he would have been clear of the premises by Old Michaelmas, Oct 10th. *BNP*, Wednesday September 21, 1808, p1 Issue 1369.

²⁴ *Norfolk Chronicle or Norwich Gazette*. Sat April 23, 1808.

²⁵ "Court of Chancery. On an application to have a commission of bankruptcy, taken out against Mr Firmin, an eminent solicitor, residing at the Rookery, near Colchester, superseded. It appeared that Mr Firmin was occasionally afflicted with fits of melancholy, in which state he would fancy that he would be unable to pay all his creditors and to relieve his mind from this uneasiness two of his friends, Mr Woodgate, a solicitor, and Colonel [indecipherable] near relative of his wife had sued out the commission of bankruptcy, although, after payment of all Mr Firmin's debts, the surplus of his personal property would amount to at least £29,000, and he had considerable freehold estate..." *The Salisbury and Winchester Journal and General Advertiser of Wilts, Hants, Dorset and Somerset*. 27 October 1809 Vol LXXIV Issue no 3798.

²⁶ House of Lords (1812) *Local and Personal Act (Not printed) 52 George III, c73. An act to dissolve the marriage of Richard Moore Esquire with Sydney Arabella his now wife and to enable him to marry again: and for other purposes therein mentioned*.

²⁷ “The creditors of Richard Moore Esq of Kentwell-hall (in Suffolk) are requested to meet at the Bull Inn, Long Melford, on Monday the 5th of July at 12 o’clock. Such of the Creditors as may not have sent in an account of their debts are requested to transmit the same without delay, either to Messrs Forster, Cooke and Frere, Lincoln’s Inn, London; or to Messrs Sparke and Holmes, at Bury, lest they should be excluded from the benefit of the intended arrangements.” *The Times* (London, England.) Friday, June 25, 1813, pg 1 Issue 8946.

²⁸ In 1803 Peter Firmin was advertising mortgages of up to £2,000 on landed property. *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 29 April 1803, Issue 1960

²⁹ “Poor Mr Firmin’s affairs seem most sad notwithstanding that there is that essential – money- to spare. I am really vexed at all we hear, as he constantly was always well affected to us all.” JCC I p35

³⁰ Golding Constable on Grand Jury of Suffolk Assizes, Bury St Edmunds. *BNP* Wednesday August 01 1804 Issue 1153 19th Century British Newspapers, Part II. (Also listed on Aug 07, 13 and 16.)

³¹ JCFDC pp114-16

³² A remarkably hot period in July, with temperatures up to 90°F, was followed by storms with giant hailstones, as recorded by amateur meteorologist Luke Howard (1772-1864). *The climate of London: deduced from meteorological observations*. (2012) Cambridge: CUP.

³³ “The lordship is at present vested in Richard Moore Esq of Melford” Shoberl, Frederic (1813) *The beauties of England and Wales or, Delineations, topographical, historical and descriptive of each county*. Vol XIV. London.

³⁴ This observation is in contrast to the views of John Barrell who referred to a distance between Constable as an observer of human landscapes and the figures in those landscapes. Barrell, John (1980) *The dark side of the landscape: the rural poor in English painting 1730-1840*. Cambridge: CUP.

³⁵ Reynolds, Graham (1996) *The early paintings and drawings of John Constable*. New Haven: Yale UP.

³⁶ Extracts from a letter to Constable from brother Abram, 19 June 1808; “You know that money comes loath from our father and that he thinks any sum a great one that goes away in a lump, as it were, without value apparent. He has now sent what I think will clear you of all, and I do hope that you may not again be in want of aid, other than your own...” JCC I, p24.

³⁷ “During the autumn he made the first of the open-air oil sketches which confirm that he had achieved a personal style of mature naturalism in painting his native landscape.” Reynolds, Graham (1996) *The early paintings and drawings of John Constable*. Text. New Haven: Yale UP for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

³⁸ “Constable was probably able to get down to Suffolk in the course of the next month, as a drawing by him of an upland park is dated 18 August [1808].” JCC I, p 28.

³⁹ Wilkie “called with Constable at Sesquiers” JC:FDC p315

⁴⁰ The Bull is prominent in Long Melford and is known as a large coaching inn, although in 1802 the Bury coach stopped at the Ram, no longer in existence. *Cary’s Itinerary*, 1802.

In 1836 The Old Bury, run by W. Chaplin and Co., left the Spread Eagle Office in Piccadilly and covered the 74 miles to Bury by this route in nine hours. Bates, Alan, comp., (1969) *Directory of stage coach services 1836*. Newton Abbott: David and Charles.

⁴¹ Urban, Sylvanus (1808) *The Gentleman’s Magazine: and historical chronicle for the year 1808*. Vol LXXVIII. London: Nichols. The observations were probably made in London.

⁴² W R Bigg addressed a letter to Constable in East Bergholt on September 8th. JCC IV, p 48

⁴³ On the tithe map of 1842 field 246 on the northern boundary of Lavenham parish is intriguingly named “Golding’s Field”. John Constable’s Golding ancestors are known to have come from Bures, south of Sudbury, and a superficial search does not show a connection with the Lavenham area.

⁴⁴ Rosenthal, Michael. (1983) *Constable: the painter and his landscape*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁴⁵ As an example that wheat could still be standing in the third week of August “1817 Aug 20th. The first wheat carted and stacked from Home Barnfeild” Extract from the diary of Arthur Bidell, Hill Farm, Playford, quoted in Thirsk, Joan and Imray, Jean eds. (1958) *Suffolk farming in the nineteenth century*. (Suffolk Records Society, Vol 1. Redstone Memorial Volume) Ipswich.

⁴⁶ Catalogue number 1819, in possession of Tate Britain. Parris, Leslie. [The Tate Gallery Constable Collection](#). London, 1981. Viewed 19 February 2015.

⁴⁷ Evans, Mark, Calloway, Stephen and Owens, Susan (2014) *John Constable: the making of a master*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum.

⁴⁸ *Ordnance Survey First Series, 49*. One mile to one inch. (1837)
<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/589795/250820>

⁴⁹ *Lavenham tithe map (1842)*. The key is *Lavenham. Apportionment of tithes*. (1842) Both seen at Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds.

⁵⁰ *Ordnance Survey County Series: Suffolk*. 1:25,000 (1885)
<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/588984/251496/12/101302>

⁵¹ *Ordnance Survey County Series: Suffolk (partial)*. 1:2,500 (1926)
<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/588984/251496/12/101134>

⁵² *Ordnance Survey Plan (partial)* 1:10,560 (1958-9)
<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/590019/251092/10/101324>

⁵³ Lavenham Airfield. <http://www.lavenham.co.uk/airfield/fieldmap.htm>

⁵⁴ *Ordnance Survey Explorer 211. Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, Debenham and Elmswell*. 1:25,000. (1999)

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