

**CREATIVE COAST:
CHAPTERS IN THE STORY OF ART AND LITERATURE FROM
KENT'S ISLE OF THANET
Biography and local history by Richard Lewis**

From Chapter Four – James Tissot: A French Artist's English Love Story

The force that drives an artist to his art drives him to the furthest boundaries of love. He must escape the ties of people and places to feel that great feeling and find that great image. James Tissot, a highly individual artist who came to England from France in 1871, let nothing hold him back from his love for Kathleen Newton, a beautiful social outcast who, by the age of twenty-two, had already become a divorced woman and the mother of two illegitimate children. Living in the rigid, unforgiving time of Victorian convention, Tissot had to run away with Kathleen to feel free. He had run before, from Paris to London. Now he would escape to the sea. To Ramsgate, on the Isle of Thanet.

From Chapter Seven – The Mad Passion of Louis Wain

Louis Wain was an artist head over heels in love. Many artists spend their lives wrapped in the emotions of love, but for Wain it was different. He was in love with – cats. They obsessed him far beyond the limits of any putative Asperger's or Autism spectrum: they became the sole focus of his inner life to the extent that he descended finally into complete mental disorder. Yet the drawings, prints, posters and paintings he created were so captivating and of such quality that they became art best-sellers of the day, reaching an absolute peak of popularity during the time he lived in Westgate-on-Sea, between 1894 and 1917.

From Chapter Fourteen – Baroness Orczy, a Romancer in Thanet: seeking the woman behind the Scarlet Pimpernel.

'They seek him here, they seek him there. Those Frenchmen seek him everywhere. Is he in heaven? Is he in hell? That damned elusive Pimpernel!'

We may no longer read the stories, but we all know the Scarlet Pimpernel. The rhyme still echoes down the corridors of time and never fails to raise a smile. It was picked up in the sixties with the hit song *Dedicated Follower of Fashion*, it rang out from our televisions in this century's noughties. It never quite seems to die. As an invention of fiction, the Scarlet Pimpernel was an unlikely but real achievement and remains the reason we still remember Baroness Orczy as a writer – a writer who spent a happy three years at the height of her writing powers and fame at Cleve Court, on the Minster road between Acol and Minster.

From Chapter Seventeen – T S Eliot on Margate Sands

'Let us go then, you and I,' as Tom Eliot might have said in calmer moments to his wife, Vivien, suggesting a break away from London among the certain half-deserted streets of an out-of-season seaside town, like Eastbourne. Except that there were no calmer moments in Tom's fraught married life with Vivien, and that he would spend any stay at such a seaside town alone, not together with his wife. And the trip he did in fact make in September 1921 was not to Eastbourne, as he had initially planned, but to Margate.