

How Lowestoft Came to Be. 75 Years On.

It was a fishing net knot and a short supply of labour in post-war London that established the Crown Artist Brush site in Lowestoft. Fast-forward to December 2021 we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the first production at the Winsor & Newton Brush Factory in Lowestoft.

This article delves into the history behind the artists brushes manufactured at Lowestoft. We're also proud to launch the "Lowestoft Factory Film" that showcases the people behind the brush-making.



Brush making began in the 1850s in Rathbone Place, the original Winsor & Newton site just off London's Oxford Street. Art brushes were made by hand from natural hairs, metal ferules and turned wooden handles. In 1841 Queen Victoria commissioned the Series 7 brush and granted Winsor & Newton the first Royal Warrant, still held to this day.

By World War II, brushes were produced at the Colart site based in Wealdstone in suburban London. However, faced with the challenge of a short supply of labour in post-war London the search for a new location began.

Tasked with a limited timeframe to secure a new site, the selection criteria was guided by two essential requirements. Firstly, a location large enough to cope with canvas priming and brush production and, secondly, and most importantly, finding a community capable of the manual dexterity requirements to make the brushes.

This dexterity is vital for a particular knot tying technique used to hold brush hairs together, known as the 'clove hitch'. The knot used was standard in several industries such as linen weaving and the manufacture and repairs of fishing nets.

The search led to Suffolk on the East Coast and ultimately the port of Lowestoft. Here, the local economy was reliant on the fishing industry. The fishermen and their boats could be out to sea for up to ten months of the year. Their wives, skilled in repairing nets, generated a surplus labour force. These people and their skills were identified as the ideal solution to the manual dexterity requirements.

Negotiations with Government Departments began in 1946 to convert the old Town Brewery into a factory. The factory could produce brushes and priming canvas, particularly with the ample available space to house the canvas frames in the space previously used for holding the brewery barrels.

With the Government system still steeped in the war-time mood, progress during 1946 was slow, and it was not until December of that year, during the coldest winter for over a century, that production began at the 'Winsor & Newton Ltd Crown Works'.

Today, Lowestoft has a flexible workforce of 87 people producing over 4 million brushes a year.

A huge thank you to all employees past and present and the support of the wider Colart family that makes Crown Artist Brush a place that truly "acts like a family" and lives our values. Here's to another 75 years!, says Mark Brindle, Lowestoft Site Manager.

Coinciding with the 75th anniversary, we're excited the launch the pilot film made in Lowestoft. Read all about the Colart Factory Filming project after you watch the film. *(Click the image below to watch the film)*



The Marking of the “Lowestoft Factory Film”

The Factory Filming project is led by the Communications team and sponsored by Dominique Murzeau and Jane Beeston. Long term partner to our business, Nick Horrell, shall direct, edit and publish all films. Lowestoft was the pilot film with Minehead, Le Mans and Tianjin manufacturing sites scheduled for this year and Kidderminster, Le Mans and Piscataway distribution centres in 2023.

The films will provide multiple purposes; to educate newcomers to the Colart family, further educate existing people who may not be familiar with specific locations and use footage from the films to promote “life at Colart” as a talent attraction strategy. With a focus on “people at Colart”, will we also capture sustainability and brand moments through people at work, the finished art materials, the manufacturing processes and relevant signage and branding.



A massive thank you to **Mark Brindle**, Site Manager and **Sam Atkins**, Business Development Manager, for being the most amazing hosts at Lowestoft. Our gratitude and thanks go out to **Sandra Harris**, Series 7 Brush Maker, **Michelle Thompson**, Series 7

Dresser and **Megan Hall**, Brush Maker, for allowing us to interview and include them in this film. Last but not least, our thanks and acknowledgement to **Stephanie Nebbia**, Global TFAC Manager, for her exceptional collaboration in the professional presentation of the onsite archive display.