



A place to hang your art

FOR a place with so many connections with artists, Staithe's used to have a glaring omission ... "It didn't have an art gallery," says Al Milnes.

Now it does, with the biggest shop window and arguably best spot on the High Street. You certainly will never miss it as you walk down into the village and towards the harbour.

It stares out at you and the latest work on show instantly catches your attention.

Al - short for Alison and forced on her to differentiate from all the other Alisons at her school - and husband David took the place over in 2000 and opened it as a gallery last Easter after a lengthy renovation.

It is actually three buildings in one and in its time, the biggest has been an ironmongers, café, bistro and milliner's. The gallery's latest exhibition entitled **WEATHERING STORMS** features the work of Robert Shaw.

His quite exceptional and atmospheric images of Staithe's are quite unforgettable and, at prices usually in the £795-£285 range - highly collectable.

But hurry if you are interested as that is not just my view. Hundreds of others share it. Robert, who now lives in the South-west at Bradford-on-Avon near Bath and has just become a full-time artist, graduated in interior architecture from Teesside University and took up painting while his parents lived at Bouly.

Staithe's is just next door and, like so many before, he was instantly drawn to its cluster of cottages, winds, tides, storms, and fabulous light.

"He was inspired by the village of Staithe's and its human habitation which is at the mercy of the weather," says Al. "Lots of artists in the past were overawed by that. It's mankind in those cottages and they're just holding out in a resolute, stubborn way." The stark beauty of the place is vividly

Keith Newton reports:

captured in works with titles like Threatening Sky.

"He no longer lives here but I don't think he can forget about us," says Al who lives at York with David and their five children. "We're his inspiration. His style changes, but his theme stays constant.

"His work appeals on an emotional level and has been accepted in galleries from Chelsea to Tunbridge Wells, Bristol and Cardiff."

Robert, in his early thirties, used to sell his paintings in the Cod And Lobster just along from the gallery.

"He used to have one painting up on the wall and someone would buy it and then it would be replaced," says Al.

"That happened until the landlady bought one, it stayed there and suddenly there was no outlet for him."

Al and David decided to create the gallery when they tried to buy one of Robert's paintings hanging in the pub. "I've just sold it to someone," said the landlady.

"When we bought the gallery, we approached Robert's parents who still live at Bouly, and started selling his work."

Neither she nor David had had anything to do with galleries before. She used to be in further education teaching English while he is a psychiatrist. Both are great fans of Robert.

"In the past his work used to be much more impressionistic. Now there's a much more architectural style. He has introduced much more colour and I think they're absolutely fantastic."

Weathering Storms:

Staithe's Gallery
Until Monday, March 26
Gallery open Wednesday,
Thursday, Saturday and Sunday
from 10am-5pm.



ARTISTRY: Featured on page three, Cod And Lobster (above) is part of the Robert Shaw exhibition in Staithe's Gallery; while the front page painting is called Below The Bridge.