

# Mining museum traces artist

Local painter is famed for his art depicting the region's industrial landscape and coal pits

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**A Scarborough artist who painted industrial landscapes and coal pits doomed to closure in the 1970s has been tracked down by the national mining museum who want to highlight his iconic work.**

The museum had been searching for the painter Peter Watson, from West Ayton, to discover more about him and his commissions of South Yorkshire collieries completed shortly before each of the pits was closed and their footprints erased from the landscape forever.

Now an exhibition of the 14 oil-on-board canvasses, originally commissioned by the coal board, is planned for next year at the Wakefield museum and prints of the works are to be reproduced for sale there.

But with one mystery resolved another has arisen, and Peter is hoping the people of South Yorkshire can help him identify two other collieries he

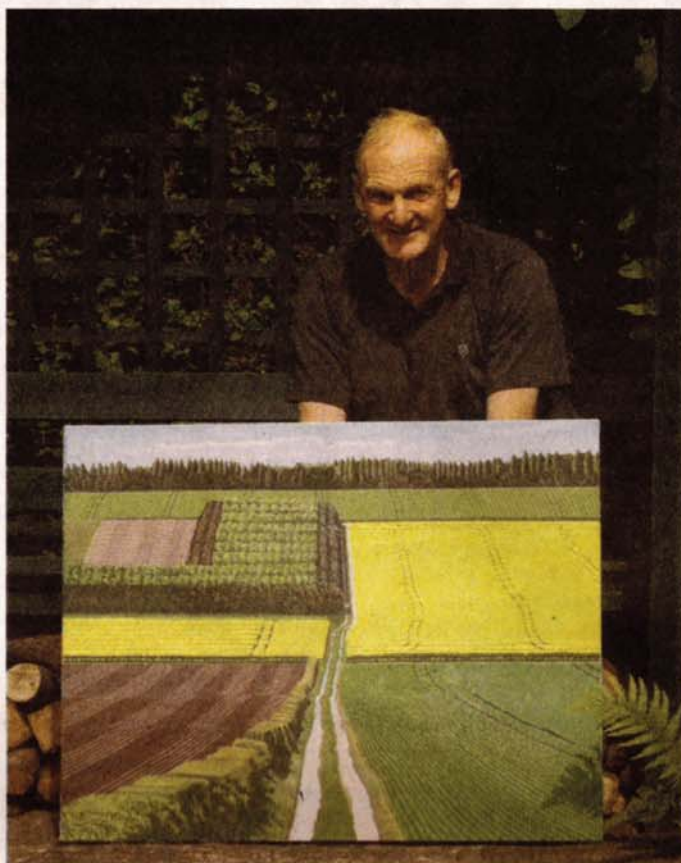
painted as a series of six currently in a private collection belonging to Kevin McCabe, the founder of his family-run Scarborough Property Group and now a millionaire property developer and owner of Sheffield United plc.

As a young teacher in Richmond, North Yorkshire, Peter met fellow teacher and his future wife, Rita, and it was while visiting her home at Wentworth, near Rotherham, that he first recognised the artistic drama of industrial landscapes.

He painted six large canvasses of pits, cooling towers, furnaces, the landmark Tinsley viaduct and two collieries.

"I can't remember which mines they were but I am sure there are many people in the South Yorkshire area who will know immediately. I would like to identify them partly because I would like to produce prints of these pictures as well as the 14," said Peter.

The original six paintings were exhibited in the Rotherham area in the early 70s and that was how Peter came to the attention of the Coal Board and



Peter Watson, of West Ayton, with one of his Wolds-inspired paintings. Above right, one of Peter's colliery paintings.

won his commissions, executed over the next several years.

The South Yorkshire Coal Board wanted an artistic record of pits fated to close, sometimes shattering communities.

"At times I would turn up at mines where the manager didn't even know the pit was to close. I felt like the grim reaper,"



#### WHERE TO VIEW

The 14 museum pictures, which include Brookhouse Colliery, Kilnhurst and Kiveton Park, can be viewed on a BBC website which is a national catalogue of works of art stored in museums and art galleries.

#### NEW FOCUS

Peter's current work is inspired by the Yorkshire Wolds in particular the juxtaposition of modern farming on natural terrain.

said Peter.

Unbeknown to Peter, in 1997 the 14 commissions were given by the Coal Board at Doncaster to the museum which exhibited them for some time in their entrance.

But the canvasses were large and finally ended up in the store room.

Emily Green, of the National Coal Mining museum, explained that she was looking for Peter firstly because they wanted to use one of his pictures in an interactive display. With the help of a museum visitor who could link his name to his period of painting sporting venues and then to his exhibition in spring this year, of Yorkshire Wolds inspired landscapes at Bridlington Spa, she tracked Peter down.

"These colliery paintings are a unique record because of their provenance, i.e. the nature of their commissioning and the social background at the time. They are really nice crisp paintings. Now we plan an exhibition and print sales though the originals will probably have to be glazed for display," said Emily.