

**EXPANDED HORIZONS: AN ACCOUNT OF THE  
ACHIEVEMENTS OF HENRY TOZER JENKINS' SONS IN  
ARCHITECTURE, SCULPTURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS**

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Within the span of two generations members of a Devonian family went from a relatively small, inland, rural base to operating and achieving recognition at national and international levels. In this they reflected the extensive social and economic changes that occurred in the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. This article outlines the fortunes of the family of Henry Tozer Jenkins, a Torquay marble mason, and examines the ways in which members of his family interacted with each other and co-operated in developing social and professional networks that promoted their opportunities.

Henry Jenkins was born in the inland, Devon village of Broadhempston. Its early 19th century population was three times its size today and its inhabitants were engaged in shoemaking, weaving, barrel making, quarrying and stonemasonry, in addition to working smallholdings (Jenkins 1973). The industrial revolution undermined the viability of these industries, with the manufacture of cloth and shoes gravitating to Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Midlands. Henry Jenkins' father had been a shoemaker and his brother had continued the business, but had moved to Torquay by the middle of the 19th century.

In the 1850s Henry Jenkins was apprenticed to Mr Coleman, a stonemason and marble merchant (Jenkins 1973). After the end of his apprenticeship he was employed in George Widger's stone and marble working business (Thompson 2008). He had become the owner of this enterprise by 1871 when the census recorded him as a 'marble mason employing 6 men' (UK Census returns).

Letherbridge (2003) has suggested that 'the years from 1860 to 1870 represented Torquay's finest hours, its halcyon days'. The influx of wealthy and aristocratic residents and visitors to Torquay in the late 19th century created demand for high-quality hotel and residential accommodation, and associated infrastructure. The building trade would have been a hive of activity, creating a substantial demand for the carving, finishing and installation of marble. Few exact details of the Jenkins firm's contracts in the late 19th century are now known but the firm certainly was involved in the building of churches, and in the construction of the Imperial Hotel, Torquay (built 1864-66 and enlarged 1871) and the Great Western (The Grand) Hotel, Torquay 1881 (Crowson 1997).

In 1869 Henry Jenkins married Elizabeth Lucy Poutain of Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire. By 1890 Henry and Elizabeth were affluent enough to send at least three of their sons away from Torquay to further their education - Frank to art college in Weston-super-Mare, Gilbert to Queens College, Taunton in the late 1880s, and John to the Royal Navy training college, Dartmouth, in 1892. Since Walter was to

pursue a career in the family firm it is likely that his initial experience would have been learning the trade in the marble workshops.

For Frank the profession followed by his father gave him an early insight into the use of the chisel (Anon 1896). After moving to London around 1890 he studied at the South London Technical Art School, Lambeth where he won several prizes for his work (Anon 1896) before being admitted to the Royal Academy School in 1893. Here he won further prizes as well as a British Institution Scholarship of £100 that could have funded his working in Paris and Rome (Mackay 1992). His first work accepted by the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1896 was a portrait bust of his artist friend, Lawrence Koe (Graves 1970).

From 1891 to 1895 Gilbert was articled to the Torquay architect, John Watson, followed by a move to London where he extended his experience by working in the office of the Stoke Newington District Surveyor. He became a part-time student of both the Royal Academy Schools and the Architectural Association (RIBA biographical records).

John Jenkins was commissioned as an engineering officer in 1897 and his subsequent service record describes a relatively undistinguished naval career.

In connection with the lavish redevelopment of the Trocadero Restaurant, Shaftesbury Avenue, for Joe Lyons, Frank won his first major commission. In collaboration with the painter Gerald Moira he developed an innovative style of low relief, painted, plaster panels that were mounted in a large frieze around the walls of the restaurant entrance (Anon 1896). Many other similar private and public commissions followed including, for example, the cupola over the stage of the Bechstein Hall, London (later re-named the Wigmore Hall). The involvement of H.T. Jenkins & Son in the Trocadero building is suggested by the reference to the use of 'Devonshire marbles' in its construction, but it is only in the following year that there is specific confirmation of the firm operating in London, in the construction of Rotherhithe Town Hall that was also embellished with sculpture by Frank Jenkins (London 1971).

1899 saw further collaboration between Frank Jenkins and Gerald Moira in the creation of the elaborate baptistery for the new church of St Matthew's, Chelston, Torquay (Pevsner & Cherry 2002). Again, it is very possible that the family firm would have carried out the associated marble work but documentary confirmation has not yet been found. Frank executed two dark green, marble sculptures, embellished with gold leaf, portraying St George and the Virgin Mary, each accompanied by a child in contemporary dress. The St George group was exhibited in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of that year (Graves 1970).

Around 1900 Frank and Gilbert were co-operating in the development of the professional networks within which they operated. In 1897 Frank had joined the Chelsea Arts Club that had become a focus of the expanding community of artists and architects in the Chelsea and Kensington areas. He was soon to become a

member of its council and then, in 1901, its chairman. He promoted a move to new premises in 1902 and Gilbert, who had joined in 1901, acted as Honorary Architect for the adaptation of the new premises, for which he was rewarded with honorary membership. In 1913, as a result of the great success of its annual balls held in the Royal Albert Hall, the Club established a limited company for this activity, and Frank was one of its first two directors (Chelsea Arts Club archives).

No information is available about how Wilfred began his career, but by 1891 he was working as a photographer in London, and was staying in the same lodgings on the Kings Road as his brother, Frank. For approximately 30 years thereafter he conducted a photographic portraiture business from premises on the Cromwell Road close to some of the wealthiest districts of the capital. One example has survived of reference photographs he took in connection with one of Frank's portrait bust commissions. Further links with his brothers are indicated by the existence of photographs he took of members of the family arrayed in fancy dress costume for Chelsea Arts Club balls. Wilfred's younger son, Alan, emigrated to Canada and became a bank manager but was also a trustee of the Vancouver Art Gallery. In the 1960s he acquired and catalogued a collection of photographs of sculptures by Frank Jenkins - a collection that has proved crucial for the current research into Frank's life and work.

The first years of the 20th century could be said to be a high point in Frank's career. He was awarded a silver medal for sculpture at the Paris International Exhibition of 1900 in respect of the low relief, sculpted panels decorating the exterior of the P&O shipping line pavilion, for its time a startlingly modern building designed by the eminent architect, Thomas Collcutt (Anon, 1900). Frank's portrait bust of Collcutt was accepted for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition that year (Graves 1970).

In the following year Frank made major contributions to the Lloyd's Shipping Register's new headquarters building, also designed by Collcutt. Most significant was his 24m long, eye-level frieze in copper, patinated by experimental means to various colours, portraying the sea, ships and figures allegorising the function of Lloyd's Register. This was also embellished with gold, silver, mother-of-pearl and semi-precious stones. The frieze was set into walls lined with marble, supplied and fitted by H.T. Jenkins & Son. The whole building was and still is one of the finest examples of the sculpture, architecture and decoration of its time.

Frank Jenkins' friend and artistic collaborator, Gerald Moira, was also involved in the Lloyd's building. They were further associated with Collcutt in many other decorative schemes including the 1904 extension of the Savoy Hotel, where Frank's gilded figure, *Count Peter of Savoy*, still stands atop the stainless steel entrance canopy. There were also many P&O ships whose interiors, designed by Collcutt to resemble country houses, were embellished with Moira's murals and Frank Jenkins' sculptures. Similarly ornate in its decoration, Ingram House



on the Strand (demolished in the 1960s) brought together the work of Frank, Gerald Moira and H.T. Jenkins & Son but in this case under the leadership of the architect, Henry Hare (Anon 1907).

In 1904 the chairman of the Lloyd's building committee, John Corry, personally commissioned Frank to create a sculpture for the head of the main stairs up to the council chamber. Although predominantly bronze it again incorporated ivory, semi-precious stones and mother-of-pearl. The sculpture stood as a complex allegory of aspects of the vital role that Lloyds played in relation to the shipping of the British Empire. A plaster version was exhibited both in the Royal Academy and in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. In Beattie's seminal book of 1983 about the sculpture of this period she suggested that this sculpture was one of a group of four 'that have not yet been surpassed in frightening intensity', and she concluded that 'the full psychological implications of such images, sinister in their juxtaposition of sexual, religious and romantic feelings, have yet to be investigated' (Beattie 1983).

An example of Frank's 'pure' as opposed to decorative sculpture was his marble bust of a young woman entitled *Psyche, or The Triumph of Youth*. It was selected for the British Section of the St Louis International Exhibition of 1904 in the USA, as well as for the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition (I Spielmann 1904 & 1908).

By this time Frank had secured a significant position in the early 20th century sculptural establishment. In 1905 he, along with four other sculptors, had shared the initiative of establishing a society 'having for its object the protection of the interests of British Sculptors and the consolidation of the profession of Sculpture'. The first chairman of the (later Royal) Society of British Sculptors was Thomas Brock. One of the other founders was William Goscombe John who, in 1906, sculpted the recumbent figure on a black marble base, executed by H.T. Jenkins & Sons, for the monument in Westminster Abbey to the Marquis of Salisbury, the former Prime Minister (Clayton 1931). This was an example of the increasingly high profile commissions being secured by Henry and Walter Jenkins by this time. They included the sumptuous multicoloured marble construction of the grand staircase in Oldway House, Paignton (1904-07) for Paris Singer, and the marble work for the chapel in the Dartmouth Royal Naval College (1905) designed by the architect, Aston Webb.

Undoubtedly the most significant commission for the firm before the First World War, also designed by Aston Webb, was the iconic memorial to Queen Victoria in front of Buckingham Palace for which the sculptor was Thomas Brock (Thompson 2009). An increasing number of commissions came from the architect Edwin Lutyens. The most prominent post WWI commission was for the supply of the stone for the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Details were by the sculptor, Francis Derwent Wood, a friend of Gilbert and, with Frank, a founder member of the Royal Society of British Sculptors. Through the 1920s and 1930s Walter Jenkins

completed a succession of high profile building contracts worldwide. The smallest of these was the marble staircase for the Queen's Doll's House, Windsor Castle, designed by Lutyens. At the opposite extreme was the enormously ambitious building of the Canadian Vimy Ridge War Memorial (Thompson 2009).

By 1910 Gilbert Jenkins had established himself as an architect. In 1901 he had been responsible for designing the new marble works at Lymington Road, Torquay for his father and brother. In the same year he started as a junior in the well-respected firm of Romaine-Walker & Bessant. On Bessant's retirement in 1910, Gilbert became William Romaine-Walker's partner. As part of this partnership Gilbert was responsible for the extensions to the Tate Gallery of 1910, 1926 and 1937 (the latter in co-operation with John Pope of New York). In connection with the 1910 extension he looked to Henry and Walter's firm for the provision of the marble door facings and skirtings.

The extremely wealthy antique dealers, Joseph Joel Duveen and his son Joseph (eventually Lord Duveen of Millbank), funded these Tate Gallery extensions. The Duveens enjoyed the patronage of, and personal acquaintance with, the Royal family throughout the reigns of both Edward VII and George V. Gilbert's working relationship with Joseph Duveen, and the Duveen family's closeness to Edward VII could well have afforded Frank the opportunity to execute his portrait bust of the King. It could also have been significant in fostering Frank's subsequent introduction into wealthy American society after he moved to the States.

With Romaine-Walker, Gilbert worked for several aristocratic and wealthy patrons, for example remodelling the Painted Hall at Chatsworth for the Duke of Devonshire, as well as various schemes in both London and Knowsley for the Earl of Derby. Gilbert shared with Romaine-Walker a great interest in landscape design. Two examples of their work, at Knowsley and Luton Hoo also included sculptural fountains executed by Frank. Gilbert redesigned the layout of the Cockington Court estate, Torquay, of which the Drum Inn designed by Edwin Lutyens formed a part. He also collaborated with Lutyens over the building of 68 Pall Mall, London. Less prominent, but still significant, was Gilbert's design for adjacent studios for Frank and for Gerald Moira at Earls Court in 1907 for which marble fireplaces were supplied by Walter.

In the 1920s and 1930s Gilbert rose to prominence in the architectural world becoming a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, President of the Architectural Association (1927) and President of the Institute of Landscape Architects (1935-37). After William Romaine-Walker's death in 1937 Gilbert's son, G. Lawrence M. Jenkins became his partner until 1940. Lawrence's own interest in landscape architecture was then called on when he was drafted into the Government's camouflage department - an unusually comprised team of architects, artists, horticulturists and engineers. After the war he researched and compiled *Trees in Town and City* for the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in

1958 (Anon 1958). Gilbert continued working right up until the last weeks of his life in 1957, and so it fell to Lawrence to oversee the completion of his father's last projects.

Late in 1916 Frank moved to New York and in the last 10 years of his life firmly established himself in the American sculpture scene. He had a well reviewed solo exhibition in the Reinhardt Gallery in 1918 showing some of his earlier work from England along with new portrait commissions from wealthy New York citizens. He became an Associate Member of the National Sculpture Society in 1921 and a full Member in 1923. Two of his works were acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He executed portrait busts of several prominent Americans including, for example, Andrew Mellon, Secretary of State to the Treasury under three Presidents. Mellon donated his substantial art collection, built up largely on the advice of Joseph Duveen, to establish the National Gallery of Art, Washington, along with funds for its construction.

There is no documentary evidence that Joseph Duveen ever specifically recommended Frank as a sculptor, but he and Duveen certainly shared several 'customers' apart from Mellon. Duveen was called upon by Edward Stotesbury, the enormously wealthy investment banker, to supply works of art and furniture for his new Pennsylvania mansion in the 1920s, while Frank executed much of the garden sculpture. In 1925 he executed a large bronze sculpture of Charles Harrison, the founding father of Pennsylvania University.

In spite of his having secured so many lucrative commissions in the 1920s it is sad to discover that by the time of his sudden death in September 1927, Frank was virtually insolvent (Fairmount Park Association archives). It can only be surmised that the style of living and location of studios that he had to maintain in order to secure work from wealthy clients was more expensive than his income would cover. His body was returned for burial in Torquay.

Few precise references to the ways in which the Jenkins brothers promoted each other's professional interests have survived. All of the brothers, except perhaps John, shared an entrepreneurial aptitude on top of their respective professional skills, and the considerable circumstantial evidence of their involvement in interrelated projects particularly in the earlier stages of their careers, points to a significant degree of mutual support.

In 1913 the Jenkins brothers erected in Torquay Cemetery a substantial bronze and polished granite catafalque over the grave of their parents, grandparents, and siblings who died in infancy. It is reasonable to assume that the stone for its construction would have been fashioned in the family's marble works. The southern face of the catafalque is embellished with a bronze, low-relief portrait of Elizabeth Jenkins, Henry Jenkins' wife, based on a portrait bust executed in the last year of her life by Frank. Although Frank is the only one of the brothers to be buried in this family grave, the catafalque effectively stands witness to the

significant contribution made by one Torquay family to the sculpture, decorative arts and architecture of the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century.

*In the preparation of this article reference has been made to the archives of the Chelsea Arts Club, Fairmount Park Association, Philadelphia, the Savoy Hotel, London, P&O Shipping Line (at the National Maritime Museum, London) and the Jenkins family, as well as to the Royal Institute of British Architects biographical records.*

Photograph of Henry and Elizabeth Jenkins surrounded by their sons  
(from L to R) John, Wilfred, Frank, Walter and Gilbert, possibly taken in 1891  
*(from a photograph owned by Robert Jenkins)*





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*Footnote: The author is Henry Jenkins' great grandson, Gilbert's grandson.*