

Turner, Laurence (Lawrence) Arthur 1864 - 1957

Laurence Arthur Turner [commonly known as L.A. Turner; also known as Lawrence A. Turner*] was born in Wotton under Edge, Gloucestershire, England on 9 July 1864. Among his brothers were the architect Hugh Thackeray Turner (1853-1937) and the painter, Hawes Harrison Turner (1851-1939).

L. A. Turner trained as an architect but instead chose to pursue a career as a decorative plasterer, architectural sculptor and stone carver and for five years was apprenticed to the Scottish sculptor and stone carver John McCulloch (c.1831-1891) in Oxford. By the early 1890s he had moved to London and over the next five decades collaborated on projects with many of the leading architects of the day including George Frederick Bodley, Frederick Charles Eden, Walter Tapper, Robert Schultz Weir, and his brother, H. T. Turner. The author of his obituary in the RIBA Journal observed that “countless churches and other buildings throughout the country bear witness to his craftsmanship on stone, wood and plaster” [RIBA Journal April 1958 p.212]

Notable among L. A. Turner's sculptural commissions were gravestones for William Morris in Kelmscott churchyard designed by Philip Webb, and for Norman Shaw, Hampstead Old Churchyard, designed by Ernest Newton in Hampstead Old Churchyard. He modelled the plaster decoration for ceilings including for 'Westbrook' a house in Godalming, Surrey, designed by the architect H.T Turner for himself in 1900. L.A. Turner also designed the plasterwork for the ceiling of his own house, 56 Doughty Street, London to where he moved in 1895, and was responsible for cutting the half-timbering for the façade of Liberty's 'New Shop' in Argyll Place, Regent Street, opened in 1924. Other commissions included stone and wood carvings at Downing College, Cambridge, Woldingham Church in Woldingham, Surrey, and Bishop Jacob Church in Ilford, Essex; coloured heraldry and symbols, lettering and stone carving for Winchester Memorial Cloisters in Winchester, Hampshire; and the carved oak pulpit, altar table and the fibrous plaster chancel ceiling at St. Thomas's Church, Upshire, Essex. In the years following World War One he was commissioned to design several war memorials. These were sometimes carved in wood, but usually in stone.

L. A. Turner participated in the exhibitions of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society in London in 1893, 1906, 1910 and 1916. A carved walnut fire-screen by Turner shown in the 1893 exhibition is illustrated in 'The Studio' November 1893 (p.59).

He also exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1897 and in the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, London in 1924-25..

He was elected a member of the Art Workers Guild in 1891 and was Master of the Art Workers Guild in 1922. and an Honorary Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects (Hon.ARIBA) in 1925.

He wrote and lectured extensively on decorative plasterwork, sculpture and stone carving and was the author of 'Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain' (London: Country Life, 1927).

Turner lived at 56 Doughty Street, London from 1895 to 1953. He later moved to Wychwood, Burbridge Lane, Godalming, Surrey where he lived until 1957. He died at St. Thomas Hospital, Godalming on 4 October 1957

* Note: There is confusion over the spelling of Turner's first name. It is usually given as Laurence although his baptismal certificate clearly states it as Lawrence. The RIBA Kalendar always gave it as Laurence and his book 'Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain' was published under the name Laurence Taylor.. We are grateful to Geoff Hassell of Artist Biographies for clearing up this confusion

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Turner, Laurence A. 'Decorative plasterwork' in The Arts Connected with Building, edited by T. Raffles Davison. London: B.T. Batsford, 1909 pp. 169-186

Wright, Jane. 'England's other Turner'. The Spectator 21 August 1976 pp.10-12

Links

- Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurence_Arthur_Turner
- Mapping the Practice & Profession of Sculpture in Britain & Ireland 1851-1951 https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/mapping/public/view/person.php?id=msib2_1208266553&search

- The National Archives

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F79864>

- Artist Biographies [Subscription service]

<https://www.artbiogs.co.uk/1/artists/turner-lawrence-arthur>

- Historic England - Bloxham War Memorial, Bloxham, Cherwell, Oxfordshire

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1438761>

- Historic England - Binstead and Havenstreet War Shrine, Isle of Wight

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1393448>

- Historic England - Baptist Church House, Kingsgate House, Southampton Row, London

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1378782>

- Historic England - South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1066238>

- Historic England - Greenwich Magistrates Court

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1272459>

- Historic England - Cound War Memorial, Cound, Shropshire

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1433086>

- Historic England - War Memorial at Dulwich Old College

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1393811>

- Historic England - Blo Norton War Memorial, Norfolk

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1453319>

- Historic England - Church of St. Thomas, Waltham Abbey, Essex

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1169564>

- Historic England - The War Cloister, Winchester College

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1095486>

- Jane A. Wright. 'England's other Turner'. The Spectator 21 August 1976 p. 10 [Spectator Archive]

<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/21st-august-1976/10/englands-other-turner>

- <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/turner-laurence-arthur-18641957>

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