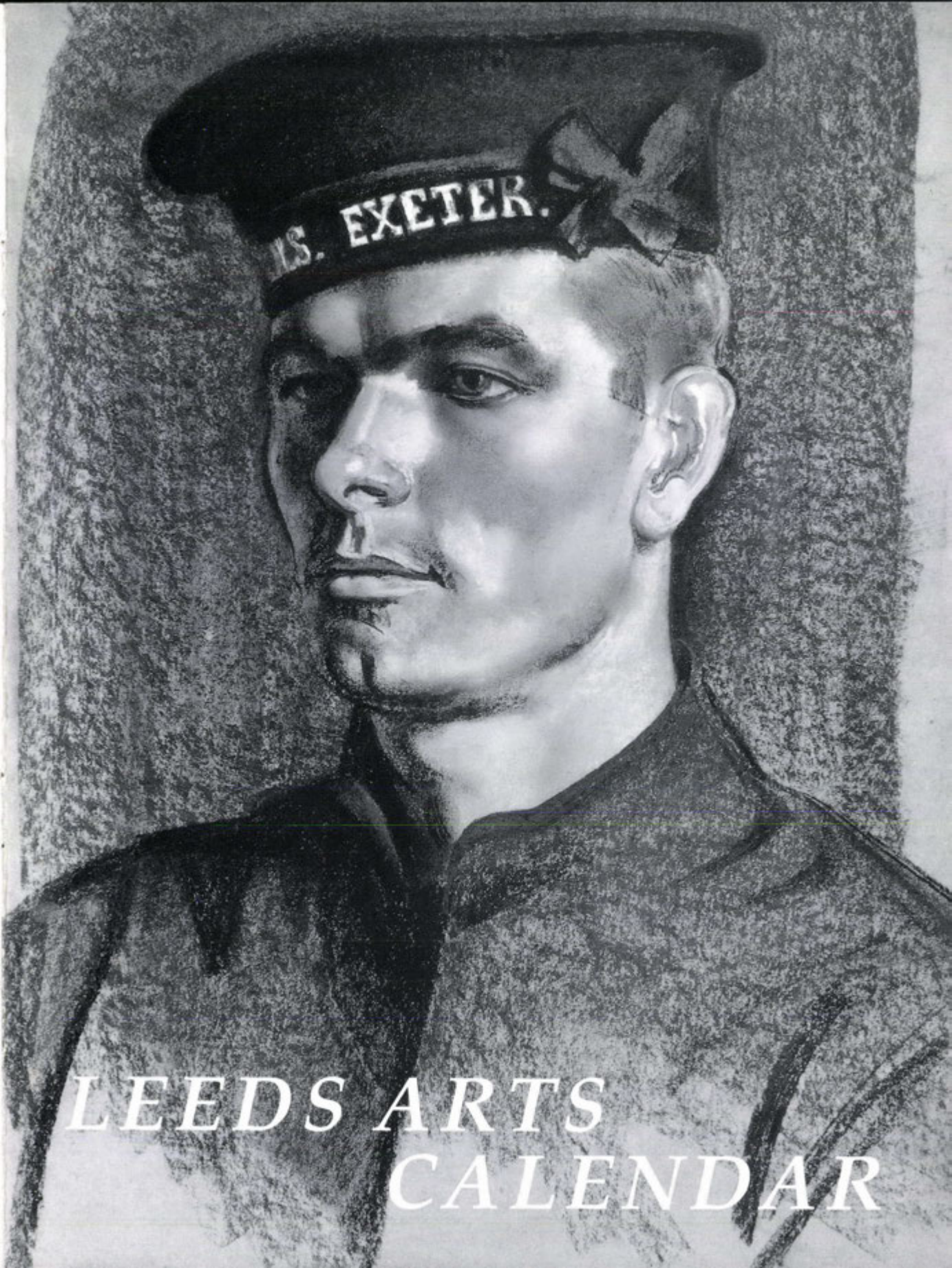

LEEDS ARTS CALENDAR

LEGACIES TO THE LEEDS ART COLLECTIONS FUND The LACF depends for its income entirely on members and supporters. Please consider leaving the LACF a legacy in your will: it is a charitable organization and all legacies to it are exempt from Capital Transfer Tax and aggregation without limit. Bequests can take the form of a lump sum or the residue or a fraction of your estate. Some members might prefer to consider leaving works of fine or decorative art but if you contemplate doing this it would be helpful if you could please seek the advice of the Secretary who can let you know if any item will fit into the permanent collection of the Leeds City Art Galleries. The following would be a suitable form of words to send to your solicitor for inclusion in your will:

'I bequeath to the Leeds Art Collections Fund of Temple Newsam House, Leeds, a legacy of ..... free of all taxes'

The Hon Solicitor of the LACF is always very happy to advise potential benefactors.

THE LEEDS ART COLLECTIONS FUND is one of the oldest supporting bodies for the visual arts in Great Britain, a source of regular funds for buying works of art for the Leeds collections. Why not identify yourself with the Art Gallery, Temple Newsam House and Lotherton Hall, receive your *Arts Calendar* free, receive invitations to all functions, private views and organized visits to places of interest. Membership is open to everyone on payment of a minimum annual subscription of £10. There is also a concessionary joint membership for £15 and life membership for £150 per person or £225 joint. Corporate membership for organizations is £25. If you would like to join simply complete the form and send it with your remittance to the Hon. Secretary, Leeds Art Collections Fund, Temple Newsam House, Leeds LS15 0AE. Telephone 647321.

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NOTE Starting with the first issue published in 1947, the entire *Leeds Arts Calendar* is now available on microfilm. Write for information or send orders direct to Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, USA.

FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

Stoker Gill of HMS Exeter, by Eric Henri Kennington, 1940.
Given by the War Artists Advisory Committee 1947.

LEEDS ARTS CALENDAR

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Still Life with Bowl of Cherries, by Jack Smith, 1954–55, oil on board, 172.8 × 121.9 cm. Bought with the aid of grants from the MGC/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Leeds Art Collections Fund 1991.

EDITORIAL

It is sad to record the death of Sara Gilchrist, aged 85, in a road accident. For many years, she held the post of Hon. Social Secretary to the LACF, her late husband was a former chairman of the Fund and she herself became a Trustee in 1984. Sara was one of our most regular supporters and an energetic champion of contemporary art, running a succession of three art galleries in Leeds city centre. The collection includes several pictures acquired from shows of work by young artists which she organized, and it is agreeable to announce that she has bequeathed two modern prints, *Musicians* by Louis Corinth and *Nude* by Wilhelm Lehmbruck, to the LACF.

Pursuing the subject of acquisitions, the LACF has made a grant of £5,000 towards an oil painting by Jack Smith *Still Life with Bowl of Cherries* dated 1954–55, purchased from the Mayor Gallery for £19,800. This Sheffield-born artist represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1956 and achieved international fame as a member of the so-called 'Kitchen Sink' school, painting still lifes and figure subjects with a gritty realism. In later years, he turned to abstract art. Not only is our new Jack Smith a fine painting, but it represents for the first time in our collection this important moment in post-war British art. The LACF has also contributed £750 towards *Mother Courage*, a self-portrait in oils by another Sheffield-born artist, Val Robinson, who was given a one-person exhibition at the City Art Gallery earlier this year. It adds a powerful contemporary image to the collection, one which continues the twentieth-century realist tradition up to the present time.

In the last editorial mention was made of the silver catalogue that James Lomax has now completed and which will be published by the LACF in partnership with Maney & Son next Spring. The committee resolved at its October meeting to establish a special publications fund to be credited with income from sales of the Pottery, Furniture and (shortly) Silver catalogue. If, in any year, the total falls short of £1,000 it will be made up to this figure from general funds. Catalogues of the Temple Newsam wallpapers, our sculpture collection, watercolours, Oriental ceramics and a third volume covering furniture acquisitions since 1978, are all strong candidates, so when research on these branches is complete and the time comes, a very useful 'pump-priming' sum of money should be available. There are at present about 250 copies each of the Pottery and the Furniture catalogue left in stock — out of print runs of 1,500 and 2,000 respectively.

At the AGM, Dr Ingrid Roscoe, a former student on the Leeds Decorative and Fine Art Degree Course, and one of the NACF representatives for West Yorkshire, was elected to serve on the committee (her co-rep, Josephine Boyle, was one of the members who stood down) so it is good to maintain our links with this illustrious art charity. The other new committee member is a student, Michael Paraskos, whose presence will help to cement our links with Leeds University and hopefully increase membership from that quarter.

The NACF has always been uncommonly generous to Leeds: I can recall only one unsuccessful application for grant aid during the past thirty years. The Fund was recently bequeathed by Norbert and Greta Magnus of Eaton Square, London, a collection of works of art to be allocated to appropriate museums. The couple had moved from their home at Wiesbaden as a result of the rise of Hitler; once in Britain, they became naturalized and left their antiques to the nation as a mark of appreciation of what this country did for them. As a result of their benefaction, Temple Newsam has been given a magnificent 7 ft long early Regency marble-topped side-cabinet, the frame of simulated bamboo, the interior and end panels superbly japanned black and gold, the doors bordered with amboyna and inlaid with exotic Oriental scenes in engraved pearl shell on a black ground. The early Regency fashion for chinoiserie was very much a taste confined to royal circles so there is a good possibility that this masterpiece was commissioned for Brighton Pavilion, Frogmore House, Carlton House or some other royal residence. It is so richly styled and important that there must be an excellent chance that research will eventually reveal its full history. Unfortunately, it is just too long to fit comfortably against the pier in the Chinese Drawing Room so careful thought will need to be given to placing this treasure.

THE LEEDS TABLE AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

CORINNE MILLER

It comes as something of a surprise to find references to Alverthorpe, Castleford, Horbury, Normanton and Brighouse in the *Royal College of Art Students Magazine* for 1923 (Plate 1). There is also a touch of chauvinism in the division of the country into the Royal College of Art and London and 'The North Country or the West Riding of Yorkshire' by Arthur Dalby in *The Second Mandrake* published in 1927 (Plate 2).

At times, the students who were not fortunate enough to come from Yorkshire seem to have felt completely overshadowed by vociferous and forceful Northerners:

> Two Secretaries of the Common Room and two Secretaries of the Students' Union and a Sketch-Club Secretary. That makes five and all five come from Leeds. This is beyond a joke. Would it be advisable for the whole college to remove to Leeds and save the travelling expenses on scholarships.[1]

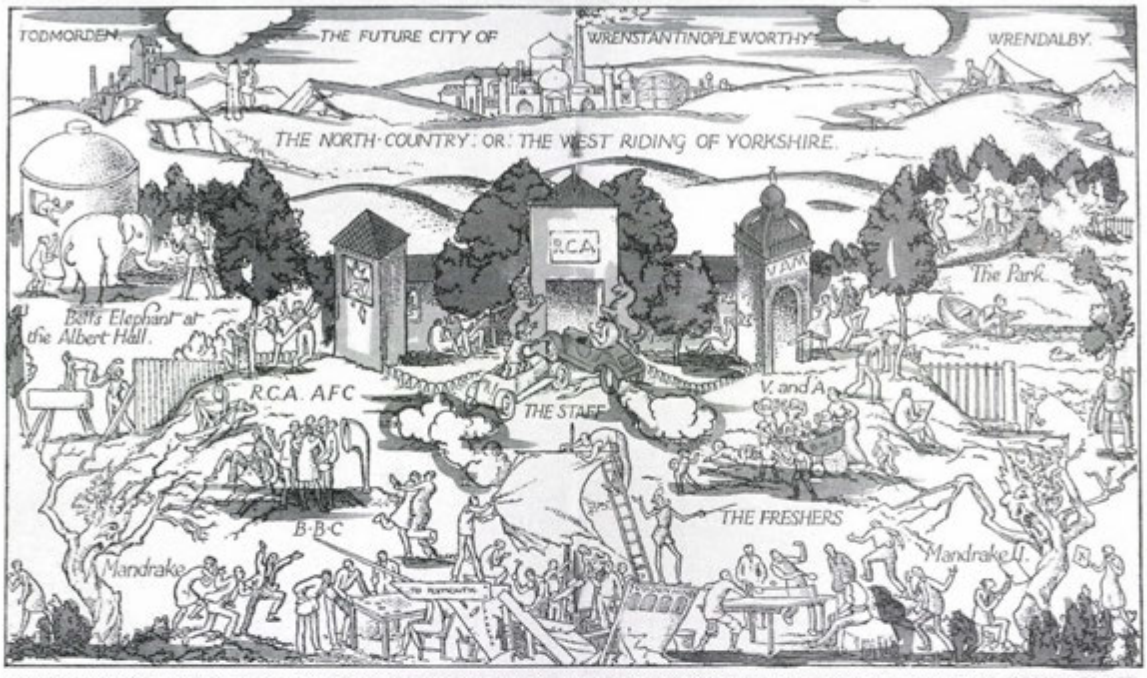
"OUR" Common Room.

1 Our Common Room by H. Brooke, *Royal College of Art Students' Magazine*, 1923

Despite the heavy irony, this suggestion, repeated with pride by *The Yorkshire Post*, indicates the strength of the links between the Royal College of Art and Leeds in the 'twenties. Several factors contributed to the connection. One was financial: both Leeds City Council and the West Riding County Council offered a generous number of art scholarships (in 1920 Leeds awarded twenty Senior Art Scholarships and the County eight). Another factor was the presence of Bradford-born William Rothenstein, the Principal of the Royal College, whose vigorous support of provincial art schools and Yorkshire initiatives in the visual arts, focused attention on the region and its artists within the College.

It was in the activities of the Student Common Room, at the Queen's Gate premises of the Royal College, that the sense of a particular and special identity for the group of students from Leeds found its chief expression. Financed and run by the students themselves, the common room provided good, simple, cheap food and facilities for sewing, dancing and reading; it was the centre of student social life and of vital importance for those whose digs were rather miserable. Leo Walmsley described a typical student bedsit in the Fulham Road which Barbara Hepworth occupied as, 'like a prison cell ... The walls covered with drawings, mostly nudes'.[2] From the profits generated by their activities the students published a magazine, and it is here that the first reference to the Leeds group appears:

> We have a Leeds clique, a Cézanne clique, a Chris and Father's clique and other cliques enough, and all have their feeding places.[3]



TO THOSE SERIOUS SOULS, WHOSE WORK IS SO VALUABLE, WHOSE TIME IS SO PRECIOUS, THAT IT DEBARS THEM FROM JOINING IN ALL COMMON ROOM ACTIVITIES SAVING ONLY THE ONE OF EATING: THIS MAP IS CHEERFULLY DEDICATED IN THE EARNEST HOPE THAT ULTIMATELY, WHEN THEY ARE OLD AND FAT, THEIR WORK MAY HAVE BROUGHT TO THEM THE FRUITS THEY SO RICHLY DESERVE

1 Our Common Room by H. Brooke, *Royal College of Art Students' Magazine*, 1923

As Helen Binyon recalled of her student days, in the early 'twenties, there was:

> One larger table which was known as the 'Leeds table' because the students who sat there, who seemed more lively and confident, were mostly from the Leeds School of Art.[4]

Identified as part of the 'Leeds table' were Raymond Coxon and Henry Moore, whose confidence no doubt stemmed from their military service during the First World War (Edward Bawden recollected that both men marched in step to tutorials) and Barbara Hepworth and Edna Ginesi. Hepworth was what Binyon described as the 'more dashing art student' who cast aside the 'skimpy straight and knee length dress' in fashionable 'cafe-au-lait'[4] for 'a black hat, a black Italian cloak' and 'a brightly coloured dress cut with a tight bodice and long flared skirt in the Medici style'.[2]

Among former Leeds students who entered the College slightly earlier were the painters Vivian Pitchforth and Joe McCulloch, and the sculptor Percy Metcalfe, whose 1914 scholarship was taken up after active service with the Yorkshire Miners' Battalion. Metcalfe designed the bronze war memorial plaque for the main staircase of the Exhibition Road building, which was unveiled by General Sir Hubert de la Poer Gogh on Armistice Day, 1921; Barbara Hepworth, as the youngest fresher, laid the wreath on behalf of the students. The model for the soldier on the stretcher was George Stephenson from the School of Sculpture, who was also an ex-Leeds student.

The progress of these students, in particular Moore, Coxon, Hepworth and Ginesi, offers us an insight into the important role Leeds played, financially, socially and technically, in their development.

Barbara Hepworth and Edna Ginesi entered the Leeds School of Art straight from school. Ginesi was given private lessons in painting by Thomas Ramsden, who ran an art school in Station Street, Leeds. On gaining a City Council Junior Art Scholarship in 1919, Ginesi was able to begin full-time study.[5]

Hepworth attended the Wakefield Girls' High School, where she was able to take advantage of the

'remarkably good and well equipped Art Room' and:

> the carefully selected coloured reproductions of pictures . . . arranged historically throughout the building.[6]

Miss McCroben, the headmistress, whose teaching of architectural history was applauded by the school inspectors, quickly identified the talents of her pupil and supported her application for a Junior Art Scholarship in 1920.

Both Moore and Coxon went to Leeds on ex-servicemen's grants in 1919. Coxon, who came originally from Staffordshire, received his initial training at Leek School of Art and served with the Cavalry in Palestine. For him Leeds was 'the nicest time' of his life:

> after bloody war to have that time free, free to build up your own ego with a terrific appetite to make up for lost time.[7]

Moore was encouraged to take up the grant by his former art teacher, Alice Gostick, who was a member of the progressive Art Teachers Guild. She carried her enthusiasm beyond the restrictions of the school timetable, inviting talented pupils to her home where, in the course of Sunday afternoon tea, she introduced them to contemporary art through influential magazines like *Studio* and *Colour*.[8]

Moore maintained his contact with Miss Gostick while serving with the Civil Service Rifles and on his return both he and Coxon attended her pottery painting classes at Castleford. In June 1920 Jacob Kramer, the most avant-garde painter in Leeds, was invited to open the second annual exhibition of painted pottery at Castleford Secondary School. His selection is indicative of the progressive taste of Miss Gostick. Only recently Kramer had been involved in a vitriolic exchange of letters with Mark Senior in *The Yorkshire Evening Post*. Mark Senior's strident objections to the 'artistic Bolsheviks' — including Kramer — asked to submit designs for the Leeds Town Hall Murals, were countered by Kramer's reservations about Senior's work in his reference to:

> the mere academy type of picture, with its niceness . . . its frills and flounces as opposed to modern art which is both vital and spiritual.

Kramer, who had studied at Leeds School of Art, exhibited at the Leeds Arts Club in 1920, and in the same year his masterpiece *The Day of Atonement* and a second painting *Hear Our Voice, O Lord Our God* were presented by the Leeds Jewish Community to Leeds City Art Gallery.

Even if Coxon and Moore were not present at the opening of the exhibition, they must have been familiar with Kramer's work, and the current debate between progressive and 'Academy' art as outlined in the Kramer/Senior correspondence.

What did Leeds have to offer these young students? Kramer wrote in a letter, to *The Yorkshire Post* (17 April 1920):

> I have moved in many circles, and no city within my knowledge can claim a deeper interest in matters of art than Leeds, in spite of the Art Gallery. But the deplorable fact is that, instead of being spread evenly over the whole community, it is concentrated in a handful of individuals, and even the intelligent mass of the citizens is left cold by it.

The dismal state of the Art Gallery was due in part to its use by the Leeds Food Control Authorities leaving only a small area for the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions.

Of the individuals cited by Kramer, the most significant was undoubtedly Sir Michael Sadler, the Vice Chancellor of the University, who was responsible for several major art commissions including the new decorations for the Town Hall. Sadler also owned a remarkable art collection, which included work by Kandinsky and Gauguin, from which he lent to both the Art School and Leeds Arts Club. Henry Moore is known to have viewed this collection while at Leeds.

The failure of the City Fathers to support the visual arts was compounded, in Kramer's eyes, by their refusal to purchase the collection of Mr Heywood Rider, which reputedly contained fine works by Rembrandt and Titian! Heywood Rider was the Headmaster of the Leeds School of Art which was located in a building designed specifically as an art school by Francis Bedford and Sydney Kitson, and opened in 1903 (Plate 3). One of the largest provincial schools (in 1923 it had 753 full and part-time pupils in roughly equal numbers) it had established a national reputation by 1919. Many students continued their education at the Royal College of Art because its diploma enabled them to take up teaching posts in the nation's art schools.

Students like Barbara Hepworth who intended to take the Board of Education entrance exam after one year had to concentrate on the drawing course which all students followed in their first year; in their second year pupils could practise other disciplines.

Coxon and Moore were taught to 'stick clay onto an armature' by Reginald Cotterill who, like

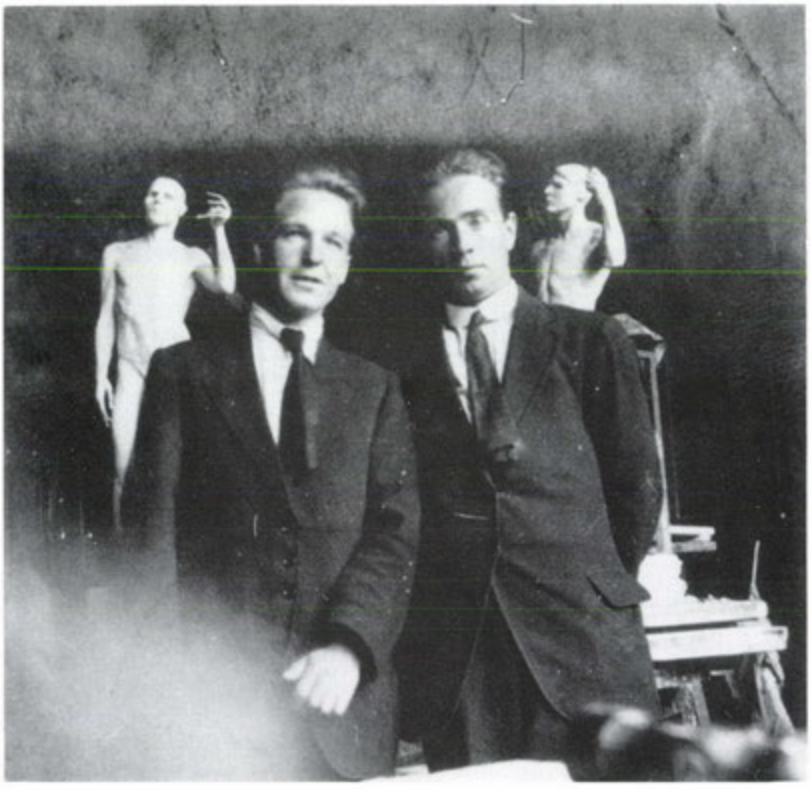
3 Staff at Leeds School of Art, *c.* 1911. Centre, seated: Heywood Rider, Headmaster. Back row, fifth from right: Walter Buckley Pearson. *Courtesy of Mr & Mrs R. Pearson*

many of the staff, had trained at the Royal College. Coxon recounts how they modelled a male nude, which ended up as just a torso because Cotterill's anxiety that it would not be finished on time led them to cut off first the head, then a few days later the legs, and later still the arms! This recollection together with a letter from Moore to Jocelyn Horner and one of Coxon's photographs (Plate 4) show that, although Henry Moore was the only student to take and pass the Board of Education Exam in modelling, he was not the only student to study the subject at Leeds. Although the School had special facilities in the basement for wood, marble and stone carving, these were seen as craft rather than fine art skills.

The modelling course was set up in 1904 under Charles Broughton who was redeployed during the war. An attempt to revive the course for the returning servicemen in 1919 was hampered by the fact that Broughton had been a conscientious objector, and the Mayor exercised his casting vote to bar him from reinstatement. The protracted debate about Broughton's re-appointment resulted in the alternative candidate, Walter Marsden, who received the Military Cross and Bar during the war, withdrawing his application and the post being re-advertised. It was not therefore until 1920 that the modelling department was re-opened on the appointment of Cotterill.

Walter Buckley Pearson was a contemporary of Broughton's at the Royal College of Art. He was appointed Head of Painting in 1905 on the recommendation of Augustus Spencer, the Principal of the College. Pearson saw it as his primary objective to get his students out of Leeds to London. Each week the students produced one drawing for him and one for the architecture teacher as homework. There was little room for individual creativity; one subject set by Pearson was 'the casting of a shadow over a gravestone with a cross; the sun at 45°'.[9]

The subjects studied in the drawing classes were: life drawing, anatomy, perspective, and classical architecture. Great emphasis was placed on memorizing the exact proportions and measurements of the classical orders and famous sculptures of antiquity. At the end of the first year Coxon and



4 Henry Moore (left) and Raymond Coxon in front of two figures modelled at Leeds School of Art, 1920/21. *Courtesy of Raymond Coxon and Edna Ginesi*

Moore won nine out of the twelve prizes offered and Coxon's caricature of the widely disliked headmaster was censored![7]

The only drawings to survive from this period are in one of Henry Moore's sketchbooks, once the property of Jocelyn Horner, a fellow student at Leeds School of Art. The sketchbook dates from 1920/21, Moore's second year at the School, as it contains notes on the History of Sculpture, a course taught by Cotterill. The drawings reflect the close association between sculpture and architecture, which determined the teaching of sculpture at the time, and include designs for lunettes and pediments on subjects typical of the 'New Sculpture': Supplication, Labour, Charity, The Arts, The Deposition and Industry; as well as a measured architectural study. In contrast to these traditional studies is a sketch of *Pietà* by the Serbian sculptor Ivan Meštrović. Moore's father had shown him illustrations of the sculptor's work in a review of the Meštrović exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1915.[8] However, five years later, it is more likely that Moore worked from the first monograph on the sculptor, published by Williams & Norgate, London, in 1919. *Pietà-Sketch* 1914 is illustrated as plate LXV and Moore's version is closer to this model than the finished bronze.

For the men returning from the war, the conservative teaching offered at Leeds, while producing the desired result — a place at the Royal College of Art — must have rankled. Henry Moore counted himself 'very lucky not to have gone to art school until I knew better than to believe what the teacher said' and Coxon admitted to a certain sympathy for his teachers: 'I daresay we were pretty arrogant people'.

For Vivian Pitchforth Leeds provided:

> good teaching, hard work and keen rivalry which laid a sound future foundation, the habit of hard work was, perhaps, the most important.[10]

The timetable was indeed rigorous, with students working from 9 to 4 with a break for tea and then returning for drawing sessions from 6 to 8.

Raymond Coxon summed up the importance of the Leeds training as 'simply this straight forward getting of skills'[7] (Plate 5).

In September 1921, the four students set out for London. Ginesi and Hepworth won West Riding

5 Students at the entrance of Leeds School of Art *c.* 1920. Left to right: Jack Elvin, George Stephenson, Raymond Coxon, Henry Moore, Doris White, Connie Castle, 'Happy' (Basil) Taylor, Geoff Kniveton. *Courtesy of Raymond Coxon and Edna Ginesi*

Senior Art Scholarships worth £75, and Henry Moore won a Royal Exhibition Scholarship worth £90 a year, while Raymond Coxon, dependent on the local authority in Stoke, had a grant of only £50.

Under the direction of the new Principal, William Rothenstein, the College was undergoing considerable change. He was appointed in 1920 to cries of 'Bolshevism' from the nation's art teachers, who saw the post as the pinnacle of an art master's career and were incensed that it should go to a practising artist. Rothenstein, a portrait painter, was dubbed 'The Holbein of today' by his students who claimed that he had 'head-hunted for a generation — few celebrities have eluded him'.[11] He shared these acquaintances, inviting groups of students to weekly soirées at his home in Airlee Gardens. As Moore noted in a letter to his friend, former Castleford Secondary School pupil, Albert Wainwright, these introductions were greatly appreciated:

> Rothenstein is a good man to have as head of anywhere — he seems to know everyone.

Although he was conservative — his devotion to the work of Ingres was frequently ridiculed by the students — Rothenstein brought with him a knowledge of French painting (Pissarro and Degas were personal friends, as was Rodin) and introduced innovative teaching practices, employing practising artists like Paul Nash and Leon Underwood as part-time lecturers. For those students whom he deemed especially talented he offered unstinting support, in Moore's case offering him a job in the sculpture department.

Coxon and Ginesi entered the Painting School while Moore and Hepworth opted to specialize in Sculpture. Hepworth had to model a head in clay from life, before admission to the school, as she had only passed the entrance examination in drawing. All students in the first term completed an Architecture course run by Beresford Pite and made detailed studies of works in the Victoria and Albert Museum, to which students had direct access from the college premises on Exhibition Road. Walter Pearson had been taught by Beresford Pite and thought him:

quite the best teacher I have been under. He was a scholarly, widely read man and an excellent teacher. He widened my knowledge and understanding of art in all its forms, probably in the best way by taking architecture as the basic and controlling art.[12]

It is unlikely that the Leeds students shared Pearson's reverence for architecture for they had already begun to question such conventional ideas.

The location of the college provided students with the stimulus of studying the national collections. In a letter to Albert Wainwright, Moore communicates his excitement on recent discoveries:

What a wonderful place is London. Yesterday I spent my afternoon in the British Museum — with the Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures. Egyptian Art is the greatest of known arts . . . Have you seen the ecstatically fine wood sculptures and bronzes and reliefs in the Ethnographical Gallery?

By 1923, fuelled by their studies and reading of works like Roger Fry's *Vision and Design*, these students were in Walmsley's eyes:

very modern, which is to say very primitive. Their discussions were about 'cave' drawings and 'bush' and Chinese and Tibetan and Egyptian and Assyrian and Aztec and 'negro' art. They were supremely contemptuous about the British Royal Academy and things like the Cavell memorial. There were a few British painters such as Constable and Augustus John and Frances Hodgkins whose work was not too bad. But the only sculptor was Epstein.[2]

'Primitive' art was regarded as 'feeding on garbage' in the Sculpture School which was under 'the stern classical gaze' of Derwent Wood. As at Leeds modelling was perceived as superior to the process of direct carving, which had begun to attract both Moore and Hepworth. The 1921–22 syllabus for the School of Sculpture outlines its objectives as:

the study of the Plastic Arts in Ornamental Design, Architecture, and the Industrial Arts and Handicrafts, based upon the study of the human figure.

In the first year students studied the 'antique'. This course included modelling from casts, modelling examples of ornament from different periods, anatomy and modelled studies of drapery. In the second year the emphasis was on lifework with studies in the round and in relief of the head and figure, a one-hour life drawing three days a week, a one-day design from a set subject, and stone carving.

It was in the drawing classes that many students found inspiration, but the direction offered by Colin Gill, Schwabe, Alston, Derrick and William Rothenstein, was not without its problems:

> Bill pops in, and sees my work, and nearly has hysterics.
> For his ideas of drawing life are different quite from Derrick's.
> He says my graceful contour is a lifeless and numb line;
> He says I've got my angles wrong and tests them with a plumb-line.

The student trembles at the thought of Leon Underwood's response:

> He gazes at it with contempt and slates it for a sketch,
> 'That's not a drawing, man,' he says, 'it's only just a sketch.
> A man's just like a cylinder or any such erection.
> He's got a length, he's got a height, he's also got a section'.[13]

Nicknamed 'The Modern Michelangelo', Underwood's teaching of 'draughtsmanship by *mass*'[10] was recalled by Pitchforth, Moore, Hepworth and Coxon in later life as one of the most formative influences of their college days. Underwood shared with his students an interest in 'primitive' art and sculpture. He encouraged shorter poses for life drawing, often using more than one model, and discouraged the meticulous shading methods advocated by Alston, insisting that volume and movement be expressed with a greater economy of line and shading. Although Underwood left the college in 1923, Pitchforth, Moore and Coxon received private tuition. In return the students were supposed to clean the artist's studio and give him their best drawings; however, the arrangement was short-lived.

One of Henry Moore's sketchbooks[14] contains ideas for sculpture with the note 'Drawing for direct carving in relief for college next term' (suggesting work for the academic year 1922/23). The subjects noted relate to those found in the Leeds Sketchbook and include Fecundity, Dancers and Toil. Of particular interest is the description which Moore uses for a single figure composition:

embodying recent thoughts, theories — movement . . . relation of masses — poise & balance — individuality of form conception — (Michelangelo) etc. etc. hole and bump modified — placing head over hollow — poising weights — rhythmic flow — Dynamism.

The influence of Leon Underwood is unmistakable. The word 'dynamism', the antipathy of the dry

6 End of Term Ball, Royal College of Art, 1922/23. Standing right to left: Robert Lyon, Edward Halliday, unidentified, Edna Ginesi, Raymond Coxon, Henry Moore (wearing ruff). Seated right to left: Leo Walmsley, Mrs Walmsley, Barbara Hepworth, unidentified, Phyllis Dodd. *Courtesy of Raymond Coxon and Edna Ginesi*

academic language of the Leeds sketchbook, is redolent of the pre-war carving of Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska. In the same year Moore completed a copy of Roselli's relief of the Madonna and Child in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The juxtaposition of these two disparate concepts of sculpture reveal the underlying tension which seems to have existed throughout Moore's training both at Leeds and at the Royal College.

On completing the diploma course in 1923 all four students continued their studies. Hepworth was awarded a Royal College Continuation Scholarship worth £60 and entered for the *Prix de Rome*. Henry Moore felt however that:

> Art institutions can be crutches, too long. I feel that once I'm free from them I shall do work much more worthwhile than what I've done up to the present. And for this reason I am seriously thinking of eschewing all such things as Prix de Romes etc.[15]

Like Ginesi and Pitchforth, Moore applied for and gained a travelling scholarship. His application to study in Berlin and Paris was turned down and like his fellow students he was obliged to travel in Italy, which at that time was in a state of political unrest. Barbara Hepworth, who came second in the *Prix de Rome* competition, also travelled to Italy, financed through a West Riding Travel Scholarship.

By 1925 Coxon, Ginesi and Hepworth had left the Royal College of Art, but the Leeds clique continued to be a powerful force within the student common room for the remainder of the decade. Leeds had instilled a disciplined approach to work and technical proficiency in drawing, while London offered exciting, new stimuli and a thorough grounding in the art of the past. It is difficult to detect any particularly Leeds characteristics in the work of these students, for so little remains, and it would be invidious to generalize from Henry Moore's sketchbooks alone. The 'Leeds table' would appear to be of purely social importance; its members participated in the activities of the common room; Henry Moore produced a play,

Barbara Hepworth performed a castanet dance and exhibited at the Sketch Club and Coxon wrote articles for the magazine (Plate 6). The sense of a special group identity provided these students with a sympathetic ambience: a corner of London where the *Normanton News* and the *Harrogate Times* were not out of place.

NOTES

1 *The Royal College of Art Students Magazine*, VI (June 1923), p. 102.
2 Leo Walmsley, *So Many Loves* (London, 1944 and 1969).
3 *The Royal College of Art Students Magazine* VII (1923).
4 Helen Binyon, *Eric Ravilious – Memoir of an Artist* (London, 1983).
5 Conversation with Edna Ginesi, 1984.
6 *The Report of Inspection of Wakefield Girls' High School and Wakefield Grammar School*, 1915.
7 Taped interview with Raymond Coxon (Tate Archives).
8 *Henry Moore Early Carvings 1920–1940*, Leeds City Art Galleries, 1982.
9 Conversation with Raymond Coxon, 1984.
10 Letter from Vivian Pitchforth to Ernest Musgrave, 1943 (Wakefield Art Gallery).
11 *The Royal College of Art Students Magazine*, VIII (June 1924), p. 50.
12 Memoirs of Walter Buckley Pearson, manuscript copy (Private Collection).
13 *Royal College of Art Students Magazine*, V (Dec. 1922), p. 845.
14 No. 2 sketchbook is in the collection of the Henry Moore Foundation and contains the address of a hotel in Paris; Moore, Coxon, Ginesi and Hepworth visited the city in 1923.
15 Letter from Henry Moore to Jocelyn Horner, 1923 (Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture).

THE YOUNG HENRY MOORE IN LONDON, PARIS AND FLORENCE

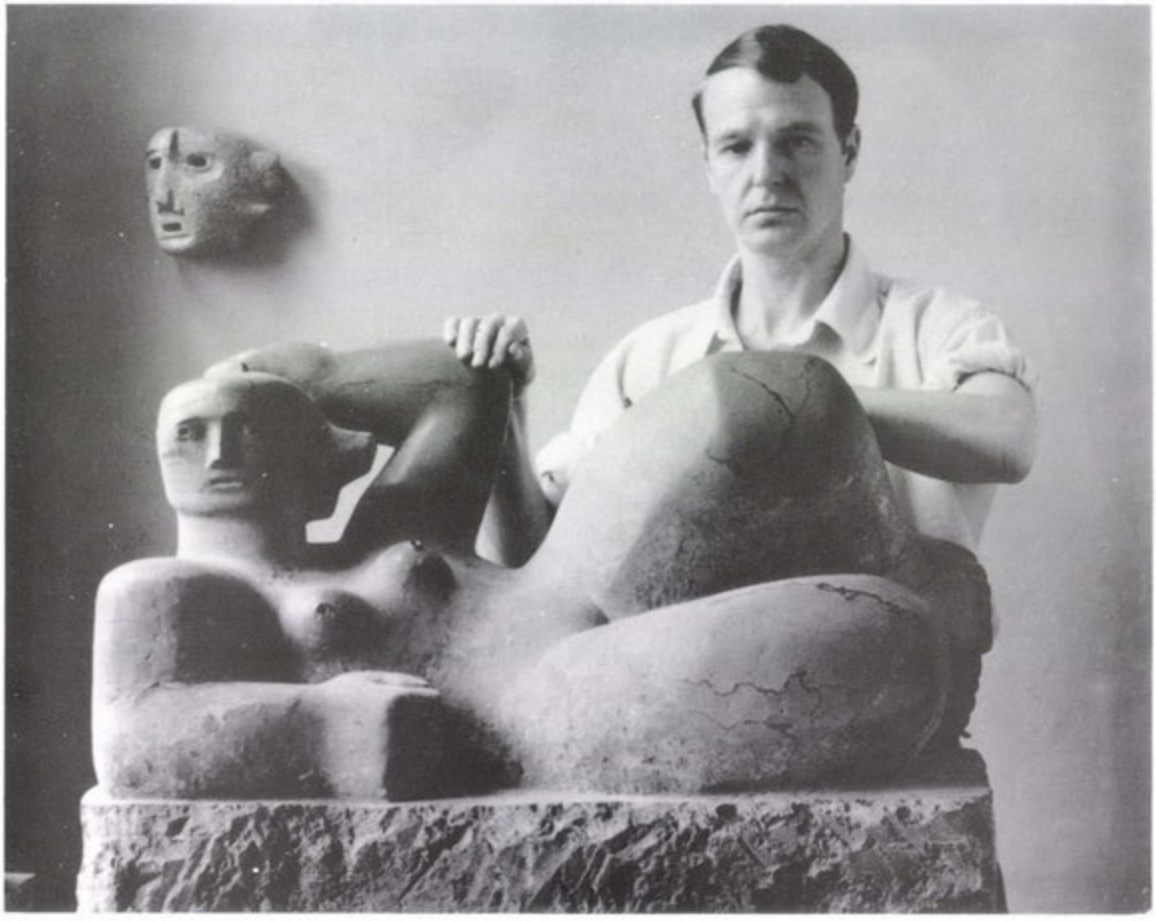
TERRY FRIEDMAN

On the occasion of the first retrospective exhibition of sculpture and drawings by Henry Moore, organized by Philip Hendy, Director of Leeds City Art Galleries, and held at Temple Newsam House during July–September 1941, an event described by Kenneth Clark as 'a very great landmark in the history of English art',[1] the now legendary Reclining Figure *carved in Brown Hornton stone in 1929 was acquired for £220 by the City Art Gallery.[2] How Moore worked towards this early masterpiece, one of the supreme achievements of modern sculpture, is the subject of this article.**

Henry Moore was thirty-one years old when he carved the Leeds *Reclining Figure* (Plate 7) and its appearance on the sculpture scene coincided with the beginning of his emergence as the outstanding British sculptor of the time.[3] It was one of the first of his works to attract wide public notice and it was reported extensively in the press, with the inevitable variety of responses. Praise came from a small circle of critics who were well-informed of the aims of the avant-garde, most notably R. H. Wilenski in his pioneering article 'Ruminations on Sculpture and the Work of Henry Moore', published in the December 1930 issue of *Apollo*, with the *Figure* illustrated.[4] At the same time it was dismissed with little sympathy or understanding by the majority of the conservative press as an example of 'Bolshevism in Modern Art', a 'monstrosity ... which surpasses in repulsiveness even that of Epstein' and so forth.[5] Sixty years on, it is easier to take a more balanced and unprejudiced view of Moore's early modernist endeavours, to appreciate with the hindsight of history the *Figure* as a major monument to his struggle to find an individual and prominent place in the mainstream of radical European sculpture, and to see it as embracing three of the essential ingredients of his fast emerging artistic genius.

These may be described as, first, Moore's use of simply shapes, of a direct and almost primitivistic simplicity, to describe the world of reality, particularly the world inhabited by the human figure, as revealed during study sessions in the great ethnographical collections at the British Museum and at the home of his friend and fellow-sculptor, Jacob Epstein, during his first years in London (from 1921). Second, Moore's creation of a special relationship between the sculpted figure and landscape, a discovery made on seeing Cézanne's famous painting of the *Grand Bathers* (*Grandes Baigneuses*, 1898–1905) during his first visit to Paris in 1922. Finally, Moore's humanistic approach to portraying the human form (he was never to embrace fully the ideas of pure abstractionism which so enthralled his close friends, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson), which he himself particularly associated with the explosive experience of discovering the early Renaissance paintings of Giotto and Masaccio, and the sculpture of Giovanni Pisano, during his first trip to Italy in 1925.

Four years earlier, in 1921, while a sculpture student at Leeds School of Art, Moore had come across in the Reference Library a copy of Roger Fry's collection of essays published in the previous year as *Vision and Design*, which included his influential discussion on 'Negro Sculpture'. Here Fry observed how the negro sculptor 'scores heavily by his willingness to reduce the limbs [of the human figure] to a succession of ovoid masses sometimes scarcely longer than they are broad' as a way of underlining their 'three-dimensionalness', thus giving the carvings their 'disconcerting vitality, the suggestion that they make of being not mere echoes of actual figures, but of possessing an inner life of their own'.[6] Moore became aware, too, that tribal art also demonstrated how the sculptor could achieve vitality of form by carving direct in natural materials — stone or wood, a method the avant-garde preferred over the long-accepted academic practice of preparing preliminary models in plaster and thereafter delegating much of the strenuous



7 Henry Moore around 1930 with the *Reclining Figure*, Brown Hornton stone, 1929, now in Leeds City Art Galleries, and *Mask*, 1930. Photograph presented by Lady Hendy, 1982. *The Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture Archives*

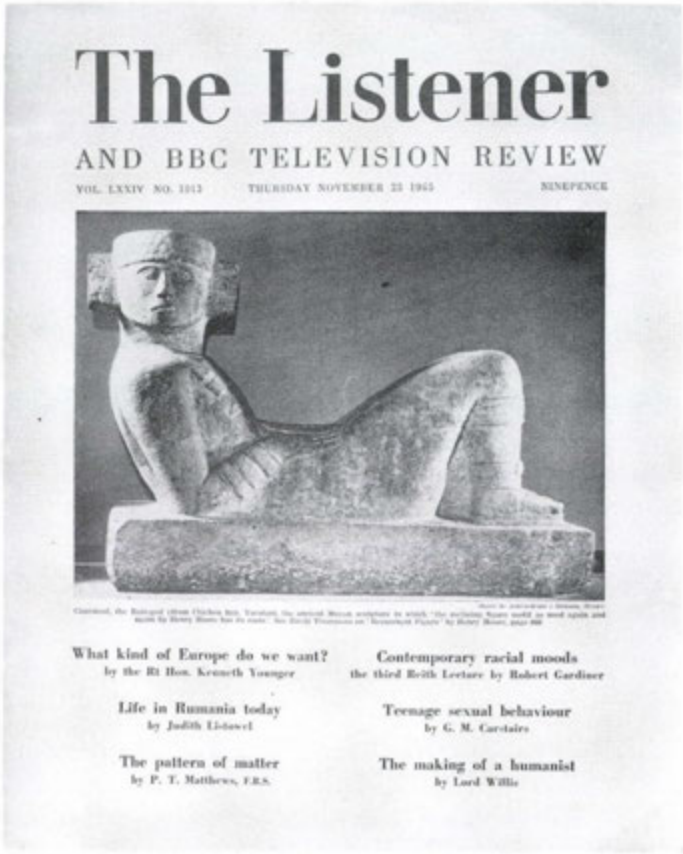
carving itself to studio assistants using mechanical pointing-machines, a process which young Moore believed stifled creativity and produced only dead art.[7] So, once he had read Fry, the purpose of sculpture came into focus: it was, he said, 'the most lucky discovery for me . . . really the beginning'.[8]

Later in 1921 Moore gained a scholarship to the Royal College of Art. In October he wrote to a Yorkshire friend how 'wonderful it is to be in London (says country-bred Harry) . . . Tate-ing or Museuming', and how 'Yesterday I spent my second afternoon in the [British] Museum with the Egyptian & Assyrian Sculpture — An hour before closing time I tore myself away from these to do a little exploring and found — in the Ethnographical Gallery — the ecstatically fine negro sculptures'.[9] Though Fry had hinted at the primitive joys on offer at the BM, it was probably Jacob Epstein (1880–1959) who encouraged the younger man to explore the Museum's treasures systematically.[10] Epstein had been buying tribal and ancient sculpture since about 1912 (his collection eventually contained some 996 items, including a half-dozen of the most important African carvings ever to reach the West).[11] Moore had met Epstein soon after arriving in London in 1921 and the two men found they had much in common: both had come from working-class backgrounds (Moore from a Castleford mining community, Epstein from Polish–Jewish emigrants on the Lower East Side of New York City); both had early in their careers disowned conservative British artistic conventions

to embrace the radical ideas of the European avant-garde (Epstein had trained in Paris, where he was known as 'ce sauvage Americain', before settling in London in 1905); both were attracted to the doctrines of direct carving and primitivism. Moore visited Epstein frequently and their early works share common features, as a comparison of Epstein's over-lifesize Hopton Wood stone figure of *Maternity*, 1910–12, and Moore's diminutive yet monumental *Maternity*, 1924, carved in the same stone and also in the Leeds collection, reveals.[12] Both sculptures possess a feeling of unsentimentalized maternal protectiveness far removed from the sweet Renaissance concept of the Virgin and Child.

There were other strong links. Certainly Moore was aware of Epstein's primitivistic, partial-figure relief of *Rima* on the *W. H. Hudson Memorial* in Hyde Park, whose unveiling in May 1925 plunged the public and art world into an unprecedentedly vituperative controversy unequalled in the annals of British modernism. Moore was presumably among the many Royal College signatories to a letter published in *The Times* on 25 November deploring the incessant attacks.[13] Epstein was among the first to buy Moore's sculpture from his first one-man show, held at the Warren Gallery in Maddox Street in 1928, and in the same year Epstein had been instrumental in securing Moore's first public commission: the Portland stone *West Wind* relief (1928–29) for the façade of the new London Underground Electric Railways Headquarters in St James's.[14] This sculpture, in turn, was the immediate precursor of the Leeds *Reclining Figure* of 1929 (Plate 7).

Here, Moore turned for inspiration to Aztec sculpture — he was later to write of his admiration for its 'simple, monumental grandeur [and] massive weightiness which ... is indestructible'[15] — and particularly to an illustration of an ancient Chacmool, or rain-god, figure in the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City (Plate 8).[16] Moore's figure, however, is female rather than male, and he has tilted her body forward so that she rests on her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What kind of Europe do we want?
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8 Aztec, *Chacmool Figure*, stone, AD 1400–1500, Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, illustrated on the cover of *The Listener*, 25 November 1965, to accompany David Thompson's article on Moore's 'Recumbent Figure'

right arm and right thigh rather than on her back, which means that the spectator is encouraged to view the figure both from the front and from above simultaneously, as if looking down from a height on to some rugged island terrain. Brilliant use is made of the idiosyncrasies of native Derbyshire limestone to express the natural textures and blemishes of flesh, while darker veins of ironstone run through the figure like pathways across valleys and barren, treeless uplands; precisely the sort of countryside Moore had walked as a boy on the Yorkshire Moors. One of the figure's most distinctive features, nipples drilled into the breasts rather than carved upstanding, as they would be in academic sculpture, prompted one contemporary critic to ridicule the work by suggesting that Moore had been perversely inspired by the volcanic mountain-peaks of the Peruvian Andes![17] The 1929 *Figure* is Moore's first sculpture in which both form and material are used to express landscape, not only the figure *in* landscape but the figure *as* landscape: it is both human and geological.[18]

The remarkable idea of associating a reclining figure with the natural landscape, of fusing figure and landscape in a single sculpture, remains amongst Moore's most compelling inventions, and it apparently came about as a result of his momentous visit during Whitsun of 1922 to the Pellerin Collection in Paris, where he saw Cézanne's great canvas of the *Grand Bathers* (Plate 9), now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.[19] Moore was particularly struck by 'the triangular bathing composition with the nudes in perspective lying on the ground as if they'd been sliced out of mountain rock'.[20] Here was Moore — a sculptor not a painter — transforming Cézanne's two-dimensional figures painted on the flat surface of the canvas into powerful three-dimensional forms set in real landscape, as he was soon similarly to do in the 1929 *Figure*.

The other deeply moving experience of Moore's formative years was his trip to Italy in 1925. In March of that year he wrote to William Rothenstein, Principal of the Royal College of Art: 'I have ... been moving with the speed of an American tourist ... I've made stops at Genoa, Pisa and Rome, before coming on here to Florence [where] early wall paintings — the work of Giotto, Orcagna, Lorenzetti, Taddeo Gaddi, the paintings leading up to and including Masaccio's are what have so far interested me most'.[21] The experience was something akin to his early explorations in the British Museum.

9 Paul Cézanne, *Grand Bathers*, oil on canvas, 1898–1905, Philadelphia Museum of Art (Wilstach Collection), formerly Pellerin Collection, Paris

10 Henry Moore, *Study from Giotto*, pencil, No. 3 Notebook, page 181, 1922–24. *The Henry Moore Foundation, photo Michel Muller*

On arriving in Florence Moore went almost immediately to the church of Santa Maria del Carmine to see Masaccio's *Tribute Money*, which he subsequently studied for a few minutes every day before going on to other things.[22] He was overwhelmed by the figures' 'monumental grandeur',[23] precisely that quality he was striving for in his own sculpture at this time (for example, the 1924 *Maternity* at Leeds). But it was Giotto who made the greatest impression: his figures were 'the finest sculpture I met in Italy'.[24] Here was the same process of looking at paintings with a sculptor's eye that had occurred with the Cézanne in Paris, and, as on that former occasion, he made bold, confident sketches (of sections of the frescoes in Santa Croce) which can be almost read as studies for sculptures (Plate 10).[25]

Young Moore's commitment to early Renaissance painting was further revealed in his grave misgivings about Renaissance sculpture, which he thought generally weak because it was too closely allied to painting and relied too much on pictorial conventions. 'Of great sculpture I've seen very little', he reported to Rothenstein; modelling has 'sapped the manhood out of Western sculpture'. Donatello was condemned and largely dismissed.[26] While admitting that the 'grandeur of gesture and scale' of Michelangelo's reclining allegorical figures of *Day* and *Night* on the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici in S. Lorenzo represented examples of 'what great sculptures is', and while admiring the 'disturbing elements [of] distortion' in the treatment of the anatomy as evidence of some sort of artistic struggle — which one may interpret as indicative of Moore's own situation in the 1920s — he could not tolerate the 'thick leatheriness' of the skin: 'You feel that the bodies are covered with a skin that is half an inch thick' and which was 'a little bit repellent'; and he confessed that he would be terrified to take a Michelangelo woman to

11 Giovanni Pisano, *St Mark the Evangelist*, marble, *c.* 1284, Pisa Baptistery, from P. James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture* (1966), pl. 8

dinner![27] In the Leeds *Reclining Figure*, by contrast, the stone is carved as if the inner life of the figure is pushed out to the very perimeter of the skin membrane.

The sculpture exception was Giovanni Pisano's figures in the Baptistery at Pisa (Plate 11). Moore thrilled at the 'humanistic expression' conveyed by the 'volumes and taut compressions', the 'bumps and hollows' of the marble.[28] Great humanist artists like Pisano, Masaccio and Cézanne, he wrote, 'express the tremendous power of goodness that exists somewhere in human nature'.[29] Moore might have been describing his own art.

NOTES

* This article is based on material delivered by the author at the University of Florence on 24 May 1989 as the Henry Moore Lecture, sponsored by the British Institute of Florence.

Abbreviations

Berthoud	R. Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (1987)
Friedman	T. Friedman and E. Silber (eds), *Jacob Epstein Sculpture and Drawings* (Leeds City Art Galleries, 1987)
HMCSS	The Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture, Leeds City Art Gallery
Leeds 1982	A. Garrould, T. Friedman and D. Mitchinson, *Henry Moore Early Carvings 1920–1940* (Leeds City Art Galleries, 1982)
Leeds 1984	*Henry Moore Sculpture in the Making* (Leeds City Art Galleries, 1984)
James	P. James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture* (1966)

1 Clark opened the exhibition of 86 sculptures and drawings, together with work by John Piper and Graham Sutherland, which attracted 55,000 visitors (*Berthoud*, p. 177).

2 Bought from the artist, Corporation Fund with the aid of a grant from the Board of Education (Inv. no. 10/41); Hendy's

annotated copy of the exhibition catalogue (HMCSS Archives).

3 Moore's public success is charted in *Friedman*, pp. 35–43. The Leeds *Reclining Figure* is discussed in greater detail in A. G. Wilkinson, 'Henry Moore's Reclining Women', *Annual Bulletin*, National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, 1979), pp. 33–35.

4 Pp. 409–13. The *Reclining Figure* also featured in *Internationale Ausstellung Plastik* (Künsthaus, Zürich, 25 July–30 September 1931), p. 30, item 143, pl. 48; in *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Sculpture and Drawings by Henry Moore with a Prefatory Note by Jacob Epstein*, The Leicester Galleries (London, 1931), no. 16 (Epstein wrote in the introduction: 'For the future of sculpture in England Henry Moore is vitally important'); in *Henry Moore Sculptor An Appreciation by Herbert Read* (1934), and thereafter on innumerable occasions.

5 *The Graphic*, 10 October and *The Daily Mirror*, 14 April 1931, respectively.

6 Pp. 66–67.

7 *Leeds 1984*, Introduction.

8 *James*, p. 49.

9 Moore to Jocelyn Horner, 29 October 1921 (HMCSS Archives, gift of Miss J. Horner, 1973). In another letter to Horner, dated August 1923, Moore mentions having recently visited the Bradford collector, Charles Rutherston, which provided 'a good opportunity of seeing probably one of the most important collections (outside London) of ancient Chinese Art in England — besides . . . examples of Negro . . . Sythian, Siberian, Archaic Greek & Egyptian Art' and a library 'which contains books of reference on almost every known art' (HMCSS Archives).

10 H. Moore, *Henry Moore at the British Museum* (1981).

11 E. Bassani and M. D. McLeod, *Jacob Epstein Collector* (1989).

12 *Leeds 1982*, pp. 48–49, *Friedman* (1987), pp. 142–48.

13 T. Friedman, *'The Hyde Park Atrocity': Epstein's Rima Creation and Controversy* (1988), pp. 38–39.

14 *James*, p. 44 and *Friedman*, pp. 222–27.

15 H. Moore, *Henry Moore at the British Museum* (1981), p. 66.

16 *Leeds 1982*, pp. 26–28, 56–57, fig. 23, pl. 18.

17 *The Daily Mirror*, 14 April 1931.

18 Ivon Hitchen's painting of Moore carving the *Reclining Figure* in his Hampstead studio, 1929–30 (Leeds City Art Galleries Collection), shows the sculptor working on the partly completed block of stone against the backdrop of his garden seen through large, uncurtained windows (*Leeds 1984*, pl. 6).

19 Auguste Pellerin's collection of more than 100 Cézanne oils was displayed in his Neuilly residence; Moore gained access through a letter of introduction from Charles Rutherston's brother-in-law, William Rothenstein, then Principal of the Royal College of Art (*Berthoud*, pp. 65–66).

20 *James*, p. 190, pl. 72. Moore sketched some of the figures in the painting (A. G. Wilkinson, *The Drawings of Henry Moore* (Tate Gallery, London, 1977), no. 62).

21 *James*, p. 37 and *Berthoud*, pp. 77–78.

22 *James*, pp. 34, 127, pl. 41.

23 *James*, p. 66.

24 *James*, p. 37.

25 D. Mitchinson, *Henry Moore Unpublished Drawings* (1971), pls, 25–27.

26 *James*, p. 37.

27 *James*, pp. 37, 91, 123, 175, pl. 63.

28 *James*, p. 38, pl. 8.

29 *James*, p. 40. 'Much as one admires Bernini', wrote Moore in 1961, 'I don't believe that he creates wonderful human beings or leads on to the idea that human life could be consistently marvellous' (p. 40).

STOKER GILL: ERIC KENNINGTON AS WAR ARTIST

W. J. RODGERS

The painter and sculptor Eric Kennington (1888–1960) is notable among a group of British twentieth-century artists whose careers span the period of the two great World Wars. His work, especially during the 1914–18 War, is concerned with the everyday life and routines of soldiers: 'If I am of use', he wrote, 'it is in depicting British soldiers in their truest and noblest aspect, of that work I shall never tire'.[1]

Such a statement may have its beginnings in an early and important work, *The Kensingtons at Laventie*, which was well received when first exhibited at the Goupil Gallery in 1916, and heralded as the first eye-witness account of the war. Kennington enlisted as an infantryman with the 1/13 London Regiment, The Kensingtons, on 6 August 1914, and the painting proved to be a personal account of the men he had shared his life with for 300 days while the Regiment was stationed in the Lys Valley District. It depicts a group of soldiers halting after line duty at Laventie, in a state of disarray and exhaustion. As a work it has iconic quality, representing the worship of young men, the 'nameless heroes of the rank and file', that was to become one of Kennington's central themes.[2] Much of Kennington's work was fiercely patriotic, an attitude which perhaps reaches fulfilment in the later World War II portraits.[3]

The Kensingtons makes use of a clearly staged composition, a rectangular space with a low perspective, a device that offers a certain degree of distortion to the figures and, given its overall sense of colour and drawing, reflects Kennington's love of early Renaissance painting. Like *The Costermonger* of 1913, it has a quality reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites, a quality which derives in part from its being painted on glass. In the precise and complicated *Hinterglasmalerei* technique, with which Kennington had experimented less successfully before the war, the outlines and accent strokes have to be painted first, followed by shadows and highlights, before the final areas of colour and background are added.[4] Kennington had come from an artistic background, albeit quite conventional, being the youngest child of the late-Victorian genre painter T. B. Kennington. He had briefly studied at the City and Guilds School at Lambeth and Kennington (1905–07), but on the whole appears to have been individualistic in his aims.[5] Throughout his life he had a habit of setting himself new challenges, and often liked to work with difficult methods and materials, often under difficult conditions. *The Kensingtons* reflects an early will to experiment.

During the Great War, French and German artists had been given access to their respective front; but it was not until 1916 (when it was finally conceded that the Propaganda War was being lost) that the Department of Propaganda, later Beaverbrook's Ministry of Information, started to send British artists to the front. Kennington returned to the front in 1916 as a civilian but, devoid of rank and status, found his life hampered. He was to return again in 1917, this time finally as an official war artist, having been appointed in August only after sustained pressure from committee members like Campbell Dodgson, General Sir John Charteris and the painter, Sir John Lavery. In a later correspondence Kennington was to write of 'the unique troubles of the soldier', a situation which must have reflected his own feelings.[6]

At home in the Ministry he had found critics who disliked his work and felt that *The Kensingtons* did not offer a profitable view of the British Army. But he had his admirers too and there is no doubting Kennington's honesty of purpose. It was probably soon after his appointment as a war artist (and some delay in receiving materials) that, moving towards the front line at Villars-Francon, Kennington began to work in pastel. A number of superb studies followed including the famous *Raider with a Cosh*, but he was to draw men in many situations, notable among them the gassed and blinded, some to be the basis for later studies. The portraits of the hospitalized often contain a grit and bear witness to the real horror and tragedy of war. The exhibition, *The British Soldier*, which opened at Leicester Galleries in that early summer

of 1918, assured Kennington's early success, with over a hundred drawings and pastels exhibited. The catalogue had a fitting introduction by Robert Graves.[7] It was to lead to further commissions, including *The Conquerors* or, as Kennington had named it, *The Victors*, a major oil painting for the Canadian Government.

Kennington also became increasingly involved with making sculpture. After the war, along with his friend Frank Dobson, he had been among the first to exhibit, and was among the forerunners in the revival of direct carving. By 1920 he had produced *PBI* (Poor Bloody Infantry), one of his first important working sculptures for his exhibition, *The Fighting Man*, at the Leicester Galleries.[8] It was in 1920, too, that Kennington met and became friends with Colonel T. E. Lawrence, with whom his name is often closely associated, and in the same year travelled to Arabia to produce the famous Arab portraits for Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*; he became its chief art editor and contributed substantially to its original success. By the early 'twenties he was already receiving further commissions, including two ambitious sculpture projects: the *Memorial to the 24th Division*, now in Battersea Park, for which he made perceptive studies (Plate 12); and *The Missing*, carved directly out of twenty-two tons of Portland (Kennington's favourite working stone) in 1927–28 at Soissons in France, for the Commonwealth War Graves Committee.[9]

The Battersea Memorial project provided Kennington with the challenge of carving a cylindrical arrangement of three soldiers, closely linked shoulder to shoulder, a sergeant, corporal and lance corporal (Plate 13). A serpent — a decorative symbol which recurs in Kennington's work — is curled among their legs. It is now evident that Robert Graves, whom Kennington had met towards the end of the war when instructor to the 16th Officer-Cadet Battalion at Kinmel Park, Rhyl, had served as the model for the left-hand soldier.[10] The 24th Division Memorial was carved from a small plasticine maquette (Kennington sometimes used bronze) at Moreton House in Chiswick, where the Kenningtons lived for over a year and a

12 *Portrait of Morris* (Morris Clifford Thomas), Study for the Battersea *Memorial to the 24th Division*. Chalk, 1924. *Imperial War Museum*

13 Kennington at work on the *Memorial to the 24th Division*, Chiswick, London. *Imperial War Musuem*

half.[11] The method was tough and arduous using a pointer, but it was a method Kennington seems to have liked.

As early as November 1939, Eric Kennington was one of the first artists to be considered by the WAAC, a body organized through a compromise agreement between the Treasury, Admiralty, War Office and the War Artists Advisory Committee. The portrait became the central theme of Kennington's World War II work. At first he produced portraits of some of the Service Chiefs, Lords Gort and Halifax, General Ironside and other prominent leaders. But soon he turned to the rank and file, many of the portraits being published in booklets, the Naval Ranks, the Armoured Corps and, completing the trilogy, the RAF. Well over a hundred portraits were finished, including likenesses of Richard Hillary and Douglas Bader. Many were drawn on stations, often as many as two per week. Such unbridled admiration was just the right moral tonic that the Ministry needed, and over the years sales of Kennington's work contributed substantial sums towards the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Stoker Gill of HMS *Exeter* (Plate 17 and Cover) is a fine example of Kennington's studies of the men who had fought the Narvic and River Plate campaigns in the winter of 1939–40. The River Plate represented an important victory, when the Royal Navy's hunting groups of ships *Ajax*, *Achilles* and *Exeter*, commanded by Commodore H. Harwood, engaged in a decisive action with the German battleship, the *Graf Spee*, which was eventually scuttled by her captain off Montevideo in December. *Exeter* had to withdraw from the action after suffering extensive damage. Christopher Kennington, the artist's son, remembers accompanying his father down to Devonport during that winter and seeing the armour plate of the *Exeter*, 'cut and bent open like a tin opener'.[12]

The portraits of the naval ranks are among the finest Kennington produced in the Second World War and in their precision and attention to detail are not products of a repetitive formula. Several were subsequently lost when, early in 1941, a ship carrying a number of works to Washington for exhibition (Ministry of Information War Pictures) was torpedoed.[13] W. O. Kennington, Eric's elder brother, had a catalogue, *Give us the tools*, printed privately to promote Britain's war effort; in an introduction, J. B. Priestley wrote of the artist often being best placed to write about his own work. Kennington could be as good a commentator as any and it must have been while staying at the Duke of Cromwell Hotel in Plymouth that he wrote: 'None had sat for a portrait before and it was treated as an order. They sat too still and often the water poured from their eyes with the effort. I found the Navy rather crushing, a supernatural thing'.[14] The description of Stoker A. Martin (Plate 14), whom Kennington refers to in his correspondence as 'Martin with the long neck', provides a clear insight into the nature of the fighting man: 'Man of action: instantaneous: 100 per cent reliable: expert technician, very gentle, sensitive, and great physical strength.'[15]

Of Seaman Vearncombe (Plate 15): 'with brass tools and great courage Vearncombe unscrewed the first magnetic mine, de-detonated it whilst through a microphone he told dispassionately the secrets of its construction'. And of Able Seaman Povey (Plate 16): 'The complete sailor. At home in every country. Like the others, perennial youth. A notable boxer at 40 years.'[16]

Early on, *Stoker Gill* was reproduced as a postcard, although Kennington and later Kenneth Clark felt that the quality of reproduction was poor. He was soon to produce another series, of the Armoured Corps, travelling up to Yorkshire to do so; the series is perhaps less fine, although some, like *Major-General Sir Ernest Swinton*, are outstanding. In this period he was to produce an inexhaustible number of portraits.

That Kennington was a superb draughtsman who became accustomed to the difficult medium of pastel, which he used often under very difficult conditions, is not in question. He generally worked on darker toned papers, as in the case of *Stoker Gill*, which allowed strong highlights, quite cinematic in their effect. In some, the use of charcoal gives 'the precision of a cast iron contour',[17] anticipating the artist's interest in sculpture, particularly the series of Arab portraits for the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and, among the many superb portraits, the series of Indian Warriors. When only seventeen, Kennington had visited relatives in St Petersburg, during the period in which the first uprisings against the Tsar had taken place: Kennington had been fascinated by Russian icons and the wall paintings of the German Orthodox Churches. This influence may act as a key to some of his work.

Kennington's best works reveal an acute artistic sensibility and a clear understanding of his subjects. *Stoker Gill* amply deserves J. B. Priestley's epithets, 'strong, masculine, sensitive, nervous'.[18] Priestley judged Kennington to be 'an artist who

14 (above, left) *Stoker A. Martin of* HMS *Exeter*. Pastel, 1940. *National Maritime Museum, London*

15 (above, right) *Leading Seaman Vearncombe*. Pastel on paper, 1940. *National Maritime Museum, London*

16 (left) *Able Seaman Povey*. Pastel on paper, 1940

instinctively records what he sees in such terms . . . peculiarly fitted for the task of creating war portraits'. Other examples in the *Naval Ranks*, such as Captain Bell of HMS *Exeter*, Petty Officer R. Barnes of HMS *Eclipse* and Leading Seaman Dove of HMS *Hardy*, are perhaps less notable but still avoid excessive exaggeration in portraying the nature of the sitter — the larger-than-life heroic quality that characterized some of the later drawings, attracting the disdain of critics like Raymond Mortimer.

Eric Stanford remembers Kennington as 'a large impressive man who wanted to embrace the world'.[19] He always seemed to set himself new and difficult targets, believed in 'being of service' and worked unremittingly throughout his life. When he resigned from the War Artists Advisory Committee in September 1942 he was physically exhausted, having produced well over one hundred portraits of the RAF in a single year. As the artist's wife Edith Celandine recalled, 'the further under pressure and the more tired, the larger the portraits became'.[20] Under more relaxed circumstances in 1944 Kennington produced the Home Guard series, the portraits again attesting to his interest in human beings both individually and as members of a group. A book, with a text by John Brophy, followed in 1945.

Kennington went on to produce more of his everyday portraits after the war.[21] His later work is softer and imbued with a strongly religious character. A committed Christian since the 1920s, in the last decade of his life he turned increasingly towards religious sculptural commissions. His work became increasingly reminiscent of early English and Romanesque sculpture, and retained that concern with craftsmanship that characterizes much of his best work — *Stoker Gill* is a striking example.

17 *Stoker Gill of* HMS *Exeter*. Pastel on paper, 1940

NOTES

1 (Correspondence in the Imperial War Museum) Mid-February 1917 Kennington to Masterman, see also Meirion and Susie Harries, *The War Artists* (London, 1983), p. 46.

2 C. Dodgson and C. E. Montague, *British Artists at the Front, IV, Eric Kennington* (London, 1918), unpaginated.

3 Christopher Kennington wrote in his introduction to the unpaginated catalogue of the Maas Gallery exhibition, March 1981: 'His unashamed admiration for the courage and strength of fighting men has not induced sympathy from a world longing to enjoy peace.'

4 Angela Weight, 'The Kensingtons at Laventie', *Imperial War Museum Review*, 1 (1986), pp. 16–18; see also Karen Wallace, *Examination and Treatment of Hinterglasmalerei or reverse painting on glass* (1977).

5 Kennington seems to have been disposed towards drawing at an early age. Paul Nash recollects in his unfinished autobiography, *Outline*, 1949: 'The highest forms at St. Paul's were different sorts of eighths — the history 8th, the science 8th, and so on.' Kennington was free to concentrate on drawing for he, and he alone, comprised the drawing 8th.

6 Kennington to Yockney, correspondence in the Imperial War Museum: 'He wrote of the unique troubles of a soldier who has no rank, no badge, no buttons, no unit, no pay, no batman, no billet, and an unmilitary dress — and no rations.'

7 Graves felt that Kennington had a trench viewpoint: this predated his own account of the war, *Goodbye to All That*.

8 Christopher Kennington, the artist's son, told the author that he had found and rescued *PBI*, which was produced in plaster of Paris, from the converted barn studio at Homer near Ipsden in Oxfordshire which Kennington had used up to his death; subsequently the sculpture was exhibited in the 1981 Whitechapel Retrospective. *PBI* was later sold to the Michael Parkin Gallery, May 1982.

9 The work and the unveiling ceremony were filmed by W. O. Kennington, Eric's older brother, who was an ardent supporter of his work. Eric Kennington was later to produce further

war-related memorials: *1940*, an RAF memorial, which occupied him at intervals right up to 1955; and a baptismal font at Betchworth in Surrey, a memorial to Pilot Officer James Erskine, carved in Ancaster and Hornton stone: this is similar to the Llandaff 'Tree of Knowledge' font produced during the same period. He also produced the reliefs on the Memorial Theatre at Stratford, clearly relishing working within a modern architectural setting.

10 R. P. Graves, *Robert Graves: The Assault Heroic (1895–1926)* (London, 1986), p. 195.

11 Kineton Parkes, *The Art of Carved Sculpture*, 1 (1931), p. 114; the Kenningtons lived at Moreton House until about 1929 when they spent an increasing amount of time at Holly Copse, a rented estate cottage at Goring Heath in Oxfordshire.

12 Christopher Kennington, in conversation with the author.

13 As note 12.

14 *Give Us The Tools*, unpaginated. W. O. Kennington's booklet was originally printed for distribution in the General Motors factory of which he was manager, but the Ministry of Aircraft Production was so struck by its potential to boost morale that a further 50,000 copies were ordered for wider circulation. Thanks are due to L. Macfarlane of the National Maritime Museum for information used in this section.

15 *Give Us The Tools*.

16 Ibid.

17 Sir Ronald Storrs, *Drawing the RAF* (Oxford, 1942), p. 17 (originally quoted in the *Observer*: 'They combine the most searching characterization with an incisive rigour of handling that maintains elasticity and the tremor of life in a cast iron precision of contour.')

18 *Give Us The Tools*.

19 Eric Stanford, in conversation with the author. Stanford, who was Kennington's last assistant (1952–60), is a sculptor in his own right and in 1990 finished a memorial to the Spanish Civil War, in Reading, Berkshire.

20 Christopher Kennington, in conversation with the author.

21 For instance, *Charles the Chef* at Reading Art Gallery and Museum. During this post-war period, Kennington was also painter to the Worshipful Company of Skinners.

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