

Edwin Greenman 1909 -2003

1909 -1929 Edwin Greenman was born in 152 Mackenzie Road, Beckenham, Kent on 21st March 1909, one of six brothers and sisters. His father was a carpenter and became a Clerk of Works, working on large construction sites including the Blackwall Tunnel. At home his mother managed the family, and kept order, albeit with some exceptions, for example the day when she said that Edwin was not going to school, she took him to the Derby at Epsom!

By the age of 13 Edwin (known as Ted) was showing an aptitude for drawing and he attended the Technical Institute (aka The Studio – photo on right) in Beckenham Road where for 2 days a week he studied architectural drawing. Here, they noticed his artistic ability and he was directed to the adjacent Beckenham School of Art where he studied engraving, drawing and painting from 1926 - 1929 under Henry Carr RA.



1929-1942 Ted received a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Art from 1929 - 1933. In order to make the scholarship go further, he caught the workman's train into London (very early in the morning) and walked from Victoria to Kensington to save money.

In 1934 he submitted a portfolio for a Rome scholarship and exhibited at the Royal Academy and other prominent exhibitions.

By the outbreak of war in 1939 he was working at Guildford School of Art where he became Acting Principal when Maurice Wheatley, the Principal, was called up for active service.

1942 -1951 Ted was called up in 1942 and transferred to the RAF who were looking for artists and photographers to work on photographic intelligence, model making, and other practical uses of intelligence gathering. Based at Medenham Ted was using photographs taken by the RAF's Photo Reconnaissance Unit to produce exact scale models for particular targets including the Dambusters' raids, Normandy landings and the precision bombing raid on the jail at Amiens.

Also in 1942 he married Freda Johns, an accomplished Pianist, and not inconsiderable artist in her own right. They lived in Woking close to Freda's father, and Ted would cycle from Medenham to Woking - including in the black out - quite a hair raising experience when there was no moon!

After the war he went to France painting with one of his great friends in the RAF, Jacob Drew, who flew in Mosquito fighter bombers to take the pictures from which the models were made. Two young men in France with little money seemed to do well. They seemed to stay where the patron never seemed to lack food despite the shortages, and made some money painting. Following this trip, Ted returned to Guildford School of Art.

1951 – 1969 In 1951 Ted was asked by Dr Alan Ward to join him at Sir John Cass College to manage the art department as Principal of the School of Art, albeit two rooms, an office, a small silversmithing section, and some three Nissan huts opposite where pottery and sculpture took place.

The department grew in the 1950's and moved to larger, but not suitable premises at the Minories before the School of Art moved to its present site almost opposite Whitechapel Art Gallery. This was a modern factory building and the upper floors were converted for use as an Art School.

In his 18 years at the School of Art it grew from a small department to become a highly respected centre for the teaching of art and by 1969, when Ted retired, it taught some 2,500 full and part time students. He had been elected to the Royal Society of Portrait Painters in 1968.

1969 – 2003 On retirement Ted moved to Hampshire he became treasurer and secretary of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters. With Society president, David Poole, the Society secured the acceptance of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as patron.

Ted undertook many commissions and supported and encouraged amateur painting groups in Chichester and the south coast, where he painted the harbours around Chichester, and boats, as well as many fine drawings and paintings of subjects, being friends, model's, people he met as well as commissions from the Royal Society of Portrait Painters.

Ted continued painting when he was 90 and on his death in 2003 some 500 paintings, drawings and sketches remained in his portfolio, and probably an equal number are elsewhere in the world.

If you would like to know more, look at the following website

www.greenman-gallery.co.uk/about-artist.html