



THE SIREN

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN ST IVES REPRESENTATIONAL ART

**Issue No 12 February 2017
(Special Raymond Ray-Jones Issue)**

**Compiled by
David Tovey
The Old Vicarage, Broadwoodwidge, Lifton, Devon PL16 0EP
Telephone : 01566 784687
E-mail : toveyd53@gmail.com
Website : www.stivesart.info**

Contents

Editorial	2
Featured Artists	
Raymond Ray-Jones - New Light on Dark Days	3

Editorial

When I first started my research into the St Ives Society of Artists ("STISA"), I had no interest in etchings, aquatints and other forms of printmaking. However, I soon picked up that the 'black and white' section of STISA had been exceptionally highly regarded, particularly in the early 1930s, and so thought it would be worth paying a visit to the British Museum and the V & A to view their collections. As the tissue paper was peeled back to reveal gem after gem by printmakers such as Frank Brangwyn, Sydney Lee, Alfred Hartley, Job Nixon, Raymond Ray-Jones, Saloman Van Abbé, etc., my attitude towards 'black and white' work was transformed completely. Of all the superb prints that I was shown that day, one stood out - the etched self portrait of Raymond Ray-Jones - and I made certain when I designed *Creating A Splash* that it received a full page spread. However, I could find very little information about the artist, other than he had moved to Cornwall in 1933 but had only remained a member of STISA for a short period. Then, at the private view of the Doncaster leg of the *Creating A Splash* tour, I was approached by Paul Sanderson, who had connections with the artist's family, and who had done a considerable amount of research into Ray-Jones' life and career. He also put me in contact with the artist's son, Alan, and this meant that the second edition of *Creating A Splash* was able to feature a much longer biographical note on Ray-Jones, as well as a photo of him in his home in Carbis Bay. I also learnt that, tragically, he had committed suicide there in 1942.

In subsequent years, both Alan and Paul have kept in touch and, at one juncture, Alan even asked if I would be prepared to write a biography of his father. I declined for several reasons, but one of these was the seeming lack of any significant Cornish element, as although his father was based in Cornwall for the best part of a decade, he did not appear to have produced very much, if any, Cornish work. Nevertheless, Alan, with considerable assistance from Paul, has continued to try to get his father's work more widely appreciated and has recently made a most generous donation of some of the best work from the family collection to the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. During the process of sifting through this collection, a series of fine portrait sketches of a number of Raymond's artist colleagues in St Ives came to light, revealing that he did take an active part in the colony, albeit struggling to complete any new work. This prompted me to visit Alan again, when he proceeded to show me his father's photographic portfolio, most of which appears to date from his time in St Ives. Whilst, at the outset, these photographs were most probably taken to aid his painting, there is the possibility that, given the death of the etching market and his struggles with watercolours, he was actually contemplating a move into photography - an art form in which his son, Tony, later found fame. Certainly, by the late 1930s, he had developed a considerable enthusiasm for photography.

Given that Paul has been successful in getting articles on Raymond published in a number of magazines, including the Parish magazine of St Uny, Lelant, where Raymond is buried in an unmarked grave, my objective initially was to concentrate on further analysis of the reasons behind (a) his move to Cornwall; (b) his lack of productivity during his Cornish years, (c) his interest in photography, and (d) his suicide. However, it has proved impossible to explain the difficulties that he had producing new work in Cornwall, without referring back to similar difficulties that he had experienced in the post-War period, both before and after marriage, and before and after the collapse of the etching market, and without contrasting these struggles with the fertile period before the War during which he produced some of his best work. Whilst Paul's articles have included few illustrations, I have been able to draw extensively on Alan's fascinating collection of photographs, and will highlight a number of the fine pieces that Alan has donated to the Whitworth ("the Whitworth donation") (measurements given in mm).

In addition to Alan and Paul, who have very generously made over to me all their research, I am also indebted to Raymond's second son, Philip, for his memories as well. Notwithstanding that Raymond has left behind him numerous examples of his extraordinary technical skill, his life story is in many respects a sad tale, and it is a huge compliment to all three that there was no pressure on me to airbrush the difficult parts.

David Tovey



Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation)

Self Portrait
(chalk, 625 x 460)

Raymond Ray-Jones / New Light on Dark Days

Raymond Ray-Jones, R.E., S.G.A., A.R.C.A. (1886 -1942) was born Raymond Jones at 81 Uxbridge Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, on 31 August 1886. He was the eldest of nine children of Martha Jones and Samuel Shepley Jones, a cabinet maker. His parents were Catholics, and his father was the organist for over 50 years at St Anne's Church, Ashton. His family, probably of Welsh ancestry, were of working class origins - his grandfather, Frederick, was a house painter, and his great-grandfather David Jones was a cotton weaver. His parents were not well off and expected their eldest child to go out to work to contribute to the family income. Accordingly, at the age of 14, Raymond left school and started working in the cost department at the National Gas and Oil Engine Company, Ashton. The 'National', which opened in 1890, was developing the new technology required for the production of diesel engines, as an extension to their gas engine range, and the company, at which Raymond's younger brother, Joe, later became Managing Director, was at the forefront of this technology. However, having demonstrated his enthusiasm for art by running away from home whilst at school to visit an exhibition in Birmingham, Raymond was permitted to attend night classes at the local Technical School. Then, as his artistic ability manifested itself, he became a student at The Heggibottom School of Art, Ashton-under-Lyne under the direction of J.H. Cronshaw. Numerous certificates catalogue his progress through the Art School from 1902 to 1907, and in 1905-6 his abilities were recognised by the award of a Board of Education Free Studentship, a County Council Art Exhibition of £15 per annum for two years (noted as being "First on the List"), and a Board of Education Local Scholarship of £20 per annum for 3 years.

Raymond's ultimate objective of studying at the Royal College of Art ("RCA") in London was achieved in 1907, at the age of 21, when he won a Board of Education Royal Exhibition of £50 per annum, coupled with free tuition at the RCA for two years. Other awards he gained included a Lancashire County Council Art Scholarship to the value of £60 per annum for 3 years, a Draper's Scholarship for £5 for 1907-08, and the King's Prize of £2 for freehand drawing. At the RCA, he studied under Sir Frank Short and Professor Gerald Moira. Short, in particular, who became a close friend, was to be a huge influence upon his career. Professor Robert Meyrick, Head of the School of Art and Keeper of Art, Aberystwyth University, kindly passed comment for me on the manner in which this influence is apparent in Raymond's work.

"The exactitude of mark that etching affords suited Ray-Jones's penchant for accuracy and detail. Under Sir Frank Short, Professor of Engraving at the Royal College of Art, Ray-Jones received a thorough foundation in the materials of his craft – grounds, inks, and papers – and methods – needling, wiping, and proofing. After all, Short had been entrusted to print plates by the late James McNeill Whistler, regarded then to be greatest painter-etcher since Rembrandt. Short was the most influential champion of the Whistlerian etched line and freely passed on the Master's techniques to his students. The influence of Short's teaching is most evident in Ray-Jones's street scenes and cityscapes. His use of strong sunlight and dark shadows reinforce spatial recession as well as evoke the Mediterranean light that so attracted him to the Continent. Short's advocacy of Whistler's use of pictorial space makes itself felt in Ray-Jones' Continental scenes. The design is worked outwards from the centre of the plate, with lines fading to nothing at the peripheries."

In 1910, Raymond became an Associate of the RCA and it is in this year that it is believed that he completed his famous self-portrait, in connection with an application for a British Institute scholarship. The original chalk drawing for this (625 x 460mm), illustrated on p.3, is one of the items in the Whitworth donation. It presents the artist as self assured and fashionably dressed. His dark overcoat has its collars turned up informally and a banded Homburg hat hides his already thinning hair. By contrast, a light coloured patterned scarf is draped around his neck so that no shirt or tie is visible. It is a boyish face, with pert lips, that holds your gaze and, lit from the left, the right side is in shadow. Set against a light, plain background, the whole is rendered in meticulous detail.

Whether the etched version of the portrait dates from as early as 1910 is uncertain. If so, it is quite surprising that it was not exhibited, seemingly, until 1915 or 1916.¹ According to Raymond, in 1925, only three first state prints of the etched version were still extant at that time, as the plate was apparently damaged when Sir Frank Short dropped it! One of these is owned by the British Museum (acquired in 1916), and one by the National Portrait Gallery. Forty were printed of the second state.² When this was shown, in 1922, in an exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in London entitled "The Seventh Exhibition of Modern Masters of Etching", it was hailed as "one of the finest etched portraits of contemporary times", with all available copies sold on the first day. Robert Meyrick calls it "truly one of the landmarks of etched self-portraiture" and hails "its technical brilliance and the depth of character portrayed".

In May 1911, Raymond enrolled at the Julian Academy in Paris, where he was placed in the atelier run by Jean-Paul Laurens, and, that year, he was awarded the Prix Julian and Medal for portrait painting for a portrait of a female. In line with tradition at Julian's, he was also at the receiving end of practical jokes, with painstakingly prepared etchings being used by fellow students to wrap butter purchased from a local market! Whilst he developed a great affection for Paris, some of his finest architectural etchings being of Parisian street scenes, he struggled financially and often had to go without food in meagre attic rooms. It is not clear how long Raymond studied in Paris, but several etchings of Paris scenes are dated 1913.³

Raymond was successful for the first time at the Royal Academy in 1913 with the etching *Rue du Four, Paris*, but, later that year, most probably for commercial reasons, he decided to adopt the name Ray-Jones, albeit he never formalised the change of name by deed-poll. In 1914, he was again successful at the RA with *La facade, St Germain l'Auxerrois, Paris* (see p.6) and that year, was created an Associate of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers ("RE").



Detail from 1911 photograph of students at the Julian Academy. Raymond is at the back in the centre

1 In a letter from the artist to Manchester Art Gallery on 10/2/1925, he indicates that it was first exhibited at the RE in 1915, but this is not corroborated by the information provided by the RE to Paul Sanderson. The British Museum consider it was exhibited at the RE in 1916 (no 63).

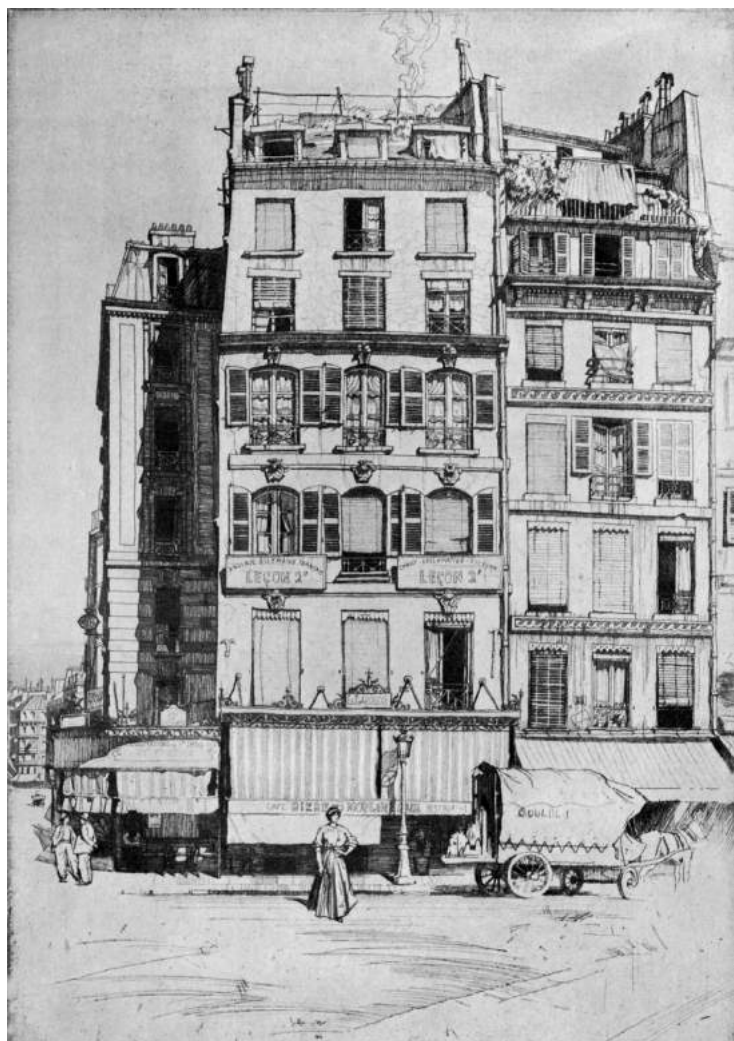
2 The plate of the first state was half an inch longer. Letter from the artist to Manchester Art Gallery, 10/2/1925. The British Museum was told when it acquired the print in 1916 that it was one of five first state prints, suggesting that two others were damaged before Raymond's letter in 1925.

3 Ray-Jones family folklore indicates that, prior to World War I, Raymond was arrested for spying in Venice, as the authorities were concerned about the exceptionally detailed drawings that he was making and this is also mentioned in the piece 'Students of Short at the RCA 1891-1920'. However, there is no other indication, in the form of drawings or exhibits, that he visited Italy at this juncture and I wonder if the story actually relates to pre-World War II, as he was definitely in Venice in the late 1930s and one can imagine the Mussolini government being paranoid in this regard.

In 1915, *The Studio* produced a special publication *Paris - Past and Present*, which contained six illustrations by Raymond. These were *Pont Henri-Quatre*, *Quai de l'Hotel de Ville*, *St Germain l'Auxerrois*, *Cor d'Or*, *Rue du Four*, *Rue de chat qui pêche* and *Rue du Four, au Cor d'Or*. Other Paris scenes in the collection of the V & A include *Pont Neuf, Paris* (1913) (see p.6), *Pont de l'Alma, with the Passerelle Debilly beyond*, *La Rue Zacharie, Paris* (1913) and *West Portal, St Germain l'Auxerrois* (see p.6).

In 1916, *The Studio* produced a similar publication, *London - Past and Present*. This time, Raymond was only represented by one work, *Wellington Arch, Constitutional Hill*, his RA exhibit of 1915. His 1916 RA exhibit was also a London scene - *The Thames at Millbank* (see p.7).

If one pauses at this juncture, Raymond appears on the verge of a successful career. He had already demonstrated a magnificent ability as a draughtsman, both in portraiture and in architectural subjects. His ability to render with the same precision on an etched plate his self portrait in chalk indicated that he was a printmaker of exceptional talent, whilst his etchings of Parisian buildings demonstrated not only an ability to record the minute detail of architectural adornments, but also a fine sense of composition and an alertness to the artistic possibilities of scaffolding, washing lines, shop canopies and such like. Although the figures that he included might be considered at times a little wooden, they are very subsidiary to the main motif. Whilst clearly his pieces relied on intricately observed detail, so that both the initial pencil drawings and the consequent etchings must have taken some considerable time, he nevertheless produced in these early years an impressive body of work in both quality and quantity.



Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation)

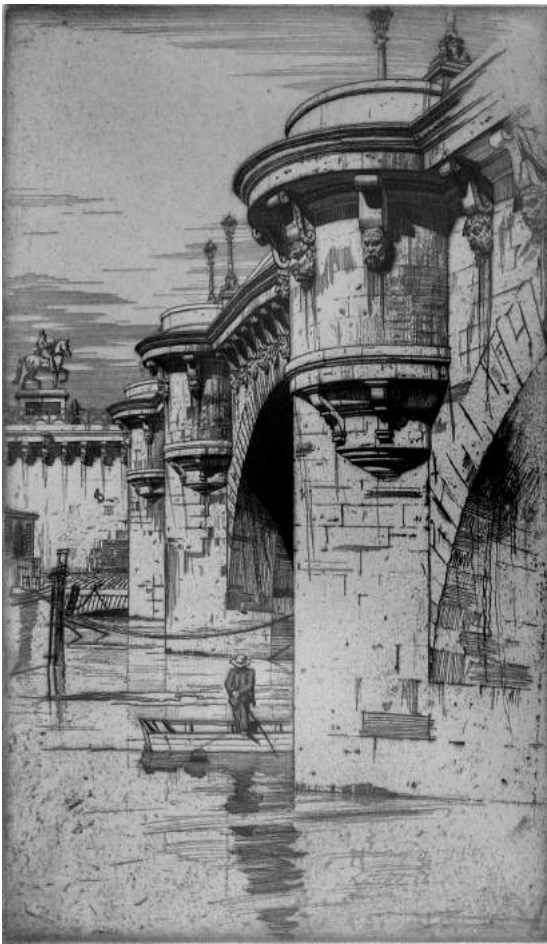
Quai de l'Hotel de Ville
(etching, 251 x 176)

One review described this as "masterly in its austere lines and clear-cut relief"



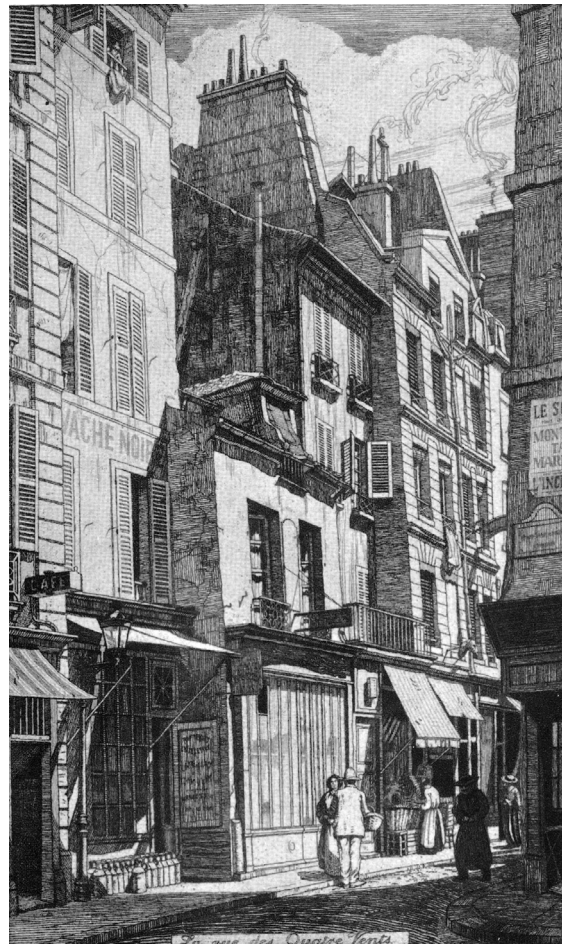
Raymond Ray-Jones
Au Cor d'Or, La Rue du Four
(Whitworth donation)
(etching, 264 x 97)

The drawing for this subject was also included in the donation.



Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation)

Pont Neuf, Paris
(etching, 320 x 188)



Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation)

La Rue des Quatre Vents
(etching, 276 x 164)

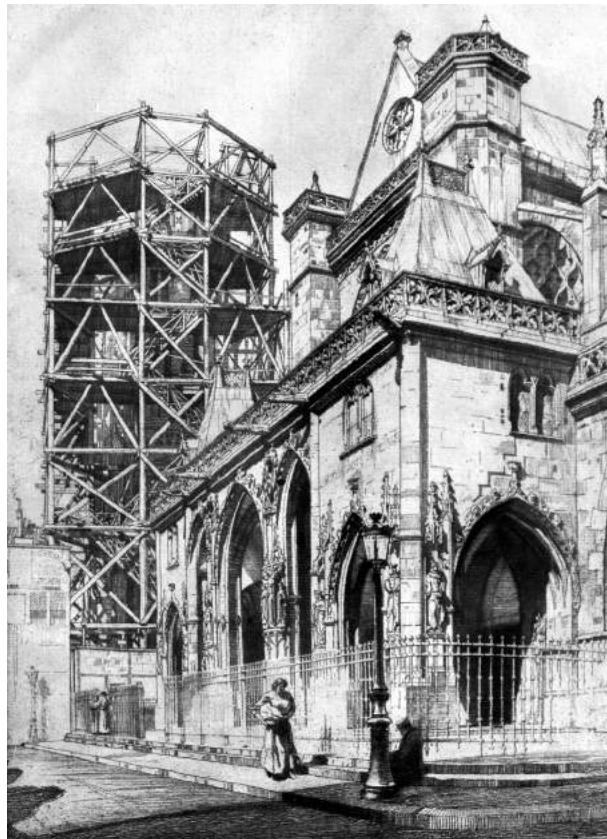
This work, with its decorative title in the plate, seems to have been exhibited first at the RA in 1922 and so may be the result of a post-war visit.



Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation)

*West Portal,
St Germain l'Auxerrois*
(etching, 214 x 214)

The drawing for this subject also included in donation.



Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation)

*La facade,
St Germain l'Auxerrois*
(etching, 313 x 234)

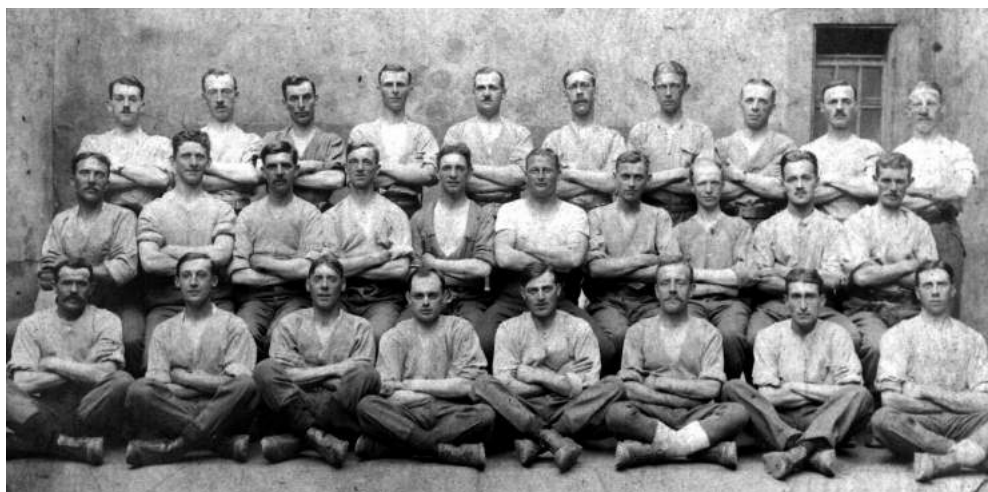


Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation)

The Thames at Millbank
(etching, 220 x 275)

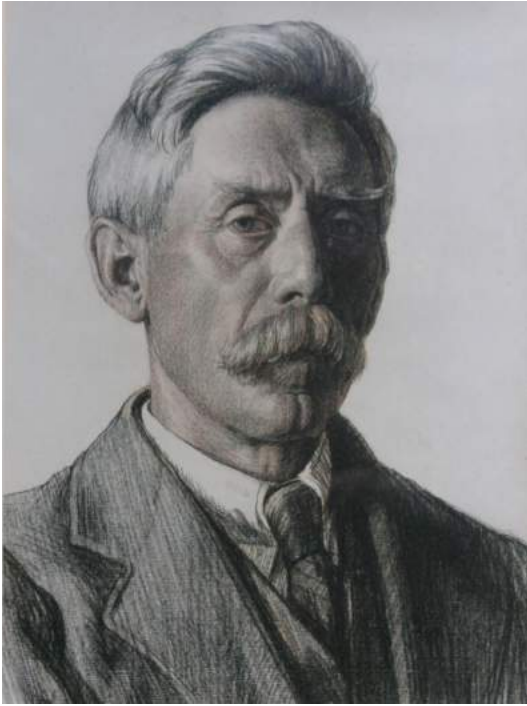
Furthermore, Raymond's talent was already being recognised by the leading art societies of the day. He had had to fight hard for the opportunity to become an artist in the first place and, in the light of his background and lack of schooling, the status that he had now acquired was an extraordinary achievement - the result of much hard work and a single-minded dedication to his art.

During the war, Raymond served with the Royal Horse Artillery at Woolwich, in a clerical position, since his health was apparently not good enough for him to serve in France.⁴ It is thought that the issue concerned his lungs. He is also thought to have served for a spell with the Royal West Kent Regiment in Chatham and Rochester, where he may have guarded prisoners of war. The family recall a photo of him during bayonet practice appearing in the *Daily Mail* at some juncture. He remained in the Army for two years after the war ended. He hated the whole experience, but, as his war records have been destroyed, it is not possible to determine how precisely he may have been affected. However, something dramatic appears to have happened, as the character that emerges after the war is one racked by self-doubt, nervy and seemingly unable to apply himself to his art as much as he had done beforehand. This is all the more surprising as the 1920s saw the heyday of the etching market, when he should have been able to make a comfortable living.



Raymond (middle row, 3rd from right) during his Army days

⁴ This is recorded in an article on him in a piece 'Students of Short at the RCA 1891-1920'. This also indicated that his detailed sketches had meant that he had been mistaken for a spy in Italy prior to the First World War, albeit there is no other indication of him having gone to Italy at this juncture.



Raymond Ray-Jones
J.W.E. Pearce (chalk, 408 x 300)



Raymond Ray-Jones
Mrs I.K. Pearce (chalk, 402 x 300)

After the war, Raymond set up a studio in 6 & 8 Jubilee Place, Chelsea. In 1920, he was one of the Foundation Members of the Society of Graphic Art, but he produced very little new work. The scholarship funds that had helped to support him before the war were no longer available and economic conditions in the post-war period were variable. The family recall stories of him existing solely on porridge. In 1921, Leon Underwood (1890-1975) did a pencil portrait sketch of him, which might indicate that Raymond attended his Brook Green School for a while.

In 1922, Sir Frank Short put forward Raymond's name to a young Oxford law undergraduate, Edward Holroyd Pearce, who wanted to commission portraits of his parents. Edward, who later became a High Court Judge and subsequently Lord Pearce, was the son of John William Ernest Pearce, a headmaster and Latin scholar, who had recently retired from running his own private boys' boarding school, Merton Court, at Sidcup, and was soon to become (or was already) a well-known numismatist specialising in Roman coins of the fourth century AD. Edward's mother was Irene Kate Chaplin, daughter of Holroyd Chaplin, a prosperous London solicitor, who was interested in art, collected etchings, and knew Frank Short. In his unpublished biographical notes, Edward commented that Short had sent him to "Ray-Jones A.R.E., a fine artist, who never recovered after the war the artistic impetus or success that he had started to develop. To him my commission was a godsend. He had then been living for some time in an attic on one or two shillings a day. He did two slightly grim but finely drawn likenesses of my parents for me and my family and friends bought many of his etchings."

This introduction also led to Raymond having a commission to produce a portrait of Mrs Holroyd Chaplin and an etched portrait of the Rev Canon William Dawson, who had been headmaster of Brighton College since 1906. The latter came about, as J.W.E. Pearce was currently teaching there. However, it was not a success, as Edward Pearce recorded in his autobiographical notes.

"We persuaded Dawson, the handsome and popular Headmaster of Brighton College to sit for an etching, knowing that many would be glad to buy proofs of it. Unfortunately, the Headmaster liked speed and success while Ray-Jones was slow, diffident and unconvincing. The length of the sittings for the drawing irritated the sitter, and this made the artist still more nervous. By the time the etching was finished, months, even years had elapsed. The handsome popular Headmaster looked in the etching like some grim tyrannous pedagogue, and all hope of selling any proofs disappeared."

It appears as if the Dawson portrait might well have led on to other commissions, but its failure scotched this possibility, as, in a letter to Edward Pearce dated 14th June 1922, Raymond commented, "I have staked everything on the Dawson portrait, and believed, if it was successful, that it would make a certainty of the six portraits project. It has evidently failed dismally, for he writes to say that the project is abandoned!" Another portrait commission obtained through the Pearces - an oil of Lorna Beadle, sister of the BBC personality, Gerald Beadle - was also rejected upon completion for some reason. As a result, Raymond's finances remained in a parlous state, with him dreading each quarter day when his rent became due.



Raymond Ray-Jones in his studio at 6 & 8 Jubilee Place, Chelsea

Top : with Rev. Dawson portrait and etchings

Middle : with his printing press

Bottom : with Edward Pearce, viewing a copy of his self portrait



Raymond Ray-Jones

Left : *Effie* (pencil)
(family collection)

Right : *The Velvet Hat*

A copy of this etching
was acquired by the
British Museum in
1930.



The Dawson commission highlights the problems that Raymond had in making a career as a portraitist. Despite his brilliant technical ability, he was a slow and laborious worker, which meant that his sitters grew tired of the modelling process. Furthermore, he did not have the personality to put his models at their ease. In such situations, his working class background and lack of education will have made him uneasy, even if he was not actually shown up. Accordingly, the lucrative career of a portraitist proved to be closed to him, and, although his best works are his portraits, these tend to be of close family members, where he could relax and time was not of the essence.

Another consequence of the commissions from Edward Pearce was that he met Edward's eldest sister, Effie. Born in 1899, she had been brought up as one of the few girl pupils in her father's school, and, accordingly, was quite a tomboy. She was also quite bohemian in attitude and a bit of a rebel. Furthermore, she had had a riding accident when aged thirteen, which had left part of the left side of her face frozen. She was one of the few women students at that time to undertake training to become a doctor at St Mary's Hospital, and described how her fellow male students used to play 'catch' with human livers over the heads of the girls! However, she failed her Maths exam and transferred to the Middlesex Hospital to train as a masseuse. A letter to Edward Pearce, dated 23rd May 1923, might suggest that Raymond had already fallen for Effie, but had not made much headway. He commented, "Regarding Eros, the least said the better. He is not very friendly just now, and my aspirations seem quite beyond possibility of fulfilment. Yet one must expect misunderstanding I suppose." However, in due course, Effie sat for Raymond a number of times, and he used her as the subject for his fine etched portrait, *Lamplight* (see below), which was the Print Collectors Club 1925 Presentation Plate.⁵ A chalk drawing of her retained by the family shows the effect of her Bell's Palsy (see below). In due course, Raymond and Effie fell in love and, whilst Raymond was unlikely to have been the sort of match that Effie's parents would have hoped for, they eventually consented to the marriage, as men were in short supply after the war.



Raymond Ray-Jones
(Whitworth donation) *Lamplight*
(etching, 200 x 182)



Raymond Ray-Jones *Effie*
(chalk, 527 x 406)

⁵ The trial proof of this print is one of two of his prints held by the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Raymond Ray-Jones

Nude (Effie)

(Whitworth donation)
(pencil, 320 x 418)

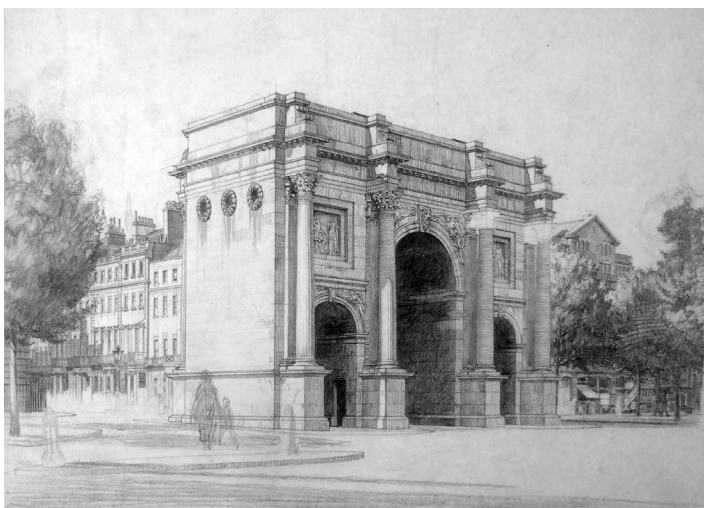


After their marriage on 12th February 1926 at Brighton Registry Office, Effie and Raymond lived initially at 'Woodhall', in Woodham Walter, a village near Maldon in Essex, which was presumably bought for them by Effie's parents. One would have thought, from Raymond's point of view, that marriage into a reasonably wealthy middle class family would have provided the security for him to blossom, but it appears to have had the opposite effect, for he felt uneasy moving in their social circles, disagreed with their political views and was most uncomfortable relying on them financially.

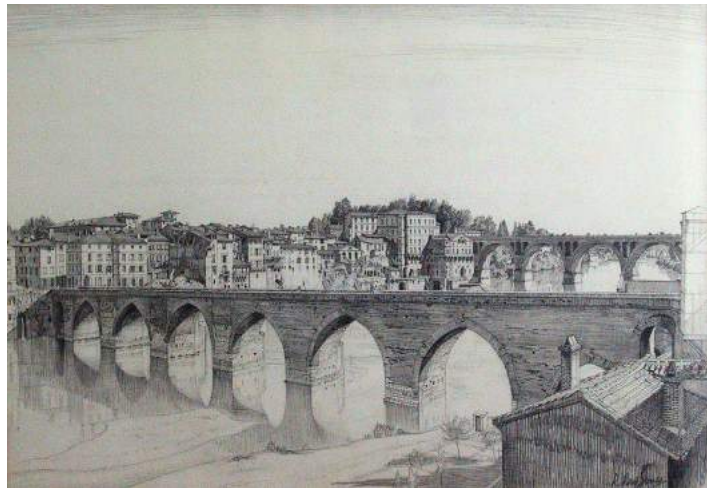
In 1926, Raymond was made a full member of RE, albeit he had only exhibited there since 1917 *La Rue des Quatre Vents* (1922), the portrait of the Rev Dawson (1923), *Wellington Arch*, *Constitutional Hill (with quadriga)* (1924) and *The Velvet Hat* (1926). The latter, another portrait of Effie, wearing a coat with a fur collar and a velvet hat, was also shown at the RA that year (see p.10). Yet, Raymond had told Edward Pearce in a letter in 1922 that he saw "etching of the architectural variety" as "the only hopeful line". I have not found any reference to *La Rue des Quatre Vents* before 1922 and so it may be a new piece, particularly as, unlike his other Paris etchings, its title is incorporated in a decorative style into the plate (see p.6). Whether it originated from another visit to Paris is unclear. However, one would have expected Raymond during this period to have done further etchings of London buildings and streets if he felt that architectural etchings were his best option. Instead, the only possible new work that was exhibited was his re-working of his etching of the Wellington Arch to show the quadriga, but, as this had been added in 1912, there is no guarantee that this is a post-War piece either. A sketch of Marble Arch (see below) is the only architectural drawing of a London subject in the family collection. Accordingly, despite, by 1926, the etching boom being in full swing, Raymond, for some reason, was not able to produce new work to take advantage of it.

Raymond Ray-Jones

Marble Arch (pencil)



Raymond Ray-Jones
Two Bridges, Albi
 (Whitworth donation)
 (pencil, 244 x 351)



Despite his election at the RE, Raymond did not exhibit there again, other than two works in 1930. He also resigned from the Society of Graphic Arts in 1926. The Society's records reveal that the Council, having been made aware of "his serious difficulties", "agreed that Mr G.L. Brockhurst should ask him to remain a member without liability as to subscription until his position was improved".⁶ Such an offer was most unusual, evidencing the high regard in which he was held, but even his old student friend, Brockhurst, could not persuade him to accept it. This episode suggests that, right from the outset of his marriage, there were severe difficulties on the financial front.

Raymond did continue to exhibit at the RA, and one of his 1927 exhibits was, unusually, an oil. Albeit entitled *Effie*, it was not a close up of his wife, but depicted her sitting by the far window in the elegant drawing room of her parents' home in Brighton. Above her head hangs his self portrait! Effie continued to be Raymond's best model and there are a number of fine sketches of her in the family collection, including a superb nude pencil sketch, which is part of the Whitworth donation (see p.11).

Despite their financial circumstances, Raymond and Effie seem to have managed to travel on the Continent most years, and Raymond found these trips mildly stimulating. Given that he had clearly enjoyed his time in Paris, one might imagine that he would have liked to have shown his new bride the sights there, and his second RA exhibit of 1927 was a depiction of the *Pont Neuf, Paris*, but this may possibly be a pre-War work.⁷ In 1928, his RA exhibit was *Le Pont Vieux, Albi*, and the family collection also includes a drawing *The Two Bridges, Albi* (see above). However, due to Raymond's insistence on meticulous detail, it does not appear as if any other work was produced. Effie later recalled interminable hours spent on river banks during visits to France watching Raymond counting the bricks or stones in each course of bridge abutments. He also apparently became exasperated when drawing clouds, as they changed before he could draw them accurately in every detail. He appeared not to be able to cope if anything had to be left to his imagination.

In 1929, his RA exhibit was a pencil drawing *Rue des Ecuyers, Chartres*, and the family collection includes a couple of landscape watercolours, with the towers of the Cathedral as a backdrop. However, landscape was not his forté.

Raymond Ray-Jones
L'Oratoire, Avignon
 (Whitworth donation)
 (pencil with wash, 280 x 325)



⁶ Information courtesy Geraldine Jones, Archivist of SGFA, via Paul Sanderson.

⁷ Two depictions of the Pont Neuf are recorded in the catalogue of Raymond's work maintained by his son, Alan. One, an etching, was done before the war and was illustrated in *Colour* magazine in 1917 when it was shown at the Winter Exhibition of Graphic Art at the RA. The other, a different view, is a watercolour and so this might be the 1927 RA exhibit.



Raymond Ray-Jones *Palais des Papes, Avignon* (Whitworth donation) (pencil, 350 x 200) with Raymond's photo below

Raymond Ray-Jones *Pont Benezet, Avignon* (etching, 201 x 253), with Raymond's photo below

A trip to Avignon was far more productive. This resulted in an etching *Pont St Benezet, Avignon*, which was shown at the RA in 1930 and was also his last exhibit at the RE that year. The family collection also includes another work depicting the Pont St Benezet from a different angle, a couple of the Palace of the Popes, one of the walls of the city and one of the Oratory (see p.12). Why he did not exhibit these other works is unclear. By this juncture, Raymond was using a camera to record scenes, which may have helped him to produce further works on his return home, but a comparison between the photographs taken and the works produced (see above) reveals that Raymond did not slavishly copy the photos. There are also two uncompleted watercolours of different perspectives of the Pont St Benezet (see below). With the etching market having died overnight with the Wall Street Crash in 1929, Raymond may have realised that he needed to work in another medium, but although he must have spent a considerable amount of time drawing the outline of the bridge and its adjoining buildings, he was not a natural colourist. There are a number of examples of unfinished watercolours in the family collection.



Raymond Ray-Jones Unfinished watercolours of *Pont Benezet, Avignon* in studio collection



Raymond's son, Alan, at Christmas 1932 at 'Woodhall'.



Raymond Ray-Jones *The Student*
(Whitworth donation) (drypoint, 220 x 220)

The Avignon trip was the last one to inspire Raymond to produce a flurry of new work. Indeed, such Continental trips may have been put on hold for a while, as, in 1930, Effie gave birth to their first child, Alan. However, new additions to the family do not appear to have inspired Raymond to sketch - young children did not stay still enough for him. There are just two works featuring his eldest son, Alan - one in 1935 and one in 1941 (see p.24), and none of his other two sons. In fact, he may have found the consequent disruptions in the household off-putting and, certainly, it is noticeable that Effie, now that she had maternal duties to attend to, hardly sat for him at all - the family have just one chalk drawing of her dating from the 1930s. Furthermore, due to the Great Depression of the early 1930s, which made a number of artists feel that the production of new work was pointless as sales had dried up completely, Raymond seems not only to have ceased to paint or etch, but also to have decided that it was not worth the cost of exhibiting work. Not only did he cease to send to the RE, but, apart from submitting a pencil version of the bridge at Avignon in 1931, he did not exhibit again at the RA until 1936.

Raymond received some welcome publicity in 1931 when the Crown Prince of Sweden ordered an etching off him and, in the article that recorded this news, it was stated that he had in the past exhibited in international exhibitions in Paris, Venice, Hamburg, Dresden, Zurich, Geneva, Toronto, Sydney and Dunedin. His representation in these shows will have been organised by his London agent, Colnaghi, but it was a condition of this firm that the etching plate was destroyed after the initial run had been printed off. This was essential for etchings to maintain their value in the hands of purchasers, but Raymond found the practice distressing, after all the hard work that had gone into the plate's preparation.

In 1933, it was decided that a change was needed. There is no record of the precise reasons behind the move to Carbis Bay, just outside St Ives, in Cornwall, or who was the prime mover behind the decision. However, it seems clear that the catalyst for the move was Job Nixon, a friend and fellow artist-printmaker, who had moved down to Cornwall in 1931, living first in Lamorna and then in St Ives. He was able to tell Raymond and Effie about how Cornwall was much cheaper, about the wealth of subjects to suit artists of all genres and the fact that STISA was a thriving and sociable group who were holding successful touring exhibitions around the country at which significant sales were being made. Perhaps, if Raymond was based in a close artistic environment, where he could mix and discuss art with fellow brothers of the brush, he might be pulled out of his lethargy. Raymond might also have been glad to get away from the Pearce family social circle as well. Furthermore, Cornwall would be a great place to bring up young children, for Effie was pregnant again with their second son, Philip. In any event, it seemed an idea worth exploring and they paid a visit early in 1933, as Raymond was made a member of STISA in late February. Then, following the birth of Philip in November, they acquired the property, 'Wheal Speed', Chyangwheal, in Carbis Bay, which had a nice studio, with a north-facing light, in which Raymond could work. However, he retained his rooms at 6 & 8 Jubilee Place, Chelsea, subletting them to other artists.

Job Nixon was an extrovert character with a delightful sense of humour, who gave the impression of being carefree and irresponsible, but who was nevertheless industrious. He and his artist wife, Nina Berry, who was known as 'Bea', lived a bohemian existence in a gypsy caravan, which they tended to park on The Island in St Ives. However, on occasion, they parked the caravan in the field adjoining 'Wheal Speed' and the two couples enjoyed days on the beach with their young children.



The Nixons' caravan in the field at 'Wheal Speed'

Nixon, like Raymond, was primarily an etcher and so suffered the same problem when the etching market collapsed in 1929. Indeed, he is not known to have produced an etching during his time in Cornwall. Instead, he decided to concentrate on watercolours and, although these tend to betray his primary calling by being little more than coloured line drawings, he had nearly a hundred works accepted by the RWS in the decade 1928-1938. Raymond, though, seems to have had a difficulty with painting from the outset, as he told Edward Pearce in 1922, when it was suggested that he might accept a painting commission. "You see I am so very much out of practice with painting, it would probably result in getting into a morass, as before, and so the time would be wasted. It would take some time to get into form and then..... an interval, and the same thing to go through again the next time a painting was required. No, I am convinced that one must paint constantly, or leave it entirely alone. I do hope you will see that my present precarious position forbids any further experiments."⁸ Even when there was no alternative, it appears as if Raymond could not master watercolour painting to his satisfaction. There is just one completed watercolour of St Ives, dated 1939, in the family collection, a view over the harbour with the properties in the foreground depicted in extraordinary detail - every stone, brick, tile and mortar joint recorded for posterity (see p.16). Nevertheless, it has more atmosphere than many of Nixon's watercolours and suggests that if he had been able to apply himself diligently to the genre, he would have had some success.

Whilst the plethora of landscape and marine subjects in the locality did not suit Raymond's speciality, there were still streets in St Ives that featured quaint old buildings, with atmosphere and charm. Indeed, artists such as Herbert Truman, John Park and Leonard Richmond were at this time producing a range of attractive street scenes for the burgeoning postcard market. However, there is just one pencil sketch of a St Ives street scene by Raymond in the family collection. What put him off tackling even such subjects as these, where he would have been able to showcase his expertise as an architectural draughtsman? Did he feel intimidated by the competition?



The Nixon and Ray-Jones families (with some of Raymond's relations) on the beach at Porthcurno

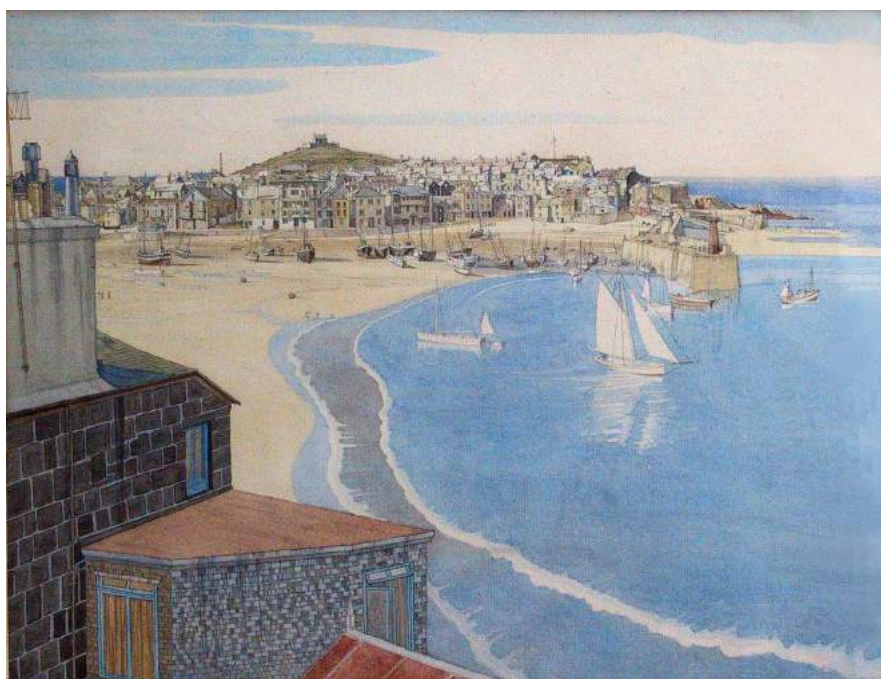
⁸ Undated letter, probably May/June 1922.

Nixon, when he settled in St Ives, immediately became involved with STISA, serving on its Committee and giving a talk on *The Art of Etching*. To supplement his income, he also ran a painting school at the Porthmeor Studios on Tuesday and Friday evenings. As has been seen, Raymond was immediately welcomed as a member of STISA, but, during the year or so that he was involved, he exhibited, for the most part, old etchings, such as his *Self-Portrait* (which was not for sale), *Quai de l'Hotel de Ville*, *St German l'Auxerrois*, *Pont Neuf, Paris*, *La Rue des Quatre Vents, Paris*, *Lamplight* and *Pont St Benezit, Avignon*. The one new work was an oil portrait of Effie's aunt, Phyllis, Wife of P.H.Cowell Esq, D.Sc, F.R.S., which was included in the 1934 Summer show.

Why Raymond did not remain a member of STISA is not known, but he was not involved at all after 1934. He may well have concluded that the subscription was not worth his while, given that his etchings were not selling. However, Borlase Smart, who was the leading personality in the Society, was always insistent on artists exhibiting new work, which, despite the move, Raymond was not producing. Furthermore, there were some artists, such as Arthur Hayward and Raymond's Carbis Bay neighbour, Hugh Gresty, who disagreed with Smart's approach and left the Society. Nixon too had left by early 1935 - not because of any disagreements but because he had been tempted back to London by an offer of a teaching post at the Slade School. As Bea Nixon had also become a good friend of Effie, they will have been missed.

Raymond's short involvement with STISA and his lack of exhibited St Ives work suggested that he had failed to immerse himself in the artistic community in St Ives at all. Accordingly, the discovery of a series of portrait sketches of other local artists, seemingly done over a period of years, transforms our understanding of his time in the colony. In addition to Job and Bea Nixon, the artists featured are fellow etcher, Saloman Van Abbé, Leonard Richmond (and most probably his daughter, Olive Dexter), Fred Bottomley, Alixe Shearer Armstrong and Pauline Hewitt.

It is thought that these sketches were done in figure drawing sessions held by the artists at which one of their number sat for their colleagues. There are references to such sessions in the early days of STISA, when they were organised by Pauline Hewitt. They could also have been part of Job Nixon's art school curriculum. Many of the artists sketched by Raymond had lengthy connections with the colony, but most can be placed in St Ives in 1934. However, the fact that a similar sketch in conte crayon of a female, which appeared at auction in 2016, is dated 1940 and that Raymond himself featured as the model in a sketch done in 1941 by Mary Millar Watt, then a student at the St Ives School of Painting set up by Leonard Fuller in 1938, suggests that he continued to be involved with these sessions, on occasion, right through his time in the colony. Raymond's son, Alan, also recalls his father having erudite discussions with his artist friends, but these might merely have highlighted how Raymond's approach was different from the prevailing taste. Nevertheless, genuine friendships appear to have developed with their Carbis Bay neighbours, Hugh and Elizabeth Gresty, and Bernard Leach and his family. Isobel Heath and Agnes Drey were two other artist friends that Philip recalls. In a bid to appear artistic, Raymond started to wear a beret, as did Leonard Richmond, but it did not really suit him. There was also a fashion amongst the artist fraternity for colourful cravats.



Raymond Ray-Jones *St Ives* (watercolour, 303 x 401)



Raymond Ray-Jones

Sketches of St Ives artist
colleagues

Clockwise, from top left

*Job Nixon
Nina Berry (Bea Nixon)
Pauline Hewitt
Olive Dexter
Alix Shearer Armstrong
Unknown*





Raymond Ray-Jones
Sketches of St Ives artist
colleagues

Clockwise, from top left

Leonard Richmond
Fred Bottomley
Saloman Van Abbé
Unknown
Unknown
Unknown



Mary Millar Watt *Raymond Ray-Jones* c.1941



Raymond Ray-Jones in his library at 'Wheal Speed'



Raymond Ray-Jones painting in Verona in 1936.
Effie was detailed to keep the street urchins at bay!

In 1936, Raymond exhibited for the last time at the RA - and these may have been his last exhibits anywhere. One work was his drypoint of Effie, *The Student*, the date of which is not known (see p.14). The other was a pencil sketch *Les Arenes, Arles*, and a group of photographs indicate that Raymond and Effie had managed to get away for a holiday there, possibly in 1935. Other photographs and sketches indicate trips in other years to Verona, in 1936, and Venice. Whilst the Verona trip did not result in many photographs or sketches, he did produce one delicately coloured watercolour of a street scene there (see below) that suggested that he was beginning to find an attractive style that could have proved popular with traditionalists, albeit 1930s taste favoured less detail and simplified, even stylized, forms with an emphasis on decorative pattern.

However, it was Venice that clearly inspired Raymond the most and there are far more photographs of this city than of any of the other places that he and Effie visited. These photographs are nearly all very carefully composed and, whilst he clearly envisaged using some of these as the basis for pencil or watercolour sketches, there are indications that he intended them to stand on their own as photographs. Indeed, some are of night-time scenes that would not have been able to be captured in paint (see p.21). Quite a number of the photographs he arranged to have enlarged. Included in the family collection was an unfinished watercolour of the Grand Canal, in which he was incorporating detail from a series of different photographs of the same scene. There is also a pencil sketch, which is clearly based significantly on a photograph of a side canal scene (see p.20).

Whilst photos show Effie in Verona and Venice with Raymond, their son, Philip, recalls his mother indicating that Raymond had sometimes gone on such trips on his own, but that she had had to rush out with funds, as he was trying to live on 6d a day.



Raymond Ray-Jones *Street scene, Verona*



Raymond Ray-Jones

The Grand Canal, Venice (unfinished),
with related photographs



Raymond Ray-Jones

Side Canal, Venice (pencil),
with related photograph





Raymond Ray-Jones

A selection of
Venetian photographs





Raymond's children, Alan and Philip, recall that the outbreak of the War depressed their father further, particularly as it meant that the foreign travel, that seemed to stimulate his muse best, was no longer possible. He had hoped, apparently, to return to Venice, to check up on some details, and was horrified that friends made there were now considered enemies. However, his increased interest in photography, as a result of the Venice trip, led to him looking with new eyes at St Ives, and he took a series of photographs of the town during 1940. Again, he arranged for several of these to be blown up in different sizes and placed in display wallets, almost as if he was contemplating marketing them. Even if his thinking was not yet this advanced, he clearly was intending to use them as a basis for sketches.



There was nothing terribly original about his choice of subjects - for instance, Norway Lane, a busy scene outside The Sloop Inn, a view of the harbour over the roofs of St Andrew's Street, with the church tower framing the left of the scene, and a view of the harbour at low tide, with the wall of the West Pier, as an imposing foreground. However, these photographs suggest that he was more motivated than he had been for some time.



Any notion that the War was happening a safe distance away was scotched in January 1941 when a land mine was dropped on the Leach Pottery and, the same night, a German aircraft took off the chimney pot of 'Wheal Speed'.



Raymond Ray-Jones

A selection of St Ives photographs (1940)



Raymond Ray-Jones and his sons Alan and Philip in Carbis Bay 1940. Alan commented that this was the only family photograph in which Raymond is smiling.



Raymond and Effie Ray-Jones and their three children and her brother, Edward Pearce, and his family on the beach at Carbis Bay, August 1941

On 7th June 1941, Effie gave birth to a third son, Anthony. As it had been over seven years since the birth of Philip and given the War and their financial position, this addition to the family may not have been planned. Alan has commented that he had no doubt that his parents loved each other, but that Effie's brother, Jack, who stayed with them for a while in 1940-1, had indicated that there had been times when relations between Raymond, who was a fervent socialist, and Effie, who was outspoken, had not been good. Even a woman with the patience of a saint would have become exasperated, over time, with Raymond's inability to produce work or to make any other contribution to the family's finances. Effie tried a series of money-making ventures herself, making and selling leather gloves, boiled sweets and packets of crisps locally. For food, she made use of wild plants, such as nettles and dandelions, as well as vegetables from the garden. However, in the main, she was dependent on donations from her brother, Edward, who invariably gave her a cheque for £100 at Christmas. Raymond's brother, Joe Jones, who, in 1939, became Chief Engineer at the 'National', is also thought to have assisted.⁹ Alan recalled his father spending all his time in his studio, as if to get away from the family, albeit he clearly was not producing much work. In that era, diagnosis, comprehension and treatment of mental health issues, such as depression, or conditions, such as autism, were all rudimentary.

On 26th February 1942, it all became too much for Raymond and he committed suicide. The inquest heard that he had gone out of the house to his shed at 6.30 p.m., with "a funny sort of smile on his face". He had been due to catch a train to London at 8 p.m. as there was an issue to attend to concerning 6 & 8 Jubilee Place, Chelsea - at one stage in the War, it had been hit by incendiaries. He had also been worried about a small income tax demand, and would not seek advice over it. When Effie realised at 8 p.m. that he had not left, she went to investigate and saw his body through the window of the shed, with his shotgun nearby. He had left two notes. One read, "This is the last straw. I cannot find my identity card anywhere and the train is due to leave in an hour and twenty minutes. Everything gets lost these last few days or broken." The other said, "Goodbye my darling, my Alan, my Philip, my Anthony".¹⁰

Given that his own family were staunch Catholics, suicide was considered a cardinal sin and, for some forty years, the Jones family had little to do with Effie and her children. Even at St Uny, Lelant, where Raymond was buried, it was deemed that it should be in an unmarked grave, the location of which has not been determined. After Raymond's death, Effie moved to Tonbridge (1942-5), then Little Baddow, Essex (1945-8), selling 'Wheal Speed' in the late 1940s. She then settled in Hampstead, and valiantly brought up the three boys on her own, qualifying as a physiotherapist. She remained friends for many years, with Bea Nixon, who found herself in a similar position, as a young widow, with small children, after Job's untimely death in 1938. Effie died in January 1996, aged 96.

In 1929, James Laver in *A History of British and American Etching* had commented adroitly, "The best work of Ray-Jones has been in etched portraiture, notably the large self-portrait and the plates known as *Lamplight*. In both these, the exquisite modelling of the faces rivals that of Brockhurst. In architectural etchings, his manner is dignified and accurate, with a certain 'tightness' and lack of atmosphere. He

⁹ Joe Jones initiated the experimental work that led to the development of the dual fuel and high compression gas engines and became Managing Director of the company in 1951.

¹⁰ *The Western Morning News*, 2/3/1942.

strikes the critic as a very reserved artist who would do still better work with a little more confidence.”¹¹ Unfortunately, Raymond’s confidence waned rather than waxed thereafter and when Kenneth Guichard published his book *British Etchers 1850-1940* in 1977, Raymond’s work was so little known that Guichard thought that he had only produced four or five plates. Paul Sanderson has been instrumental in remedying this neglect, to some degree, by initiating two retrospective exhibitions in Tameside, the area of his birth - the first in 1992, which Effie was able to view, and then in 1996 a ‘father and son’ exhibition, which combined Raymond’s art with the photographs of his son, Anthony, who became, prior to his untimely death from leukemia aged just 30, a highly regarded photographer. Now, Alan’s generous donation to the Whitworth Art Gallery will ensure that his father’s art is remembered. Whilst his work has been represented in a number of major public collections for many years, the grouping of some thirty-five important paintings, drawings and etchings in a public gallery close to the town of his birth should ensure that there are regular displays of these works, so that his exceptional skills as a draughtsman and printmaker can be appreciated generation after generation.

Raymond, however, was not an all-rounder as an artist. His oil paintings, principally early portraits of his family, are competent, but not inspired, whilst mention has been made above of his difficulties with watercolour. He also lived in an age, where the development of colour photography meant that artists, in order to be different, had to produce work that was not reliant on intricate detail but took a broader view of their subjects. This could be impressionistic, or simplified, or stylized, but the artist needed to promote his own distinctive individual vision. Raymond was never able to do this. Whilst it can be seen that, where he used photography as an aid, he did not slavishly copy every single detail and did introduce nicely observed additional touches to add veracity; nevertheless, the fundamental framework for all his pieces was intimately observed intricate detail. He seemed unable to simplify this into its essential parts, and when faced with items that were not capable of being captured in detail, was unable to use his imagination to fill the void. For instance, his frustration with clouds, for not retaining their form long enough for him to sketch them in detail, led to him excluding clouds completely from the vast majority of his works. However, he still had many admirers and printmaking was an art form in which intricate detail was appreciated for longer than other genres. In fact, the 1920s was the heyday of the printmaking market when an artist, such as he, should have been able to have made a very decent living. It is such a shame that his mental state then did not enable him to benefit from this bonanza, for the collapse of the etching market in the 1930s impacted adversely on many far stronger characters than Raymond. His life is such a sad tale in many respects, with a tragic ending, and yet, despite everything, he has left behind a fine body of work. However, there will always be that feeling, “If only....”



Raymond Ray-Jones

The Artist's son, Alan, in velvet hat with feather
(Whitworth donation)
(etching, 238 x 171)
This is thought to date from 1935.



Raymond Ray-Jones

The Artist's son, Alan
(chalk, 410 x 393)
This is thought to date from 1941.

¹¹ J.Laver, *A History of British and American Etching*, London, 1929.