

William Lakin Turner (1867-1936)

Landscape artist

by Ian Hodkinson

The account below represents work in progress and will be updated as more information becomes available. I would love to hear of any information that might fill gaps in my research into WLT's life and paintings. I am trying to produce a definitive list of paintings and have details

of over 500 at the moment, compiled from various sources. The final version of this document will list sources. I can be contacted at i.d.hodkinson@ljmu.ac.uk

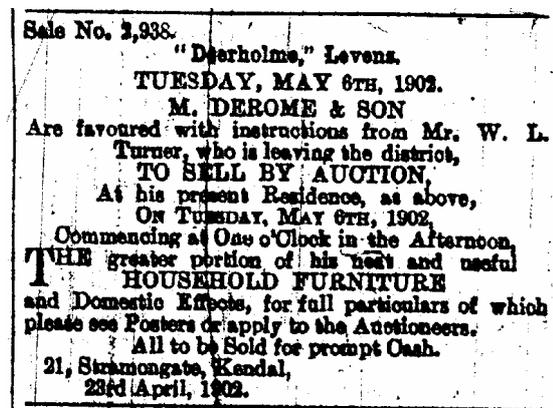
At the time of the 1901 census the landscape artist William Lakin Turner resided with his wife Lina at Deerholme, Church Road, Levens. The cottage still bears the same name today.



Deerholme in 2008

During that year he exhibited three paintings at the Royal Academy in London. An advertisement for the auction of his household furniture the following year in the Westmorland

Gazette heralded his departure from Levens.



From the April 26th 1902 issue of the Westmorland Gazette

William Lakin Turner was a founder member and treasurer of the Lake Artists Society who exhibited widely in Britain and Ireland. He painted predominantly in oils and is noted for his ability to capture the fleeting atmosphere of mists and sunshine on the hills and the awesome power and splendour of fast flowing rivers in spate. The subject of many of his early paintings were of landscapes in his

native Derbyshire, Surrey and Epping Forest, often incorporating woodland scenes or figures in a rural setting. Lowland river or seascapes, particularly along the Thames, and often featuring punts or sailing boats, also figured strongly. Much of his later inspiration, however, came from wild mountain landscapes. It is clear from exhibition catalogues and auction records that he visited the highlands of Scotland and the Lake District early in his career and it was to these areas he turned to later for creative stimulation. It is telling that all the paintings he exhibited at the Royal Academy were mountain landscapes, suggesting that he felt that this was his best work. There is little evidence for an extended stay in Scotland but it is clear that he made regular visits from the late 1880s onwards. Many of his Scottish paintings feature the area around Killin in Perthshire, notably the River Dochart, but also the River Spey, the area of the Trossachs around the Pass of Leny and the Moffat area of the southern uplands. Lake District scenes, however, dominate his output in the latter part of his life.

William Lakin Turner displayed his work at several notable exhibitions including The Royal Academy of Artists (1890-1911, 14 paintings), Royal Hibernian Academy (1885-86, 4 paintings), Royal Society of British Artists (1886, 1 painting), Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (? - ?, 6 paintings), Lake Artists Summer Exhibition (1905-1936, 350+ paintings) and Nottingham Castle Annual Art Exhibition (1883-1934, 81 paintings).

Examples of William Lakin Turner's work are to be found in Nottingham Museum and Art Gallery, Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery and the

Ruskin Museum, Coniston. A painting of '*Rydal Water*' owned by Beatrix Potter now hangs in the parlour of Hill Top, the property she bequeathed to the National Trust. Further examples of Turner's work are to be found in the collections of the Witt Library at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. A painting of '*The Coniston Valley*' featured on the front cover of the 1992 Wordsworth Editions publication of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*.

Paintings by William Lakin Turner have frequently come up for sale at major London auction houses including Sotheby's, Christie's, Bonhams and Phillips de Pury & Co, and there are auction records from the USA, Sweden and Germany. Paintings have been sold by at least fourteen UK provincial auction houses and locally his work figures regularly at auctions by Penrith Farmers & Kidds, which is not surprising, given his long association with the Lake District.

William Lakin Turner was born on 25 February 1867 at Barrow on Trent, Derbyshire, the son of George Turner (1841-1910) and Eliza Turner (nee Lakin) (1837-1900). His father was a well-known Derbyshire landscape artist and part-time farmer. It was from his father, who has been christened 'the Derbyshire Constable', and other visiting artists, that William was first exposed to the techniques of landscape painting. He was the eldest of four children, with two sisters Mary Turner (later Chamberlain then Woore) (1868-1937) and Florence Palmer Turner (1869-1955), and a younger brother Percy Reed Turner (1871->1936).

William's early education was in Barrow on Trent and then as a boarder at Trent College, Eaton, Derbyshire (1871 and 1881 census) where he later became a member of their alumni

association. By the 1891 census he was listing his profession as landscape artist, although an exhibition catalogue records paintings from as early as 1883 and his first painting accepted for exhibition at the Royal Academy, ‘*The gloom of the forest, near Killin*’, was in 1890. Interestingly, he figured twice in the 1891 census, living both with his parents at Walnut House, Barrow on Trent and as a visitor at the home of John and Mary Wykes, Little Eaton Village, Shardlow, Derbyshire.

In the early 1890’s William studied at the West London College of Arts in Chelsea and during this time he met his future wife, Rachel Selina (Lina) Burville. She was born in London June 15th 1868, the eldest daughter of the Chelsea photographer Wood Burville and his later estranged wife Julia. They were married on July 27th 1892 at St. Luke’s Church, Chelsea. Following their marriage the couple moved residence frequently, presumably to gain artistic inspiration from differing landscapes. The following (as yet incomplete) chronology is constructed from addresses given in exhibition catalogues.

Date	Residence
1890-93	Walnut House, Barrow on Trent, Derbyshire
1895	13 Bishop's Terrace, Fulham, London
1896	Clovelly, York Hill, Loughton, Essex
1899-1900	Hawkshead, Cumbria (then Lancashire)
1901-1902	Deerholme, Levens, Cumbria
1904-1907	The Firs, Keswick, Cumbria
1908	Applethwaite, near Keswick, Cumbria
1908	Springholme, Madeley, Shropshire
1909	Keswick, Cumbria
1910	Applethwaite, near Keswick, Cumbria
1911	Chestnut Hill, Keswick, Cumbria
1912	The Firs, Keswick, Cumbria
1913-1936	variously listed as Applethwaite, Keswick or just Keswick

Following the death of William’s mother Eliza in 1900 his father George remarried in 1903, to Kate Stevens Smith. He died seven years later in 1910, leaving the main part of his estate to his second wife. William received a small legacy of £100.

From around 1913 William and Lina appear to have settled down at Applethwaite, Cumbria, a small village on the hillside beneath Skiddaw, with views across to Derwentwater and the main central Lake District fells. It is unclear whether they rented the same cottage throughout their stay but latterly they resided at Yew Tree Cottage, Applethwaite. The discovery of numerous artist’s tubes and pots in the garden by the current owners suggests an extended occupation.



Yew Tree Cottage, Applethwaite

Yew Tree cottage was owned from 1909-1939 by Louisa Isabella Langton of Teeton House, Northamptonshire as part of a property portfolio and was presumably rented from her by the Turners.

A couple of myths surrounding William Lakin Turner require dispelling. In her splendid book *The Lake Artists Society A Centenary Celebration* Jane Renouf states that William Lakin Turner was thought to be a great nephew of Joseph Mallord William Turner, the famous watercolourist, and that his brother Percy Turner had acted as an advisor to the Courtaulds Institute in its purchases of artwork, particularly French impressionist paintings.

Jane based her statements on misleading information contained in a series of letters sent by the late Basil Robinson of Lorton to Henry Almond, the then secretary of the Lake Artists Society, in 1989. These letters were stimulated by an article entitled *Fine Art* in the July issue of *Cumbria* magazine of that year, which mentioned that the cover of the current Lakes Artists Summer Exhibition catalogue featured a painting of 'Grange in Borrowdale' by William Laker (sic) Turner. Basil Robinson

and his wife had been good friends to Turner's second wife Janet and were both executors and major beneficiaries of her will (see later).

The truth about William Lakin Turner is in reality more prosaic: there is no genealogical evidence to link him to JMW Turner and the Percy Turner associated with the Cortaulds Institute is Percy *Moore* Turner (1877-1950), who ran a Paris gallery for many years. William's brother Percy *Reed* Turner remained a farmer in Barrow on Trent throughout his life. Coincidentally, however, William's future wife Selina lived at 127 Cheyne Walks, Chelsea in 1881: at the time his death in 1851 JMW Turner lived at number 119. Perhaps this is the closest the families came together?

Lina Turner died of heart failure on November 30th 1935 in the Mary Hewetson Hospital in Keswick. Apart from small legacies to friends the bulk of her estate passed to "my dear husband William L Turner ...in token of his love and goodness to me".

In the context of the love and affection for William expressed by Lina, subsequent events are difficult to interpret. On April 2nd 1936, barely four months after her death, William made a new will, stating his intention to marry a Janet Langham and making her the major beneficiary. They were married five days later in Eastbourne, Sussex. William died shortly after, on October 21st 1936, in Yeatman Hospital, Sherborne, Dorset, from cancer of the brain and rectum.

TURNER.—William Lakin Turner passed away at Sherborne, Dorset, October 21st, 1936, elder son of the late George Turner, artist.—Funeral, Eastfields Hotel, Sherborne, Dorset, 12 o'clock Friday.

Death Notice from the Westmorland Gazette 24 October 1936

His death certificate curiously gave his address at the time as Kingsbury, Milborne Port, Wincanton, Somerset. It seems clear that William had been aware of his terminal condition at the time of his marriage.

Where and when William met Janet Langham remains, however, a mystery. At the time of their marriage she was a spinster, twenty five years his junior, apparently living in Eastbourne. Her death certificate states that she was born on April 26th 1894 in London, while her marriage certificate states that her father, John Langham, was a clerk. There is, unfortunately, no entry in the St Catherine's Index of births that matches this profile. Intriguingly, however, given the infrequency of Langham births in the UK, there is an unnamed female Langham born in Eastbourne on the correct date and registered by a solicitor Edward Owen Langham and his wife Emma Eugene Stapylton Langham. The 1891 and 1901 censuses similarly provide no clear indication of Janet's possible origins.

Other legacies in William Lakin Turner's will provide further insights into his life. He left small legacies to each of his three surviving siblings, Mary, Florence and Percy, including a chest of drawers from his father's house to his brother Percy. A sum of £10 was bequeathed to his friend and fellow artist James H Crossland of Ambleside who superintended William's last exhibition at the Lake Artists Society in the month before his death.

Donations to several Christian charities notably Muller's Orphanage, Bristol, The Bible Churchmans' Missionary Society, The Mildmay Mission to the Jews, The Christian Colporteur Association and the Scripture Gift

Mission suggest a strong religious commitment. This is supported by the fact that his friend the Rev. Henry Anton of Tunbridge, Kent acted as an executor.

Following William's death Janet Turner spent some time as a companion to Lady Strang Steel at Philiphaugh, near Selkirk in the Scottish borders where she is fondly remembered by the family. By 1971 she had taken up residence at the Smithy, Lorton, an address she was to occupy until her own death on June 15 1982 in Cockermouth Cottage Hospital. With Janet's demise the Turner dynasty became extinct: William and Lina remained childless as did each of William's three siblings.

In her will (dated 1971) Janet Turner left her entire estate to her friends and neighbours Basil and Dorothy Robinson, who also acted as her executors, and to her godson Quentin Alleyne Robinson in the form a trust fund. As final tribute to her late husband and in appreciation of her time spent at Philiphaugh she bequeathed, in a later codicil to her will, dated 1975, four of William's paintings to various members of the Strang Steel family. Two of these paintings '*Ben Ledi*' and '*Flowing through the wood*' still reside at Philiphaugh.