**Henry Edward Spernon Tozer, 1864–1955**

Born on 5 December 1864, in Sheerness, Kent, ‘H.S. Tozer’ (as he generally signed) was elder son of London-born Henry Edwin Tozer (1838–1913) and his wife Louisa Jane (née Griffin, 1835–1922). Henry Edwin was son of a tinplate worker and though he also became an artist, his stated profession on marriage at St Martin’s in the Fields on 18 May 1861 was ‘Civil Engineer’: Louisa’s father was a hairdresser. After Henry Edward in 1864, their second child was Marianne (b. *c.*1867), and the third Eustace Arthur Tozer, also an artist, born in 1869 at Milton, near Gravesend. By April 1888 the family had moved to Newlyn, Cornwall, possibly drawn by the artistic colony there.

In the 1891 and 1901 censuses Henry Edwin, his wife, daughter, and son Eustace were all at 1 Cape Cornwall (or 1 Cape Cornwall House), Boswedden, St Just, Penzance. Henry was listed in 1901 as ‘Artist Marine’ and Eustace as ‘Artist Landscape’, both working in oil and watercolour. Henry Edwin showed one coastal piece of ‘Surf and rocks at the mouth of the cove’ at the RA (1892). Eustace also showed one work at the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1892 as from ‘Cape Cornwall House’. Johnson & Greutner attribute two shown at the Birmingham Society of Artists (1889–92) to Henry Edwin but the Cornish Artists Index claims these as Henry Edward’s as well as one exhibited at the opening of the Newlyn Art Gallery in 1895. Probable confusion of father and son up to that point remains to be clarified.

Henry Edward painted scenes of country life in oil and watercolour, mostly the latter, and is best known for detailed cottage interiors including one or two figures, often elderly. Reports of him being notable for Cornish subjects around St Just seem overstated given how generic many of his works are and how briefly he lived there. At the 1891 census, which lists him as an ‘Artist, Figure Painter’ he was already boarding at ‘The Clump’, Thursley, near Godalming in Surrey, though what took him there is unknown. The Clump – or nos. 1 and 2 The Street – seems to have been two adjoined large houses, of which no. 1 was also a grocery shop run by Mary Fosberry (b. *c.*1839), widow of William Fosberry, a builder. Her builder son William (also widowed by 1891) and his three sons lived next door. In practice, it appears to have been a joint family unit with one of Mary’s grandson’s then helping in the shop and two granddaughters – apparently son William’s girls – also listed as with her and her unmarried daughter, Mary Ann.

On 9 January 1894, aged 29, Tozer and Mary Ann (28) married at Thursley and themselves had three sons and two daughters, all born there between 1895 and 1905. While Tozer was formally head of household at The Clump in 1901 and described both as an artist and the Thursley sub-postmaster, his 77-year-old mother-in-law was also still there running the grocery business. She appears to have died by 1911, when he and his wife had taken over. Mary Ann is noted as ‘assisting’ his sub-postmaster duties, so was probably running the grocery business. Tozer was still listed as ‘Artist and Shopkeeper’ in the 1939 Register, when their youngest child, Doris, a ‘knitwear maker’ was the last living with them. Mary Ann’s retired brother William, and others of his family, were then still next door.

Tozer’s father died at Galmpton, near Salcombe, aged 74, in 1913. His brother Eustace lived in Devon from at least 1910, served in the Rifle Brigade in the First World War and died in or near Exeter early in 1931, where this was registered in March. Tozer himself died aged 90, still at The Clump, Thursley, on 15 November 1955.

*Summarized from web sources and Art UK discussion of Tozer’s ‘Wheelwright’ in Bradford Museums and Galleries.*

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