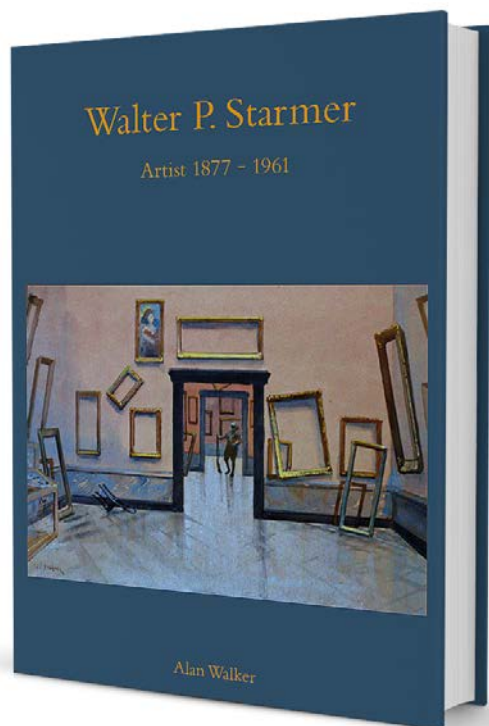


Walter P. Starmer Artist 1871-1961



In 1994 when Alan Walker became the Vicar of St Jude's he realised that, as well as nurturing the spiritual welfare of his parishioners, he was also the guardian of one of the most significant church buildings of the twentieth century. Lutyens groupies would ask the question "when are you going to get those dreadful murals whitewashed over?" The murals were by an unknown, and therefore obviously insignificant, artist and they diverted attention from the purity of Lutyens's architecture. There is a widely held view that Lutyens neither wanted nor approved of the mural scheme for St Jude's. However, Alan has discovered that this was far from the case. Indeed at the time this book was being edited, he discovered the Free Church too had been planning a similar decorative scheme. After consulting English Heritage, who reported that the work was actually a rather outstanding and nationally important example of twentieth century ecclesiastical decoration, Alan Walker set about finding out as much as he could about the artist, and now the fruits of his research have been made available in a splendidly produced volume *Walter P. Starmer Artist 1871-1961*. Starmer's complete body of work is explored here for the first time ranging from advertising copy for Poppyland (north Norfolk), through cartoons for *The Anti-Vivisection Review* and golden age Children's book illustrations.

At this time of marking the centenary of the First World War, Alan Walker has managed to track down and reproduce several of the paintings Starmer

made when serving with the Red Cross on the Western Front. Unlike some 'official' war artists, Starmer was based in France for the duration of hostilities and this degree of freedom provided him with thoughtful and unusual source material. Starmer's special mission was to record the work of the YMCA in offering rest and recreational facilities for the troops. In one painting Starmer depicts a large group of Australian soldiers viewing a film show projected onto the wall of a farm building. Others show the little-known contribution of Chinese workers and Indian troops to the war effort. The YMCA built semi-permanent structures behind the front lines. A number of these were decorated with Starmer murals.

It was in France that Starmer met the first Vicar of St Jude's,

the Reverend Basil Bouchier, who was serving as a military chaplain. Bouchier invited the artist to submit proposals for a war memorial at St Jude's. Rather surprisingly Starmer came up with a scheme based on images of the women of the Bible and which was later extended to include other 'eminent women'. The latter included historical figures such as Joan of Arc, but also the more recent promoters of the kind of causes that appealed to the early radically-minded female residents of the Suburb such as the campaign against vivisection and, of course, women's suffrage: Frances Power Cobbe, Josephine Butler, Angela Burdett-Coutts, Edith Cavell and Emily Davison. A reminder, perhaps, that for its founder, Henrietta Barnett, the Suburb was as much a 'feminist' project as a social experiment.

Although a prize-winning student at both Norwich and Birmingham art schools, Starmer never became famous at least in part because he worked in media that by the middle of the twentieth century had become decidedly unfashionable – church murals and stained glass. Ironically one of Starmer's contemporaries at Norwich was Alfred Munnings, the society equestrian painter. Back in those collegiate days Starmer was considered the more promising student, but it was Munnings who was to have the flashier artistic career, ending as President of the Royal Academy.

Sadly Starmer's artistic legacy and reputation has faded as most of his later work for West End churches was destroyed during the Second World War. By a strange quirk of fate, one of

these was St Anne's Soho, the church to which Basil Bouchier moved after his time at St Jude's. What the Luftwaffe had failed to achieve, in town planning was ruthlessly carried through by postwar developers. Both St Peter's, Piccadilly and St Agatha's, Shoreditch, had substantial Starmer murals – but where are they now? Extant sketches indicate that his post St Jude's mural style was evolving in interesting ways. Starmer's portfolio of varied and unusual war paintings was sufficiently highly regarded by the Imperial War Museum that they bought no fewer than thirty examples. Disappointingly not one of them has ever been on public display.

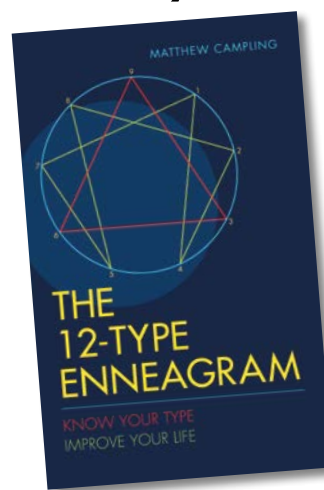
Despite all the knocks, Starmer was no garret-living, starving artist. He was a successful professional practitioner of his craft. He was able to make a comfortable, if moderate, income throughout his life from the work he set out from childhood to do. He comes across as a modest and shy man, but one driven both by a commitment to his art and his religious convictions. *Walter P. Starmer Artist 1899-1961* reads like a detective story as Alan Walker unpeels the onion skins of the artist's life and work. Eruditely written and lavishly illustrated, this book throws a spotlight on the man and his work too long overshadowed by Lutyens.

STEPHEN JAMES

Walter P. Starmer Artist 1871 - 1961 by Alan Walker is available through Amazon and eBay at £19.99 or directly from the church at the special price of £15.



Find your essence type



Suburb resident Matthew Camplin, author of two books on eating disorders, has recently had a new book published by Watkins Publishing. Entitled *The 12-Type Enneagram*, it reveals how and why we all think, feel and behave differently from each other by identifying which one of 12 very specific 'essence types' a person is.

The book shows how our lives are affected by our essence

type, how this knowledge can help with understanding ourselves and others, and enable us to live more fulfilling lives. Readers can find out more about the essence types on the website at www.12egram.com.

Matthew Camplin is a psychotherapist who lives in Willifield Way. He has written for magazines and newspapers, featured on television and radio, and was a regular guest expert on ITV's *The Trisha Show*. For those who are interested he is running workshops on the 12-Type Enneagram.



WORDSEARCH

Welcome to the new series of the Wordsearch! In the box below there are 20 world languages concealed. An extra one is highlighted to start you off but don't include it in your total! Names may be read in all directions, straight or diagonally. All words have four letters or more. Please send your entries by email to cristina.lago@gmail.com or by post to Cristina Lago, 47 Willifield Way, NW11 7XU with your name and contact details. The closing date is June 20. All correct entries go into a draw to win a £20 voucher from our great local shop Joseph's Bookstore. Good luck!

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