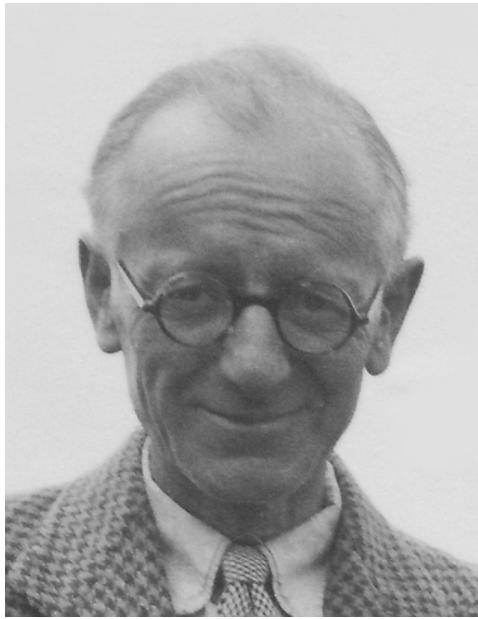


## Lewis Jones 1894-1953



**Lewis Jones was a principal artist and fabric designer for the Silver Studio from 1910 to 1953. During the First World War he fought in the Middle East and on the Western Front.**

Lewis Jones (sometimes Louis Jones) was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1894 at 22 Lowestoft Road, Watford in Hertfordshire. He was the 15<sup>th</sup>, and last, child of Robert Jones and Susan Selina Ann Jones. His mother's maiden name was Cross. Hardly ever called Lewis, he was known by family and friends as Jack.

His parents, brothers and sisters had lived at Outward Kiln, which was next to Coldharbour Farm, Aldbury in Hertfordshire. The kiln and farm were both parts of the farming, building and brick making business of Lewis' grandfather. In the late 1800s, Callow Land in Watford was an area being developed, and where Lewis' father Robert was employed as a carpenter. They were one of the first to move into the newly built homes in Lowestoft Road. Number 22, where Lewis was born, was slightly larger than most of the other houses, with bigger bedrooms over an alleyway.

Lewis attended Callowland Boys School in Leavesden Road, Watford. The only time he spoke of his school was to say that he was responsible for smashing the back of the school's upright piano whilst moving it at high speed across the school hall.



Lewis Jones at Callowland School, Watford, he's the boy at front-left, c1899



Lewis Jones with his father Robert Jones,  
c1902



Lewis Jones and his sister Ethel (Doll) Jones  
outside 22 Lowestoft Road, Watford, c1902. In  
the window are canaries for sale.



The family had a pony and trap pulled by Nobbler, an unbroken stallion. They had a stable on a small holding in North Watford. Lewis' sisters were responsible for Nobbler, but he was very difficult to handle and they were afraid of him. When Lewis was old enough he could control Nobbler.

At 14 years of age Lewis started to study design at Watford School of Science and Art. In 1910, at 16, he joined the Silver Studio at 1 Haalem Road (a corner house, now Augustine Road), Hammersmith in London, to become a designer of furnishing and dress fabrics. At this time Rex Silver had already taken over the management of the Studios. The blue plaque at 84 Brook Green Road W6 is on Rex Silver's home address.



Lewis Jones at Saffron Walden, 1915

In December 1914 Lewis Jones enlisted. He joined the 16<sup>th</sup> London Regiment, The Queen's Westminster Rifles, in which he stayed for all the war. He did his training in the London parks and on Salisbury Plain. The Regiment did intensive training in 1915 at Saffron Walden and were then sent to Ireland at the time of the Easter 1916 Rebellion. The Regiment went to France in October 1916 and saw action in the front line trenches near Vimy Ridge. They were then sent to Greece where they did an unopposed assault landing at Salonica, and then marched to fight the Bulgars where heavy casualties occurred.

The regiment then went to Kantara in Egypt to oppose the Turkish army. Here Lewis Jones was wounded in the head by a sniper. Nomadic Arabs found him, dressed his wounds and told him that he had shot and killed the sniper who had wounded him. During the time he was with the Arabs his parents received a 'Missing believed killed' telegram. He travelled with the Arabs until they were able to make contact with the British troops. On his return to the army he was sent to a military hospital, but he feared the chaotic

conditions there so he simply walked out and rejoined his unit. He was in the front line in Palestine in December 1917, and in April 1918 was with the British force that crossed the Jordan to attack enemy positions under heavy fire and at bayonet point. In June 1918 the Regiment returned to the Western Front in France. On 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> September 1918 the Regiment took heavy casualties and Lewis said that the first to be killed was the medical officer. The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment had also taken heavy casualties, and as senior NCO Acting Sergeant Lewis Jones led all that remained of both companies. He was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry in the action at Seaforth Farm near Messines, Northwest of Lille. The Regiment was in the rear until mid October and then back into the front line until the end of the war. Lewis travelled to Calais and then back to England for demobilisation at Crystal Palace in March 1919.

***A thorough description of Lewis Jones' war years is in the WW1 addendum to this biography.***

After four years of war Lewis returned to Silver Studio almost immediately and once more began producing a wide range of designs for printed textiles, carpets, wallpapers and woven fabrics.

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1919 Lewis Jones married Annie Frances Carpenter at Christ's Church, Watford. Lewis Jones is named as Louis on his marriage certificate. Lewis and Annie were always known to family and friends as Jack and Nance, and they initially lived in his parent's home at 22 Lowestoft Road, Watford. Their first child, Robert Albert Lewis Jones, was born there on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1921.

The family does not know when Lewis (Louis/Jack) met Annie Frances (Nance). Annie was born at 92 Trafalgar Street, Walworth in London on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1896. She was the youngest daughter of John Henry Carpenter and Hannah Jane (nee Harris). After the death of her father in 1900 her mother remarried, twice, and moved first to Bushey and then Watford. In 1913 Annie was living in Brighton Road, Watford, which is near Lowestoft Road where Lewis lived. Annie worked on armaments and munitions during the First World War. When she was packing parachute flares (star-shells) one of them exploded on her work bench. Fortunately Annie was not injured, but was so badly shocked that she was excused further munitions work. Lewis had introduced Annie to his family by then and she always said she spent more time with his family than in her own home. Annie had very little formal education and Lewis' mother, Susan Selina Jones, encouraged her to learn. On a photograph of Lewis' mother she wrote "My dear Mum", which perhaps is an indication of her affection.



Lewis Jones and wife Annie Frances Jones (nee Carpenter). c1919



Lewis (Jack) and Annie (Nance) Jones. c1923





An early painting of two cockatoos by Lewis Jones dated 1920. This is one of his works he signed 'Louis Jones'.

In 1922 a radio broadcasting station began transmitting from London with a call sign of "This is 2LO calling", which developed into the first BBC radio service. Lewis became a keen amateur constructor of 'wireless sets', and he was aware of every development in the 1920s. He used designs, such as super-heterodyne, which were published in the amateur wireless magazines. With no mains electricity he used accumulators (batteries) for the 'low tension', which were charged weekly at a local shop, and a box full of 4.5V torch batteries wired together for the 'high tension'. Lewis had a loudspeaker when most people only used earphones. For an aerial Lewis used a square wooden frame with wire wound around it, which was suspended from the ceiling in his bedroom, and gave a better signal than the typical 'long wire down the garden' of most listeners.

North Watford was expanding in the 1920s and they found the new home they wanted. Lewis, Annie and their son Robert moved into 74 Bushey Mill Crescent, Watford in November 1929 and Lewis and Annie would continue to live there all their lives. Their second son, Dennis Eric Jones, was born there on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1930. Lewis had rented an allotment garden since 1919, at Harebreaks in Watford, and this was a valuable help supplying almost all the vegetables they needed during the 1920s. He needed a greenhouse, but now could not afford to buy one, so he designed and built his own from rough timber using the tools and carpentry skills that had been passed on to him by his father. Lewis was a keen gardener and there is no doubt some of the flowers he grew were incorporated in his designs. His 'Desert Flowers' chintz in 1938 was probably inspired by his cacti collection. He was constantly searching for ideas and they came from museums, exhibitions and newspapers. When a subject was suggested it was always thoroughly researched.



TL: Lewis Jones with his son Robert in the rear garden of 22 Lowestoft Road.  
 TR: Susan Jones, Lewis' mother and her grandson Robert.  
 BL: Lewis Jones with his son Robert, Watford, c1924.



Watford allotment in the 1920s. Back left is Win, Lewis Jones' sister with her husband Alf King, their daughters Joyce and Vera, and dog Pip. On the right are Lewis' wife Annie and their son Robert.



Annie and Lewis Jones c1934, by the French windows at 74 Bushey Mill Crescent.



Annie and Lewis with their son Dennis in a cine film from the mid 1930s.



During the 1920s Lewis suffered bouts of fever because of the Malaria he had caught in Greece during WWI. He sometimes had to take days off work because of shivering - a serious problem for an artist depending on his hands. Also, the textile trade was in trouble in 1930 and Lewis Jones' salary was cut by 50%. Only by harsh economy did his family survive. They paid only the interest on their mortgage and sublet rooms in their house to a young couple, Mr & Mrs Mayes, Len and Maud (known as Janey), who became lifelong friends.

Lewis did all his own preparation work for every stage of producing his designs. For each finished design he would dampen cartridge paper and lay it on a drawing board, and then seal the edges with gummed tape. Once dry it gave a smooth surface that did not crinkle when water colours were applied. The Silver Studio bought Tempera Colours in powder form which were moistened and ground with a palette knife. Crystals of gum arabic were dissolved to add to the colours to fix them. Backgrounds for designs were usually washes of watercolour; these were sold in small bottles labelled 'Aerograph Colours'. All the colours were of course 'flat' and small squares of each colour used, known as the 'Tally', were usually positioned below each finished design. Lewis Jones would start a design on lightweight 'detail' paper, and using thin sticks of Vine Charcoal he would plan the finished artwork. He had the ability to work with a stick of charcoal in each hand and could produce mirror images when drawing scrolls.



Roy Passano, Lewis Jones and ANO, artists at the Silver Studios in the 1930s.



On economic recovery the late 1930s became prosperous years and Lewis Jones most prolific period. He produced about 100 designs per year in this period. In the 1930s, Lewis travelled daily from Watford to the Studios by train and then bus to Brook Green, Hammersmith, and took sandwiches for lunch. He worked in a room on his own and some days he never spoke to anyone until he went home. He told of how he fed a mouse which came out of the wall until one day he found the mouse dead. It had been killed by the cleaning lady, so he nailed her slippers to the floor in revenge.

The threat of war overshadowed the last years of the 1930s and on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939 he received a letter from Rex Silver to say that if war was declared the studio would close immediately. The Second World War started the next day. The studio did not close, but that weekend Lewis was told by a neighbour that there were vacancies at Watford Electric and Manufacturing Company (WEMCO), which manufactured switchgear for the Royal Navy. He started on the Monday and was the stores manager there until the end of the war.

At WEMCO he had two assistants, and many fellow workers, so it was a complete change from the life he had known for the previous twenty years at Silver Studios where he said he had "lived each working day like a Cistercian monk". After the war he told his family that, when the threat of invasion was greatest, all top secret plans were copied and sent to the USA. He was the courier for WEMCO and delivered their plans to a government agent at a 'special meeting place'. Whilst he was at WEMCO he was also an aircraft spotter on the roof of their building whenever there was an air raid.

In June 1940, after Dunkirk, Lewis Jones joined the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV) which became the Home Guard. He was a member of B Company 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Home Guard. In the event of an invasion he would have taken the Lewis Gun and its drum magazines from the bedroom wardrobe at his home and established a machine gun position. This position was to be in the public house in the St Albans Road, Watford, on the railway bridge where a footpath led to Watford Junction Station. Lewis was an excellent shot and in a competition at Bisley only just lost to a sergeant of the King's Own Scottish Borderers. His son, Robert, remembers "the final decision between them was made when they repeatedly fired one round at a time, and scored bull after bull until Dad scored an inner and was eliminated".

During the war the spare room at 74 Bushey Mill Crescent was let out to conscripted women working in aircraft production in North Watford, and others replacing the men who had been called up.

Late in the war a V1 hit Sandringham Road and the British Moulded Hose Company, causing numerous casualties. Lewis attended the site to offer first aid, and was later visited by Dr T Wood who wanted to show Lewis the medal that he had received and thought that Lewis should have got. Dr Wood said "you were giving aid to the wounded and dying before I got there".



Lewis Jones and his son Robert in Home Guard uniforms, 1940.



Watford Home Guard, 1941. Lewis Jones is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row from front and 2<sup>nd</sup> from right. Robert, his son, is 2<sup>nd</sup> from right in the row behind Lewis Jones.





Lewis Jones with his wife Annie and their son Dennis, mid 1940s.



Annie and Lewis Jones in their garden at 74 Bushey Mill Crescent, c1950.



George and Elsie Briggs, Annie and Lewis Jones at Mablethorpe, c1949.  
Lewis' son Robert married Una Briggs in 1946.

When peace returned in 1945 he left his wartime work and returned to the Silver Studios. Lewis Jones and Frank Price were the only full time designers there then. In 1952 Rex Silver was planning to offer them both partnerships.

Lewis Jones had a heart condition, probably caused or aggravated by a lifetime of heavy smoking. He had medication to use when it troubled him, and he said that at times his heart "played boogie-woogie". He died quite suddenly of coronary thrombosis on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1953 at the age of 58. He had been working just a few days earlier. Lewis is buried in North Watford Cemetery (Section A, Number 980) and his wife, Annie Francis Jones, was buried in the same plot when she died in March 1974.

The elder of his sons, Robert Albert Lewis Jones, served six years in the army, and Lewis attended his wedding to Una May Briggs at Wilford, Nottingham, in 1946. In 1952 Lewis Jones was able to see his first grandson Mark Lewis Jones. His younger son, Dennis Eric Jones, served with the Royal Air Force and trained to fly in Canada. He married Elizabeth Gentle at Brandon, Suffolk in 1953, and emigrated to Canada in 1956.

Neither of his sons directly followed their father's occupation, but both were involved in artwork. At the time of Lewis' death: Robert was doing general advertising artwork; and Dennis was a colour retoucher for photo-gravure printers. At their retirements: Robert was the art director of Davis Gibson Advertising, in London; and Dennis was Assistant Director at the McMichael Canadian Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario.





Lewis Jones with his family on the birth of his first grandson, 1952.



Lewis Jones - Robert Jones and wife Una with baby Mark - Elizabeth and husband Dennis Jones. 1952.



A painting of 'Irises and Viburnum' by Lewis Jones, c1951.



'Souvenir d'Afrique'. This design by Lewis Jones at the Silver Studio was first produced by Warners in 1930 and re-released 1988.



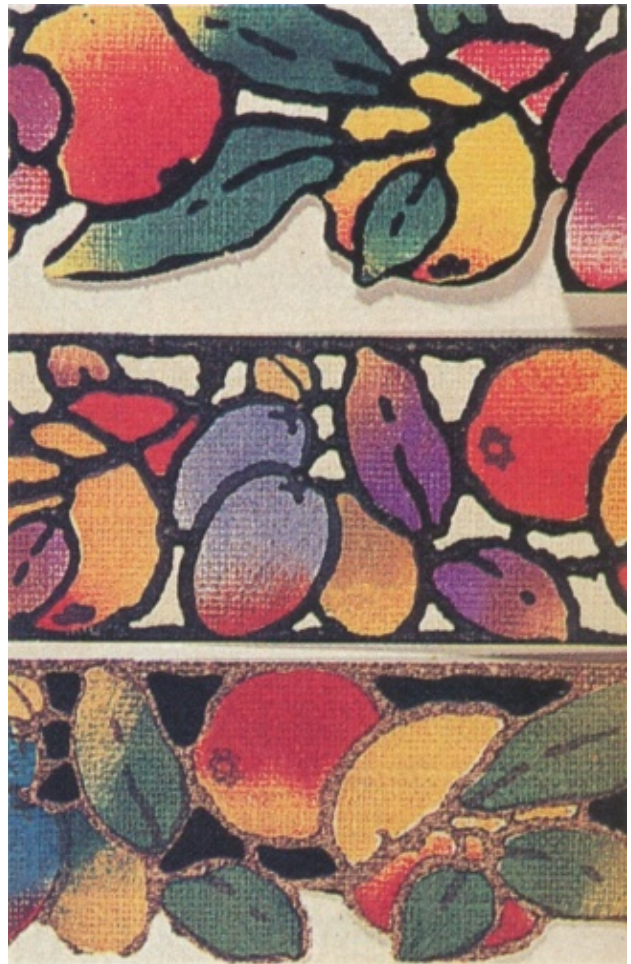
Lewis Jones worked at a time when it was usual for the studio, and not the designer, to take the credit for the work they produced. His daughter-in-law, Una, was therefore surprised in 1981 when some of his designs were shown on the midday BBC television programme 'Pebble Mill'. She telephoned them and confirmed that she had seen designs by Lewis Jones, and was told of an exhibition at the Museum of London, organised by Middlesex Polytechnic. It was there that Mark Turner told her of the 'Silver Collection' and that there was a log which gave the artist's name to each design. This collection is now held by the Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture (MoDA), part of the Middlesex University ([www.moda.mdx.ac.uk](http://www.moda.mdx.ac.uk)).

Lewis Jones never sought fame, and so would not have expected that many years after his death the Condé Nast publication 'House and Garden' in October 1988 would have an illustrated special feature "Lewis Jones: a Career in Textile Design" by Mary Schoeser. He would have been surprised that it was entitled "Rediscovered Designer".

In the 1980s the Warner Fabrics company re-issued some fabrics designed for them by Lewis and other Silver Studio designers. The Warner Textile Archive, Braintree in Essex, documents the history of The Warner & Sons textile business ([www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk](http://www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk)).



Some of Lewis Jones' work for the Silver Studio, 1910-1953.

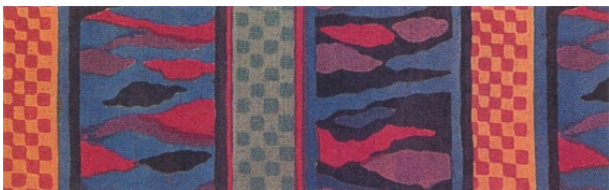


Please note that we acknowledge most of these examples are probably copyright of the *Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture (MoDA)* or the *Warner Textile Archive* or others. But, we have included them here to provide some representation of Lewis Jones' work.





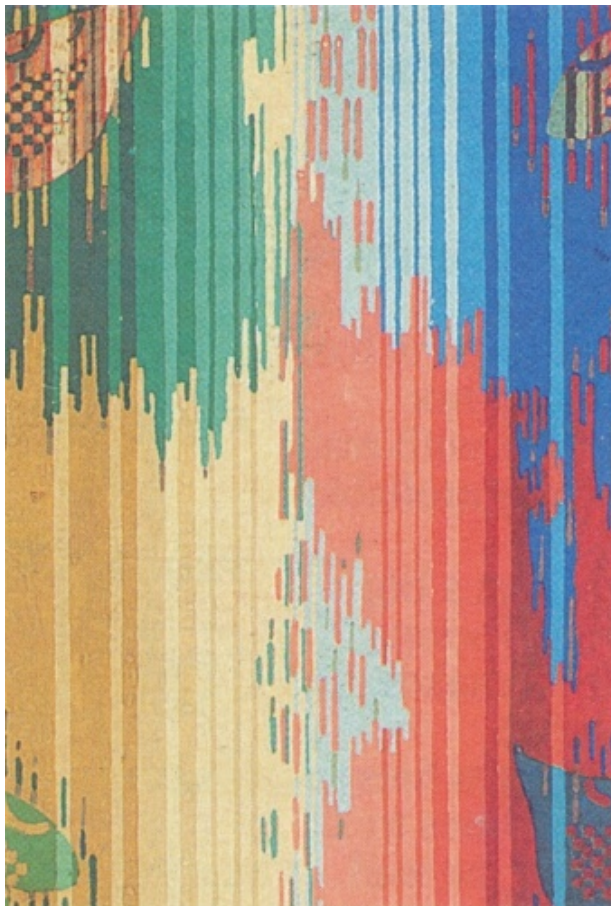
Some of Lewis Jones' work for the Silver Studio, 1910-1953.







Some of Lewis Jones' work for the Silver Studio, 1910-1953.



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Further information about Lewis Jones and the Silver Studio can be found at:

*Museums:*

**Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture (MoDA)**

<http://www.moda.mdx.ac.uk/>

MoDA Collections Centre, Middlesex University, 9 Boulevard Drive, Beaufort Park  
Colindale, London NW9 5HF

*This is the primary source for details of the Silver Studio work.*

**Warner Textile Archive**

<http://www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk>

Silks Way, Braintree, Essex CM7 3GB

*Documents the history of the Warner & Sons textile business.*

**National Army Museum**

(especially: Adjutant Mare's book:

"Some unofficial adventures of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battn 16 London Regt  
The Queen's Westminster Rifles 1914-1916")

<http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk>

Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London, SW3 4HT

**The National Archives (formerly Public Record Office) [war diaries]**

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU

Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York

Piece of fabric credited to the Silver Studio

*Publications:*

Turner, Mark and Hoskins, Lesley. (Middlesex Polytechnic)

Silver Studio of design. a Design and Source Book for Home Decoration

Webb & Bower (Publishers) Ltd / Michael Joseph Ltd. 1988

Mary Schoeser

Lewis Jones: a Career in Textile Design. Rediscovered Designer

House & Garden, Condé Nast, October 1988

H G Hayes Marshall

British Textile Designers Today

pub: F Lewis 1939

*Catalogue:*

A London Design Studio 1880-1963: The Silver Studio Collection

1980, The Middlesex Polytechnic, ISBN 0-85331-431-4

(Museum of London 21 February to 28 March 1981

and subsequently in Wolverhampton, Bradford and Newcastle-upon-Tyne)

*Designs re-published in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century:*

Souvenir d'Afrique

Desert Flower

by Warners, now Zimmer + Rohde

**Some short family history notes:**

Lewis' father Robert Jones was born on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1846 in Ringshall, Buckinghamshire. Robert's parents were James Jones and Eliza Jones (nee Simmonds). Robert died on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1924. Lewis' mother Susan Selina Ann Jones (nee Cross) was born on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1848 in Islington, London. Susan's parents were William Batchelor Cross and Mary Ann Cross (nee Horwood). Susan died on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1932. Robert and Susan had married on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1866 and there children were: Maud Rosalind Elizabeth 1867; Ada Lillian 1869; William J 1872; Harry Walter 1874; Reginald Joseph 1875; Ethel Marion (Doll) 1877; Robert Ralph 1879; Margaret Ann 1880; Edward Stanley 1882; Albert Arthur 1883; Mabel 1885; Winifred Dora (Win) 1887; Violet (Vi) 1888; Margery 1890; Lewis (Louis/Jack) 1894.

Lewis married Annie Frances Carpenter on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1919 at Christ's Church Watford. She was the daughter of John Henry Carpenter and Hannah Jane (nee Harris) and born in Walworth, London. Lewis and Annie Jones, who were known as Jack and Nance, had two sons, both born in Watford: Robert Albert Lewis Jones 15<sup>th</sup> July 1921; Dennis Eric Jones 26<sup>th</sup> April 1930.

**Authorship**

This biography and the WWI addendum were written by Lewis Jones' son Robert Jones, with help from other family members. They are available online at [www.mooch.org.uk/serious](http://www.mooch.org.uk/serious).

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