

Sir Thomas Brock R.A. and his early career at Worcester

Thomas Brock was born in Worcester in 1847. The start of his career, at the age of 8 is difficult to believe - At the Exposition Universelle at the Palais de l'Industrie 1855, Paris, Le Jury International awarded T.Brock a second class medal. (This may not be the same person)

In 1857 Brock won a box of colours at the Worcester Government School of Design. He probably worked for Kerr & Binns porcelain works, sweeping floors and turning wheels at this time and was then officially apprenticed in 1859. The first entry for him in the wage books is as dated 6th August 1859, working in the modelling department with James Hadley who was then 22 years old and quite an old hand! Brock's first wages were £ 1.1shilling and sixpence per week. The 1861 census records him living at 5 Sidbury Place with his parents William & Catherine, sister Mary Jane and an apprentice painter Herbert Millington.

Brock studied at the Government School for nine years, winning local prizes and Government awarded medals every year until 1866. He studied in good company; his classmates included Benjamin Williams Leader, Charles Noke, and James Hadley. In 1866 he completed his seven-year apprenticeship and went off to London as a pupil of John Foley R.A.

In 1868 Brock submitted a portrait bust of his ex-boss Royal Worcester R.W Binns F.S.A to the Royal Academy and in 1869 he submitted a figure of Salmarcis, the Water Nymph.

We have no record of the models that Brock worked on during his apprenticeship; presumably he would have helped the more senior modellers, however two Royal Worcester models have always been associated with Brock.



The Bather Surprised - model no.486 She was produced in three sizes (10 ½", 15 ½", 24") from 1875 and an example was exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1878. A note in the shape record says that the original was by Brock in 1868. Royal Worcester employed modellers on a freelance basis at this time and therefore Brock was probably commissioned to design this figure, it may however have been a version of his model of the Water Nymph The large size examples are impressed 'T.Brock Sc.London' and the small size versions were modelled by George Evans after Brock's original.

The Young Mozart - model no.1487 is more puzzling. It was designed in 1890. (19 ¾") and is said to commemorate the centenary of the composer's death in 1791. (A small version was re-issued in 1931) This was again probably a commission.



As a sculptor Brock's most well known works are the Victoria Memorial facing Buckingham Palace, the monument to Lord Leighton in St.Pauls' cathedral and monuments to Longfellow and Gladstone in Westminster Abbey.

In 1913 Brock was awarded the Freedom of the City of Worcester, he died in 1922.

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