

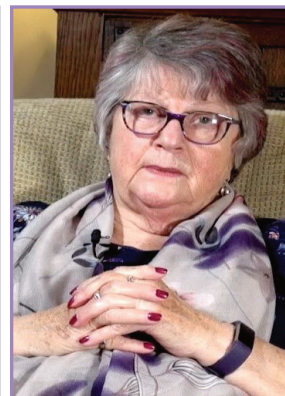
Behind the Brush

Carole Cuneo - as told to David Bennett.

The works of Terence Cuneo will endure for many years, admired by many as they are now. What fades is the memory of the artist himself, both as a professional and a private man. Cuneo's daughter and President of the Cuneo Society, Carole Cuneo (*right*), has recorded interviews with the Editor about her father, discussing less public aspects of his life.

In this episode we discuss Terence Cuneo's home at Ember Lane, East Molesey, built in 1934. It was found and selected by Cate, who was particularly taken with the billiard room, with a glass roof, which was to become Terence's studio. They moved in during mid 1939. But what was it like - what were the rooms like?

Here Carole talks again about her childhood, and the more private part of family life...the upstairs.



"The colours, the decoration, changed over the years, but usually the stairs were a beige pink colour and went up from the main hallway. They were carpeted, always carpeted. The stair rails were white and we would go up and round to the top of the landing. Right there were some very big cupboards which were the linen cupboard, and another for mother's or father's suits and loo rolls on the bottom and that sort of rubbish.

Then on the left there was my bedroom when I was a child and next to it was Mummy and Daddy's bedroom which was double aspect with windows both sides, on top of the sitting room. It was a good sized bedroom and they had a big bed.

There was a fireplace which had a gas fire there. I can remember it clearly not least, as on my 21st birthday, they called me to their room at night. My Father was stood with his back to the gas fire, it wasn't on. I can remember it clearly. The furniture was dark, but a lot of it they had fitted, such as the cupboards in the alcoves. And I remember that originally, they used to have potties under the bed, the 'guzunders'!

Is that what happened to your bedroom next to them, your original bedroom, became a bathroom?

So, as you came out of their room, next door was my bedroom. But when I went up to boarding school aged eight, they had it converted into a bathroom for them. It was only bath and basin, no loo, which those days were kept separate, you know. There was one loo upstairs after you came straight up the stairs, you went round to it.

There was also a landing on the right, with a big airing cupboard in which Daddy dried his paintings.

Next along we had a single loo, and then there was this amazing bathroom, which was ours, which had a sunken bath. In the kitchen underneath there was an alcove, which was where the bath came through the ceiling. It had the most amazing tiles that you could sit on, when you got out, you didn't have a big step, but you could sit on the tiles.

I remember having a hell of a row with Daddy in there when I was about 15. I was supposed to be in hospital

the next day to have my wisdom teeth pulled out. I didn't want to go, and Daddy came and talked to me. I was just howling all night. I should have been there just for 24 hours but because I was upset the day before and I was fighting the anaesthetic I couldn't move for pain apparently and they kept me in for about five days.

So what else was upstairs?

Now we've done the bathroom, we've done the airing cupboard, now we are going round a corner and now another corridor which was all panelled, dark, dark panelling.

My sister's room was the first you came to which was very bright. But I was naughty, and played with her gas fire, so that finger (*indicating*) was the one that was put into Linda's fire to teach me not to play with gas. So, I lost the end of my finger. As well as the gas fire she had a basin

Also on that corridor was my bedroom once I'd been moved, on the right. It had a gothic shaped door to enter with a latch. I had two little windows but it was very dark because there was a big chestnut tree outside, which virtually covered the windows. The windows overlooked the coal bunkers. My bedroom was dark, very dark, it spooked me completely.

I also had a wash basin, and some bookshelves, with my coronation coach, which my mother got rid of. Opposite was a cupboard where I hung my clothes. Inside there was another little cupboard, a door and you opened that door and you get into the loft, over the studio and all Daddy's lovely classical records were in albums.

The loft was absolutely rotten, but anyway that was spooky. And it was full of rats.

Would the rats and squirrels keep you awake at night?

Well, you would sort of hear things – I hated coming home. Yes, they'd keep me awake at night. I didn't enjoy it at all.

Then finally one other room, which was Pooh's room, our governess. She had a lovely bay window in which she could sit and look at the garden and everything, whereas mine had been the servant room. Mary and

Josephine lived in there when I was young, two Irish maids came and they lived in there together, they were sisters.

Let's talk about the servants and home-help. Presumably somewhere in the kitchen there would have been a bell-board?

Yes, that's right, downstairs over the kitchen door that as you go in from the hall, above that, it was there.

And when did the family last have maids?

Nora was the last daily maid. Nora was a lovely soul with her starched apron and it would either be a pink and white checked dress or blue and white checked dress, and then she would wear this absolutely starched white pinny over her and little cuffs. She was the perfect help and could turn her hands to almost anything from cleaning to cooking.



At home - Terence Cuneo in his studio, 1965, working on the lying in state of Sir Winston Churchill.

Your mum sounds like the sort of person who would use a bell to summon help?

Oh yes, yes, definitely. Especially from her bedroom. 'Peel me another grape', you know that was the sort of attitude.

Would she have expected the maids to answer the door if someone came to the house?

Oh yes, and they would be in uniform. It was very smart. The guests would wait in the hall while the person they were visiting, Father or Mother, was informed. Or they would be put into the sitting room, if no one was in there at the time. If Mummy or Daddy were in the studio then they would say that so-and-so was here and in the sitting room, would you like me to get tea/coffee or whatever. This is why, I suppose, I feel that I can't do anything now and it depresses me because I was brought up in this rich, really rich atmosphere!

Do you think the fact you had such a lovely house contributed to your Dad's success. He felt secure. He didn't have to worry about that side of things?

Oh without doubt. She had many faults in my eyes, but my mother was undoubtedly a very good housekeeper. She organised the right staff and everything; and she knew exactly what had to be done when such as cleaning the silver and that sort of thing, a certain day of the week was a silver cleaning day.

You read about artists in garrets – this was not your dad's life style?

Daddy was a gentleman, he really was. He was a gentleman and a scholar and you would never have thought he was an artist when he went out, he looked fantastic. He never looked the arty-farty type, if that makes sense. But then you didn't in those days. No, home life was important and it was a key part of all the family in so many ways."