

# Window on the Ear: Barbara Hepworth and the Fenestration Series of Drawings

## Introduction

Almost fifty years ago, Dame Barbara Hepworth had already obtained a reputation as a leading sculptor and over a short period of a year or so, she became interested in the activities in operating theatres and produced a number of drawings of orthopaedic and otologic surgical procedures, and of the staff involved in the operating theatres. It is most unusual for a sculptor to produce artistic drawings but they exemplify her interest in three dimensions and movement, so typical of her work.

These drawings and the sketches she made to assist her in making these drawings have been of substantial interest for many years, and in this manuscript, John Booth has recounted how Dame Barbara Hepworth became interested in these surgical activities, and he has reproduced a number of the drawings she produced as well as many of the sketches she made in preparation for them.

Barbara Hepworth produced six major drawings of Garnett Passe performing the fenestration operation, and John Booth has recorded the details of these drawings and has produced a copy of five of them, together with many of her sketches.

Garnett Passe was a leader in the development of the fenestration operation, before and after the Second World War. Widely respected in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, his life was suddenly terminated at the age of forty-eight years in 1952 at the height of his career. Who knows what this energetic and innovative surgeon may have achieved if he had lived for the normal span? In his relatively short life he achieved much and left his mark upon the developing sphere of the surgical restoration of hearing.

In tracing Garnett Passe's career, John Booth has recorded the details of the development of the fenestration operation – all of which were most important in establishing the procedure as a highly successful and worthwhile operation which gained much support and helped many people around the world suffering from otosclerosis in the two decades before Samuel Rosen and John Shea successfully developed the surgical techniques of dealing with the stapes fixed by otosclerotic bone.

Those of us who grew up in the exciting times of the development of the surgical procedures for the restoration of hearing will find much of interest in this excellent manuscript, and younger colleagues will find much to interest them in the importance of refining the techniques in the surgical procedure in order to obtain the best possible results.

Garnett Passe was born in South Africa of Australian parents in 1904, and was educated in Melbourne. He graduated in dentistry from the University of Melbourne in 1926, and travelled to the United Kingdom to study medicine. To honour his memory, and the memory of her second husband, his widow Mrs. Barbara Williams, established a large foundation which became operative upon her death in 1991. The Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams Memorial Foundation has been pleased to support the publication of this manuscript which is in part a biography of Garnett Passe and his contribution to otology, as well as a fascinating history of the development of the fenestration operation.

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*The Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams  
Memorial Foundation*