

Jack Riviere, blind sculptor who taught others to see

Blind sculptor Jack Riviere will make his last journey on a horse-drawn hearse.

At a simple funeral today (Wednesday), his own friends will provide the musical accompaniment.

Arrangements for the service at St. Andrew's Church, Medstead, at 2 p.m. reflect the interests that were nearest and dearest to the man who showed others how to sculpt, even when he could no longer see himself.

Jack valued friendship above all else and was known for his great love of horses, too.

"They were the passion in his life," said his widow, Tana. "He grew up with them and went on to own several and they were often the subject of his work."

"I know this is what he would have wanted, an old-fashioned funeral with a horse-drawn hearse."

It is also at Jack's own wish, highheartedly expressed a long time ago, that one of his friends, Chris Oldroyd, will be playing the lament, "Flowers of the Forest," on the bagpipes at his funeral.

Flautist Simon Hunt, cellist Rosse Hunt and violinist Julian Daniel, all Jack's friends, will be performing during the ser-

vice. The 1897 hearse, an "absolute wreck" before it was restored by a funeral museum in Southampton, will be pulled by "Hercules," a Dale Cab.

Raymond Briton Riviere (76), —he always preferred to be called Jack—died at his home, Medstead, on January 2nd. Born

in London, the son of a portraitist, he was also the grandson of a celebrated animal painter.

In a successful career as a professional sculptor, he designed decorative work to adorn many London buildings, including the Cafe Royal and the Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square.

Blind in one eye since the

age of 18, he had lost sight completely before he was 30. But Tana, a talented artist herself, encouraged him to continue with his sculpture and, three years ago, he presented a piece of his work in bronze as an award for the most popular exhibit in Alton Art Society's annual show.

Jack, who is also survived by

his son Martin, daughter-in-law Jane, daughter and son-in-law Robert, as well as his four grandchildren, once described sculpture as a "feeling art" and he helped many students to "see" their work in a different way.

His lifelong interest in horses began as a boy when he learned to ride a pony; he rode at

every opportunity when on holiday in the country and even tried his hand at ploughing with horses at a time when he was seriously considering becoming a farmer.

He had always been a supporter of the International League for the Protection of Horses, to which donations may be sent in his memory.



Death of noted sculptor

RAYMOND Briton Riviere, the Medstead sculptor, who died suddenly last week, represented a fifth generation of notable artists. His grandfather was a well known Royal Academician, and his father H. G. Riviere, portrait painter, one of whose pictures, the portrait of a former headmaster, now hangs in Winchester College.

Jack, as he preferred to be called, was born at St. John's Wood, went to prep school and on to Gresham School, in Norfolk. As a child he regularly devised his own toys by modelling in plasticene, and his interest in animal shapes remained a consuming passion that was of vital importance in his years of blindness.

His original intention was to become a farmer, but the agricultural slump of the 1920s

persuaded him to look elsewhere. He spent three years at the Architectural Association in Bedford Square and then decided to move on to the Regent Street Polytechnic to study sculpture. While there, he received a commission for a full size figure and, with this completed, he returned to the Polytechnic prepared to become a full time sculptor.

He began his career as a freelance artist working in London and his first major triumph was at The Sentry Box, in Beauchamp Place, where his model of the Queen at the Trooping the Colour attracted the attention of H.R.H. the Duke of Kent, who bought it and presented it to Her Majesty.

The Queen Mother, having seen the portrait of the Queen, commissioned a model of the Duke of Edinburgh playing polo.

As a young man Jack was a keen and active sportsman, despite losing an eye in a youthful rough and tumble. He was a rugby enthusiast and, when eventually he had to give this up, he continued with his horse riding and his high diving, always with the knowledge that he might soon lose the use of his one good eye.

In fact, he retained this reduced vision for another forty years, during which time he created many notable works. He designed the leaping figures inside the proscenium arch in the Odeon, Leicester Square, and the graceful nude in the Brasserie of the old Cafe Royal.

On commission that gave him particular pleasure to execute was for a portrait bust of Teazy Weazy, the hairdresser.

His models of 'Historic Uniforms' were created with such delicate detail that they have become collectors' pieces and are used as models by theatrical costumiers and others to whom accuracy was of vital importance.

On a more commercial plane, he fashioned a series of models of animals, cowboys and other figures for the 'Lone Star' plastic toys, and he recreated characters from the Noddy and Popeye cartoons. The total blindness came sud-

denly following an operation at Southampton for a detached retina which, it had been hoped, would assist his failing vision.

It was then that his indomitable spirit inspired him to carry on his work without the benefit of sight. He had no fear of blindness and felt pity for the deaf, the maimed and the paraplegic, whom he considered more severely handicapped than he was himself.

He moved to Medstead in 1956 to be able to work in peace and yet to be within a reasonable distance from London, and here he designed many sets for local dramatic societies.

He married his present wife in 1961. This was his third marriage and he met Tana through her friendship with his own daughter.

Tana, who is an artist in her own right, has been his eyes and his mind, and Jack freely admitted that, without her help and guidance, he could not have succeeded. There have been several noteworthy husband and wife exhibitions of their separate works.

With his most sensitive fingers, Jack could follow the contours of his models, and his vivid insight enabled him to picture the details. Tana would criticise his finished model, as a fellow artist, and point out any irregularities that might otherwise mar the beauty of his work.

It is almost impossible to realise the daunting task of sculpturing by touch alone, but Jack accepted his affliction without complaint and with incredible fortitude. He confessed that he was fascinated to discover what could be achieved without sight and, in this respect, he was grateful that he was not a painter.

He was anxious to pass on his skills to young artists and, with Tana, inaugurated sculpture classes at Alton Further Education Centre, and later he extended this to promoting similar classes at the Fareham centre.

His death came suddenly and peacefully at the age of 76, as the result of a virus infection that was followed by a fatal coronary.