

## Trouble with Inigo Jones

“You look glum, Mary,” said her husband, Ted. “What's up?”

“It's the creative writing group,” said Mary.

“I thought you liked it since you joined,” said Ted. “You're always saying what a friendly lot they are.”

“So they are, Ted,” said Mary. “But I can't get any inspiration for this month's theme. I had thought of doing something in verse, but I can't even get anything going in prose!”

“Writer's block, eh?” said Ted. “What's the theme?”

“Inigo Jones,” sighed Mary.

“Not very festive, is it?” replied Ted. “We need cheering up in these dark December days.”

“Like with Hanukka and Christmas and New Year,” said Mary. “But what about Inigo Jones?”

“The first English architect to apply Vitruvian rules of symmetry and proportion in his buildings,” mused Ted.

“I know,” said Mary. “But I can't get worked up about Vitruvian rules. It makes me think of Leonardo's 'Vitruvian Man.’”

“Same thing,” said Ted. “Don't forget Leonardo's drawing has text above and below, based on Vitruvius' writings. He saw the ideal proportioned man as a cosmography of the microcosm.”

“A what of the what!” exclaimed Mary.

“Basically,” said Ted, “that the proportions and working of the human body are an analogy for the proportions and working of the whole universe; and thus these proportions should be applied in architecture if we want things to be pleasing to man and in harmony with the universe.”

“What nonsense!” said Mary. “It sounds like a lot of humanist superstition. Because an ancient author maintained this, the Renaissance humanists accepted it. Anyway, it's not helping with Inigo Jones.”

“Except,” laughed Ted, “that, as I said, he was the first English architect to apply Vitruvian rules of symmetry and proportion in his buildings.”

“All right,” agreed Mary. “But what buildings? Where can I find them?”

“Now there's a problem,” said Ted. “More than a thousand buildings have at one time or another been attributed to him, but only a very small number are certain to be his work.”

“Oh, why so?” queried Mary.

“It seems,” said Ted, “that the later concept of an architect's artistic responsibility for a building did not exist in his day. His role in many instances may have been that of a civil servant in getting things done rather than as an architect; his contribution to a building may also simply have been verbal instructions to a mason or bricklayer or in providing an Italian engraving or two as a guide, or the correction of drafts.”

“I see,” said Mary. “But are there no known buildings of his one can see?”

“Oh yes,” said Ted, looking on the Internet, “it seems the Queen's House at Greenwich was his first major work; it became a part of the National Maritime Museum in 1937. But, according to the Encyclopædia Britannica, his greatest achievement is the Banqueting House at Whitehall. His only other surviving royal building is the Queen's Chapel at St. James's Palace. He was also involved with the planning of Covent Garden, but little of Jones' original work remains there.”

“Didn't I read somewhere that he was involved in the restoration of St Paul's cathedral?” asked Mary.

“Not Wren's church,” laughed Ted. “But, yes, he was involved with restoration work on the old St Paul's cathedral and with the building of a new west front portico. But that all got destroyed in

the Great Fire of London. The present St Paul's has nothing to do with Jones, but it is thought that Jones' ideas influenced Wren in his design of some of the city churches."

"I see," said Mary. "But 'Inigo' is an odd name, isn't it. Where did it come from?"

"His Dad," said Ted. "The famous Inigo was born and brought up in London, but his Dad, also called Inigo, was originally a Welsh cloth worker."

"But 'Inigo' isn't right for Welsh, is it?" replied Mary.

"No," agreed Ted, "not unless it were 'Inigo'."

"Maybe," said Mary, "it's was; and just as Welsh 'Meredith' usually gets changed to 'Meredit' when it crosses Offas's Dike, so 'Inigo' changed to 'Inigo.'"

"No," said Ted, "it was always 'Inigo.' It's not Welsh at all, it's Spanish *Íñigo*, which in turn was derived from the Basque name 'Eneko.'"

"Odd," said Mary, "what's a Basque name doing turning up in Wales?"

"It's not really clear," said Ted, "but it was the Spanish form that got to Wales. It seems to have been connected in some people's minds, both in Spain and in Wales, with the name Ignatius."

"It doesn't sound much like it," said Mary.

"No," said Ted, "but one Basque called Eneko did make the name 'Ignatius' well known."

"That's got to be 'Ignatius of Loyola'," said Mary, "the guy who founded the Jesuit order."

"Quite right," said Ted, "He was baptized 'Enecus' after the 11<sup>th</sup> century Benedictine, St Enecus, being the Latinized version of Eneko. He was known in his native Basque as Eneko and in Spanish as *Íñigo*. After his spiritual conversion and call to religious life he adopted the name 'Ignatius' after the first century St Ignatius of Antioch."

"But why should a Welsh cloth maker have a name associated with Ignatius?" asked Mary.

"Because he was a Catholic," said Ted.

"Oh," said Mary, "wasn't it rather dangerous being a Catholic back then?"

"If you were a priest," said Ted, "you were regarded as a traitor and liable to be hung, drawn and quartered. If you aided in hiding priests you could get into serious trouble. But if you were an ordinary citizen and kept your head down, you weren't usually in any danger, though you were debarred from established professions and from going to university."

"So was the famous Inigo Jones also a Catholic?" asked Mary.

"Oh yes," said Ted. "he adhered to his father's faith throughout his life. Practically nothing is known about his early life but when he was about thirty he spent quite a few years in Italy, mainly in Venice."

"Ah," said Mary, "that's when he learnt about Vitruvian architecture, I suppose."

"No," answered Ted, "that came later. After his first visit he was invited to the Danish court, but soon returned to England where from 1601 he was engaged in designing costly scenery and machinery for masques at the royal court. Then around 1614 he made his second trip to Italy."

"That's when he learnt about Vitruvius, then," said Mary.

"Quite right," said Ted. "His notes show that he studied the writings of well-known architects and became acquainted with famous architects then living in Rome."

"Did he ever marry?" asked Mary. "Did he have family of his own?"

"No," replied Ted. "He remained single. His full-time career ended with the outbreak of civil war in 1643. He died in 1652, worn out with grief and disappointment."

"Oh, how sad," said Mary, "A catholic with a name of Spanish origin, who was probably involved in one way or another with very many building projects but only a few definitely ascribed to him are known, and who never married and died worn out with grief and disappointment."

“But remember,” said Ted, “he was the first English architect to apply Vitruvian rules of symmetry and proportion in his buildings; and that had a great influence on later architects, particularly on Sir Christopher Wren.”

“You and your Vitruvius!” exclaimed Mary.

“My Vitruvius?” replied Ted with a laugh. “He's not mine. Why don't you suggest him as a theme for your group sometime next year?”

“No,” said Mary emphatically, “I'm having enough bother with a 17<sup>th</sup> century English architect. I'm not going to be suggesting a Roman architect of the *1<sup>st</sup> century BC!*”

“Sorry,” said Ted. “Not really a serious suggestion. Anyway, you should have some ideas now for something to write for your group – even, maybe, something in verse.”

“Well,” said Mary, “I don't think I could manage anything in verse but I'll probably cobble together something in prose from the ideas you've given me.”

“Let's hope so,” said Ted. “Of course, if you want to make it festive you could always do a fantasy on Inigo Jones meets Santa!”

“Stop being silly, Ted,” said Mary. “Just leave me to get on with something.”

“OK, Mary,” said Ted. “I'll just take this pile of Christmas cards off to post. Bonne chance!”

With that Ted took the post and left Mary to get on cobbling together her piece for her creative writing group.