

Edward Arthur Walton RSA

RSA Obituary by J Lawton Wingate RSA

Transcribed from the 1922 RSA Annual Report

Edward Arthur Walton, R.S.A. Born at Glanderstone House, Renfrewshire, on 15th April 1860, Mr. Walton's home influences were congenial and stimulating to the pursuit of Art.

Some elementary instruction at the old Glasgow School of Art, followed by a course of training at Dusseldorf during the later seventies, served him as introduction to the technique of the profession.

The continental training implied in the latter was not, however, that which was then attracting Scottish, and especially West of Scotland students to Paris; and on Walton it seems to have left little impression.

But he did not escape the wider cosmopolitan influence referred to; for it was his association, during the years immediately following, with the mostly Parisian-trained young men, already beginning to be known as "the Glasgow School," which became the leading formative influence on Walton's Art.

Later, his intimate relations with Whistler may be said to have completed his outlook on both the aims and practice of Painting, and to those ideals he adhered throughout his subsequent career.

Mr. Walton's association with the Academy commenced as early as 1880, and from that date, when he was represented at the Exhibition by a picture entitled "The Bend of the River," whether resident in Glasgow, London, or Edinburgh, where successively he had his headquarters, his name has seldom been absent from its catalogues.

During the eighties, his contributions are mainly landscapes, but in 1891 the series is broken by the notable "Girl in Brown," after which portraiture predominates, though, of quite recent years, there were not wanting indications that landscape might again play the leading role.

Mr. Walton, who had been elected Associate in 1889, was raised to premier rank on his finally settling in Edinburgh in 1905.

Thenceforth, though naturally of a retiring disposition, he took a leading part in the affairs of the Academy. In collaboration with Sir James Guthrie, he had much to do with the reconstruction of the Royal Institution building, so successfully carried out by Mr. Oldrieve, and with other changes brought about at that time.

At the Council Board, also, though not given to much talk, he advocated, not always successfully, various reforms in the constitution and management of the Academy.

This Mr. Walton did with unflinching courtesy to those who differed from him, and though the Academy was far from having reached his ideal of what such a National

Institution should be, he was deeply interested in all its activities, especially in its School of Painting, where, for some years, he had been senior visitor.

Walton's talent was many-sided, and dealt with almost every department of the Painter's craft, from the noble decorative "Glasgow Fair in the Fifteenth Century," in the Municipal Banqueting Hall of the capital of the West, to those dainty water-colour landscapes which were a distinguishing feature in his later practice; or from the luscious "Shadowed Pastures" in the Scottish Modern Arts Collection, to the dark-haired girl in crimson, gold, and subdued whites of the Diploma Gallery hard by, and the series of virile portraits with which these were interspersed.

Such versatility of talent could not fail to bring full and wide recognition to the Artist, and few names are more widely known in the Art world than that of E. A. Walton.

This is not the place to dilate on its technical qualities, but it may be permitted to say that his fellow craftsmen both in Scotland and beyond its limits, are deeply indebted to him for the example of a laborious life spent in the pursuit of high ideals in so wide a field.

Mr. Walton was associated with practically all the leading Art Societies in Scotland, and with not a few in England and abroad. In the founding and growth of some of them he took a leading part.

This may especially be said of the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Water Colours; and the members of that body recognised his continued interest in it by electing him President on the death of the late Sir Francis Powell in 1915.

During the spring months Mr. Walton had suffered from an attack of influenza. He had apparently recovered, and was returning to his professional work and his duties at the Academy, when, owing to heart trouble, he died very suddenly on 18th March.