

## **Robert Sinclair Thomson ARSA**

### **RSA Obituary by M.A. RSA**

#### **Transcribed from the 1983 RSA Annual Report**

Robert Sinclair Thomson was born on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1915 in Glasgow though of Caithness descent. He went to school in Glasgow and after winning a scholarship for entry to Allan Glen's School, he studied there for the next six years.

While there, at the age of sixteen, he sustained an injury to his knee while playing rugby which led to the amputation of his leg. Arising from this he was to suffer great pain and inconvenience for the rest of his life.

In spite of this major accident, his life was to prove very interesting and varied, as a Scout leader, a businessman and as an artist in several very different media.

During the war and in spite of his disablement, he became a dispatch rider for Civil Defence, and this love of motorcycles was to be a lifelong obsession.

In 1941 he went to the Glasgow School of Art and Studied Drawing and Painting under Hugh Adam Crawford.

One of the enduring passions of his life was the making of pottery and he was fortunate in having a job by day in the High School within easy reach of Glasgow School of Art where he taught pottery in the evening classes.

This was a very happy and creative time for him. He erected a fine kiln in his home and did some of the finest pottery that has been done in Scotland during the last thirty years. He received a commission for large figurative murals made of pottery tiles for schools in Lanarkshire which are unique and of great beauty.

Robert was always a very friendly man and by being invited to his studio, a great many young artists found a willing artist friend eager to help them and to put all his facilities and experience at their disposal, and so evolved the art classes in his home which brought together a nucleus of young students including Joan Eardley.

They posed for each other and spent the evenings drawing, painting and discussing all aspects of the artistic world. His first wife, Florence, herself a good painter was part of the coterie.

He was appointed in 1960 to be a lecturer in Drawing and Painting in Glasgow School of Art and was a greatly loved and respected teacher there right up till ill-health forced him to retire in 1975.

He was elected to Associate rank in the Royal Scottish Academy in 1952 and continued to exhibit there right up till the time of his death.

His work was strongly based on fine draughtmanship using oil, water-colour and pastel. His early work consisted of fine portraiture and figure composition while later on he did many interesting landscapes.

For many years he left the city in summer to live in his cottage in Ballantrae. There he sat among the roses and flowers of his garden and painted. He looked out over the Firth of Clyde towards Ailsa Craig which he painted many times and enjoyed painting large sunsets looking towards Arran.

It was there in the lovely summer of 1983 while chatting to his second wife, Barbara, another of his pottery pupils, that he suddenly died. He will long be remembered by his friends and pupils for his genial kindness and wise council.