

William Walls RSA

RSA Obituary by George Pirie RSA and David Foggie RSA

Transcribed from the 1942 RSA Annual Report

William Walls, the son of the late James Walls, Provost of Dunfermline, was born in 1860. He died on 25th June, the oldest member of the Academy still active in its affairs.

After his attendance at Dunfermline High School he studied art at the School of Design and the Academy Life School. Thereafter he worked under M.C. Verlat at the Academy at Antwerp, where he had as companions MacGeorge and Hornel.

Even at that time Walls' interest was in the painting of animals, and in the large Zoological Gardens at Antwerp he had great scope for observation. He seems to have followed his study at Antwerp by working at the London Zoo and by painting landscape in the Fen country.

Returning to Scotland his concern was principally with domestic animals until the formation of the Edinburgh Zoological Garden, where again he had an opportunity to study his more savage models.

In the formation of this Zoological park he was very active, and was a member of the Executive Council. His important landscapes were mostly of Highland subjects, and among his portraits that of his mother was a very distinguished performance.

Walls was made an Associate of the Academy in 1901 and full member in 1919. His Diploma work is of a wounded swan; the Academy also possesses "In the Arena" and a rendering of "Pike" acquired this year. In the Modern Arts Collection are "Snow Leopards' Toilet" and "Cave-dwellers at Play." Glasgow, Dundee, Paisley and the Carnegie Trust, Dunfermline, have also examples. He became a member of the R.S.W. in 1906.

To the end Walls' vitality and youthfulness of spirit were remarkable, and a large circle of friends will deeply regret his passing. He is survived by his widow, a son and a daughter.