

Lyon and Turnbull Visit: Friday 2nd November 2018

A group of members visited the autumn exhibition, dedicated to the talented Walton family, at Lyon and Turnbull in Bath Street, Glasgow. We enjoyed a knowledgeable introduction from James Mc Naught to the items on display, mainly on loan from private collections, examples of work by all five Walton artists.

The father, Jackson Walton, moved to Glasgow from Manchester in the 1860's. As a talented amateur artist, he encouraged the artistic leanings of his large family. No fewer than five of them became practising artists.

The most well known is the Glasgow Boy painter, E.A.Walton (Edward Arthur). He was especially friendly with Guthrie and Crawhall and painted with them at Rosneath in 1879. Although a noted portraitist, his first love was landscape. We saw an interesting Spanish scene, unusually painted on silk.

His older sister Helen was the first to set up a studio in Glasgow. Later joined by her younger sister Hannah, she ran a teaching studio in Hillhead. The hand-painted ceramic and glass 'blanks' bought from local firms. Helen later became the lead instructor in applied ceramic decoration at the Glasgow School of Art in the 1890's. Another younger sister, Constance, became a flower painter, mainly in watercolour.

The most commercially successful member of the family was younger brother George, an interior decorator and art furnisher, who established his own company, Walton & Co. He was commissioned by Miss Cranston to design tearoom interiors and later worked with Mackintosh on Argyle Street and Buchanan Street tearooms. Only after Walton's move to London in 1897, was Mackintosh later in sole command, for example at the Willow Tearooms. Like Mackintosh, he aimed to create a total 'look' in furniture, wallpaper and stencil decorations, possibly also helped by his sisters' designs for tableware.

Finally the next generation of the Walton family produced one of the most important artists of the early twentieth century in E.A.Walton's daughter, Cecile. She grew up in Chelsea, where among her father's friends were Whistler and Lavery. When the family moved to Edinburgh she came under the influence of John Duncan, the Symbolist movement and the Celtic Revival, along with her husband Eric Robertson.

Although the family did not live in Helensburgh, the town can take a proprietorial interest in their work. E.A.Walton frequently stayed in Helensburgh at Thornton Lodge, the house of his friend J.Whitelaw Hamilton. He produced a superb set of watercolours of Helensburgh in the 1880's. George Walton designed fireplaces, wallpaper and stencil designs for several artistic Helensburgh houses, and Helen and Hannah were visiting teachers of ceramics at St Bride's School for Girls. Guthrie's splendid diploma picture, Midsummer of 1892, presented to the RSA and still in their collection shows Maggie Hamilton, her sister Mary Ann and one of the Walton sister, probably Hannah taking tea in the garden of Thornton Lodge.