

Robert John Scott Bertram 1871 – 1953 [Stained Glass]

The family wanted Robert to enter the Commercial world and in 1885 he was apprenticed to the German Coal exporting firm of 'Besallers' at the Quayside, Newcastle. It was here that he first gained his love of the older Newcastle streets and historic buildings. He attended evening classes and developed his natural talents for drawing and design. He won a scholarship to the Durham College of Science and Art and his exceptional ability with Pencil and Pen were soon realised when in 1893 he did the illustrations for the first volume of the Northumberland County History.

In 1895 Robert was appointed Part-time assistant at the Art School (now King Edward V11 School of Art, Armstrong College in Durham University) where the professor of Fine Art was Richard George Hatton, a follower of the William Morris

Movement. He worked very closely with Hatton and was now skilled in the techniques of lettering, illustrations, heraldry, painting in oils and watercolours, lithography and etching.

In 1919 Robert was appointed Head of Design at the University. At the Theatre Royal in Grey Street he painted, with assistants all the drops for the Northumberland Pageant in 1923. He was selected in 1928 to paint a large lunette spanning a gallery in The Laing Art Gallery and chose as his subject 'the partial destruction of the Tyne Bridge during the 1771 flood'. He was now examiner for Art

in the Universities School Certificate Exam Board, a member of the Bishop's advisory committee for the care of churches, later becoming secretary, member of the Pen and Palette Club and the Lit and Phil soc.

Unfortunately no precise record of his work was kept, but his output was amazing. Always busy with commissioned work, his work on committees, his college duties as well as his own interest in landscape painting.

But here are listed a few documented work In the 1890's he illustrate several books including guide books to the East and North Ridings of Yorkshire; in 1905 'A Fishers Garland' by John Harbottle; 'The Borders' by William Sitwell; 'Nortumbrian Decameron' by Howard Pease; 'Account of Belsay Castle by Sir Arthur Middleton. In 1908 a large folder of 15 lithographs entitled 'Old Newcastle' was published by Mawson Swan and Morgan and in the same ear he has a picture of Warkworth Castle in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Just before the outbreak of war in 1914 his Newcastle upon Tyne Sketchbook was published by A.&C Black but similar books on York and Chester were abandoned. However in 1920 A 'Durham Sketch Book was published.

He had three children who all made careers in the Art/Teaching world – Bryan, Neville and Helen Joyce. It is Helen and Neville who modelled for his design of the window in St Aidan's Church Bamburgh.

Pete Loud has some pictures of the stained glass windows in St Aidans, on his web site. Go there