

Lethaby, William Richard 1857 - 1931



William Richard Lethaby [also known as W.R. Lethaby] was born in Barnstaple, Devon, England on 18 January 1857. In his youth he attend the Barnstaple Literary and Scientific Institute where he took night classes in drawing. In 1878 he moved to Duffield in Derbyshire where he was employed for a period in the office of the architect Richard Waite. He then worked briefly with T. H. Baker in Leicester. After winning the Royal Institute of British Architects' Soane medallion for 1878-79, he moved to London where he was employed as chief assistant by Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) from 1879 to 1889. He was a Pugin Student in 1881

In 1889 Lethaby left Shaw's office and set up his own practice in Bloomsbury, London. During his career, he only designed six building. It is as an historian, teacher, educationalist and design theorist that he is better known.

Lethaby was influenced by the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement and was particularly inspired by the writings of William Morris and John Ruskin. He was a founder member of the Art Workers Guild in 1884 and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1888. He was a close friend of the Cotswold architect-craftsmen Ernest Barnsley, Sidney Barnsley and Ernest Gimson. Together with Gimson, the Barnsley, Mervyn Macartney, Reginald Blomfield, and Stephen Webb, he set up Kenton & Co., a short-lived cabinet-making workshop in London in c.1889.

In 1894 Lethaby was was appointed art inspector to the newly established London County Council technical education board, and following the establishment of the

board's specialist training school, the LCC Central School of Arts and Crafts, in 1896, Lethaby became joint director [later Principal] with the sculptor George Frampton. Lethaby was also appointed Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art in London in 1900 and held both posts until 1911 when he resigned from the Central. He held the post of Professor at the RCA until 1918. From 1906 he was surveyor to the dean and chapter of Westminster Abbey.

Lethaby was an active member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA) in 1906 but refused the RIBA Royal Gold Medal in 1924. He died in London on 17 July 1931.

Worked in

UK

Works

Lethaby only designed six buildings, of these, four were country houses: Avon Tyrrell, near Christchurch (1893); The Hurst at Four Oaks, near Birmingham (1893); Melsetter House at Hoy in the Orkneys (1898); and High Coxlease at Lyndhurst, Hampshire (1900–01). The other buildings by him were the Eagle Insurance Buildings, Colmore Row, Birmingham (1899–1900) and the Church of All Saints, Brockhampton, near Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire (1901–02)

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