

Waterhouse, Alfred 1830 - 1905



Alfred Waterhouse was born into a strictly Quaker family in Aigburth, Liverpool, Lancashire, England on 19 July 1830 and was articled to the architectural partnership of P. B. Alley and Richard Lane (1795-1880) in Manchester in 1848. Having completed his apprenticeship in 1853 he spent ten-months touring France and Germany. On his return he set up his own architectural office in Manchester. From the outset the practice proved to be successful and before long he had a successful client base within the local business community, consisting mainly of warehouses, schools, chapels, offices and banks.

He came to national prominence when in 1859 he won a competition to design the Manchester Assize Court. Other notable commissions from the early years of his practice included Hinderton Hall (1856-57), a large country house in Cheshire for Christopher Bushell, a Liverpool merchant; Strangeways prison in Manchester (1861-69); and St John the Divine (1863), an Anglican church in Sale, Cheshire.

In 1865 Waterhouse relocated his office to London. His practice continued to thrive and soon after his move to the city he won three major commissions that were to further cement his reputation as one of the leading architects in late Victorian Britain - the Natural History Museum in London (1866 and 1870-80); and the new Town Hall in Manchester (1868); the rebuilding of Eaton Hall (1870-83) in Cheshire. The design of the museum was significant in its extensive use of terracotta for the exterior and interior facing of the building.

Other notable buildings by Waterhouse and his practice included Darlington Town Hall (1861-63); Blackmoor House (1865-73) for Sir Roundel Palmer (1st Earl of Selborne) in Selbourne, Hampshire; the Seamen's Orphans' Institution in Liverpool

(1870–75); Reading (1871–76) in Reading, Berkshire; Hove Town Hall (1880–83) in Hove, Sussex; Lyndhurst Road Chapel (1883), in Hampstead, London; St Elizabeth church (1883-85) in Reddish, Lancashire; the National Liberal Club in London (1884-87); Liverpool Royal Infirmary (1886–92); University College Hospital in London (1894-1903; and the Jenner Institute of Preservative Medicine (1896) in London. He also designed several new buildings for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. From 1877 he was employed by the Prudential Assurance Company to build the series of offices for the company. Built mainly in red brick and terracotta, they are Waterhouse's "most characteristic contribution to commercial architecture" [Cunningham. Grove Art Online]

Waterhouse worked alone until 1891 when he took his son, [Paul Waterhouse](#) (1861-1924) into partnership as A Waterhouse & Son. When, in 1901 Alfred Waterhouse had a severe stroke and was forced to retire, Paul Waterhouse took over the running of the practice.

Alfred Waterhouse was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA) in 1861 and was President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (PRIBA) from 1888 to 1891. In 1878 he was awarded the RIBA Royal Gold Medal. Such was his international reputation that he was elected a member of the academies in Vienna in 1869, Brussels in 1886, Antwerp in 1887, Milan in 1888, and Berlin in 1889. He was also made a corresponding member of the Institut de France in 1883.

He exhibited his designs at the Royal Academy from 1857 to 1901 and was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy (ARA) in 1878 and a Royal Academician (RA) in 1895.

In 1901 Alfred Waterhouse suffered a severe stroke and subsequently retired, leaving his son to run the practice. He died in Yattendon, Berkshire, on 22 August 1905

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Alfred Waterhouse 1830-1905. Biography of a Practice by Colin Cunningham and Prudence Waterhouse [*see Bibliography*] contains a complete list of Alfred Waterhouse's contracts.

See also:

[British Listed Buildings site](#) - contains over 300 records of buildings designed by Alfred Waterhouse

[Historic England](#) - contains over 300 records of architectural work by Alfred Waterhouse

[Wikipedia - List of public and civic buildings by Alfred Waterhouse](#)

[Wikipedia - List of domestic works by Alfred Waterhouse](#)

[Wikipedia - List of commercial buildings by Alfred Waterhouse](#)

[Wikipedia - List of educational buildings by Alfred Waterhouse](#)

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