

## Comper, John Ninian 1864 - 1960



John Ninian Comper [also known as Sir John Ninian Comper] was born in Aberdeen, Scotland on 10 June 1864. In 1882 he spent a term studying drawing at Ruskin School of Art in Oxford. In 1883 he moved to London where he worked as a voluntary assistant in the studio of Charles Eamer Kempe (1837-1907), a designer and manufacturer of stained glass. He also attended classes at the South Kensington School of Art. He decided to embark on a career as an architect and in late 1883 was articled to the Gothic Revival architects George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907) and Thomas Garner (1839-1906) of Bodley & Garner.

On completing his articles Comper commenced practice as an architect in London and in 1888 formed a partnership with William Bucknall (1851-1944) whom he had met at Bodley & Garner's office.

Comper's partnership with Bucknall was dissolved in 1905 and thereafter he worked independently.

In all Comper designed fifteen churches and renovated, restored, altered, decorated and furnished many more. "No other English church architect of the twentieth century endeavoured to penetrate so deeply to the core of Western civilization by studying the church art and architecture of Europe in order to find there spiritual values for his own time" [Anthony Symondson. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography]

Comper lived at 5 Chapel Road, Norwood, Surrey from 1890 to 1894; and 5 Gipsy Road, Norwood Surrey from 1905 to 1912 when he moved to The Priory, Beulah

Hill, Crystal Palace, south London, where he lived for the rest of his life. His office was located at 35 Old Queen Street, Westminster, London until 1905 when it was relocated to 228 Knight's Hill, London, where he remained until 1946. Comper was knighted for his services to architecture in 1950. He died at the Hostel of God, Clapham Common, London on 22 December 1960.

A biographical file on John Ninian Comper is available on request from the Enquiry Desk, Royal Institute of British Architects, London

Worked in

UK

Works

Commissions on which Comper worked during his association with Bucknall included the restoration of St Wilfrid's church in Cantley, Yorkshire (1892-94); the restoration of St Mary's church in Egmont, Nottinghamshire (1897); the conversion of the south aisle of the crypt of St Mary Magdalene's in Paddington, London, into a chantry and Blessed Sacrament chapel (1895-99); and St Cyprian's church, at Clarence Gate, St Marylebone, London (1902-03). In 1904 Comper embarked on the furnishing and decorating of St. Mary's church in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. Considered his masterpiece by Anthony Symondson [Oxford Grove Art], Comper worked on the commission until 1931.

Commissions on which Comper worked following his split with Bucknall include Holy Trinity, Southchurch, Southend-on-Sea, Essex (1906); St. Mary, Knox Road, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire (1906-30); St. Mary, Toad Lane, Rochdale, Lancashire (1909-11); St. Michael, Newquay, Cornwall (1909-11); St. Martin's Chapel, Herritage Crafts School, Chailey, Sussex (1913); a series of windows for Westminster Abbey in London; a baldachin and the east window, designed as part of a war memorial (1921-23); Welsh National War Memorial in Cardiff, Wales (1923-28); and the Lady Chapel at St Matthew's Church, Westminster, London; and the Lindsey Memorial Chapel at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Boston, Massachusetts (consecrated in 1924).

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*See also:*

[Dictionary of Scottish Architects 1660-1980](#)

[Historic England](#)

[British Listed Buildings](#)

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