Tait, Thomas Smith 1882 - 1954

Thomas Smith Tait was born the son of a stonemason, in Paisley, Scotland, on 18 June 1882. He studied architecture at Paisley Technical College (1900-03; Glasgow School of Art under Charles Rennie Mackintosh; and at the Royal Academy Schools in London. He was articled to the Paisley architect John Donald (1852?-1914) from 1896 to 1903 following which he worked as an assistant to James John Burnet (1857-1938) from 1903 to 1914.

He was also employed by the London architects Trehearne & Norman. In 1910 he collaborated with James Mitchell Whitelaw (1886-1913) and Cecil Alfred Leonard Sutton (1886-1965) to enter a competition to design Marylebone Municipal Buildings. Their entry is illustrated in British Competitions in architecture vol. 3, no. 36, August 1911 (pp. 373-374).   From 1918 to 1930 he was in partnership with Burnet. In 1930 Francis Lorne (1889-1963) joined the practice which became Burnet, Tait & Lorne, The partnership was dissolved in c.1949.

In 1936 Tait was appointed Chief Architect of the Empire Exhibition, Scotland 1938 by the Scottish Development Council. He subsequently chose Bellahouston Park in Glasgow as the site for the exhibition for which developed the master-plan . He was also responsible for designing most of the buildings on the site for which he was assisted by a team of architects who included Basil Spence (1907-1976). The most notable building designed by Tait for the exhibition was the Tower of Empire, a 300-feet,high structure, commonly known as Tait's Tower, which dominated site.

During World War Two, Tait was employed by the Ministry of Works as Director of Standardisation from 1940 to 1942. He resumed his practice after the war and retired in 1952.

Tait was elected an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects (ARIBA) in 1913 and a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA) in 1926. In 1933 he was awarded the RIBA Royal Gold Medal.

Tait died in Aberfeldy, Scotland, on 18 July 1954.

Worked in
UK
Works

Kodak House in Kingsway, London (1910), the north wing of the British Museum in London (1914), Adelaide House in London (1920-25), the Church of Christ Scientist in Kensington Palace Gardens in London (1926), the Silver End estate village for Crittall Metal Windows near Braintree, Essex (1926-28), Unilever House, London (1930–33), the Hospital for Infectious Diseases in Paisley (1932-38), the Royal Masonic Hospital, Ravenscourt (1930-33), houses in St John's Wood, London (1934-36), the Curzon Cinema in Mayfair, London (1938), the layout of the Empire Exhibition, held at Glasgow's Bellahouston Park in 1938, Saint Dunstan's Hospital for the Blind near Brighton, Sussex (1938), and Saint Andrew's House in Edinburgh (1939). Following World War One Tait received commissions to design several war memorials including the Great Western Railway War Memorial at Paddington Station, London, unveiled on Armistice Day 1922.

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For an additional lists of architectural projects by Thomas Smith Tait see the Dictionary of Scottish Architects 1660-1980; Historic England; Historic Environment Scotland [*links below*]

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Thomas Tait: The Last Empire Builder (Architect 1882-1954). Paisley, Scotland: Paisley Museum & Art Galleries, 1998

Links
• Dictionary of Scottish Architects 1660-1980
http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=200729
• Artist Biographies [Subscription service]
https://www.artbiogs.co.uk/1/artists/tait-thomas-smith
• Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_S._Tait
ª British Listed Buildings - 58 entries on Thomas Tait
https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/site-search/?q=Thomas%20Tait
• David M. Walker. Thomas Smith Tait. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online [Subscription service] https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40375
• David M. Walker. Thomas Smith Tait. Grove Oxford Art Online [Subscription service] https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T083047
• Historic England - 67 entries relating to Thomas Tait
https://historicengland.org.uk/sitesearch?searchType=site&search=Thomas%20Tait&searc
• Historic Environment Scotland - over 80 records relating to Thomas Tait
http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/hes/web/f?p=1505%3A200%3A%3A%3ANO%3ARP%