

Ashbee, Charles Robert 1863 - 1942



Charles Robert Ashbee [commonly known as C.R. Ashbee] was born in Iseleworth, Middlesex, England, on 17 May 1863. After studying history at King's College, Cambridge from 1883 to 1886, he was articled to [George Frederick Bodley](#) (1827-1907) of [Bodley & Garner](#) in London. Whilst working in Bodley's office he lived at Toynbee Hall, a university settlement in Whitechapel, east London, where he started classes in the arts and crafts. These evolved into the Guild and School of Handicraft, a craft workshop which he launched on 23 June 1888 at 34 Commercial Road, a warehouse building next to Toynbee Hall.

Apart from Ashbee, the Guild initially consisted of four workers who made furniture, metalwork and painted decorations. In 1891 the Guild relocated to Essex House, at 401 Mile End Road, London. In 1895 the enterprise was renamed The Guild of Handicraft. By 1900 it was employing about forty men who now included jewellers, silversmiths, enamellers, and blacksmiths. In March 1898 they took over the staff and presses of William Morris's Kelmscott Press to form the Essex House Press which the Guild ran until 1905.

In early 1902 the Guild relocated again. This time to Chipping Camden in the English Cotswolds, where they re-established a workshop. Although the venture was successful at first, the Guild began to run into financial difficulties by 1905 and in late 1907 and in the autumn of 1907 it was decided that the Guild should go into liquidation.

Following the collapse of the Guild, Ashbee continued to live in Chipping Camden with his wife, Janet, whom he'd married in 1898. During World War One he spent

much of his time lecturing in the USA and in 1917, took a post as lecturer at the Sultania training college in Cairo, where he taught English. In 1918 he was commissioned by the military governor, Ronald Storrs, who asked him to write a report on the planning and repair of the Jerusalem, which was then under British administration. He subsequently moved with his family to Palestine where he remained until he resigned from his post in 1922. After another lecture tour of the USA, Ashbee and his family settled in Godden Green, Kent.

Ashbee was the author of numerous books and articles on architecture, town planning, the decorative and applied arts, and other matters. For details of all known writings by Ashbee see Appendix four. A list of C. R. Ashbee's published writings in Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee. Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist* by (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1985 pp.484-486.

Ashbee was elected a member of the Art Workers Guild in 1897 and Master of the AWG in 1929. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA) in 1907 and was also a member of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, an Honorary Member of the Vienna Secession and an Honorary Corresponding Member of the Deutsche Bildender Künstler. Ashbee died in Godden Green, Kent on 23 May 1942.

For a list of work designed by Ashbee in public collections see Appendix two. Public collections containing work by C. R. Ashbee in Crawford op. cit. pp.477-478

Worked in

UK

Works

Architectural works by C. R. Ashbee included 37 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, London (1894); Chapel and additions, Wombourne Wodehouse, near Wolverhampton, Staffordshire (1895-97); 38-39 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, London (1899-1901); 75 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, London (1897); New wing, Coombe End, Whitchurch, Oxfordshire (c.1902); 71 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, London (1902); Rebuilt many derelict cottages in and near Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire (1902-06)' Little Coppice, Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire (c.1905); The Shoehorn, Orpington, Kent (.1905); Stanstead House and Five Bells, Dromenagh Estate, Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire (c.1905); Norman Chapel, Broad, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire (1905), conversion of a chapel into a house for himself; 52 industrial cottages near Birchfield Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire (1906); Byways, Yarnton, Oxfordshire (1907); Villa San Georgio, beside San Pancrazio church, Taormina, Sicily (1907); Manor Gate Cottage, Ockley, Surreu (c.1909); 1049-1054,

Squirrel's Heat Avenue, Romford, Essex (1911); and Sidcot, near Winscombe, Somerset (1912-13).

For details of all known architectural works by Ashbee see Appendix one. A list of C. R. Ashbee's architectural works in Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee. Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist* by (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1985 pp. 467-476.

Bibliography

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Ashbee, C.R. *Craftsmanship in competitive industry. Being a record of the workshops of the Guild of Handicraft, and some deductions from their twenty-one years of experience*. Campden, England: Essex House Press, 1908

Aslet, Clive. 'The townies who made Chipping Campden beautiful'. *Country life* vol. 211, no. 18, 3 May 2017 pp. 140-141 [Report on an exhibition of the work of C. R. Ashbee and the Guild of Handicraft at Court Barn Museum, Chipping Campden (April 7-July 9, 2017)]

Ashbee, Felicity. *Janet Ashbee : love, marriage and the Arts & Crafts movement*. Introduction by Alan Crawford. Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press, 2002

Boutouille, Myriam. 'Ashbee orfèvre de l'épure'. *Connaissance des arts* no. 769, April 2018 p p. 82-87. [Discusses the work of C. R. Ashbee who was the subject of two exhibitions in 2018 - at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, and at the Musée national suisse, Zurich]

Carruthers, Annette. 'Ashbee silverwork & jewellery'. *Antique Collector* vol. 59, no. 2, February 1988 pp. 23-28.

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C.R. Ashbee & the Guild of Handicraft. Cheltenham, England: Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, 1981 [Exhibition catalogue]

- Crawford, Alan. C.R. Ashbee: architect, designer & romantic socialist. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985
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- 'Obituary'. The Builder vol. 152, 29 May 1942 p. 476
- 'Obituary'. RIBA Journal vol. 49, 1942 p. 134
- Rapaport, Raquel. 'The city of the great singer: C. R. Ashbee's Jerusalem'. Architectural History vol. 50, 2007, pp. 171-210. [Discusses C.R. Ashbee's work in Jerusalem from 1918 to 1922, as Civic adviser to the city and principal officer of

the Pro-Jerusalem Society which he document in a series of papers following his return to England. The collection was never published and is largely unknown]

Saint, Andrew. 'Ashbee: a man out of time'. Architects' Journal vol. 183, no. 4, 22 January 1986 pp. 20-21

Simplicity or Splendour. Arts and Crafts Living. Objects from the Cheltenham Collection. Edited by Annette Carruthers and Mary Greensted. London: Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums in Association with Lund Humphries Publishers, 1999

Stamp, Gavin. The English House 1860-1914. Catalogue of an exhibition of photographs and drawings. London: InternationalArchitect and the Building Centre Trust, 1980 pp. 34-35

'Ten letters from Frank Lloyd Wright to Charles Robert Ashbee'. Architectural History vol. 13, 1970 pp. 64-76

Links

- Alan Crawford, 'Ashbee, Charles Robert (1863–1942)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [Subscription service] <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30465>
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York [2,448 entries on C.R. Ashbee] <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search#!?q=Charles%20Robert%20Ashbee&pe>
- Victorian Web <https://victorianweb.org/art/design/ashbee/>
- The National Archives. The Papers of Charles Robert Ashbee <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/836ba5e9-befc-4d2b-842e-151bfb522efc>
- artnet <http://www.artnet.com/artists/charles-robert-ashbee/>
- Victoria & Albert Museum [150 entries] <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?q=Ashbee%2C%20Charles%20Robert>
- Museum of Modern Art, New York <https://www.moma.org/artists/23>
- Artcyclopedia http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/ashbee_charles_robert.html
- Alan Crawford. C(harles) R(ober) Ashbee. Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online [Subscription service] <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T004537?q=ashbee>
- Artist Biographies [Subscription service] <https://www.artbiogs.co.uk/1/artists/ashbee-charles-robert>
- National Art Library Catalogue <https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=&queryString=Charles%20Robert%20Ashbee>
- YouTube. Guild of Handicraft https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z9Qhu0o_r8

- RKD Netherlands Institute of Architecture
<https://rkd.nl/en/explore/artists/record?query=ashbee&start=2>
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- Chipping Campden History Society
https://www.chippingcampdenhistory.org.uk/content/history/people-2/arts_artists_and_craftspeople/c_r_ashbee
- Roman Road London <https://romanroadlondon.com/charles-robert-ashbee-arts-and-crafts-movement/>
- Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Robert-Ashbee>
- Invaluable <https://www.invaluable.com/artist/ashbee-c-r-67xqad83c9/sold-at-auction-prices/>
- BBC A History of the World - Piano designed by C R Ashbee
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/XZ4h2T4gQkOJEW7EhdDBXg>
- BBC A History of the World - Silver dish designed by C.R.Ashbee
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- Van den Bosch
<http://www.vandenbosch.co.uk/Artists&Designers/C.R.Ashbee.htm>
- Great Buildings Online
http://www.greatbuildings.com/architects/C._R._Ashbee.html
- Dallas Museum of Art <https://collections.dma.org/essay/GIk73kMd>
- Historic England - 21 entries on architectural work by C. R. Ashbee
<https://historicengland.org.uk/sitesearch?searchType=site&search=%22C%20R%20Ashbee>
- British Listed Buildings - 32 entries on C. R. Ashbee
<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/site-search/?q=Ashbee>
- Wikimedia Commons
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Charles_Robert_Ashbee
- Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Robert_Ashbee
- Bibliography of the History of Art <https://primo.getty.edu/primo-explore/search?query=any%2Ccontains%2CCharles%20Robert%20Ashbee&tab=bha&search>
- ART UK <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/ashbee-charles-robert-18631942>