

Sumner, Heywood 1853 - 1940



George Heywood Maunoir Sumner [commonly known as Heywood Sumner] was born in Old Alresford, near Winchester, Hampshire, England, on 14 October 1853. After graduating in 1874 from Christ Church, Oxford, where he read classics and modern history, he trained for the law and was called to the bar in 1879.

In the late 1870s he shared lodgings with the art metalwork designer William Arthur Smith Benson, who introduced him to the Arts and Crafts movement. This seems to have decided Sumner to abandon law and instead pursued art as a career. His first work as an artist was a series of etchings for two books - *The Itchen Valley from Tichbourne to Southampton* (1881) and *The Avon from Naseby to Tewkesbury* (1882). He subsequently illustrated other books. He also worked as a decorative artist, designing stained glass, tapestries, mosaics, textiles and wallpapers.

In the mid-1880s Sumner experimented with sgraffito, at first decorating the plasterwork of the houses of friends and relatives, and later applying the technique to several churches. Among the best example, was at St Paul's Church, Winchester in 1903-04. Unfortunately, his work was plastered over in 1962. A small area of the work has since been uncovered and restored.

Sumner exhibited at the Royal Academy and Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers in London; and at the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts. From 1884, Sumner was associated with the Century Guild and was one of the founders of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, participating in all their exhibitions from 1888 to 1916. He was also a founder member of the Art Workers Guild in 1884 and was Master of the AWG in 1894.

In the 1890s, Sumner was instrumental in establishing the Fitzroy Picture Society, formed by a group of Arts and Crafts designers whose aim was to get away from some of the elitist attitudes of the Arts and Crafts movement and in doing so introduce its beauty to the masses.

Sumner made one foray into architecture - Cuckoo Hill, a house he designed and built for himself at Cuckoo Hill near South Gorley and Fordingbridge in Hampshire. He lived in the house from 1904 until his death 36 years later. He wrote an account of the building of the house in his book *The Book of Gorley* (1910).

In his latter years, Sumner devoted most of his activities to archaeology and wrote a number of publications on the subject. He was also a collector of local folk songs.

His address was given as The Hill House, Chalfont St Peter's, Slough, Buckinghamshire in 1888; 1 Notting Hill Square, London in 1889; 2 Campden Hill Square, London in 1896; and, from 1906, Cuckoo Hill, South Gorley, Fordingbridge, Hampshire, his address at the time of his death on 21 December 1940.

Worked in

UK

Works

Cuckoo Hill, a house he designed and built for himself and his family at Cuckoo Hill near South Gorley and Fordingbridge in Hampshire, completed in 1904

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