

Townsend, Charles Harrison 1851 - 1928



Charles Harrison Townsend [commonly known as C. Harrison Townsend] was born in Birkenhead, Cheshire, England, on 13 May 1851 and was articled to Walter Scott in Liverpool from 1867 to 1872. He then worked as a draughtsman to [Charles Barry](#) (1823-1900) in London until 1875 following which he was employed as senior draughtsman in the office of the London School Board until 1877. In that year he opened his own architectural office. [Note this is the date given in 'Directory of British Architects 1834-1914 volume 1 A-K' by Antonia Brodie et al p.825, however, in his entry in 'Who's Who in Architecture 1914 p.225, Townsend states that he commenced practice in 1885]. It would seem that Townsend moved permanently to London in c.1880 following which he may have worked initially with William Eden Nesfield before joining the office of [Thomas Lewis Banks](#) (1842-1920) in London in c.1883.

Townsend was in partnership with Banks from 1884 to c.1886. Thereafter, he practised alone.

Townsend was an architect of flair and originality who epitomised the Arts and Crafts ideal. In his essay on Townsend in 'Edwardian Architecture and its Origins' by Alistair Service et al (London: The Architectural Press Limited, 1975 pp.162-182), Service wrote that he "often sought surging organic shapes that would make the design appear to grow from the ground" (p.162).

Projects by Banks & Townsend included a house in West Hartlepool (c.1884); the Upton Congregational Church in Forest Gate, London (c.1884); and a chapel at Lamplugh in Kirkland, Cumberland (1886). Works by Townsend as an independent architect included Tourelle in Salcombe, Devon (1890); alterations to All Saints

Church in Knightsbridge, London (1892); St. Martin's Church, Blackheath, near Guildford, Surrey (c.1892-95); the Bishopsgate Institute, Bishopsgate, London (1892-95) Linden Haus in Düsseldorf, Germany (1896); Cliff Towers in Salcombe, Devon (1897); the Horniman Museum, Forest Hill, London (1897-1902); Whitechapel Gallery, London (1899-1901); Dickhurst, near Haslemere in Surrey (1900); St Mary the Virgin Church at Great Warley, Essex (1902-04); the Union Free Church in Woodford Green, Essex (1904); Arbuthnot Institute Hall in Shanley Green, Surrey (1906); house in The Glade, Letchworth, Hertfordshire (1906); schools in Penn and Holmer Green, Hertfordshire (1909-10); The Wakes, Guildown, near Guildford, Surrey (c.1910); resoration of Compton Wynyates House, Tysoe, Warwickshire (c.1910); Village Hall in Panshanger, Hertfordshire (1910); and 2 Temple Fortune Lane, Hampstead Garden Suburb (c.1912).

Two photographs showing the dining room and the hall at 'Dickhurst' in Haslemere designed by Townsend are illustrated in 'The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art' 1907 (pp.72, 73); and photographs of a house at Letchworth and 'Blatchcombe' at Blackheath in Chilworth are featured in 'The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art' 1908 (illustrations B71, B72, B92). In addition to his work as an architect, Townsend also worked as a decorative and applied artist. He designed bookplates, metalwork and fireplaces. A hall fireplace designed by Townsend is featured in 'The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art' 1908 (illustration B125).

With [Walter Crane](#) and [Robert Anning Bell](#), Townsend worked on the design of the English section of the Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna in Turin in 1902. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA) in 1888. He was elected a member of the [Art Workers Guild](#) (AWG) in 1888 and was Master of the AWG in 1903.

Townsend was author of 'Beautiful Buildings in France and Belgium (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916). He died in Northwood, London on 26 December 1928.

A biographical file on Charles Harrison Townsend is available on request from the Enquiry Desk, Royal Institute of British Architects Library, London

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Works

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Source of Images

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