

William Birnie Rhind RSA

RSA Obituary by George Pirie RSA and David Foggie RSA. Transcribed from the 1933 RSA Annual Report

In these days when the theory is being canvassed that the decay of Sculpture is due to its divorce from the actual handling of stone it is interesting to trace the descent of W. Birnie Rhind from his Grandfather, John Rhind, master builder of Banff, of a family of masons established there since the beginning of the 18th century.

His father, another John Rhind, was also a mason and stone-carver in Banff, who came to Edinburgh and studied Sculpture in the studio of Handyside Ritchie, A.R.S.A. Becoming one of the foremost Sculptors in Scotland of his day; he was elected an Associate of the Academy in 1892 - unfortunately only a few days before his death.

It is also worth recording that when the statue of Dr. William Chambers, which now stands in Chambers Street, was under arrangement in Edinburgh, while John Rhind, the father, received the commission, Wm. Birnie Rhind, the subject of our memoir, received the first premium, and John Massey Rhind, the second son, now also R.S.A, was placed next. A third son, the late Sir T. Duncan Rhind, studied Sculpture also, but directing himself to another aspect of his family's tradition achieved eminence as an Architect

Born in 1853, William Birnie Rhind, after passing through the School of Design, under Mr. Hodder, worked in the Academy Life School for five years. He first exhibited in the Academy in 1878. Elected Associate in 1893, he was made full member in 1905. His death took place on 9th July 1933.

Among his numerous works in relation to architecture the Central doorway of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery with its historical figures in canopied niches may be specially mentioned, and the Mary Queen of Scots' group, gifted to the same Institution by the ladies of Edinburgh. Other decorative works are the groups, "Sculpture" and "Religion" on Kelvingrove Gallery, Glasgow; the figures on the *Scotsman* Office, and on other buildings in Edinburgh, Newcastle and Liverpool.

In addition to his portrait busts, among them the marquess of Salisbury for the Conservative Club, Birnie Rhind is represented by public monuments to Burns at Montrose, Lochiel at Fort William, the Coats brothers at Paisley, and abroad at Winnipeg, in India, and in Australia, by Col. Light at Adelaide, and the equestrian statue of the Marquess of Linlithgow in Melbourne.

He executed memorials of the Great War at Plymouth, Buckie, and at Fettes College. It is however, by his regimental groups that he will be best known to Edinburgh citizens, the monument to the Scots Greys in Princes Street Gardens, the Black Watch on the Mound, and, above all, by the K.O.S.B. group on the North Bridge.