

Thomas Scott RSA

RSA Obituary, transcribed from the 1927 RSA Annual Report

Tom Scott was born in Selkirk in 1854, the son of a tailor and a clothier. After leaving school he worked for a time in the business, but, much against his parents' wishes, he decided to become an artist, and entered the Trustees' School at the Mound under Mr. C. H. Hodder, proceeding later to the Royal Scottish Academy Life Class, when the visitors were MacTaggart, Lockhart and Mr. Robert Gibb.

While a student he made some excellent life studies in water colour, and gained the Stuart Prize with a composition entitled "A Border Raid." Many of his early landscape studies done in the beautiful policies of "The Haining," Selkirk, were marked by careful drawing of tress, giving evidence of an assured and facile technique, and presaging his skilful command later on of water colour in his larger and more ambitious pictures.

After a few years in Edinburgh, he removed to Earlston, Berwickshire, where he had a long and serious illness, but making a wonderful recovery, he was able to resume work, stimulated by an intense determination to make up for his enforced idleness.

After his marriage he went to live at the picturesque village of Bowden, sheltering under the Eildon Hills, but finally settled at Leslie Cottage, Selkirk, which was his home for the rest of his life. Scott made numerous painting tours on the Continent, France, Italy, Holland, and Morocco, among other places, finding material for any interesting and beautiful drawings.

It was, however, in his own Border Country that his "heart untravelled" centred. In a region teeming with the spirit of romance and story, versed from boyhood in its history and ballad lore, from such sources he found inspiration for many of his large and important works. It may be, however, that in his smaller drawings, prompted by the natural beauty of the scenes among which he lived, greater spontaneity and suggestiveness were obtained.

He loved the Border hills, knew every winding of the Ettrick, the Yarrow, and the Tweed. Shortly before his death he humbly said to a friend, he had endeavoured to record, and hoped he had revealed in his work, something of the beauty and haunting charm of the Borderland.

Tom Scott had considerable Antiquarian knowledge, and gradually acquired a large collection of stone and bronze implements, armour, weapons, and other objects of interest.

In later years, owing to impaired health, his sketching activities were restricted, but he was able to visit his much loved resort "St. Mary's Loch," where, accompanied by Mrs. Scott, he lived and painted in a caravan for a few summer months.

Towards the end while confined to the house, he was delighted to have visits from his many friends, ever welcomed with kindly hospitality and genial courtesy. His mind to the last continued clear and active.

With a dash of rugged borderer's temperament, Scott had a forceful personality, holding strong views on Art, Literature and kindred subjects. He has marked likes and dislikes, and his opinions were expressed with vigorous emphasis, tempered with a blending of whimsical humour.

That a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, was not Scott's experience. Almost from the beginning of his career he was appreciated by his fellow-townsmen, few homes in the neighbourhood of Selkirk are without a Tom Scott water colour.

Among his more important works are "Otter-hunting on the Ettrick," "Meet of the Duke of Buccleuch's Fox Hounds at Riddell House," "Border Moss Troopers returning from a Raid," "The Arch of Titus and Colosseum, Rome," the property of A. F. Roberts, Esq., of Fairnlee, "The Legend of Lady Wood," the property of Alexander T. Roberts, Esq., of Drygrange, Melrose, "Sir Walter Scott's Gate, Bermeside Hill," the property of W.W. Webster, Esq., Denley, Arbroath.

Exhibiting for the first time at the Academy in 1878, Scott contributed regularly thereafter. Elected an Associate in 1888, Academician in 1902, he died at Leslie Cottage on 21st July 1927.