

Alexander Garden Sinclair RSA

RSA Obituary, transcribed from the 1930 RSA Annual Report

Alexander Garden Sinclair A.R.S.A., the elder son of the Rev. Alexander Sinclair, was born at Kenmore, Perthshire, in April 1859, and died at his residence, 18 Ann Street, Edinburgh, on 12th June 1930, after a long illness. His father was a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, and, school over, Alasdair, as he was generally called, having attended classes at Aberdeen University without taking a degree, an irresistible inclination towards an artistic career brought him to Edinburgh.

Studying at the Trustees Academy and the Royal Scottish Academy Life School, he showed unmistakable abilities, gaining recognition among his fellow students, the late Mr. James Cadenhead, R.S.A., and Mr J. H. Lorimer, A.R.W.S., being among his closest friends; the Visitors found in him an apt pupil, and he was awarded many prizes. Mr. Sinclair's position in the profession was of slow growth, although from the beginning there were those who recognised the peculiar charm and subtlety of his work, both in portraiture and landscape.

He first exhibited at the Academy in 1883 with a picture "Drummond Hill, Loch Tay," and while in subsequent years subjects appear drawn from many places at home and abroad - Edinburgh, Iona, Holland, and France - Sinclair's love for his native county remained steadfast. At St. Fillans he spent many happy months painting and fishing. Of his portraits, the most memorable are two of his mother, one of Lady Dunedin, 1909, another of his wife, 1910; a full length of his brother-in-law, Mr. J. H. Stevenson, Unicorn Pursuivant, and that of the late Colonel T. Cadell, V.C., of Cockenzie, will also be remembered.

Sinclair, who was an original member of the Society of Scottish Artists, and also of the Society of Eight, especially distinguished himself in oil painting and decoration, but he worked also in water colour, pastel, and black and white, always evincing command of composition, sensitive appreciation of beauty and stylistic design. Gifted with imagination, impatient with current aims and ideals, dissatisfied at the same time with his own attainment, from time to time he achieved a very high level of accomplishment.

In his prime a singularly handsome man, keenly interested in music, literature, and the deeper things of life, those who knew him were fortunate in finding a penetrating sympathetic critic, a delightful companion, one who appreciated the great work of the past, but with an open mind to the latest developments of Art.