

George Washington Browne 1853-1939

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Architect

George Washington Browne was born in Glasgow on 21 September 1853, the eldest child of Samuel Brown, a cabinet maker, and Sarah Agnew. He trained as an architect in Glasgow, worked in London and travelled in Europe before moving to



Edinburgh in 1879 to work for Robert Rowand Anderson. He became Anderson's partner in 1881 and then set up in business on his own in 1885.

His successful career saw him win contracts to design several major buildings, including Edinburgh Central Library (1887), the Royal Hospital for Sick Children (1892), the Caledonian Hotel (1898) and the main building of Edinburgh College of Art (1906), a wide variety of churches, banks and houses, and several war memorials. His houses include The Limes in Blackford Road where he lived c. 1896-1914.

Browne was elected an Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1892 and a full Academician in 1902. He was the first architectural President of the RSA 1924-33. He was closely involved in the RSA's Centenary Exhibition in 1926, a year which saw him awarded a knighthood, admitted as a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and awarded an honorary LL.D. degree by Edinburgh University.

He was also involved in the Edinburgh Architectural Association, serving as its President 1884-86; Edinburgh College of Art, where he was head of Architecture 1914-22; and the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland, established in 1927.

Browne married twice: first, in August 1881, Jessie Brownlie (1857-1900), and second, in April 1905, Louisa Emma Adams (1872-1931). Of his five children by his first marriage, four died between 1916 and 1922: his two younger sons, George Brownlie and Hew Edwards Browne, were killed in action in 1916; and his eldest son, Leslie Aitchison Browne, a chemist, who had gone to McGill University in Montreal, Canada, after graduating from Edinburgh University in 1913, joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force, was seriously wounded at Ypres in June 1916, and died of tuberculosis in 1922. His elder daughter, Christina Scott Browne (b. 1883), married James Strachan McLeod in 1903 and died in 1920.

In 1938 Washington Browne moved to Shropshire to live with his younger daughter, Jessie Agnew Browne (1899-1970), who had married Norman Carl Preston, a mycologist, in 1929.