

Ernest Moore (1865-1940)

Brief biography

One of the most highly regarded portrait painters of his day, Ernest Moore achieved not only a national reputation but also an international one. He was eagerly sought and commissioned as a painter of official and presentation portraits of prominent figures in local and national life; he is also known to have painted narrative and landscape subjects.

Moore was born in Barnsley on 6th July 1865, one of four brothers and three sisters to Joseph and Ann Moore. Joseph Moore was stationmaster at Summer Lane railway station, Barnsley. It is thought one of his brothers was killed at Summer Lane station.

His artistic talent was recognised from a young age. It is thought he was a delivery boy for Guest's shop on Market Hill and his employer displayed one of Moore's paintings on the cover of Guest's almanac.

He studied at Barnsley School of Art and when he was about eighteen years old, he left Barnsley to further his studies as an art student in London under Prof. Sir Hubert von Herkomer and later in Paris under Benjamin Constant.

Following his training he opened a studio in Sheffield in 1889 painting many notable figures. He exhibited at the Royal Academy many times and at the 1903 exhibition one of his portraits received praise from Sir John Everett Millais.

Sheffield Press Club commissioned Moore to paint a portrait of the celebrated actor Sir Henry Irving in 1898/99. This was probably the last portrait of Irving and was unveiled at the Club's annual dinner in 1900 in the presence of Irving who was their guest.

In 1909 Moore travelled to the USA spending ten months in the District of Columbia and Kentucky executing many important commissions. Upon his return to England he wrote an article about his experiences titled 'The Trail of the Painter Man' for the Barnsley Chronicle.

Moore was regarded as a painter of the 'old school' and did not like the Impressionists and similar schools, but he was regarded as an artist of distinction, 'prolific yet ever finished'. In 1925 he staged a successful exhibition 'Men of Yorkshire' in London which included portraits of Sir Michael Sadler and cricketer Wilfred Rhodes. His painting of King George V was considered by many as 'the happiest and most natural picture of His Majesty that was ever painted.' It is reported that: 'He attacked his work with a fine life and energy which was, of course, reflected in his studies.'

Ernest Moore never lost touch with Barnsley and Sheffield. He was a member of the Sheffield Reform Club where he was remembered as possessing a delightful sense of humour and being a most entertaining and stimulating conversationalist.

Moore seemed to have enjoyed good health and was working up to his death on 16th September 1940 at his home in Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London.

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