

## **Samuel Swift (1846-1929)**

### **Brief biography**

Samuel Swift served an apprenticeship as a stone mason in the family business in Cawthorne village, South Yorkshire. His talents were recognised by the Pre-Raphaelite painter, John Roddam Spencer Stanhope of Cannon Hall. Roddam gave Samuel letters of introduction to Farmer and Brindley, a well-established London firm of architectural sculptors.

Farmer and Brindley worked on contracts for architects such as Bodley and Garner, Alfred Waterhouse and George Gilbert Scott. These commissions were for prominent public and religious buildings such as Manchester Town Hall, The Natural History Museum London, Oxford and Glasgow Universities, St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh and St Paul's Cathedral London. At 23, Samuel was living in London and working for the company.

In 1874 Samuel married Margaret Heckle who came from Great Ayton near the North Yorkshire coast. They did not have children, but adopted Jack, the son of Samuel's younger brother Benjamin. When, a few years later, Benjamin and his wife died within a year of each other, they also took in Jack's younger brother, Samuel. Benjamin's remaining children were fostered by other members of the family.

Individual sculptors were rarely credited at Farmer and Brindley. Between 1875 and 1880 Samuel was in charge of the workshop when the company worked on the refurbishment of All Saints' Church Cawthorne. The Spencer Stanhopes commissioned architect G. F. Bodley to do this and Samuel carved the reredos. Samuel also worked on St Paul's Cathedral, carving the reredos designed by Thomas Garner but unfortunately this no longer exists. It was damaged during the bombing of World War II and replaced in 1958.

Samuel's sculptures in Cawthorne include apprentice pieces on the family home on Taylor Hill and on the garden wall opposite. St Paulinus decorates the outside of All Saints' Church and John Wesley fills a niche on the front of the Methodist Church. Visit the Victoria Jubilee Museum to see his statue of Hebe. Photographs of his work are shown in the exhibition.

Around the beginning of the First World War, Samuel left Farmer and Brindley and the family moved to Kenilworth in Warwickshire. There Samuel carried on in business as a sculptor until he was no longer able to manage the work. He died in Kenilworth in 1929, 8 years after his wife Margaret. They are both buried there.

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