# Nesbitt & Nisbet Artists

**Raymond Nisbet Rolinson**

IN THE STOCKS. (ENGRAVED BY NESBIT FOR BUTLER'S "HUDIBRAS," 1811.)

**London : Nesbitt / Nisbet Society**

**2008**

Dedicated to the late Peter White, whose advice was:

If you love a subject, write about it!

**Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| B.I. | British Institution |
| G.I. | Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts |
| R.A. | Royal Academy of Arts [London] |
| R.B.A. | Royal Society of British Artists SS (Suffolk Street) |
| R.H.A. | Royal Hibernian Academy |
| R.I. | Royal Institute of Watercolour Painters |
| R.O.I. | Royal Institute of Oil Painters |
| R.S.A. | Royal Scottish Academy |
| R.S.W. | Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolours |

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Cover illustration (Figure 1)
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BLACK & WHITE ILLUSTRATIONS

# FOREWORD

This is a simple guide to the many creative artists produced by the Nesbitt/Nisbet family (howsoever spelt) over the last 300 years. At the last count there were over 50 Nesbitt/Nisbet artists in all the fields of fine art- oil, watercolours, miniatures, graphics, wood-engraving, ceramics, stained glass and sculpture. These are widely distributed, including all parts of the British Isles, Canada, the United States of America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Coverage of living artists -there are many- is limited to a handful of established names. It will be interesting to see how Nesbitt/Nisbet art develops in the twenty-first century.

Details of family and life have been given where possible; several themes emerge. In the past, as now, many accomplished artists relied on a "day job" for support, very often as art teachers. The social background of artists is surprisingly varied. A talent for art often runs in the family.

I would be pleased to hear, via the Nesbitt/Nisbet Society, of further artists or works of art.

# COLLECTING

Collecting Nesbitt/Nisbet works of art is a hobby for any pocket, and warmly recommended. The advent of the Internet has made it much easier to find and purchase art, but commercial galleries can still offer pleasant surprises. Price depends on the place of sale, the renown of the artist, the interest or attractiveness of the subject, and the medium and size of the artwork. As a rough guide, experience suggests the following:

£20-100: Watercolours and drawings on eBay and at country auctions.
£200-600: Attractive small watercolours and oil paintings at commercial galleries and specialist auctions. The work of Frances Emily Nesbitt is particularly sought after.
£1000-2000: An attractive, medium size painting by one of the known artists, e.g. Hume Nisbet, Robert Buchan Nisbet, Pollock Sinclair Nisbet, Noel Laura Nisbet and Tom Nisbet.
£5000-10000: A significant, large painting by an artist such as Noel Laura Nisbet.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bayly Art Museum, Charlottesville, Va, USA
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Royal College of Surgeons, London
Russell Cotes Art Gallery, Bournemouth
National Watercolour Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
John Moffat, Eastbourne
Mark Nesbitt of that Ilk
William Nesbitt, Devon
Andrew & Peter Nisbet
James E. Nisbet, N.S.W., Australia
Trond Hjorteland-Rød
Richard Vicary, R.E., R.W.A., printmaker and teacher
Fergus Clunie, New Zealand Historic Places Trust
Alistair Rowan
and many artists featured in the book, and their descendants, who assisted with enquiries.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND EARLIER

Lincoln's Inn Fields in London is perhaps an unusual place to begin this guide, but on the south side of the square stands the imposing Royal College of Surgeons, and within we find our first Nisbet painting. Adorning its elegant halls and corridors hang portraits of England's most notable medical men, painted by the greatest artists of the day. Among these is Robert Nisbet M.D., F.R.S., F.R.C.S. (1700-1761), painted by his son John Nisbet in the late 1750s (Plate 1). The portrait shows Robert robed and wigged, seated on a high-backed chair in a classical setting with imposing wooden pillars. On a small table at his side leans an open book, possibly one of the eight volumes of his most famous work, *Human osteogeny*, published in 1736. Robert Nisbet was born in London, the son of John Nesbitt (1661–1727), an Independent minister originally of Northumberland, and his wife, Elizabeth. The painting remained in the family until 1821, when it was sold by the artist's grand-son to the college for £10. As far as we know, John lived and worked in London, and probably trained there.

The earliest Nesbitt/Nisbet artist yet known is Alexander Nisbet, born in Leith, Scotland, in 1682. Little is known about him, but it is assumed he was trained in Edinburgh. Any examples of his work have been lost or are at unknown locations, but he is known to have painted the landscape background to Van Somer's portrait of Lord Bacon. George Vertue (1684-1756), the father of English art history, acknowledged Alexander as a source.

The mid-eighteenth century produced two or three other Nesbitt/Nisbet artists: one Nisbet exhibited two landscapes at the Scottish Academy in 1763, and in 1760 a Banff painter, John Nisbet, copied and signed two paintings by Alan Ramsay of the Earl and Countess of Fife. There are records of a Kilmarnock Nisbet painter working at Culzean Castle for the Earl of Cassillis (now National Trust of Scotland).

In the annals of Scottish art, these artists do not rank with the great painters such as Ramsay, Raeburn or Naysmith, but they made a significant contribution to the national scene. They - and many others - are represented in public and private collections in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

### CHARLTON NESBIT - A GREAT WOOD-ENGRAVER

Commercial wood-engraving began in the late seventeenth century, and reached its height in the late eighteenth century. Charlton Nesbit was born in Swalwell, near Gateshead, Co. Durham, in 1775. His father, a keelman, recognised his talent early and apprenticed him to Northumberland's greatest artist, wood-engraver and illustrator, Thomas Bewick. From 1790 until the end of his apprenticeship in 1798, Charlton worked on Bewick's *British birds* (1797), drawing and engraving a bird's nest for the preface of volume 1.

Figure 2. Charlton Nesbit: *A nest*, c. 1797, 3.1 x 5.8 cm,
*A hovel before some ruins*. c. 1797, 5.2 x 6.7 cm, wood-engravings.

During his Newcastle period he engraved vignettes and titlepieces to poems by Goldsmith and Purnell, and to Le Grand's *Fabliaux* (1796). This same year Charlton's close friend and fellow apprentice, Robert Johnson, died and Nesbit published an engraving from one of his friend's watercolours of Newcastle's St Nicholas' Church (now the cathedral) for Robert Johnson's parents, giving the profits from the sale of the print to them. When completed, it was declared the largest wooden engraving ever produced, measuring 15 by 12 inches and made from 12 blocks mounted on a cast-iron plate. A copy of this is in the British Museum, and Nesbit gave a copy to the Society of Arts who presented him with a silver medal.

Figure 3. Charlton Nesbit (after a watercolour by Robert Johnson)
*St Nicholas Church, Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, 1798, 41.1 cm x 33.1 cm, wood-engraving.
Courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria & Albert Museum

Arriving in London in 1799, Charlton set up a business in Fetter Lane, near St. Paul's Cathedral, and very quickly gained a reputation for skill and integrity. His old master was very proud of him, and describing him as "the first of my pupils who made a figure in London, after my brother". Bewick noted that Charlton had gone south when woodcuts were at their height, and that he had the technical skill to follow the pencilled designs of John Thurston, an acknowledged master in the field. Nesbit produced work after Thurston, including the frontispiece to Bloomfield's "Farmer's boy" in 1800 and Butler's "Hudibras" in 1801. He was awarded a second silver medal by the Society of Arts in 1802. Perhaps his most ambitious work was Ackermann's *Religious emblems*, published in 1806. This was also based on Thurston's work, and was engraved together with two of Bewick's pupils, Clement and Hale. According to Iain Bain (*Dictionary of National Biography*) “judged on technical skill alone, he was probably the best of Bewick's pupils”.

William Savage published his *Practical hints on decorative printing* in 1818. Nesbit's specimen block of Rinaldo and Arminda, after Thurston's drawing, was considered by Savage to be the finest specimen of wood-engraving ever produced, along with the work of Branston Snr. In 1812 Charlton Nesbit married Margaret Owen, at Christ Church, Blackfriars Road, in Southwark. His children included a daughter, Jane.

Figure 4. Charlton Nesbit: *Rinaldo and Arminda*, Wood engraving.
Courtesy: Witt Library, Courtauld Institute


Figure 5. Charlton Nesbit: *The daughters of Jerusalem*, Engraved for Ackermann's *Religious emblems*. Courtesy: Witt Library, Courtauld Institute

In 1820 Nesbit returned to his native Shalwell as the result of an inheritance. He returned briefly to London in 1830, and worked on the second Northcote series, published in 1833. This and his Scripture illustrations were considered amongst his best work. Charlton Nesbit died at Queen's Elm, Brompton, London, on 11 November 1838, aged 63. His reputation lasted after his death, and the British Museum has a large collection of his work.

Another engraver working in the nineteenth century was John Nesbit, of whom little is known.

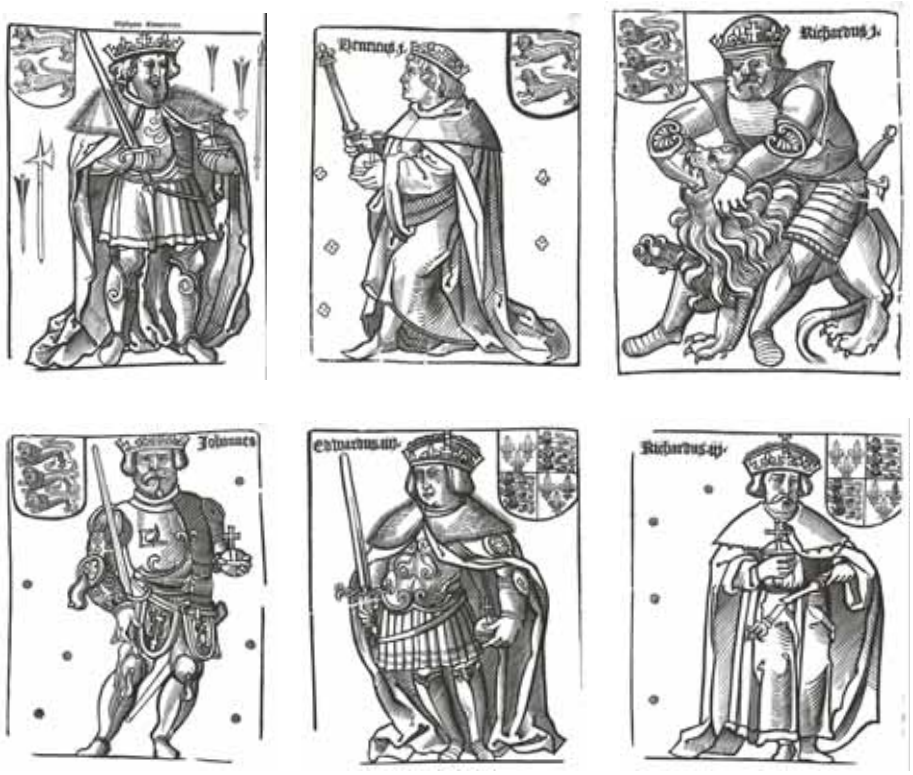

Figure 6. John Nesbit: *Woodcuts of English kings*, from John Rastell *The pastime of people*, printed in London, 1811. This rare book is itself a reprint of the very rare 1529 original. John Nesbit prepared these facsimiles of the original woodcuts.

**POLLOCK NISBET AND FAMILY**

Pollock Sinclair Nisbet A.R.S.A., R.S.W., was born in Edinburgh in 1848, son of John Nisbet, a house-painter. He was eldest of two famous brothers who, perhaps more than anyone, established the family name in the forefront of British artists. His picture "Glencoe, Argyllshire" was accepted by the Royal Academy in 1871, when he was only 23. He exhibited his "Morning on the coast of Margate" there in 1884, but was mainly supported by, and exhibited in, Scottish institutions. On 3 December 1879 Pollock Nisbet married Helen Grieve.

Nisbet travelled widely in Europe and North Africa, spending lengthy periods in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia painting market-places and architectural studies of mosques, churches and palaces. In Scotland he painted oils and watercolours of lochs and glens, but these do not convey the freshness of his work abroad (Plate 4). He was elected Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1892, and retired to Edinburgh where he died in 1922.

Pollock's younger brother was Robert Buchan Nisbet, R.S.A., R.B.A., R.W.S., R.I. (1 July 1857-15 August 1942). After a formal education he was apprenticed to a shipping firm. At the age of 23 he decided to follow his brother in art, resigned from his job, and joined him in Venice. Returning to Edinburgh he attended the Board of Manufacturer's school and the Royal Scottish Academy life classes from 1882-5, later studying in Paris under Bouguereau.

Figure 7. Robert Buchan Nisbet *Early autumn...* Watercolour, 1886. (Private Collection)

Robert Nisbet devoted himself to watercolours and became a master in this medium. He exhibited at the R.A.S. in 1880, and his first two pictures at the Royal Academy in 1888, "Castle Stalker, Argyllshire" and "Aberlady from Luftness Links". A further 21 paintings were exhibited there between 1888 and 1901.

Clearly Nisbet had made detailed study of the older English masters, Girtin, Cox and de Wint - and developed his own style (Plate 3). Hardie, in his book "Watercolour painting in Britain", notes that "...his work was similar to de Wint in broad contrasts of light and shade

and in depth of low-toned masses, but his method was less direct and spontaneous. Some of his small sketches are fresh and fluent but in larger work he was tempted into rubbing and scrubbing the colour." He sacrificed the transparency but not the fine quality of his work. Nisbet's work was always popular and much in demand, especially abroad. Elected an A.R.S.A. in 1893, R.S.A. in 1902, he was also a founder member (1892) and second president of the Society of Scottish Artists.

Robert Buchan Nisbet's work is in the National Watercolour Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Tate Gallery, and Derby, Dundee, Kirkaldy and Leeds art galleries. Manuscripts relating to his work are held in the National Art Library of the V&A. He died in Crieff in 1942.

The third member of this highly gifted family of artists was Margaret Dempster Nisbet, the wife of Robert Buchan Nisbet. She was born in Edinburgh in 1863, studying in that city, Dresden and Paris. Her work included portraits, landscapes and miniatures. She died in 1935.

**HUME NISBET AND HIS FAMILY**

James Hume Nisbet was born in Stirling on 8 August 1839, the son of a painter and decorator, James Herkis Nisbet (1816-81). He was given a very broad education by Dr James Cochran and trained in art with Sam Brough, R.S.A., in Edinburgh. In 1866, at the age of 16, Hume sailed for Australia with his father, brother and stepmother, first settling in the young colonial city of Melbourne. Over the next seven years he tried many occupations, including the theatre. He travelled widely, observed much and began writing, although nothing was finished. He is seen here (Figure 8) as a as a young actor in Australia (drawn by William Nicholas, from E. Buscombe *Artists in Australia & their Portraits*).

Returning to the United Kingdom, Hume decided to live in London and studied art at South Kensington. After completing his studies he was appointed art master at the Watt Institute and School of Art in Edinburgh, forerunner of today's Heriot Watt University. He married Helen Currie, daughter of the well-known Border sculptor Andrew Currie, on 1 November 1875. After eight eventful years of teaching, Hume resigned and concentrated on painting. His "Feast of Sardanapolous" was exhibited in 1884, and the following year "The Last of the Spanish Armada" was accepted for hanging by the Society of British Artists (S.S.) in London. During this period he wrote *The practical in painting* which was published in Edinburgh by Muir and Patterson (1880). In the 1870s Nisbet adopted Herkis as his first name; paintings may be signed as Hume Nisbet (the name under which his books were written), Herkis H. Nisbet, or H.H. Nisbet (Plates 7, 8).

Figure 9. Hume Nisbet *A New Guinea Village* *A New Zealand Fern-Tree Gully*

The year 1887 saw Hume and his family move south to London, settling first in Harrow where the last of the six children was born. The family then moved to Clapham for the next 20 years where Hume painted and exhibited, but gradually became more and more involved with writing. He again visited Australia (with his wife and children) in 1895, after obtaining a commission from Cassells of London, to write and illustrate articles for a book to be called *Picturesque Australia*. His travels in Australia and New Zealand were to result in nine chapters in the eventual three-volume book.

On his return to Clapham, Hume concentrated on writing, producing numerous novels and travel books between 1887 and 1923. He also found time to write a further five books on practical art. After Helen Currie died in 1901, Nisbet married Katherine Septima Hopper on 28 January 1902, at the Tyndale Chapel, White Ladies Road, Bristol. He retired to Eastbourne, dying there on 4 June 1923. Hume Nisbet was one of the most colourful personalities of our kinsmen, and much more remains to be written about him.


Figure 10. Hume Nisbet *Bookplate of W.E. Goulden*

Two of Hume Nisbet's daughters became professional artists. Margaret Henrietta Nisbet was born in Edinburgh in 1877 and trained at the Clapham School of Art in London. Establishing herself as a professional artist, she took a studio in Albert Bridge Road, Battersea. Margaret exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1908/9. In 1915 she moved to Merton Park, where her father had bought the girls houses, with studios on the top floor. Margaret became a popular portrait painter of repute.

Noel Laura Nisbet, R.I., the youngest of the family, was born in Harrow on 30 December 1887. Educated at the Notre Dame Convent in Clapham Common, she developed a keen interest in art at an early age. Encouraged by her father, she decided to make art her vocation. At the Clapham School of Art she studied under outstanding teachers and won three gold medals, bronze medals and the Princess of Wales scholarship. Noel Laura married a fellow student, Harry Bush, in 1910. He went on to make a name for himself, becoming known as the "painter of the suburbs", exhibited widely and was elected to the Royal Institute of Oil Painters in 1951.

Figure 11. Harry Bush Noel Laura Nisbet

Noel Laura first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1914, submitting a large watercolour and a small oil painting. A further 23 works were to be accepted between 1914 and 1938. She was elected to the Royal Institute of Watercolour Painters in 1926, and to the British Watercolour Society in 1945. In 1913 she illustrated *Fairy tales* by Andrew Lang Nisbet - never published - and *Russian fairytales from the Shazki of Palera* by R. Nisbet Bain. Two years later her illustrations appeared in D. Hyde's *Legends of saints and sinners*, and the following year in R. Nisbet Bain's *Cossak fairy tales*. Several other books appeared towards the end of the war, after which she concentrated on her larger works (Plates 2, 9).

In her illustrations Noel Laura used watercolours, monochrome and woodcuts, creating a dreamlike quality. Later, she was strongly influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites; their vibrant colours matching her strong extrovert personality. She has been called the last of the Pre-Raphaelites. Her work was widely exhibited, and her work can be seen in several galleries: Newport (Gwent), Bournemouth (Russell Cotes Gallery), Belfast Art Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. An article on her work appeared in the journal "Art Reason" in August 1948. She died in 1956, a memorial exhibition was held at Leighton House in 1969, and her work was featured in the 1989 exhibition "The last romantics - Burne Jones to Stanley Spencer" at the Barbican Gallery in London. Noel Laura Nisbet's work has become increasingly sought after in the last decade.

Figure 12. Noel Laura Nisbet *The Tsarivna arose from her coffin,* 17 x 15 in, pen & ink. Courtesy: Witt Library, Courtauld Institute

## SOME MORE SCOTTISH ARTISTS

The Edinburgh artist John Nesbitt (1831-1904) worked in watercolour and oil, painting mainly landscape and marine scenes (Plate 6). He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1870-1888. His work is noted for his use of a "quiet" palette, achieving his effects with skilful use of chiaroscuro. It is worth noting that much of his coastal work was painted round the Firth of Forth and down the coast towards Eynmouth. Several of his Academy works were of the Coldingham area, where at least two Nisbets were priors before the Reformation. John Nesbitt exhibited some 150 paintings at the Royal Scottish Academy, between 1863 and 1902. John Nesbitt was also an active early photographer, with a studio at 79 Princes Street in the 1860s.

John Nesbitt was born in Belfast in about 1830, the son of Francis and Anne Nesbitt. He married first Sarah Cosgrave (maiden name Robinson), in Belfast on 23 October 1854. Children of the first marriage included John Robinson Nesbitt, born 24 April 1860, who exhibited at the R.S.A. in 1885/6. In the 1871 census John Nesbitt is recorded as being married to Harriet Louise ?Hussy. On the 23 June 1887 John married Ellen (Nellie) Jane Moffat (1850-1938), eldest daughter of John Moffat (1819-1894), a pioneer of photography in Edinburgh. John and Nellie are shown in the photograph (Figure 13), taken by John Moffat in about 1900. John Moffat was a proficient painter and it is likely he and John Nesbitt went on painting excursions together. The marriage took place in St Thomas' English Episcopal Church. In the 1901 census John is resident at 131 Warrender Park Road, Edinburgh, where he died on 15 July 1904.

Thomas Nisbet was a wood-engraver in Glasgow in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He was born around 1840, and worked from his studio at 166 Buchanan Street in the 1880s. In Kelly's Directory of 1900 an advertisement described him as an engraver on wood and zincographer specialising in large illustrations for walls. The British Museum has in its collection his small engraving "Judas betrayed Christ", after John Martin. This may well be the Thomas Nisbet recorded in the 1891 census as born in Mauchline, Ayrshire and working as a draughtsman & engraver on wood. He was a son of Hugh Nisbet and Agnes Walker, and married Maggie Grainger on 23 January 1877.

## SOME ENGLISH PAINTERS

Frances Emily Nesbitt was born in Wolverhampton in 1864, the daughter of the eminent surgeon Francis Albert Nesbitt. After training at the Slade School of Art at University College London, she chose to concentrate on watercolours. Frances and her mother took up residence in Tite Street, Chelsea, where she established herself as a highly successful artist. From 1888 she exhibited regularly at the Royal British Artists, the British Institute and other leading galleries. Frances' work was first accepted by the British Academy in 1896.

Almost annually the two ladies travelled abroad, visiting France, Germany, Italy, Norway and the Netherlands, sight-seeing and studying the history and architecture of these countries (Plate 5). For Frances, an excellent linguist, it was an excellent opportunity to capture the local colour and atmosphere in her numerous watercolours. Venturing further afield, the pair visited North Africa. This trip resulted in Frances' excellent travel book *Algiers and Tunis* (1906), illustrated by many of her watercolours. Sadly her second book, *Palestine*, was never

published. After her busy life in London, Frances retired to Hilltop, Bovingdon, in Hertfordshire, where she died on 12 January 1934.

Painting in London at the same time was Ethel Chapman Nisbet, born in Wells, Norfolk in about 1860. She specialised in watercolours and painted still lifes and fine architectural studies. Ethel exhibited at the R.B.A. from 1884 to 1891 and at the Women's Watercolour Society, and her paintings were accepted eight times by the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Her book, *Flower painting for beginners* was published in 1884. Ethel and Florence Nisbet were the daughters of Henry Alexander Nisbet, born at the Cape of Good Hope, Africa, and Kate, born in Wells; Henry was a merchant's clerk; they married in 1855. In the 1901 census Ethel and Florence are recorded as living as boarders at 5 Birch Grove, Acton.

Sidney P. Nesbitt (1844-1920) taught at the Blackheath School of Art for many years and exhibited at the Royal Society of British Artists gallery between 1872-8. He painted mainly landscapes and scenes of village life, and had a painting accepted by the Royal Academy in 1878. He lived in Charlotte Street, London, and co-authored the *Handbook of model and object drawing* with G. Brown in 1884. In the 1901 census he is recorded as an art master at Cheltenham College. Examples of his work are at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Sidney Pearce Nesbitt is descended from the Berwickshire family recorded in Robert Chancellor Nesbitt's *Nisbet of that Ilk* (pp. 89-90) and is thus a close kinsman of the current clan chief. Sidney married a Frenchwoman, Maria Grillet, and had three children. When Sidney retired he joined his younger brother, Alfred Mortimer Nesbitt, in Australia. He died there in 1920.

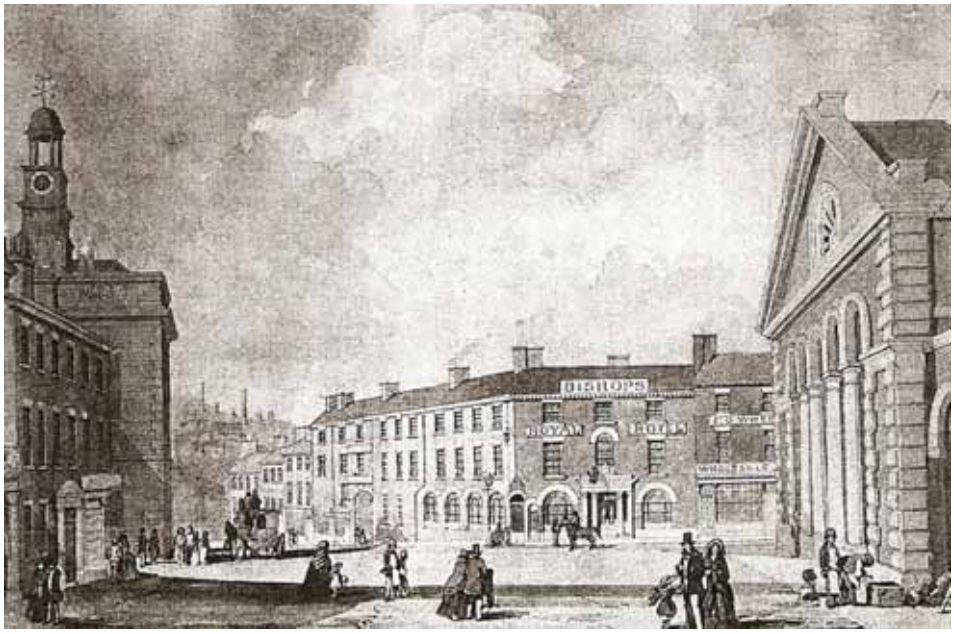

Figure 14. Thomas C. Nisbet *Waingate, Sheffield*, Watercolour, 1837.

Thomas C. Nisbet was born in Kingstone, Hants, where his family had lived from the mid-eighteenth century. He was christened 30 May 1821 at Saint Mary's, Portsea, the son of Thomas and Kezia Nesbet. After education in Portsea he moved to Yorkshire, attending the School of Design (later the Sheffield School of Art). Here he studied all aspects of art and design, specialising in watercolours and lithography. A watercolour of Waingate, Sheffield, is in the Mappin Gallery and shows that even at an early age he had a perceptive eye. The 1851 census shows he was living in William Street and was established as a lithographer. In 1852 and 1854 he was awarded the prestigious Marlborough House Medal for design. Several galleries and private collections have examples of his work. In the 1871 census he is living at

Plate 1. John Nisbet: *Robert Nisbet M.D.* 1750s, Oil on canvas. Reproduced by kind permission of the President and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England

Plate 2. Noel Laura Nisbet: *Self portrait* Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum

Plate 3. Robert Buchan Nisbet *Old Berwick Bridge* Courtesy: Witt Library, Courtauld Institute

Plate 4. Pollock Sinclair Nisbet: *Loch Andrews*, Oil on canvas

Plate 5. Frances E. Nesbitt *North African souk*

Plate 6. John Nesbitt: *Sandy Shore*, watercolour (Private Collection)

Plate 7. Hume Nisbet: *Ettrick Brigg End*. Oil on canvas.
Signed H.H. Nisbet, 1874 (Private Collection)

Plate 8. Hume Nisbet: Moonlight, 1911, Oil on canvas. From *On oil painting*.

Plate 9. Noel Laura Nisbet: *Carnival*, watercolour (Private Collection)

Plate 10. Eileen Nisbet 1979 1986
Courtesy of the Crafts Council

Plate 11. John Nesbitt: *feryoo*. 1979, epoxy-painted aluminium

2 Windsor Road, Islington (London) as architect and artist, married to Ellen, with children Ellen and Thomas. Thomas Callaway Nisbet and Ellen Hollis were married in West Bromwich in 1858.

Veronica Nisbet was an artist in the late nineteenth century, living at 12 Leonard Place, London W.8.

Figure 15. Veronica Nisbet: *The Ice Maiden*, 8 inches diameter, (sold Christies, London, 6 Nov 1995). Courtesy Witt Library, Courtauld Institute

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

### MAINLY SCOTLAND

Dorothy Nesbitt was the first of what we might call modern painters. She was born in Musselburgh, Scotland, in 1893, to John Robertson and Katherine Nesbitt. She trained at the Edinburgh College of Art. Here she came into contact with D.M. Sutherland, Cecile Walton and other members of the Edinburgh group and worked with them for some years from 1916. The Group consisted of some of the most talented young artists of the day, with a strong influence on Scottish art. They were a bohemian crew, and their outlandish behaviour and art tended to affront polite Edinburgh society. A critic wrote:

"Half Edinburgh goes to Shadwick Place secretly desiring to be righteously shocked, and the other half goes feeling deliciously uncertain it may be disappointed by not finding anything sufficiently shocking".

After her marriage to a fellow artist, William Miles Johnston, on 28 March 1921, the couple moved to Kirkcudbright where they continued to paint, both specialising in landscapes. Dorothy founded the Kirkcudbright School with her close friend Laura Alexander. She died in 1974.

G. Wilson Nesbit painted mainly in London. Based in Chelsea, he was a very fashionable portrait painter and in 1909 "Paola and Francesca" was his first painting to be accepted by

the Royal Academy. He exhibited there and at various London galleries thereafter. Many of his finest portraits are adorning country house walls..

Alexander Nisbet lives and works in Montpelier, Edinburgh. He exhibited "Describing water" at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1990.

Dr. Alexander F.R. Nisbet was born in New Abbey, Kirkcudbright, and died in Dumfries 24 July 1975. He came from a farming family, and studied agriculture at Glasgow University, where he received his doctorate. He lectured at the West of Scotland College of Agriculture. After retiring in 1964, he took up art full-time, achieving success commercially as well as at national exhibitions, including the Glasgow Institute. Alexander Nisbet is best known for his landscapes in his beloved Stewartry, but also painted in Spain, the Hebrides and Northern Ireland. His painting of Paul Jones' birthplace is in the Kirkcudbright Museum. In 1972 Alexander wrote a delightful book called "Galloway Painter". Highly readable, it gives an insight to the work and life of this remarkable man.

**ENGLAND**

E. (Edith) Nesbit was known throughout the English speaking world as a wonderful children's story writer, but what is not generally known is that she was also an accomplished artist. After the early death of her father her mother took Daisy (as she was affectionately known to the family) and her sisters to live in Europe, where they attended schools in France and Germany. It was possibly during this period of her life that Edith was taught ,as were many young women of her day, art appreciation and watercolour painting. She also developed a strong sense of design, a talent which was to later prove useful. After her marriage to Herbert Brand and before her first successful publication Edith designed and painted greetings cards for Raphael Tuck. Sadly, no known examples of her work survived as the records of Raphael Tuck received a direct hit during the War.

Scott Nisbet lived in South London and was a figure and landscape artist of some note. He exhibited at the R.A. almost every year from 1935-40. He studied painting at Goldsmith's College. After war service in the Army Education Corps, he joined the Department of Education at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth as an art lecturer. Limited contact with London deterred the artist from exhibiting there. His later work was influenced by eye problems, which led him to work very close to the canvas, and a strong sense of affinity with the works of Turner and the Impressionists. Many of these later works were of the stretch of lane outside his cottage. Scott Nisbet died on May 18, 2002.

**IRELAND**

Thomas (Tom) Nisbet, A.R.H.A., A.R.A., (1909-2000) was born in Ireland and exhibited in Dublin between 1935-79. He is particularly well-known for his paintings of western Ireland and Dublin.

**CERAMICS**

Eileen Nisbet was one of Britain's leading ceramicists. Born on 25 September 1929, she attended the Hornsey College of Art from 1950-53, and from 1960-63 the Central School of Art and Design, where she later taught for many years. An early member of the Craftsmen Potters Association, she was also on the Crafts Council Index from the beginning, and stayed in close touch with both throughout her working life.

Eileen's work had three distinct periods. Initially she produced press moulded earthenware dishes, then hand built ceramic wall plaques, and finally her most important work, innovative

free-standing porcelain sculptures. These were internationally known, and from 1977 onwards she exhibited throughout the United Kingdom, U.S.A. and continental Europe. Many of her finest pieces grace major galleries around the world, including the Victoria and Albert Museum and three Scottish national collections (Plate 10).

Eileen (pictured right) died on 9 July 1990 after a long illness. In one of the many obituaries by colleagues and ex-pupils, Mick Casson wrote of "a talent...of a rare order, the highest order".

Kristen Nesbitt, daughter of the artist John Creighton Nesbitt, was born in South Africa. After her formal education, Kristen decided to make art her life's work and enrolled at the Port Elizabeth School of Art, where she studied life form and commercial art. Although strongly drawn to painting, especially watercolours, Kristen followed her teacher's advice and concentrated on pottery and ceramics. In 1963 she moved to England, joining a studio in Notting Hill Gate, London. Two years later the firm decided to move production to St Ives in Cornwall. This worked well, as there is a strong artistic community in St Ives which gave Kristen the opportunity to work and teach. Within a couple of years the pottery was taken over by Troika Ceramics. Kristen decided it was time to branch out on her own, and now runs a successful studio in Beaulieu producing a wide range of ceramics, with a specialism in painted tiles and ceramic murals.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Lowell (Blair) Nesbitt was one of the leading figures in modern American art. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, on 4 October 1933, he trained in Philadelphia and, from 1955-6, at the Royal College of Art, where he studied stained glass and etching. He designed sets for a number of New York theatres and, from 1959-63, worked at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. At the end of this time he decided to become an independent artist, being closely associated with other leading artists such as Louise Nevelson, Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol.

From 1963 until his untimely death on 8 July 1993, he mounted annual exhibitions of his work in about 120 American galleries and 11 other countries around the world. His first exhibition was in 1958 at the Baltimore Art Gallery, where he later became instructor in print-making. Important commissions came from various institutions, including NASA, who asked him to paint the Apollo 9 and 13 space launches, and the U.S. Postal Service for a series of flower paintings for commemorative stamps.

Lowell was one of a group of influential artists who helped bring Realism into prominence. His meticulous attention to detail is reflected in all his paintings, particularly the enlargements of flowers, showing every detail of their structure. Working in oil on canvas, he produced over twenty series with subjects ranging from still life to architecture. Lowell lived in a SoHo loft in Manhattan, New York, and at Kent, N.Y.

Figure 17. Lowell Nesbitt: *Stairway, 1810*.
Courtesy of the Bayly Art Museum

Jackson Lee Nesbitt
*December Afternoon*, 1993

Jackson Lee Nesbitt was born in Kansas City, U.S.A., in 1913, and is a well-known etcher. He studied with Thomas Hart Benton and John Demartelly at the Kansas City Art Institute, and his work has continued over the decades to celebrate his Regionalist roots. As a student and a young artist, he created numerous paintings and prints largely in the American Scene tradition of familiar, everyday subject matter, particularly in industry and farming. In the 1950s, as interest in Regionalism waned, Nesbitt turned to commercial art. Much later, in the 1980s, in the midst of a renewed appreciation of art from the Depression years, he returned to printmaking and created a number of lithographs with imagery inspired by previous works, and by his life in the Midwest.

Alexander John Nesbitt, educator and calligrapher, was born in Paterson, New Jersey, on 14 November 1901. He studied at the Art Students' League, Cooper Union and Southeastern Mass. University. From 1942-4 he was Technical Art Director at the Jordanoff Aviation Company, and from 1944-5 Art Director at Technographic Publications. In 1963 he became the owner of Third Elm Press. As one of America's foremost calligraphers, he accepted many commissions, including memorial plaques for churches, designs for gravestones, and

genealogical charts. From 1963 onwards he held a series of exhibitions throughout the U.S.A. and Germany.

Alexander wrote and edited several books on calligraphy, and was co-author of a book on *Weathercocks and weathercreatures* with his wife Ilse Buchart Nesbitt, the well-known printmaker and illustrator. With his wealth of practical experience, Alexander felt that teaching was his forte. His first post was as Instructor of Typography and Lettering at his old college, Cooper Union, where he stayed for seven years. In 1957 he took up the position of Associate Professor of Graphic Design at Rhode Island School of Design, but in 1965 once more returned to Cooper Union, accepting a professorship. He retired in 1974 and died on 23 July 1995.

Ilse Buchart Nesbitt is an active printmaker at her studio in Newport, Rhode Island. She was born in Frankfurt/Main, Germany in 1932 and grew up in Japan between 1936-1947. In 1954 Ilse moved back to Germany to study fine art at the art academies of Hamburg and Berlin, focussing on lettering and typography through 1959. There, she completed her first woodcut prints. Ilse moved to the United States in 1960 and taught typography and book design at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, R.I for five years. In 1965 she founded the Third & Elm Press with her late husband, calligrapher and type historian Alexander Nesbitt; the press is in Newport, Rhode Island, and is open to the public. Since 1965 she has had numerous one-woman and group shows in the U.S. and Germany.

Christine Nisbet (Christine Bacheler) was born on 24 April 1902, received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Yale, and then studied in Paris for some years. Back in the U.S.A. she taught art and history of art and continued working in various media - oils, lithographs, watercolours and scraperboard. In 1929 she married the writer Hugh Ulric Swinscow Nisbet (1897-1987) of Salcombe, Devon, where the couple spent most of their life. She received commissions for illustrations, and she exhibited annually in London, dying in Salcombe in 1991. Her paintings are often of an allegorical nature.

Figure 19. Christine Nisbet: *Eve*.
Scraperboard, 12 x 10 in (sold Sotheby's, London, 28 Aug 1975). Courtesy Witt Library, Courtauld Institute

Robert Hogg Nisbet was born in Providence, Rhode Island, New York on 25 August 1879 and was a successful artist in etching and engraving. He entered the Rhode Island School of Design when he was eight. He later studied in New York and abroad. He taught at Brown University and was president of the Art Students League of New York, where he served as president from 1909-1910. He was elected an Associate Member of the National Academy of Design in 1920 and a National Academician (N.A.) in 1928. One of the incorporators of the Society of American Etchers, he was also a member of the Philadelphia Society of Etchers. Nisbet settled in Kent, Connecticut with his wife Marguerite. His work won him three National Academy awards, several etching awards, and the National Arts Club (Painting) prize. Many of his works are in private collections and public art galleries. Robert died on 20 April 1961.

Figure 20. Robert Hogg Nisbet: *The Hurrying River* Drypoint, 1925. *Florida Pines*, Etching, c. 1932.

**CANADA**

Florence Alma Nisbet, who was born in Toronto in 1913, painted extensively in Canada. She died on 29 November 1998, at St. Catharines, Ontario.

John Nesbitt R.C.A. is an internationally known sculptor and Canada's major addition to our Nesbit/Nisbet artists. He has explained his motivation - "Doing sculpture is like writing poetry. To me sculpture is poetry."

John's father, a lover and writer of poetry, had a profound influence on him from an early age and doubtless helped shape his creative thinking. (Matthew) John Nesbitt was born in 1928 in Montreal, Quebec and educated there. After leaving school John was apprenticed to a cabinet-maker where he developed a feel for the textures of wood. In his mid-twenties he enrolled at the Sir George Williams University drawing classes. Later he moved to L'Ecole des Beaux Arts for three years, studying engraving, drawing and sculpture. It was to the latter that he felt drawn, initially working in wood and stone. After setting up his own studio he experimented with various media, such as bronze and other metals, marrying them with stone into superb sculptures. In 1969/70 he was awarded a Canada Council Arts scholarship to study in Paris. During his stay in France he visited London: "I went to the Tate Gallery and walked into a room full of Turners and I saw these paintings, tears started to come down my face, I felt that he was speaking to me and he said 'John this is how good this is, how well you must do your art', so I knew from that moment on that it was going to be a hard job and I had to devote my life to it , deeply".

Settling down once more in Montreal he threw himself in to his work exhibiting at various venues. 1964 and 1965 were "sell-outs" and John moved to New York in 1964 where he worked for the next ten years. At the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Spring Show in 1965 he won the First Sculpture prize and purchase. One of his pieces was exhibited at the World Fair Expo in 1969 and was later bought for the University of Moncton. It was during his New York period that John began experimenting with large sculpture using aluminium and carefully chosen colours. In his previous work he had used his native talent and keen eye, creating largely with his hands, but now he sketched his ideas before beginning work. Returning to his home country in 1975 he decided to settle in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia where he built a house with a large studio attached. With the help of his wife Anne -an artist herself- he found the almost perfect setting to continue his work and creativity (Plate 11).

**NEW ZEALAND**

Alistair Nisbet-Smith was born in New Plymouth, New Zealand in 1942. Educated in Invercargill, he studied at Canterbury School of Fine Arts from 1961-64, graduating with a diploma in Fine Arts. His first one-man exhibition was held in Auckland in 1970, and he has had solo or group exhibitions there almost annually. In 1980 he received the Queen Elizabeth II award, and in 1982 was one of the major artists represented at the Ilam Artists Centenary in Christchurch.

Working in oils on very large canvasses, his expressive use of bold colours and textures creates exciting and challenging paintings. His works hang in many city art galleries in New Zealand, as well as major private collections.

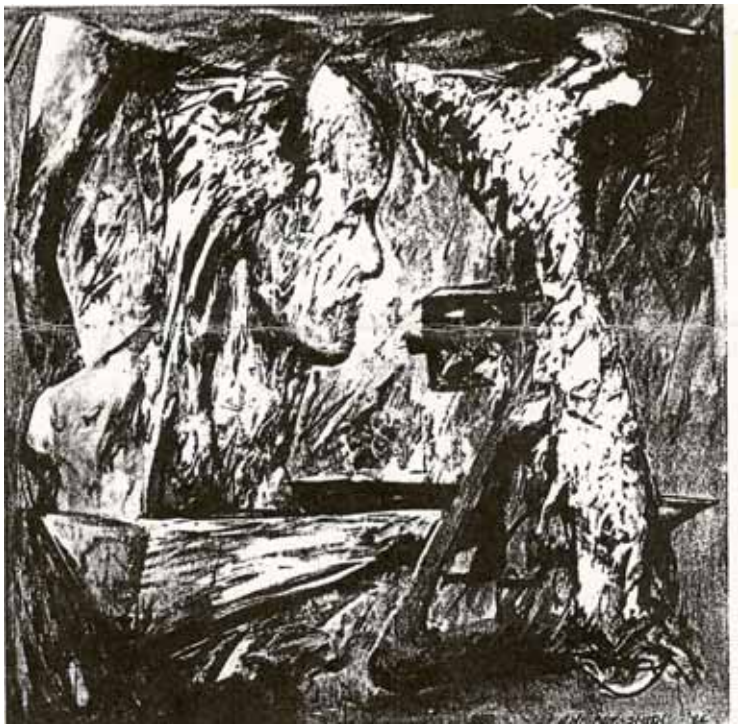

Figure 21. Alistair Nisbet-Smith: *Dancing Partners III*, 180 x 180 cm, Oil on canvas, 1986.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

George Hunter Hardy Nesbit was born in Johannesburg in 1933. After gaining his National Art Teachers' Certificate at Witwatersrand Technical College from 1952-6, from 1960-63 he took his B.A. at the South Africa University. He went on to teach at the Port Elisabeth Technikon, and in 1968 was granted an Oppenheimer Trust Memorial Award for overseas study, looking at stained glass and architectural detailing.

For a while Hunter taught and exhibited in London. After returning to South Africa, he again turned to teaching and also exhibited widely. He painted mainly in oils - landscapes, portraits and seascapes. From 1976 he specialised in the design and restoration of stained glass. He became a member of the Centre international du Vitrail and the International Institute for Conservation, as well as a member of the South African Museums Association. His many commissions for church glass are primarily in South African churches; many of the main galleries also hold his paintings.

Ruth Nesbit (nee Carter), Hunter Nesbit's wife, was born in London in 1948, but has lived in South Africa since 1968. After study at the Port Elizabeth Technikon, she has been a professional ceramicist and calligrapher since 1978. Ruth has taught drawing, fashion drawing

and experimental graphics at the Technikon. Interested in social work, she set up a screen-printing department at the Port Elizabeth Cripple Care Society. Ruth's work has been exhibited widely throughout South Africa, and is represented in both public and private collections.

## ARCHITECTS[1]

In 1663 Alexander Nisbet, a mason, built additions to Dreel Castle in Fife for Sir Phillip Anstruther, fragments of which survive in a later tower to the present time. James Nisbet, a mason, worked at Crowhill Farm, Lothian, in 1722 on extensive buildings that are still standing today.

### JAMES NISBET OF KELSO

The first work of another James Nisbet, a mason and architect, was at Paxton House, designed by John Adam for Patrick Home of Billie, with Nisbet acting as mason and superintendent of works from 1758 to the 1760s. The masonry work at Paxton, for which Nisbet was responsible, is described as 'impressive' in the Buildings of Scotland: Borders. A memorandum by Nisbet on how he proposed to construct the monumental flight of steps at the front of the house, ' so that the frost has no power to move them' demonstrates his skill and inventiveness as a mason. On the Doric portico of the building he also devised an ingenious system of shallow segmental arches built above the horizontal beams – architraves – that span the columns so that no load from the weight of the wall above would be transferred directly on to the beam. These flat arches have 'joggled joints' at the sides of the individual stones which have retained the masonry in place, without any movement for 250 years.

Nisbet used the skills acquired at Paxton at Ednam House (shown left, Figure 22) in Kelso, built for James Dickinson in 1761. The New Statistical Account for Scotland (1845) describes Ednam as 'One of the most elegant mansions that Nisbet ever designed'. It has been considerably extended and altered but much of its original fabric remains, including superb plasterwork and fine mahogany doors. It is now a hotel.

No more than one hundred metres from Ednam House and separated from it by the impressive ruins of Kelso Abbey, stands James Nisbet's other notable work, the Old Parish Kirk (shown right, Figure 23), which he designed in collaboration with two other tradesmen, John Laidlaw, a mason, and Robert Purves, a carpenter. They produced a scale model of the kirk for submission to the heritors in 1771, some ten years after Ednam House. Differing completely in style from his other work, it is an octagonal building with an eighty-two foot span and a pyramidal roof and cupola. It was completed in 1773.

[1] Reprinted from the *Nesbitt/Nisbet Society (UK) Newsletter* 10(4): 8-10(1993), with much additional material from the very useful online *Dictionary of Scottish Architects 1840-1940* www.codexgeo.co.uk/dsa

The years between 1771 and 1778 appear to have been Nisbet's most productive, working on two Northumberland castles along with other projects - Ford, home of Sir John Harvey Delaval (later Earl Delaval), and Twizel for Mr (later Sir) Francis Blake. Ford, close to the border, was built in 1338 as a defensive structure. Three of its massive stone structures remain with a fine Elizabethan wing dating from 1589. Sir John had commissioned James Nisbet to gothicize the 16th century wing in what was then the height of fashion. He also designed the curtain wall and gatehouses creating a huge forecourt (left, Figure 24). This was completed by Gillies of Kelso in 1791, ten years after Nisbet's death. Twizel was to be a vast structure in the Gothic style on the River Tweed. It was never completed but fragments can be seen today. The survey drawings are preserved in the Northumberland Record Office.

Between the years 1771-1775, James Nisbet also supervised the building of Wedderburn Castle, Duns, Berwickshire, which was designed by Robert Adam. Here he worked once more for his original employer at Paxton, Patrick Home, who had inherited the Wedderburn title and estate. Drawings by Adam and Nisbet are still extant. By now established as the leading architect in the area, Nisbet was called to Floors Castle by the Duke of Roxburghe and asked to submit a report on the condition of Broxmouth House in East Lothian. This document still exists in the Charter Room at the castle. His report of December 1774 recommended the demolition of the house and the building of a new one. This work was begun in 1775 with James Nisbet as the probable architect.

The remodelling of Forberry Tower, a 15th century tower house near Wooler, occupied the years from 1776 to 1778. This was carried out for Sir Francis Blake (cf. Twizel) and contains striking gothic interiors such as fan coving above the staircase, and crocketed ogee arches in several ground floor rooms. This work can only be attributed to Nisbet, owing to the lack of documentation.

Wedderburn Castle must have received his attention again in 1781 for it is mentioned in papers appertaining to that building, and indicating that James Nisbet had died in September or October of that year.

**JAMES NISBET, PLASTERER**

The Edinburgh-based plasterer-architect, James Nisbet, worked, with one recorded exception, in that city. His ceiling plasterwork of 1782 at Tweeddale House, Canongate is still in place in the 17th century High Dining Room. The *Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh* states 'Shallow Adamesque enrichments with a swaged cove and large central oval, diagonally crossed by bow-tied cords. In the medallions at their ends, figures of music and agriculture'.

It is worth noting that there is scarcely another building in the Kingdom which is associated with so many eminent architects and craftsmen, Sir William Bruce, John and Robert Adam among others.

Controversy over the St George's (Charlotte) Square site, which was the final piece in the First New Town in 1789, led to James Nisbet submitting drawings for a circus or crescent. By March 1791, however, the dispute had been settled in favour of Robert Adam's plan though James Nisbet's drawings are still extant. The only surviving house of the trio built in about 1790 with its fluted Corinthian pilasters and swaged frieze is at 115 George Street,

possibly designed by James Nisbet. The plasterwork in the front drawing room, though clumsily reinstated, is typical of Nisbet's work. Recently restored, these houses were attributed in the 1883 'Builder' to Robert Adam.

During the period 1779 - 1785 Nisbet was also working on Leuchie House in North Berwick for Sir Huw Dalrymple. Here he displayed his mastery of the craft with restraint and order in the entrance hall and staircase walls. In three state rooms - considered his masterpiece - he lavished great attention to detail on friezes using classical figures, antique foliage and pairs of griffins. In the dining room Nisbet echoed Flaxman's pink and white marble fireplace with central relief of Bacchus and Ariadne.

Obviously James Nisbet designed and decorated many buildings but the last building known to be by him was the former Tontine Buildings in George Street. Begun in 1792, it was still unfinished during the Napoleonic Wars and so was cheaply fitted out as a cavalry barracks. Its arcaded ground floor has been filled in but the upper front remains with its centre-piece of composite pilasters.

**HAMILTON MORE NISBETT**

Hamilton More Nisbett was born on 4 January 1868, the second son of John More Nisbett, 8th of Cairnhill and of the Drum, Gilmerton and his wife Lady Agnes Dalrymple, daughter of the 9th Earl of Stair. He was articled to John Kinross in 1889, and in 1896 moved to London before travelling extensively on the continent. In 1899 he started independent practice at 122 George Street, Edinburgh, but spent a month or two of most subsequent years travelling in France, Belgium, Germany, England and Scotland.

Hamilton More Nisbett married Ivegh Marguerite Gladys Bayly Jones on 7 November 1905. He succeeded to the family estates as 11th of Cairnhill and 4th of the Drum on the death of his elder brother, North More Nisbett, on 5 January 1939. He was author of several books, *Drum of the Somervilles*, *Oxenfoord and its owners* and *Cairnhill*. He died on 24 December 1955.

As part of his degree course in Architecture at Edinburgh University, More Nisbett made a measured drawing of the famous painted ceiling in Pinkie House (now part of Loretto School; the room is used as a senior dormitory). Painted in tempera in 1615, the ceiling was twenty-three metres long. Subsequently water destroyed about half of the ceiling during roof repairs. It was restored from the drawing, it being the only detailed record.

Much of More Nisbett's architectural work was in the form of adaptations of historic buildings, memorials, and in estate or village buildings at The Drum and elsewhere. As assistant to John Kinross he worked on the major extension of the late 18th century house at Manderston House, near Duns, in about 1895. An interest in ecclesiastical architecture is evidenced by a period spent working with the famous church architects Bucknall & Comper, and by the design of a reredos for several churches.

**JOHN NISBET**

John Nisbet was born at 118 Dale Street, Glasgow on 9 December 1868, the son of James Nisbet, grocer and his wife Ann Cassells. He studied at Glasgow School of Art from 1887 to 1891 and started practice on his own account in 1900-01. He married Jessie Maxwell, daughter of Charles Edward Maxwell in 1898.

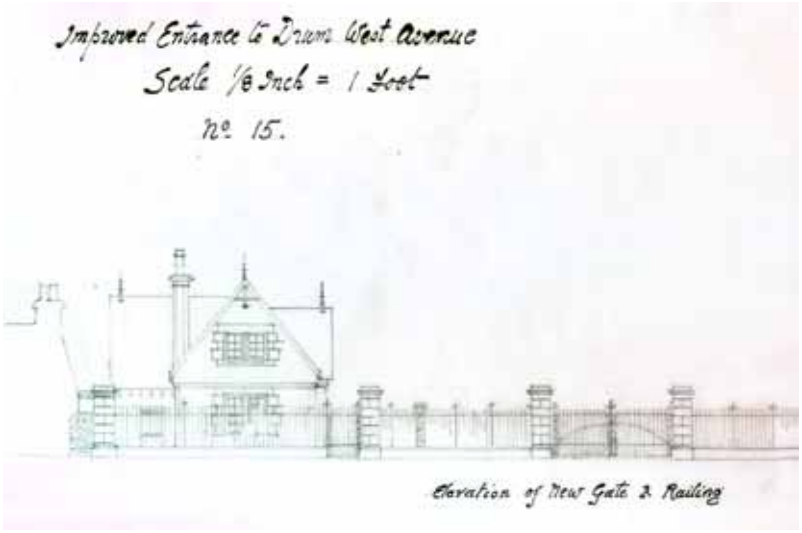


Figure 25. Architectural drawing by Hamilton More Nisbett. Courtesy of Alan More Nisbett.

John Nisbet built a great many tenements of some refinement, with understated Glasgow-style decorative elements, for the property developer John Auld McTaggart. Camphill Gate is the most notable, built of fireproof materials with a roof garden. He designed McTaggart's own house, Kelmscott in Pollokshields, in the Arts and Crafts style. The Finance Act of 1909, which increased taxation on tenement buildings, caused his practice to decline steeply. After this he worked as a valuer for the Inland Revenue and ceased to practice. Nisbet continued to exhibit as an etcher and painter at the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts until 1922, and died on 29 October 1951. In 1915 he published *Glasgow - A Sketch Book*.

**JOHN BRYAN NISBET**

John Bryan Nisbet was born in Kilmaurs, Ayrshire in 1862 and articled to Sutherland & Walker of Edinburgh from 1876 until 1881, attending Heriot-Watt College and Edinburgh School of Art. He commenced practice on his own account in Edinburgh in 1905, his business being chiefly concerned with domestic buildings, shops and structural alterations to existing properties. After the first World War supervised several housing schemes for the East Lothian County Council. He died on 18 January 1930, at the age of 67.

**OTHER ARCHITECTS IN SCOTLAND**

Yet another James Nisbet of Edinburgh was an architect-builder, connected with the development of the Northern New Town, which lies parallel to the first new town on the northern edge. Planned by Reid and Sibbald in 1801/1802 it remains the finest and least altered Georgian townscape in Edinburgh. Nisbet, together with two lawyers, James Morison and Maxwell Gordon, and two fellow architect-builders, Thomas Morison and George Winter, formed a syndicate to develop their recently acquired land. One terrace of high class dwellings which they built is in Northumberland Street. Constructed in about 1812, it consists of two-storey houses with pilastered doorways and Adam-type decoration in the entrance halls.

In 1802 Robert Nisbet, a mason of Newbiggin in East Lothian, submitted his design for a new kirk at Inveresk. His was chosen out of the four designs presented for inspection. The site had been occupied by various churches since the 6th century and was therefore one of the most historic Celtic places in Scotland. Nisbet's church was tall in appearance because of the 'Fisherman's Loft' which is a second floor gallery. The interior was remodelled in 1893.

David Nisbet of Edinburgh was an architect-builder. Born in 1790, He died in 1833, and is buried in Carlton cemetery. James Nisbet was active as an engineer in Glasgow in the years around 1900, designing a works building for James Howden in 1897, and a four-storey block in 1907 for D. Cockburn and Sons Engineering Works

**BENJAMIN ROBERT NESBIT**

Ben Nesbit was born in North Berwick, in the county of East Lothian in about 1798. He was the first known member of the Nisbet/Nesbitt clan to settle in New Zealand. As an artisan and carpenter, he worked on two of the earliest European buildings to survive from the new colony. The Stone House, for which he built the roof in 1832-36, and Kemp House, for which he built additions in the early 1830s, are at Kerikeri, in the very north of the North Island. These are now national monuments in the care of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Nesbit worked in the Bay of Islands for many years, and married a young Australian. His descendants live in New Zealand to this day.

## OTHER ARTISTS

I have come across the following artists in lists of Royal Academy exhibitors, records of the Society of Watercolours and elsewhere. At present I have not been able to find out more about them.

- Miss A. Holmes-Nisbet lived in Glasgow. She exhibited at the G.I. in 1890/1. This is probably Agnes Holmes Nisbet, born 28 January 1871, daughter of Alexander Nisbet ("Surveyor of H.M. Stamps & Taxes") and Agnes Holmes, of 351 Bath Crescent, Glasgow and later of Partick.
- Fanny M. Nisbet had a studio in Redcliffe Gardens, South Kensington, London. Specialising in landscapes, she exhibited at the R.B.A. between 1881-1885/6.
- H. Crocket Nisbet worked in Murrayfield, Edinburgh. An oil painter, he exhibited "A glimpse of Loch Feochan, Argyllshire" at the R.S.A. in 1898.
- Helen Nisbet, Bedford Gardens, South Kensington. Exhibited at the R.A. 1928/9.
- Henry A. Nisbet exhibited in 1864.
- J.D. Nisbet of Aberdeen exhibited genre paintings at the A.R.C. in 1961.
- J.S. Nisbet of Edinburgh exhibited an unnamed landscape at the Royal Academy in 1871.
- James A. Nisbet, a Paisley artist, exhibited at the R.G.I. in 1944.
- James D. Nisbet of Glasgow exhibited at the R.S.A. 1932-7 and the R.G.I.
- Jane Nisbet, a Glasgow artist, exhibited genre paintings at the R.S.A. between 1874-1908. R.G.I.
- John J. Nisbet lived in Leicester and worked in oils on landscapes and portraits. He exhibited between 1934-9.
- Leslie Nisbet was an Ulster painter, who exhibited at the R.H.A. in 1961.
- Lucy Nisbet was a London-based Scottish artist, who exhibited at the R.S.A. in 1882.
- Robert H. Nisbet of Peebleshire exhibited "Snow on Burnside, Glasgow" at the R.S.A. in 1944.
- M. Nisbett exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1843, showing two barn interiors with carthorses and sheep. He also exhibited a Cambridgeshire farm scene at the Royal Institution.

## ART GALLERIES HOLDING NISBET / NESBITT WORKS OF ART

| | |
|---|---|
| Art Gallery of South Australia | Adelaide |
| Ulster Museum and Art Gallery | Belfast |
| Westminster Gallery | Boston |
| The Russell Cotes Galley | Bournemouth |
| University of Moncton | New Brunswick, Canada |
| National Gallery of Art | Capetown |
| Bayley Art Gallery (University of Virginia) | Charlottesville |
| Derby Museum and Art Gallery | Derby |
| The Art Gallery | Dundee |
| Diploma Work Collection, Royal Scottish Academy | Edinburgh |
| Scottish National Portrait Gallery | Edinburgh |
| Royal Scottish Museum | Edinburgh |
| Kelvingrove Art Gallery | Glasgow |
| Newport Art Gallery | Gwent |
| Art Gallery of Nova Scotia | Hamilton |
| Art Gallery of Johannesburg | Johannesburg |
| The Art Gallery of Kirkaldy | Kirkaldy |
| Kirkcudbright Museum | Kirkcudbrightshire |
| City Art Gallery | Leeds |
| Tate Gallery | London |
| British Museum | London |
| Victoria and Albert Museum | London |
| The Craft Council | London |
| Auckland Art Gallery | New Zealand |
| National Museum of Canada | Ottawa |
| Ottawa Art Gallery | Ottawa |
| Art Gallery of West Australia | Perth |
| Carnegie Institute | Pittsburgh |
| Paisley Art Gallery | Paisley, Scotland |
| Richmond on Thames Library | Richmond, Surrey |
| The Art Gallery | Salford |
| The Ruskin Museum and Art Gallery | Sheffield |
| Smithsonian Institute | Washington, DC |
| National Gallery of New Zealand | Wellington |

# INDEX OF ARTISTS IN THE MAIN TEXT

## BOOKS BY NESBITT / NISBET ARTISTS AND ART CRITICS

Ethel C. Nesbit 1884 *Flower Painting for Beginners*. Blackie & Son. The original paintings for this book were sold on eBay in 2005.
Frances E Nesbitt. 1906 *Algeria and Tunis*. London: A & C Black.
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Alexander F. Nisbet 1972 *Galloway Painter*. Holmes & McDougall.
Harry Nisbet 1919 *Grammar of Textile Design*. London: Scott, Greenwood and Son.
Hugh Ulric Nisbet 1934 *Thoughts on the Purposes of Art*. Reigate: Bacheler-Nisbet Gallery.
Hume Nisbet 1883 *Exhibition of pictures by Hume Nisbet, painter*. Edinburgh: A. & G. Brown.
---------- 1887 *The Practical in Painting*. Edinburgh: Muir & Paterson.
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---------- 1883 *The Scottish school: an analysis: containing a few hints on the art of picture-making for exhibitions, with some suggestions about reform, to academicians, artists, and the great public*. Edinburgh.
---------- 1891 *Lessons in art*. London: Chatto & Windus.
---------- 1892 *Where art begins*. London: Chatto & Windus.
---------- 1896 *Plain Guide to Oil Painting*. London: Reeves & Sons.
---------- 1896 *A Plain Guide to Oil Painting*. London:. This major work was reprinted with alterations in 1915 with the following note - Dedicated to the memory of my revered friend and master JOHN RUSKIN whose sage advice given after the first impression was published I have obeyed in this issue.
---------- 1897 *On Painting in Watercolour*. London: Reeves.
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---------- 1924 *On oil painting*. London: Reeves & Sons. (Many editions)
Sidney Nisbet & George Brow 1884 *Handbook of Model and Object Drawing*. London: Collins.

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# NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY United Kingdom
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The Nesbitt/Nisbet Society was founded in 1980 by Prof. John and Dolores Nesbitt of Iowa City, USA. Its aims are to assist genealogical research into Nesbitt/Nisbet families (whatever the spelling), to identify and preserve Nesbitt/Nisbet heritage, and to encourage communication and gatherings.

The United Kingdom branch (with a membership spanning much of Europe) was founded in 1983. It collaborates closely with the branches in North America and Australia in organising annual gatherings in Scotland and North America, producing a quarterly newsletter, and publishing a wide range of books. Its website was established in 1995 and contains a wide range of information on Nesbitt/Nisbet people, families, places and publications.

Membership brings access to our newsletter and online back-issues, meetings and genealogical advice, and publications that are not online.

**PUBLICATIONS SERIES**

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*Herald and historian: Alexander Nisbet* by Sir James Fergusson of Kilkerran. 2003, 12pp.