WILLIAM JAMES NEATBY
ARTIST AND DESIGNER
1860-1910

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ART AND DESIGN OF DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT

The principal aim of this thesis is to investigate the life and work of William James Neatby (1860-1910), artist and designer. Neatby worked as a designer, largely of architectural ceramics, during the 1880s and 1890s. After the turn of the century he became a more general designer, working in a variety of media. Several of his works are extant and, of these, the tile interior of the Meat Hall in Harrods department store, London, and the ceramic facade of the Everard Printing Works, Bristol, are the best known. The thesis investigates his early life and training, his career as a designer at the Burmantofts ceramics works, Leeds, and subsequently as Head of the Architectural Ceramics Department at Doulton of Lambeth. Finally, the study looks at his life as an independent designer in the years 1901-1910.

On a broader front the thesis establishes the character of Neatby's achievements, analysing his design philosophy, relating it to other contemporary artistic ideas and movements. In doing so it re-evaluates the nature and achievements of fin-de-siècle art in Britain and where appropriate in Europe. This section of the thesis also reappraises certain terms and design systems relating to contemporary art and design movements in Britain and Europe. In particular, the terms 'Art Nouveau', 'Arts and Crafts' and 'Aesthetic Movement' are scrutinised and re-defined or deconstructed in the light of this research programme.

The thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge of the late Victorian and Edwardian art and design world through its analysis of Neatby's work in relation to that of his contemporaries, offering alternative viewpoints, to those usually promoted, on the relationship of the Arts and Crafts Movement to the Aesthetic Movement and the origins of the English New Art Style. The thesis also discusses and illustrates several areas of Neatby's work that have not been published before, allowing for a re-appraisal of his status as an artist and designer in the period 1880-1910.
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A particularly important part of this thesis is the detailed photographic survey of Neatby's work that accompanies the text. With reference to the images reproduced here, all photographs are the work of the author unless otherwise stated, with the exception of the family photographs that are to be found in Chapter 1. These were generously provided by Mr. R. Neatby. As for other source material illustrated in this thesis, a great deal resides in private collections. Where this is the case, source material is credited thus: 'Private collection', to respect the wishes of those who have kindly allowed me to inspect and photograph their Neatby artefacts. The numerous line drawings produced by Neatby for Burmantofts, 1884-1890, which are illustrated in Chapter 6 and elsewhere in the thesis, are taken from a series of trade catalogues held in the Abbey House Museum, Kirkstall, Leeds. These are fully referenced in the text and the Bibliography.

Although this study includes numerous references to architectural facades and interiors, this work does not aim to be a technical treatise on architecture. Rather, among other things, it is concerned with the application of decorative art to buildings through the medium of architectural ceramics. The work is more an essay on Neatby as an ornamentalist rather than as an architect and in consequence, measurements of particular objects are only included where it is deemed necessary to appreciate the scale of an object. This is not usually necessary with large architectural features but is more relevant, for example, when an appreciation of the size of Neatby's paintings is required.
Numerous organizations and individuals have provided me with information and other help during the course of the research for this thesis on the subject of W.J. Neatby, and I would like to record my thanks to them here. The nature of data retrieval on such a scale and over a period of time makes it almost impossible that every individual will be recorded here, but to those whom I have left out, I offer my sincere thanks and I will try to give them a mention in any future publications resulting from this research. I wrote to several members of the Neatby family asking for information and I am indebted to them for their responses. However, above all others, I would like to record my gratitude for both her interest and her hospitality to the late Mrs Vivienne Neatby, whose letter to me, revealing that William James Neatby was her father-in-law, provided me with something of a missing link and led subsequently to the discovery of much interesting and unpublished information relating to Neatby. Of all the other individuals and organizations who assisted me, I would particularly like to thank the following: Alan Garlick, Abbey House Museum, Leeds; Sylvia Neatby; Mr. G.O.M. Neatby; Mr. R. Neatby; Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll; Louise Irvine; Dr. Mary Young; Rachel Cox; Mr. T.R. Cook; Christopher Sawday; Cynthia Church; Paul Rothery; Julie McKeown, Royal Doulton Museums; and the staff of the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum.
INTRODUCTION

This project was originally inspired by observation of the decorated ceramic spandrels of the main entrance archway constructed for the now demolished wholesale market in Halford Street, Leicester. These spandrels, now re-erected in a modern brick casing in the vicinity of West Bridge, Leicester, were decorated in low relief with the figures of two confronting mermaids, as part of a scheme of ceramic decoration undertaken by W.J. Neatby on behalf of Doulton and Co. of Lambeth in 1900. The analysis of this work contributed to the original parameters of this study which at first was concerned primarily with an investigation into the schemes of ceramic decoration proposed by Neatby for use in an architectural context. The confines imposed by the above criteria were soon found to be far too restrictive and have been subsequently widened to include Neatby's work in a wide variety of media and techniques. However, Neatby's architectural schemes did provide a starting point for the pattern of research that is outlined below.

THE AIMS OF THE THESIS

The principal aim of this research project is to investigate the life and work of William James Neatby (1860-1910), artist and designer. After undergoing initial training as an architect, Neatby worked as a designer, largely of architectural ceramics, during the 1880s and 1890s. After the turn of the century he became a more general designer, working in a variety of media. Several of his works are extant and, of these, the tile interior of the Meat Hall in Harrods department store, London, and the ceramic facade of the Everard Printing Works, Bristol, are the best known. The former of these designs enjoys a worldwide reputation as one of the finest ceramic interiors of the early 20th century. Several other
lesser-known schemes of decoration are also extant and are readily accessible. This being the case, Neatby's work has come under the scrutiny of a number of scholars in the past, but has never been the subject of a major study.

Such work as has been published relates in almost all cases to the same few extant schemes of ceramic decoration and only rarely mentions Neatby's work in other media. The schemes of decoration chosen for analysis have usually included his most noticeable remaining works such as the Harrod's scheme, the Everard's facade, and the well-known, although now inaccessible, series of ceramic tiles painted with exotic female figures executed for the Winter Gardens complex in Blackpool. Neatby's later accomplishments as a designer of furniture, glass, metalwork, and fireplaces are rarely mentioned. His paintings and graphic designs are usually ignored as an area of study. The effect of this concentration has been that Neatby is viewed as a talented yet inconsequential creator of a small number of novelty architectural decorative schemes; realistically, he has been marginalised and his importance as a fin-de-siècle artist and designer has been negated by contemporary scholarship. It is against such a background that this study was inaugurated, with one of its main aims being to re-evaluate Neatby's contribution to the art and design of the period in which he lived.

In embarking on this re-evaluation of W.J. Neatby, it is not the aim of this thesis to create a major artistic figure for the turn of the century, to restore a major influence to his rightful place, or to rescue an unsung hero from obscurity. There is nothing to indicate that he is...

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another figure of the stature of Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928), who has somehow been overlooked by succeeding generations of architects, designers, and art historians, until rescued from the margins by a Pevsner\textsuperscript{2} or a Howarth.\textsuperscript{3} However, the present evidence from data uncovered by this research programme suggests that there exists enough material of sufficient quality to justify a positive reconsideration of Neatby's position in the art and design establishment of his day. This conclusion rests upon an appreciation of the position and reputation enjoyed by Neatby during his lifetime, and on an evaluation of the material, produced by him, that known previously and work more recently uncovered by this study.

On the former point, Muthesius included a reference to Neatby in Das englische Haus,\textsuperscript{4} describing his furniture as `...of a notably high standard' and he was also the subject of two major contemporary reviews of his work, one in the Studio,\textsuperscript{5} and the other in Kunst und Kunsthandwerk.\textsuperscript{6} Reviews of this kind, considering the work of individual artists, were not unusual in either of the two latter publications, but they do give an indication of Neatby's esteem. More importantly, through the literary work of Muthesius and the two highly respected and extensively circulated periodicals mentioned above, Neatby's designs reached the notice of a wider European and American audience.

With reference to Neatby's status as judged from his own body of work, research has

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} Pevsner, N.: Pioneers of the Modern Movement (1936).
\item \textsuperscript{3} Howarth, T.: Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement (1952).
\item \textsuperscript{5} Vallance, Aymer: 'Mr W.J. Neatby and His Work', Studio, xxix (1903).
\end{itemize}
revealed this to be much larger than previously noted in any publications dealing with his output. Quantity is not necessarily an indicator of artistic worth, but that his design skills were appreciated on a wide front is shown by his involvement, either directly or indirectly, in a number of public contracts, where his ceramic designs adorned buildings commissioned by a variety of bodies including a local education authority, a hospital, Manchester School of Art, and the Admiralty. His reputation also led to his decorative schemes being incorporated into several large private commercial buildings, including banks, restaurants, and shops. Several contemporary architects and designers who now enjoy high reputation, such as C.A. Voysey (1857-1941) and H. Baillie-Scott (1865-1945), seemingly failed to achieve a comparable level of public acceptance.

The secondary aim of this research is to establish the character of Neatby's achievements, to analyse his design philosophy, to relate it to other contemporary artistic ideas and movements and in doing so re-evaluate the nature and achievements of fin-de-siècle art in Britain and where appropriate in Europe. This section of the thesis aims to reappraise certain terms and design systems relating to contemporary art and design movements in Britain and Europe. In particular, the terms 'Arts Nouveau', 'Arts and Crafts' and 'Aesthetic Movement' will be scrutinised and re-defined or deconstructed in the light of this research programme. This secondary aim has been made possible through a comparative study of the work of other artists and designers working at the same time as Neatby. These include artists of both great and lesser stature, such as Walter Crane (1845-1915), Leonard Wyburd (fl. 1883-1906), and G.M. Ellwood (1875-c. 1960), with the nature of their work being seen as of more importance than their individual reputations.
PREVIOUS STUDIES

Despite the availability of material relating to W.J. Neatby, remarkably little has been written about him. There have been both general works,\textsuperscript{7} that refer to him, and more specific publications that deal with his designs in a certain amount of detail.\textsuperscript{8} Neatby has even been the subject of undergraduate dissertations.\textsuperscript{9} However, this collection of published work is small by comparison with the available writings on some of his contemporaries, and it is also noticeably restricted in its outlook.\textsuperscript{10} With remarkable consistency these various studies deal primarily with Neatby’s schemes of architectural decoration in tile. The narrowness of this approach reflects the nature of Neatby’s best known projects and the interests of researchers who have been more involved with the study of decorative tiles than with the overall accomplishments of the individual artist. In a series of articles\textsuperscript{11} published in 1970-71 and in his book \textit{Victorian Ceramic Tiles} (published in 1972), Barnard describes a number of Neatby’s works in ceramic tile, yet gives only brief mention of his work in other materials except where he quotes earlier authorities. Referring to a series of tile murals by Neatby, in Blackpool, Barnard comments

\textsuperscript{7} For example: Barnard, Julian : \textit{Victorian Ceramic Tiles} (1972); Stratton, Michael : \textit{The Terracotta Revival} (1993).


\textsuperscript{10} Designers such as Leonard Wyburd and Lewis F. Day (1845-1910) have either fared worse or almost as badly as Neatby, however, Walter Crane and William Morris have been the subjects of numerous publications.

\textsuperscript{11} See Bibliography.
that ‘Neatby’s paintings have life and vigour’, and goes on to say that ‘...his work was well in advance of the public taste of the time, not necessarily in terms of style but because of its individuality and sophistication’. Such praise for Neatby’s work makes it even more mysterious that the author effectively restricted himself to only one area of the artist’s output. Louise Irvine continued this trend in her 1979 article for the Architectural Review which dealt almost exclusively with Neatby’s ceramic work for Doulton’s. Of the two recent undergraduate dissertations devoted to Neatby, the same emphasis was evident with one being concerned with the ceramic decoration of the Royal Arcade, Norwich, and the other actually being entitled: The Ceramicantics of W.J. Neatby.

Evidence of a more balanced approach to the artist’s abilities can be found in the two notable contemporary reviews of his work published in 1903. The first, by Aymer Valance in The Studio, contains many items of biographical information, details of recently completed projects and illustrations of furniture and metalwork designed by Neatby. The other, written by P.G. Konody for Kunst und Kunsthandwerk, commends Neatby’s ceramic designs, but gives equal exposure to his work in metalwork, furniture and stained


15 Squires, N. F.: Ibid. This work deals mainly with the creations of the architect George Skipper but provides interesting insights into Neatby’s designs for the Royal Arcade, Norwich.


17 Valance, A.: Ibid.

18 Konody, P.G.: Ibid.
glass design. In a similar vein, Muthesius, in *Das englische Haus* describes Neatby as being ‘...for the most part concerned with interior decoration and furniture design.’\(^{19}\) and later in the same work lists him with Voysey (1857-1941), Edgar Wood (1860-1935), Charles Spooner (1862-1938) and Ambrose Heal junior (1872-1959) as being an artist who has ‘produced furniture of a notably high standard’.\(^{20}\) This artistic versatility has been almost forgotten as more recent researchers have marginalised Neatby’s accomplishments and talents, portraying him solely as a designer of ceramic murals and architectural details. Unfortunately, as he was a designer of decoration, even in this field Neatby’s name has often been subsumed by the name of the architect of the building that he was contracted to decorate, with the result that he has become almost unknown in modern academic literature. Even where Neatby is credited with a project, his name usually appears without further information, leading to him being overlooked in historical terms in the list of leading designers of his day. That this was not always so and that he received significant recognition for his abilities in his own lifetime will be shown below in the main body of this thesis.

**LOSS AND RE-DISCOVERY**

That modern scholars have been predisposed to compartmentalise Neatby’s work in a narrow quasi-architectural area of study has been suggested above as a reason for his present lack of reputation, but this is not the only cause. Neatby’s present obscurity is not unique among Victorian and Edwardian artists and he has been the recipient of a form of


historical amnesia that has also caused many of his contemporaries to be forgotten. George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), painter of large genre scenes such as The General post Office at One Minute to Six (1860) and Billingsgate (1861), both of which were exhibited at the Royal Academy, enjoyed considerable success in the decades after the middle of the nineteenth century as the principal imitator of William Powell Frith (1819-1909), yet today he is almost forgotten. His later works comprising sentimental domestic scenes, historical subjects and society portraits did not find favour with latter-day critics and he has yet to be comprehensively re-evaluated by current art historians. Neatby did not live long enough to see his work become unfashionable and his obscurity is of a different kind to that of Hicks, but he has suffered by association with Victorian artists of many complexions who were castigated by early twentieth-century art critics such as Roger Fry (1866-1934) and Clive Bell (1881-1964). The published writings of these critics did much to trivialize the achievements of Victorian art and design, undermining the confidence of the art buyer both intellectually and commercially. Questions on the definition of art posed by Fry and assertions by Bell such as that concerning William Powell Frith’s painting Paddington Station which he said ‘is not a work of art; it is an interesting and amusing document’ effectively purged the artistic elite in England of any attachment to Victorian sentimentality in art, for several decades.

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22 Fry, R.E.: Vision and Design (1920).


Since the 1960s, after several generations of neglect, many of these artists have been 'artistically rehabilitated', firstly by a scholarly re-appraisal of the work of certain painters, but latterly, in the 1980s and 1990s by the commercial pressures of the international art market. It is therefore perfectly explicable that interest in Neatby re-emerged in the 1970s at a time when the careers of many Victorian artists and designers were beginning to come under academic scrutiny.\(^\text{25}\) However, such are the vagaries of academic and commercial fashion that only some of the important figures in Victorian art have re-emerged as household names among connoisseurs today. The intellectual opinions engendered by Fry still remain of importance among many art historians and prestigious exhibitions of Victorian works can still excite extreme criticism in the most elevated artistic circles. Even the 1996 Royal Academy exhibition dedicated to the works of Lord Frederick Leighton (1830-1896) provoked such academic censure.\(^\text{26}\) The commercial artworld has tended to display a more generous view towards Leighton's creations. At auction his pictures sold for steadily increasing prices during the 1970s, reaching a high of £24,000 in 1979 at a Christie's sale in London for a painting entitled: *Amarilla*. This trend continued in the 1980s, with Leighton's *Dante in Exile* selling at Sotheby's in London for £1,000,000 in 1990.\(^\text{27}\) Likewise, Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema (1836-1912) may have been among the most successful artists of his day and was perhaps the highest paid painter of the Victorian age, but it was not until the 1970s that his work started to attract the serious attention of

\(^{25}\) As exemplified in the writings of Julian Barnard and Louise Irvine, see Bibliography.


\(^{27}\) *Artquest*, sales statistics for works by Lord Leighton.
scholars. Two articles written by Mario Amaya in the 1960s\(^2\) had looked into certain aspects of Alma-Tadema's career but again, it was not until 1973 with the sale of a collection of paintings by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema owned by the American film producer Allen Funt that both commercial and academic interest was aroused. At the sale, held at Sotheby's, London, *The Roses of Heliogabalus* sold for £28,000 and *The Finding of Moses* for £30,000. Subsequently, this latter picture sold for £1,562,500.\(^2\) Whether the recent interest in Alma-Tadema and his some of his contemporaries has been driven by commercial or academic forces is open to debate, but the result is that he is now firmly re-installed in the pages of art history. With academic worthies such as Leighton provoking the kinds of intellectual response mentioned above and with the prices being paid for works by a number of better known Victorian artists, it is perhaps understandable that the products of an artist such as W.J. Neatby are rarely even considered. With the sale of an artwork by Neatby for a six-figure sum may come universal recognition.

In terms of critical recognition, designers suffered as badly as artists, ridiculed or at best forgotten by twentieth century critics immured in Bauhaus ideology and Modernist art and design theories. Prominent turn-of-the-century figures such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Christopher Dresser (1824-1904), seen by some authorities as precursors of Modernism, were almost forgotten by later practitioners in the design milieu, having to wait until 1936 to be 'rediscovered' by Pevsner in his *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius*.


In some ways the 20th-century preoccupation with product design has meant that designers have perhaps retained a credibility that Victorian canvas painters forfeited. In the judgement of the later avant-garde, 19th-century painters appeared dated and sentimental. However, with its absence of narrative content the subject of design, particularly in areas such as furniture and metalwork production, has remained a legitimate field of study, especially where functionality can be identified as a prime influence in a particular object design. Today, Christopher Dresser, William Morris and a host of lesser names are enjoying a revival of fortune with books about Morris being almost too numerous to list. Unfortunately, such intellectual largesse has yet to encompass Neatby's output. Most of his well-known works have been judged to be two-dimensional exercises in graphic art, deeply rooted in an archaic fin-de-siècle style, and as such lack the academic credibility of many more functional forms of design and architecture. Until the 1960s such art was considered to be unnecessary decoration in a world that found decoration an irrelevance. However, with changes of fashion the 'new art' styles of the turn-of-the-century are finding favour with both the academic author and the collector, with even Neatby's works receiving pre-sale estimates in the thousands of pounds on their rare appearances in the auction rooms.30

METHODOLOGY

The method of research employed in the course of this study has been largely based on empirical observation and data retrieval. This methodology appears most suitable for a study of this type, based on biographical, historical, and art-historical evidence, particularly

30 Sotheby's, London, Sale on 1st April 1999, Lot 366, pre-sale estimate for a Neatby writing cabinet: £4,500-5,500
that referring to architectural decoration. It has allowed for the development of a chronological progression in the research itself and has facilitated an understanding of the evolution of Neatby's own art and design philosophy. From this data it has been possible to generate a theoretical model of Neatby as a creative entity within the contemporary artistic establishment of the turn of the century and to compare this against traditionally held models of other artists and designers of the day. This comparative study has thrown up a number of questions concerning widely held definitions relating to traditionally accepted artistic groupings and their composition. By analysing the various features that characterise Neatby's work, it has been possible to deconstruct various preconceptions relating to his contemporaries. The variety of Neatby's work illustrates the difficulty of defining his art within narrow boundaries and of confining him to any particular area within the artistic community. Comparative analysis has indicated that Neatby was not unique in his eclectic approach to source material and the execution of his artwork. The consistent and widespread interaction of ideas and techniques between artists puts into question the value of artistic 'labels' and highlights contradictions between practice and philosophy. For example, it might be considered that many of William Morris's designs had little to do with his arts-and-crafts philosophy and relied more on the inspiration of the visual manifestations of the Aesthetic Movement. This same reliance on visual aesthetics can be perceived in the work of several of the turn-of-the-century architect designers, such as Voysey, Lethaby (1857-1931) and Ashbee (1863-1942), who can be seen as direct inheritors of Morris's philosophy and who were contemporaries of Neatby.

In analysing some of Neatby's paintings and sculptural works it has been necessary to implement a more psychological approach to methodology. Neatby's art features
innumerable depictions of the human female form in a variety of guises. His inspiration for many of these creations originates in the poetry of literary men such as Browning (1812-1889), Burns (1759-1796), Keats (1795-1821), and Shelley (1792-1822), and his visual interpretations of their works places Neatby within the late Victorian Romantic/Symbolist movement of painters. Likewise, the incidence of representations of mermaids in several of his decorative schemes in ceramics and in at least one painting associates Neatby with a number of fin-de-siècle painters including Burne-Jones (1833-1898), Klimt (1862-1918), Schwabe (1866-1926), and Draper (1864-1920) whose work is perhaps best analysed in relation to sociological and psychological questions of gender and misogyny, with reference to the formalisation of gender roles and how this is reflected in the work of individual artists. Neatby's work exhibits many of the characteristics of the late-Victorian patriarchal conception of woman and the writings of a number of commentators, including Pollock, Dijkstra, and Reynolds and Humble, have been consulted in the analysis of his representations of the female form.

In analysing Neatby's work, specific attention has been paid to the chronological period in which he lived and the influences that may have affected his various styles. His accomplishments have been viewed against a background of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau styles, the Aesthetic Movement and its major contributory component

31 Mermaids and other female sea creatures were used by a number of artists, for example: Carlos Schwabe, Spleen and Ideal, 1896; Edward Burne-Jones, The Depths of the Sea, 1887; G. Klimt, Moving Waters, 1898; Herbert Draper, Ulysses and the Sirens, 1909.

Japonisme. Literature based research into the above areas has been extensive and has encompassed both contemporary Victorian and Edwardian material and more recent publications. The extent of this section of the investigation can be observed in the contents of the Bibliography.

RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

In conducting the data retrieval component of the research programme a number of different resource strategies have been employed. These are listed briefly below:

(a) survey of modern literature including mention of Neatby. This included both book and periodical information;

(b) survey of contemporary literature relating to Neatby. This was largely concerned with contemporary periodicals such as The British Architect and The Studio, although references to Neatby do occur in a small number of monographs such as Das englische Haus (1904-1905), by Hermann Muthesius and in the Souvenir of the Fine Art Section - Franco-British Exhibition 1908 (1908), compiled by Sir Isidore Spielmann;

(c) survey of auction catalogues relating to sales of Neatby's work in recent years;

(d) survey of modern exhibition catalogues containing work by Neatby;

(e) survey of contemporary exhibition catalogues including works by Neatby;

(f) visits to extant Neatby decorated buildings for field observation and recording;

(g) tracing of non-extant Neatby schemes of architectural decoration through photographic collections;

(h) tracing and contacting living Neatby family relatives to uncover unpublished items of work by Neatby;
(i) genealogical research to establish biographical details;
(j) tracing of book illustrations by Neatby through libraries and antiquarian booksellers;
(k) recording of copies of Neatby drawings in trade catalogues, undertaken for the Burmantofts Works in Leeds and now housed in the Abbey House Museum, Leeds; and
(l) investigation of the relationship between Neatby and the architects who employed him through a study of architectural plans in local County Records Offices.

This work has involved research in several major London and provincial libraries and museums and fieldwork visits to a number of locations. It has encompassed contacts with living Neatby relatives in both Britain and Canada and has uncovered a number of previously unrecorded paintings and designs by W.J. Neatby.

FURTHER INFORMATION

An expansion of some areas of the brief research outline given above follows:

Architectural Survey

Early research on this project consisted of visiting and producing a photographic survey of Neatby's extant schemes of architectural decoration. Neatby's work in this area is on both internal and external building surfaces and is connected to his employment with the Burmantofts architectural ceramics works in Leeds in the 1880s and his later work for Doulton and Co. in the 1890s, with some projects dating to just after the turn of the century when he was an external consultant to Doulton and Co. Initially the buildings
under consideration were those dating to his time with Doulton's, as they appeared to be the best recorded and accessible. In respect of this latter point, some difficulty was encountered in gaining detailed information on these buildings as all the company records for the Architectural Ceramics Department of Doulton and Co. were apparently destroyed when the building in which they were housed was vacated in 1956. Little information relating to Doulton's architectural ceramics exists at the company's present location in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. In an effort to approach this information problem from a different angle, some original architect's plans have been consulted in local record offices. However, this has proved to be a fruitless task, for such plans have only shown the very basic architectural outlines of the buildings in question, devoid of decorative elements.

Alongside the practical fieldwork aspects of this architectural study, a comprehensive survey of relevant contemporary and modern architectural literature has been undertaken, in an effort to gain a more detailed knowledge of the buildings under consideration. This survey has provided considerable information relating to Neatby's extant schemes of architectural decoration and has also revealed material connected with now destroyed works and with works not included in more recent studies of Neatby's works. Work on the photographic collections of the National Monuments Record in London and Swindon has also revealed lost examples of Neatby's architectural work. Consequently, it has been possible to evaluate Neatby's architectural work from evidence based on a well-recorded chronological sequence.

33 The majority of the buildings under consideration are recorded in Atterbury, P. and Irvine, L., The Doulton Story (1979).
In addition to an analysis of Neatby's decorative schemes from an art historical standpoint, this architectural survey has also allowed certain insights into more technical matters relating to architectural ceramics, particularly his use of new surface finishes for ceramics, such as Doulton's 'Parian ware', used in the decoration of the Royal Arcade in Norwich in 1899. Neatby seems to have been personally involved in the development of several new ceramic products for architectural use.

Neatby's architectural work undertaken in the 1880s for Burmantofts of Leeds has also been studied. The Abbey House Museum, Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds, has a collection of documents relating to the architectural ceramics department at the Burmantofts Works, among them a series of trade catalogues, some of which contain illustrations signed by Neatby. Although it is impossible to ascertain whether Neatby designed all the decorative schemes drawn by him in these catalogues, in view of his later position as head designer for Doulton's Architectural Ceramics Department, it seems likely that most of the drawings represent his own designs. Few of the 'Neatby' schemes shown in the Burmantofts trade catalogues are still in existence but the drawings provide further evidence of his development as a ceramic designer.

Non-architectural Survey

Although Neatby's architectural schemes are his best known works, they are not representative of the wider range of his talents and output. As mentioned above, previous

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35 Most of these illustrations are also dated and provide a chronological record of Neatby's time at Burmantofts.
studies have tended to concentrate on the architectural work to the detriment of Neatby's other accomplishments. In fact, the last ten years of Neatby's life were very busy. He became an independent designer, working with a partner named E. Hollyer Evans (fl. 1890-1910), creating a number of designs for furniture and metalwork and graphics. This partnership of Neatby and Evans was certainly in existence in 1901, when the firm produced a catalogue called *The 1901 Book*, that illustrated some of their designs. That it lasted until at least 1906 or 1907 is suggested by the appearance in *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art*, for 1907, of a 'Fire-place designed by E. Hollyer Evans, Architect. Panel painted by W.J. Neatby, A.R.M.S.' By 1908 the partnership may have ended as in that year Neatby is recorded as being the Art Director for John Line and Sons Ltd., wallpaper manufacturers. He may have held this position until his death from heart failure, early in 1910.

A literature survey of contemporary periodicals and monographs of the period has produced a wealth of information relating to Neatby's designs for the fine and decorative arts. His work was exhibited at both the seventh and the eighth exhibitions of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1903 and 1906 respectively and in 1905 he held a large exhibition of his paintings in London. He also exhibited paintings at the Royal Academy and designed a variety of 'art goods' ranging from clock cases to furniture. In particular, *The Studio*, and *The British Architect*, publicised his designs in the early years of this century, with Neatby writing an article on 'Mural Keramics' in *The Art Workers' Quarterly*,

36 Colour plate opposite page 106.

in 1903\textsuperscript{38}.

As well as discovering numerous Neatby designs in periodicals, this research has also concerned itself with recording unpublished examples of wallpapers, designed by Neatby, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum and inspecting unpublished items of furniture and paintings executed by him. Investigations have also revealed that Neatby enjoyed a career in book illustrating in the years around 1907-1909. Research in the British Library and through independent booksellers has brought to light several books of poetry with illustrations by Neatby. It has also been possible to trace two previously unpublished yet extant schemes of mural decoration undertaken by Neatby in 1904-1909. One of these, in Norwich, is no longer accessible, being preserved behind a false wall, but it has been possible to acquire record photographs of the work; the other, at Sennowe Park, Norfolk, has been visited and recorded.

**Genealogical Research and Interviews**

One of the earliest concerns of this research project was the inauguration of a comprehensive programme of genealogical research relating to W.J. Neatby and his immediate family. This has produced interesting general and specific material relating to class and family background, to contribute data to a detailed biographical account of Neatby's life. The documentation arising from this work has also contributed to a knowledge of the location of his domiciles, providing addresses of houses occupied throughout his lifetime.

\textsuperscript{38} Volume ii, No. 6, April (1903), pp. 48-52.
A large number of interviews has been conducted with people connected with extant examples of Neatby's work. However, the most interesting group of people interviewed in the course of this research has been living Neatby family relatives. These relatives were accessed through the British Telecom phone directories for the British Isles. The name 'Neatby' is a rare surname and only just over twenty instances of it are recorded in the directories. Each name was contacted by personal letter which enquired if the recipient had any knowledge of W.J. Neatby. Almost all of the letters provoked a response but the majority replied in the negative. Although, all those who replied suggested that they were related, a split in the family several generations ago had divided the family into two unequal parts and the larger grouping was that which was only distantly connected to W.J. Neatby. In fact, only three of those that replied were closely enough related to be able to provide useful information. Through these latter contacts little personal information emerged to add to knowledge gained from other sources, but research into collections of family memorabilia resulted in the discovery of a number of unpublished paintings and photographs of W.J. Neatby.

In the text, where a photograph is credited to an individual, that person is usually a member of the Neatby family, although those from the female line do not, of course, share the Neatby name. Indeed, following the initial mailshot several other family members descending from the female side of the family contacted the writer. This latter group included family members living in Canada who were descended from Douglas Neatby, William's oldest son, who was the only one of his children to produce direct heirs. This research has now uncovered one picture of Neatby in Britain, while others were in the
collection of Canadian relatives. Additionally, this approach has unearthed a series of Neatby's notebooks, containing sketches for a variety of projects, including representations of animals used in the Harrods Meat Hall scheme. These notebooks appear to cover the period c1901-1909.

**Data Base**

The research outlined above has allowed for the formation of a large data base of written and visual material relating to the project. The notebooks mentioned above combine both written and drawn material. Most other written material is taken from periodical and monograph publications and from trade catalogues. During the course of this research a collection of over two thousand photographic images has been built up, relating to all aspects of Neatby's work, from drawings in trade catalogues to completed architectural projects, both interior and exterior, and fine and decorative arts productions. The research has involved every area of Neatby's work, showing him capable of using a wide variety of materials and techniques in his art and design. The data base covers all the areas specified below:

(a) **Biography:**

- personal and professional career;
- birth and family influences;
- early professional influences and architectural training;
- chronology of work at Burmantofts, Leeds;
- chronology of work at Doulton's, Lambeth;
- chronology of his life post-1900;

and
death and burial.

(b) Architectural Schemes in Terracotta:

background to terracotta decoration in Britain;

sculptural qualities of terracotta as used by Neatby;

colour qualities of terracotta - aesthetics in architecture;

sources of Neatby's styles in terracotta: influences of other architects and designers and contemporary and historical architectural sources;

and

analysis of all Neatby architectural schemes of decoration, both internal and external, in terracotta.

(c) Architectural Schemes in Tile:

background to tile decoration;

linear patterning and representational qualities of tile design;

colour qualities of tile;

sources of Neatby's styles in tile: influences of other architects and designers and contemporary and historical architectural styles;

and

analysis of Neatby's architectural schemes in tile.

(d) Painting and Graphic work:

paintings: female portraits, fantasy works and landscapes;

painted mural schemes;

book illustrations;

greetings cards designs;

trade catalogue designs and illustrations;
and

wallpaper designs.

(e) Decorative Arts designs:

decorative plasterwork;

furniture;

metalwork, including door and furniture fittings;

and

stained glass.

The work undertaken in the course of this study has uncovered considerable material relating to the life and work of W.J. Neatby. Much of this material is either previously unpublished or has been rescued from critical obscurity. It represents a substantial increase in the information available on this designer and for the first time allows for a respectable corpus of his work to be presented for analysis. Any comprehensive analysis of his artistic development and beliefs would not have been credible based on the information previously available for study. Indeed, earlier analyses of Neatby’s output have been superficial and based primarily on his work in a single medium, namely ceramic. Most of the findings of this research have been based on meticulous data retrieval in libraries and in the field and the discoveries made are themselves of an original character. However, using this data base, Neatby’s work is now available for critical investigation and evaluation, and this also offers an original contribution to knowledge.

Neatby represents a model or type of artist that has rarely been studied in depth. He was a successful commercial artist and designer, producing work, for the most part, for employers
rather than patrons, with his artistic expression restricted by all that such a working environment implies. Yet he was an artist and his accomplishments illustrate the split personality of one paid to fulfil the narrow confines of architects and clients contracts while wishing to follow his own artistic aspirations. His success was in designing not for mass production, but for mass acceptance. He was not the only designer in this position, but this thesis will demonstrate that artistically he was perhaps the most successful, which alone justifies his reinstatement as a figure of significance.

**THESIS ORGANIZATION**

Beginning with an outline biography of Neatby’s life, the core structure of this thesis is a chronological model based on his working experience. This can be roughly divided into three separate decades beginning in the 1880s when he worked for Burmantofts, Leeds and ending in the decade up to 1910 when he worked mostly as an independent designer. These years are the subject of chapters six, seven and eight, which describe his artistic output and analyse the significance of his work while at Burmantofts, Doulton and after. However, to avoid this thesis becoming a mere corpus of Neatby’s work, these chapters are preceded by four others which look at his art and design concepts analysed in relation to the leading artistic movements of the late-19th century; architectural ceramics as a feature of fin-de-siècle modernity in Britain and abroad; the role of the artist designer in society, and finally, his patrons and how successfully he fulfilled his commissions. The thesis concludes with an evaluation of Neatby’s contribution to architecture and the decorative arts.
CHAPTER ONE

A BIOGRAPHY

Early life and training.

William James Neatby was born on the 24th May 1860 at 6 Wellington Street, Barnsley, Yorkshire, the eldest son of Samuel Mossforth Neatby (1837-1910) and Mary Jackson Neatby, née Tomlin (1839-1911).¹ The couple had married in May 1859 and were in their early twenties at the time of the birth of their first child. The family was relatively prosperous and active in the non-conformist religious life of the town. At the time of William’s birth his father, Samuel Neatby, was a timber merchant’s clerk, employed in the family firm by his father, also called William (1807-1880), who owned the timber yard where he and his brother Joseph worked, and a stake in the family business, Neatby and Sons, was assured when Samuel had completed his training.

The Neatby family was well known in the local community. William Neatby senior, in addition to his successful career as a timber merchant, was a local preacher, having connections with the Wesleyan Methodists and from 1849 with the Wesleyan Reform movement. He eventually left the latter body over doctrinal differences but remained a devout Christian up to the time of his death, being commended for his faith and honesty in business matters in his obituary in the local press.² This same source mentions that another son of William senior became a doctor in London. It would seem therefore, from the information in his grandfather’s obituary, that William James Neatby was born into a

¹ See Appendix A, No. 1, for W.J. Neatby’s birth certificate.
² ‘Death of Mr William Neatby’, Barnsley Chronicle, 15th May 1880.
respected middle class family that could provide certain advantages commensurate to its position in local society.

Little is known about Neatby’s childhood. The 1861 Census, taken when he was 10 months old, places the Neatby family still at 6 Wellington Street, but by 1871 census records show that they had moved along the street to number 12. Both these addresses were situated close to the family timber yard, also in Wellington Street. Although William was the eldest son, he somehow managed to avoid being taken into the timber business, this responsibility being taken on by his younger brother Walter, who at the age of 17 was already working as a timber merchants clerk, and in the 1881 Census he is recorded as an ‘Architect’s Pupil’. Other than this basic data included in official documents, the best source of information on his early life is to be found in the article written by Aymer Valance in 1903.3 This paper has always been the prime source of biographical material on Neatby. Valance relates that ‘No sooner had he left school than Mr Neatby, at that time only a boy of fifteen years, was articled to an architect in a northern provincial town. There he remained, as pupil and afterwards as clerk of the works, altogether six years’. From this it may be judged that the young man was following the then traditional course of study leading to a career in architecture. Unfortunately the name of the firm for whom he worked is not identified nor is its location described, as for instance ‘in his home town’, so it is unlikely to have been in Barnsley, where he was living in the family home in 1881. In view of his later connections with Leeds (see below), which was only a short distance away by train, it is possible that he served his apprenticeship there. In 1894 William’s younger brother, Herbert Jackson Neatby, who was studying at the Leeds Medical School, was recorded as being

‘accustomed to travel to and from Barnsley each day’, and William could have easily made the same journey. Sheffield is another possible location, being nearer to Barnsley than is Leeds. Further support for this suggestion can be argued by the fact that in 1881 Neatby was to marry a young woman who lived in a suburb of Sheffield.

Although suggesting that Neatby’s early architectural training was somehow found to be monotonous, Valance eschews any possible lack of enthusiasm on the young man’s part as he describes the apprentice Neatby’s interest in ‘monumental art’ and how he pursued this study in nearby Yorkshire churches. When discussing later stained glass designs by Neatby, Valance mentions churches at Woolley, Elland and Thornhill, as well as York Minster, buildings rich in mediaeval glass, as being early sources of inspiration for the young man. Valance’s description suggests that Neatby had talents rather superior to those necessitated by a provincial architect’s workload and conveys the impression that the young man toiled diligently in the office while conducting a programme of self-education and improvement in his spare time. In this he followed notable 19th-century predecessors, such as A.W.N. Pugin (1812-52) or George Edmund Street (1824-81), who might be said to have developed their careers beyond initial expectations, or William Morris (1834-96) whose intended life in the Church was so successfully changed into the sphere of design and interior decoration by just such self-education.

On the 28th May 1881, at the Register Office in the district of Ecclesall Bierlow in the

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4 “Tragic Death of a Barnsley Gentleman. Mysterious Affair. Accident, Suicide or Foul Play?”, Barnsley Chronicle, 21st April, 1894. A verdict of suicide was returned at the inquest deliberating on the death of H.J. Neatby in Leeds.
Plate 1.1. Photograph of W.J. Neatby and his wife Emily probably taken at the time of their wedding in 1881.

Plate 1.2. Emily Neatby c.1881

Plate 1.3. W.J. Neatby c. 1881
County of York, Neatby was married to Emily Arnold, Spinster. Although Heeley, where the Arnold family lived is situated on the south-western outskirts of the city of Sheffield, Emily had been born in Prospect Street in Barnsley and William Neatby had probably known her for many years. The wedding took place only four days after William's twenty-first birthday; his bride, who had been born in July 1852, was nearly eight years older. Photographs of the couple (Plates 1.1 to 1.3) taken at or about the time of their wedding show William, described on their wedding certificate as an 'Architects assistant', as a rather studious looking young man and Emily as a young looking twenty-eight year old.

The disparity in the ages of the newlyweds is perhaps worth noting in an age when men were in a minority and eligible young brides were hardly scarce. An explanation is that the marriage may have been a family arranged affair. William's grandfather, William senior, had managed an iron foundry in Rotherham and may have known Emily's father William who was himself an iron founder. Equally, William Arnold's works may well have patronised the Neatby and Sons timber yard. A family connection is more than possible and the union may well have promised financial gain for one or both of the families, although perhaps the pair met by chance, socially or through business in Sheffield if Neatby was working for an architect's office in the city. Another explanation, that Neatby had long admired the older woman and that he had to wait until attaining his majority to marry her against his or her

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5 See Appendix A, No. 2, for the certificate of marriage.

6 See Appendix A, No. 3, for Emily Arnold's birth certificate.

7 Photographs courtesy of Mr. R.T. Neatby.

parents' wishes is given credence by a Neatby family folklore that relates that Neatby 'was so jealous of possible admirers that he kept her [his wife Emily] shut up at home with the blinds permanently drawn'.

Certainly, at about this time, Neatby left his hometown of Barnsley and moved with his new wife to Whitby and 'other places in Yorkshire' where 'Two years longer, after leaving the office at which he was originally articled ..[he].. followed his architectural profession'. During this period he is said to have designed engine beds and the ironwork for a mill-roof. These activities were perhaps not financially remunerative enough for the young couple, nor do they seem to have provided the stimulus that Neatby required and at the age of twenty-three he decided on a change of career, moving to the Burmantofts Potteries at Leeds where he took a position as a ceramic tile designer.

Burmantofts.

Information on the whereabouts of Neatby and his family at this period comes from two major sources: register office records and dated drawings executed at the Burmantofts Potteries. On the 16th April 1884, back once again in Barnsley, his wife Emily gave birth to a son, William Douglas, at their home in Stocks Lane. On the Birth Certificate Neatby describes himself as an 'Architect and Surveyor' and this may indicate that he had not yet started work at Burmantofts or that he viewed his position there as a temporary one. The first recorded date of his presence at the ceramics works occurs on a printed drawing in a

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11 See Appendix A, No. 4, for William Douglas Neatby's birth certificate.
Plate 1.4. Burmantofts Faience pilaster panels drawn by Neatby, dated 17th July 1884
catalogue of designs issued in 1886. The date is 17th July 1884 and occurs as part of an inscription: ‘W.J.N. delt. 17.VII.84’ on Plate 156, which is entitled: *A few Pilaster Panels in Burmantofts Faience by Wilcock and Co. Burmantofts* (sic). Valance states quite clearly that Neatby was twenty-three years old when he started work at Burmantofts. If he is correct, using the evidence of the birth certificate for Neatby’s child William Douglas, which still suggests that Neatby was entertaining ideas of an architectural career, it can be argued that he commenced work at Burmantofts at a date between the 16th April and the 24th May 1884, his twenty-fourth birthday.

The drawing mentioned above (Plate 1.4) is one of over sixty sheets of drawings, signed by Neatby, that exist as prints (unfortunately no original drawings survive) in a variety of Burmantofts catalogues. In the 1886 catalogue several designs executed in 1884 are signed and dated with the day, month and year, although in drawings after this, only the year date is given. The series of designs includes work of 1884, 1885, 1886, 1889, and 1890. Many of these illustrations show figural tiles and larger decorative pieces of architectural ceramics.

Although Neatby’s name occurs as the artist on a few handpainted specimens of Burmantofts Pottery, presumably Valance’s account is accurate in describing Neatby as a tile designer, but he was also the leading artist in catalogue design for the company in the period 1884-1890. How he thought of himself can be seen on the birth certificate of his

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13 These catalogues are held at the Abbey House Museum, Kirkstall, Leeds and are: *Catalogue of Designs* (Leeds: Burmantofts, 1886); *The Burmantofts Portfolio of Faience* (London: Batsford, 1889); *Burmantofts Firesides* (Leeds: Burmantofts, c.1890); *Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience* (Leeds: Burmantofts, 1890).
second child, a girl, Gwendoline Mossforth,\textsuperscript{14} born on 16th May 1885 at the Neatby home at 16 Lovell Grove in Leeds, on which he is described as ‘Draughtsman’.\textsuperscript{15} This same professional description is given under Neatby’s entry in the \textit{Kelly Leeds Directory} for 1886 and 1888, which give his address as 23 Leopold Terrace, Leeds. Clearly, any ideas that he had entertained about being an architect had been dispensed with by 1885. This may well have been by choice; Valance alludes to Neatby’s interest in ornament and decoration even in his early career and gives one the impression that Neatby found his work in architecture in the years up to 1884 rather mundane. As the information in the paper undoubtedly resulted from an interview or other personal contact with Neatby, most of the views represented in the article, as opposed to the critical appraisal of his work, must be Neatby’s. The years that Neatby spent at Burmantofts were professionally successful for him, but in his personal life there were traumatic happenings as well as happy events. The family story recalled above concerning Emily Neatby’s household incarceration behind closed curtains may have had little to do with jealousy on Neatby’s part but rather more to do with her fragile state of health. On 10th August 1885 she died, the cause of death was recorded as ‘Phthisis worse 5 months’,\textsuperscript{16} a consumptive condition often connected with pulmonary tuberculosis. Apparently, she was already suffering from ill health when her second child was born and this event may well have prevented her recovery or accelerated her demise. Faced with the problem of rearing two small children Neatby took them back to Barnsley

\textsuperscript{14} ‘Mossforth’ was a family name acquired from W.J. Neatby’s grandmother Ann Mossforth. It was given to his father Samuel and two two uncles who died in infancy and was in turn given to Neatby’s third child Edward Mossforth.

\textsuperscript{15} See Appendix A, No. 5, for Gwendoline Neatby’s birth certificate.

\textsuperscript{16} See Appendix A, No. 6, for Emily Neatby’s death certificate.
Plate 1.5. Gwendoline Neatby in the arms of a female relative, 1886.

Plate 1.6. Douglas Neatby in the arms of his grandfather, Samuel Neatby, c.1886.

Plate 1.7. Photograph of Isabella Neatby (née Dempster), probably taken shortly before her marriage.
to be looked after by his family (Plates 1.5 and 1.6). The following year, on June 21st 1886, Gwendoline aged one died.\(^\text{17}\)

It is not known whether Neatby moved back to Barnsley himself at this time but it is unlikely, although he was present at the death of his daughter. His address in Leeds, given above, in the 1886 directory, is probably based on information collected either very early in 1886 or in the latter months of 1885. Most probably he left the house in which he and Emily had lived and moved into Leopold Terrace very soon after her death. Certainly, it was this address that he listed on Gwendoline’s death certificate of June 1886 and on his marriage certificate of the 17th October 1887. Neatby’s second marriage was to Jane Isabella Dempster, aged twenty, who gave as her residence 12 Farndon Road, Saint Giles, Oxford.\(^\text{18}\) How the couple met is not known. Isabella or Isobel, as she styled herself, was one of four sisters whose father had been a butler. Plate 1.7 shows Isobel as a young woman in a photograph taken in Oxford, but photographs of her sisters exist and some of these were taken in London,\(^\text{19}\) so it is possible that Neatby met Isobel when on a visit to the Capital, when she, perhaps, was staying with one of her sisters. The marriage took place at the Register Office in Leeds rather than in the bride’s home parish and on the certificate Neatby entered his profession as that of ‘Artist’, the first time that he used the term on an official document. The marriage resulted in the birth of another son, Edward Mossforth, for Neatby on 22nd September 1888, by which time the family was living at 27 St. John’s

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\(^{17}\) See Appendix A, No. 7, for Gwendoline Neatby’s death certificate.

\(^{18}\) See Appendix A, No. 8, for the certificate of marriage.

\(^{19}\) Photograph and information from Dr. M. Young.
Avenue, Leeds. On the birth certificate Neatby was now an ‘Artist (Painter)’.  

The six years that Neatby spent at the Burmantofts Potteries were professionally very productive and allowed him to exercise the full range of his talents in ceramic painting, draughtsmanship and design. Much of his work was in the field of architectural ornament and many of the designs for ceramic decoration were reproduced by him as line drawings in the various Burmantofts catalogues issued during his time in Leeds. Among these drawings are numerous designs for glazed tiles, fireplaces and terracotta ornament, the latter often being executed in a highly detailed and rather delicate Renaissance style. It is impossible to know how many of these designs are Neatby’s own and how many are transcriptions of architects’ designs. However, most would appear to be Neatby’s own work. An obituary written by the architect Ernest Runtz revealed how the relationship between Neatby and his architect clients worked when he commented: ‘As an architect one had only to indicate the general idea of a decorative feature, whether in modelling or in mural decorative work, and Neatby caught the spirit of the undertaking.....’ From this, it would seem that the architect pointed out the area to be decorated on his building plans, particularly on the elevations, suggested the general decorative style and then let Neatby formulate a detailed scheme for the specified surface. Consequently, Neatby was closely associated with a number of architectural projects at this time designing glazed faience tile and terracotta pilasters, ceilings, doorways and wall panels for both the interiors and exteriors of a range of buildings including private houses, banks, restaurants, hospitals and

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20 See Appendix A, No. 9, for Edward Neatby’s birth certificate.

21 See Note 13.

hotels. Many of these projects are detailed in Chapter Six below, but one prestigious scheme noted here was for a range of fifty-seven faience doorcases produced for the Museum of Science and Art in Dublin. This was constructed in 1889 and was designed by Sir T.N. Deane and Son. *The Burmantofts Portfolio of Faience* illustrates five different patterns for doorcasings by Neatby for an order that must have been prestigious and commercially important for the company. By the end of the decade Neatby had become the main designer for Burmantofts yet it was now that he chose to leave the firm.

The working environment at Burmantofts was in a period of change. In June 1889 the firm had become part of a much larger industrial conglomerate, the Leeds Fireclay Company Limited, and in April 1890, James Holroyd, who had taken over as Manager at Burmantofts in 1879, died. Holroyd had been responsible for the inauguration of art pottery making at the factory and through a series of personal relationships, such as that with the architect Alfred Waterhouse, had successfully expanded the architectural ceramics side of the business. Holroyd was both an enthusiast and an innovator and his death seems to have led to a period of stagnation at the Burmantofts Works. For a few years trade periodicals seem to have had little interest in the business and there were few new art pottery forms, other than novelties, designed in the years immediately after 1890. Possibly Neatby did not

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24 Church, D., 'Burmantofts Art Pottery', in *Burmantofts Pottery* (Bradford: 1983), p. 24. There are over two thousand art pottery forms in the Burmantofts repertoire yet an analysis of shape numbers in conjunction with the 'England' mark, introduced in 1891, suggests that more than three quarters of the shapes were introduced before 1891, or in view of the comments above, more probably before Holroyd's death in 1890 (author).
adjust to the new management. His last dated graphic work for the company is from 1890 and he left in same that year, probably shortly before Holroyd's death.

Doulton of Lambeth.

Neatby's move was to Doulton and Co. of Lambeth, London. In his paper, Valance says that Neatby took charge of Doulton's 'architectural department for the design and production of mural ceramics', and it may have been his work on the Dublin Museum doorcases that marked him out as a talented artist and designer in the field of architectural ceramics and gained him the post. His daughter Magdalen was born in Wimbledon on 16th October 1891, thereby testifying to his presence in the London area, presumably already as a worker at Doulton's, at that date. Certainly, this is suggested by the listing of Neatby's occupation as 'Artist (Keramic)' on Magdalen's birth certificate. In fact, the 1891 Census places the Neatby family in Latimer Road, Wimbledon, sometime before 15th of April when census return information was finalised. On the Census record Neatby is described as a 'Keramic Artist'; his wife and two sons are listed and the entry shows that he could afford the services of a live-in servant, one Florence Mirfin, age 13. Electoral registers and local postal directories provide information on three other addresses in Wimbledon occupied by the family up to 1904. Plate 1.8 shows Isobel Neatby and the children Douglas, Edward

25 In: Burmantofts Firesides (Leeds : Burmantofts, c.1890); Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience (Leeds : Burmantofts, 1890).

26 See Chapter Six for a fuller account of these events.


28 See Appendix A, No. 10, for Magdalen Ruth Dempster Neatby's birth certificate.

29 Kelly, Wimbledon Directory, 1892; Trim's Wimbledon and Merton Directory, 1899; 1900; 1901; 1902; 1903; 1904; Register of Electors, Wimbledon Division, 1893; 1894; 1895; 1896; 1897; 1898.
According to Valance, Neatby spent eleven years at Doulton and Co. and while there he was able not only to develop his artistic potential but also to experiment with a number of new ceramic materials. During these years Neatby was involved in a number of major architectural projects. Some of these are known of through notices in contemporary trade publications, from biographical summaries such as those by Valance and Konody, and some have been identified from Neatby’s signature found on extant tile or terracotta work. Unfortunately, Doulton’s records relating to their architectural ceramics department were destroyed in the 1950s and this makes identifying further work by Neatby very difficult. It is possible that numerous other extant buildings, and some of those Doulton buildings that have been demolished in the past, contain decorative ceramic elements designed by Neatby.

Other than the chronology offered by Valance, the first record of Neatby working at Doulton’s is in 1893 when he produced several ornamental architectural details in terracotta for a building designed by Ernest Runtz, at 54-55 Cornhill, London. This is the first (identified) of a number of private sector commissions handled by Neatby on behalf of Doulton and Co., but he also worked on a variety of public projects in the 1890s. The

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30 Photograph courtesy of Mr. R.T. Neatby.


32 Verbal information from Louise Irvine, Doulton historian.

33 Atterbury, P. and Irvine, L.: The Doulton Story, (Stoke on Trent: Royal Doulton, 1979), p. 83.
earliest of these to be identified is the Board School building in Chapel Street, Salford, by
the architects Woodhouse and Willoughby. Here buff-coloured terracotta decorative details
are in Neatby’s distinctive flowing Renaissance style and carry his signature. One of the
most prestigious projects of Neatby’s career was executed in 1895 when as the principal
sculptor involved, he supplied terra-cotta sculpted bas relief panels for the New Physical
Observatory at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. Although terracotta sculptures and relief
work remained a major part of Neatby’s output at Doulton’s, his earlier experience in tile
design and handpainted ceramic decoration proved invaluable in a large scale decorative
scheme for the interior of the Winter Gardens in Blackpool in 1896. Here the tile decoration
consisted of both relief moulded work and handpainted figural compositions, lining the
walls of an entrance corridor and the main ballroom. Other glazed tile schemes exist, but
for much of his later polychromatic work Neatby used Doulton’s Carraraware for exteriors
and Parian ware for interiors. The former is a stoneware with a dull eggshell-like surface
that can be produced in a number of colours and Parian is the earthenware equivalent, and
was developed by Neatby. Buildings using these materials include the facade of the
Everard Building in Bristol (1901) and the Meat Hall in Harrods, London (1902). These
and other projects are discussed in more detail in Chapters Seven and Eight below.

The independent designer.

In 1901 Neatby left Doulton and Co. to pursue a career as an independent designer,
however,

‘so far from severing his connections with the firm, he maintained with
them, and still maintains, the friendliest relations, frequently working in


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concert together with them when they require a special design supplied, or
when he himself has occasion for getting tiles made and fired'.

Valance's comments suggest that Doulton's were not particularly eager to see their head
designer in architectural ceramics leave their employ. His explanation that Neatby left 'in
order to work on his own account', seems true. Certainly there does not appear to have
been any bad relations between Neatby and his employers as they were only too ready to
use his talents as an outside designer and decorator for the Harrods interior in 1902. Neatby
apparently wanted to expand his repertoire, to undertake artwork in a number of different
areas that interested him, such as stained glass design. In March 1899 Neatby was elected
to the membership of the Society of Designers, many of whose members ran independent
design practices. As a forum for the exchange of practical and theoretical ideas the Society
must have proved an invaluable stimulus and must have contributed to Neatby's desire for
freedom to pursue his own design concepts. However, what immediate motive provoked
Neatby's action in leaving Doulton's at the particular time when he did is unsure, but his
relationship with the Birmingham architects Newton and Cheatle may provide a possible
explanation. In 1898 Neatby had worked with this firm on their City Arcades project in
Union Street, Birmingham. For this shopping arcade scheme Neatby provided designs
for exterior terracotta decorations comprising anthropomorphic figures and a frieze of
fantastic creatures and for the interior ambulatory, a blue and green faience balustrade
formed by entwined imaginary beasts. In 1901 the architects asked Neatby to design an
interior for The King's Smoking Cafe, a unit within the City Arcades. He provided designs

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35 Valance: op cit, p. 115.

for the stained glass, the metalwork and mural tiles for the cafe,\textsuperscript{37} the latter being produced by Doulton’s, and in undertaking this scheme, may well have begun to appreciate the confined nature of his work as head designer of the architectural ceramics department. Alternatively he may have left Doulton and Co. to accept this commission.

Soon, Neatby joined forces with another architect designer, E. Hollyer Evans, to form the firm of Neatby, Evans and Co., with showrooms at 15 Percy Street, London. The company offered various areas of expertise and abilities in mural decoration, artistic furniture design, metalwork, stained glass and textiles; basically anything to do with interior decoration. At the inception of the company they advertised extensively in publications connected to \textit{The Studio}\textsuperscript{38} and produced a small catalogue and publicity booklet, illustrating the nature of their products, called \textit{The 1901 Book}. Whether Neatby, Evans and Co. was a commercial success is not recorded but that the alliance of the two main partners\textsuperscript{39} continued in some form until at least 1906 or 1907 is suggested by the appearance in \textit{The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art}, for 1907, of a Fire-place designed by E. Hollyer Evans, Architect. Panel painted by W.J. Neatby, A.R.M.S.\textsuperscript{40} By 1908 the partnership may have ended as in that year Neatby is recorded as being the Art Director for John Line and Sons Ltd., wallpaper manufacturers\textsuperscript{41}. However, as early as 1904 Neatby had been designing wallpapers for

\textsuperscript{37} Valance: \textit{ibid}, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{38} For example in Holme, Charles (Ed): \textit{Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration} (London: Studio Publication, 1901).

\textsuperscript{39} A third member of Neatby, Evans and Co. was a Mr. Eddison, whose name is given in \textit{The 1901 Book}.

\textsuperscript{40} Colour plate opposite page 106.

Jeffrey and Co.\textsuperscript{42} and undoubtedly the partners produced individual works in addition to those made under the Neatby and Evans co-operative.

Painting was one of the main art forms that Neatby pursued. He seems always to have considered himself as an artist rather than an architect and after leaving Doulton's he widened his interests in this area. Some of his work was executed as decorative panels on Neatby and Evans furniture, but most was for exhibition, mural work or book illustration. As early as 1899 he had published one of his drawings, a picture illustrating a scene from Tennyson's \textit{Day Dream}, in \textit{The Artist},\textsuperscript{43} and he was to develop from this style, presumably designed for ceramic mural decoration, into painting in either oil or watercolours. To further his career in painting, in 1906 he joined the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, first as an A.R.M.S. then becoming a full R.M.S. in 1907. Perhaps due to this association, one of only two formal society affiliations that he made (the other being his membership of the Society of Designers), Neatby has been considered by past researchers as a little more than a miniaturist\textsuperscript{44}. However, his repertoire was much wider, and included a number of mural schemes such as those produced in co-operation with the architect George Skipper, whose Norwich based office commissioned Neatby to provide mural schemes for Sennowe Park, Guist, Norfolk and for the main headquarters building of the Norwich Union Insurance Company. In December 1905 he took part in a large exhibition of painting and sculpture at the Modern Gallery in New Bond Street, London. Neatby contributed sixty of the

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{42} Jeffrey and Co. production log for 1904. See Chapter Eight below.

\textsuperscript{43} "Rest". From the "Sleeping Palace", Tennyson's "Day Dream". From a design in colour by W.J. Neatby', \textit{The Artist}, xxv, 1899, between pages 72 and 73.

exhibition's 122 entries, joining three other artists in this venture. His paintings were brought before an even wider audience in a number of book illustrations that he produced for the publishers Hodder and Stoughton for a series of books published from 1909 to 1915. The artwork, and the individual books themselves, is largely undated, but one illustration for the volume: *A day with the Poet Browning*, is signed 'W.J. Neatby 1906' suggesting that Neatby utilised some previous work for the project or that the books were several years in the planning stage.

Neatby obviously enjoyed the life of the Bohemian artistic set, dressing and behaving accordingly. In 1904 he apparently outraged the guests at his cousin Thomas's wedding by attending the ceremony wearing a velvet jacket with a yellow cravat. By 1906, when he exhibited two works at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, Neatby had moved into a studio at 56 Glebe Place, Chelsea. He obviously appreciated the area, one of Whistler's haunts, and well known for its artistic traditions and occupants, and by 1909 when he again exhibited at the Royal Academy, he had moved to 4 Wentworth Studios, Manresa Road, directly opposite to Glebe Place on the other side of the King's Road.

Fortunately, a number of Neatby's notebooks, dating to the first decade of the 20th century, survive. They are full of small sketches and occasional notes mentioning articles and objects that he had seen illustrated in a variety of art journals. Presumably such items

45 The painting is titled: *My Last Duchess.*


48 In the possession of the author. See Appendix E for details of these notebooks.
provided Neatby with the inspiration for his own designs. Sometimes the names of other artists appear as references to be consulted for ideas; these include Kate Greenaway, Albert Moore and Byam Shaw. Often examples of decorative schemes and individual items appear, but usually without reference to the location of the work, or the date. However, in one notebook entitled *Birmingham Theatre*, on the outside of the front cover, notes and sketches illustrate his ideas for the internal decoration of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, decorated by Neatby in 1904. Much of the work that he executed in this and other theatres was in the form of moulded plasterwork and this was an artistic medium that he also developed in the creation of a number of relief moulded figural plaques which were sometimes used as overmantels for fireplaces.\(^{49}\) Returning to Neatby’s notebooks, one of the main features that they throw light on is the way in which he produced his landscape paintings, many of which were used in the design of wallpaper friezes as well as being framed works for sale. The books are full of pencil sketches of landscape features, particularly trees and whole landscapes, each one minutely annotated with information relating to the colour of leaves and bushes etc. Obviously, he sketched in the field and then returned to work on the watercolour or oil picture back in the studio. Few of these sketches are signed or dated, but rather peculiarly, because they must relate to his last annual sketching holiday, a series of detailed coastal studies that are well dated and sometimes signed place Neatby in the Bournemouth area late in the summer of 1909.

Neatby died of a heart attack on the 20th April 1910 at 36 Devonshire Street, the home of his cousin Edwin Awdas Neatby, an eminent London physician. He was 49 years of age.

\(^{49}\) For an example exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society’s Seventh Exhibition held in 1903, see *The Studio*, xxviii, 1903, p. 185, and *The Art Workers Quarterly*, ii, No. 6, April 1903, p. 76.
His cousin, Edwin certified the death and his son Edward registered it.\footnote{Neatby's eldest son Douglas had emigrated to Canada in 1905; information from Mr. R.T. Neatby in a letter dated 17th June 1993. See Appendix A, No. 11, for William James Neatby's death certificate.} Notification of the death appeared in \textit{The Times}\footnote{A further notification appeared in the deaths column of the \textit{Barnsley Chronicle} of April 30th 1910: 'NEATBY - On April 20th, 1910 at 36 Devonshire Street, London W. William James Neatby, of 4 Wentworth Station (sic), ? Chelsea, aged 49, eldest son of the late S.M. Neatby of Barnsley'}. for Saturday April 23rd 1910 as follows:

\begin{quote}
'NEATBY - On the 20th April, 1910,
WILLIAM JAMES NEATBY, R.M.S., of Wentworth Studios, Chelsea. Funeral Hughenden Church, High Wycombe, today (Saturday), 1.15 p.m.'
\end{quote}

Some years before Neatby had taken on a second home in the countryside at Bowood, Walters Ash, near Hughenden, and it was near this home that he chose to be buried. Today he lies buried, alongside his wife who died in 1936,\footnote{See Appendix A, No. 12, for Isabella Neatby's death certificate.} in Hughenden Church cemetery in a grave marked out by four low stone kerbs, one of which bears the inscription:

\begin{quote}
'W.J. NEATBY RMS 1860-1910 YEA SAITH THE SPIRIT THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM REV 14.13'
\end{quote}
and around the corner:

‘AND HIS WIFE JANE ISABELLA 1868- 1936’

In his last will and testament, for which Probate was granted on 27th June 1910, the gross value of Neatby’s estate was £495. 16. 0. At a time when the average male professional salaried worker received remuneration of £2. 13. 0. per week, this was a considerable sum and a mark of Neatby’s professional success. 53

Neatby was favoured with an obituary written by the architect Ernest Runtz which was published in both the Architect and The Journal of Decorative Art and British Decorator. 54 Runtz had worked with Neatby on a variety of architectural projects, notably theatres, and was in a better position than most people to comment on Neatby’s career and character for the trade press. In the obituary he comments on Neatby’s modesty and gentlemanly conduct in his business affairs, his artistic originality and versatility. He mentions his recent employment at Doulton’s and as chief designer for Messrs. Line and Son, wallpaper manufacturers, but this biographical detail takes second place to Neatby as a man and as an artist, as when in his designs for wallpaper he is credited with possessing ‘a keen sense

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53 This figure is for the year 1911, as given in: London and Cambridge Economic Service, The British Economy: Key Statistics 1900-1964 (1965), Table C, p. 8.


55 For further information on this professional relationship see Chapters Five, Seven and Eight below.

56 Reproduced here as Appendix B.
of line and pleasing colour which in some of his work was reminiscent of William Morris'.

In terms of two dimensional design there can surely have been no greater compliment paid to an artist in the early years of this century. Runtz concludes his eulogy with the words: 'He was a true artist, and a man of fine character, and he pursued his art with a direct and single purpose'.

Another evaluation of W.J. Neatby, his artistry, professional and personal character, can be found in a small memorial booklet entitled: *W.J. Neatby - A Memory*, printed for private circulation after his death. The writer of the main body of the text is nowhere identified and a 'Foreword' to the work only identifies its author with the initials 'G.E.L.' It is unclear whether both sections were written by the same person or not. In addition to the text, the booklet contains a reproduction of a photograph of Neatby taken in his studio. The photograph was most probably taken in 1907 as Neatby is shown putting the finishing touches to a mural painting on canvas which can be identified as one of a series illustrating the history of the British Navy, executed for the Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London, which was completed in that year. A second painting, apparently finished only recently, hangs from a balcony rail above Neatby's head and this particular picture can be identified as that published in *The Studio Yearbook for 1907*. The booklet describes Neatby as a devout Christian for whom religion was a part of daily life. As an artist he related all beauty to God's creation and 'saw something beautiful, something to thank God for, everywhere.' He is revealed as kindly man who disliked the noise and speed of early twentieth-century society, preferring the quiet of his studio or the

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57 The date of the booklet is most probably 1911 as an introductory sentence explains: '...it is more than a year since we laid him to rest'.

58 *The Studio Yearbook for 1907*, p. 62.
countryside around his home at Walters Ash, although as an artist he worked energetically and at great speed. As for professional influences he is described as being 'full of sympathy' for the works of Holman Hunt, Rossetti and G.F. Watts, although his notebooks contain references to many more artists. This choice of mentors is reflected in his own choice of subject matter and palette and the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism can be seen in many of his works. His world was one of observation and appreciation for nature and his talent was in utilising art to transform his observations into forms that viewers would wish to experience.
CHAPTER TWO

NEATBY IN CONTEXT

With the benefit of almost a century of hindsight, defining Neatby’s art in stylistic terms still presents problems. His varied repertoire covers accomplishments in both the fine and the decorative arts and has, on different occasions, distinctive affinities with a variety of artistic movements and styles that could be categorised in number of ways, labelled in part or whole as Aesthetic, Arts and Crafts, Symbolist or Art Nouveau. Whether any of these labels fits depends on both intellectual preconceptions and shared cultural criteria and even if suitable characteristics can be established to allow a meaningful definition to be proposed, it can only be relevant in today’s terms and most probably has little reference to Neatby’s own conceptions of his art. In stylistic terms past researchers such as Schmutzler\(^1\) and Spencer\(^2\) have had few reservations in ascribing much of Walter Crane’s design work to Art Nouveau, and yet Crane, a contemporary of Neatby, was emphatic in his dislike of the style, referring to it as a ‘strange decorative disease’.\(^3\) Whether Neatby held such negative convictions about any of the movements mentioned above is unknown and he may not have analysed his own art in these terms. Certainly there is evidence that he nursed an aversion

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towards Impressionism, but that is likely to have been from a technical rather than a theoretical viewpoint, the justification for this position being reflected in his own ‘hard-line’ graphic style.

In any attempt to contextualise Neatby’s contribution to art and design the basic duality of the term ‘context’, as used here, must be considered, looking at the critical environment for his work in both present and historical modes. This chapter contains observations and analyses relating to both ends of the chronological spectrum, the contemporary and the historical, although it could be argued that the raison d’être for Neatby’s art is best perceived through the study of his relationships with his patrons and clients, a subject reviewed in Chapter 5 below.

A further question to be considered in this chapter concerns the various artistic movements that appear to have contributed to Neatby’s operational repertoire. Part of the discourse investigates the origins of that repertoire through a consideration of the work of other contemporary architects, artists and designers in Britain and continental Europe, in the process, ascertaining the importance of journal publications for the dissemination of design theory and practice and examining potential interfaces for cross-cultural exchange in the field of the decorative arts in the period 1880-1910.

The Aesthetic Movement.

Undoubtedly, the ideas of the Aesthetic Movement had a pronounced effect on his artistic productions but whether this was at a philosophical, populist or practical level is open to

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question. Neatby spent his early formative professional years in the latter part of the 1870s and into the 1880s, a time when the ideas and effects of the Aesthetic Movement had progressed beyond being the property of a small group of avant-garde artists and cognoscenti. By the 1880s Aesthetic ideals had been translated into popular culture with prices of artistic bric-a-brac being low enough to allow the purchase of such goods to permeate well down into middle-class income groups. This was particularly true of products such as art pottery where '... an opportunity is presented, to people of moderate means, of possessing a vase or other object equal in colour and decorative effect to the best Persian, Chinese, or Japanese productions, but at a vastly less cost'.

Referring to this decade, with its widespread acceptance of art products, one recent authority has perceived the Aesthetic Movement as being so 'normal' that it '..had become a little old-fashioned.' Such a statement militates against the democratisation of art, suggesting a diminution of quality by dilution, and reinforces elitist perceptions of artistic culture. Furthermore, it portrays the Aesthetic Movement as a narrowly defined incident in both chronological and art-historical time. Although it is not within the scope of this study either to define or expose the differences between art and popular culture, it seems clear from both the widespread acceptance of Aestheticism and the fact that the movement warranted its own written history, as early as 1882, that its adherents felt that they were improving the quality of their lives by purchasing a whole range of artistic pottery, Japanese fans, furnishings and prints to beautify their homes. In terms of the number of people involved, Aestheticism reached

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5 Linthorpe Ware: Desultory notes and comments on the productions of the Linthorpe Pottery (1885), p. 5. In this booklet a subsequent sentence suggests that Linthorpe art pottery could be purchased at less than a fifth of the price of true Oriental pottery.


its zenith in the 1880s as is evidenced by the success of mass-production art pottery manufacturers such as Burmantofts and Linthorpe; in terms of artistic philosophy, as is suggested below, it had merely reached a stage in its evolution towards the Symbolist art movements of the 1890s.

Neatby’s artwork is itself a witness to his familiarity with Aesthetic form and decoration, and he utilised a familiar Aesthetic iconography of peacocks, fans and pots influenced by the Japonism current throughout the latter decades of the 19th century. The enthusiasm for all things Japanese that is such an important feature of much Aesthetic Movement art has been discussed by a number of writers and is seen in Neatby’s early work in the use of Japanese subject matter and the inclusion of Japanese objects in his ceramic paintings and graphic designs. Such conceptions are merely part of contemporary popular fashion and serve to give his works a certain modernity. For example in his designs for fireplaces executed for Burmantofts in the 1880s (see Chapter Six), fans and art pottery vases placed on mantlepieces or small tables positioned in the drawing aim to give the design an up-to-date feeling. In this use of objects he is emulating paintings by fine artists such as Whistler (1834-1903) or Tissot (1836-1902) in the early 1860s, but in his case twenty years later.8 However, it is fair to comment that the Leeds artist John Atkinson Grimshaw (1836-1893) was happy to incorporate a host of Japanese objects in a series of painting that he undertook in the mid 1870s, for example in his Summer of 1875, and other artists continued the tradition into the 1880s.

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8 For example, see Whistler’s Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl (1864), Tate Gallery, London, or Purple and Rose: The Lange Leisen of the Six Marks (1864), Philadelphia Museum of Art; or Tissot’s Jeunes Femmes regardant des objects japonais (1869), Private Collection, Wood, C.: Tissot (London: 1986), pl. 28; or Jeune Femme tenant des objects japonais (1865), Ibid., pl. 26.
Certainly, in his use of Japanese objects in his early works of the 1880s, Neatby shows that he is well versed in the practical usage of the artistic trappings of the Aesthetic Movement and later, in the following two decades, his use of stylisation of natural forms, the sinuous line and the attenuated human female form illustrate his conversion to an Art Nouveau style that grew out of later Aestheticism. However, it must be considered whether he fully understood the principles behind each of these movements or whether his art was mere mimicry. If a practical knowledge of contemporary styles is obvious in Neatby’s work, an equal familiarity with the literary works of the Aesthetic theorist Walter Pater is not so readily identifiable. Similarly, how well did he know the writings of John Ruskin, William Morris, Charles Baudelaire or Paul Verlaine and had he seen the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Glasgow or Victor Horta in Brussels? Unfortunately, Neatby committed few of his ideas on such matters to paper and in consequence the intellectual basis for his work can only be judged through an analysis of his extant or recorded works. To gain an insight into whether he took his position as a cultural producer seriously in an artistic or aesthetic sense, as opposed to being merely a commercial designer bent on financial gain, it is necessary to detect the influence of current art and design theory in his works, to perceive the influences of other designers used in a ‘structurally correct’ manner (to make an analogy between late 18th - century Gothick and High Victorian Gothic architecture of the 19th century), and to identify any innovative features in his work that advanced beyond current practical manifestations of published ideas. In support of Neatby’s artistic convictions a consideration of his various career moves is also relevant, particularly his move into independent practice in 1901.
Plate 2.1. Art Nouveau style female head by Neatby taken from *The 1901 Book*

Plate 2.2. An Arts and Crafts style table designed and drawn by Neatby taken from *The 1901 Book.*
Although it is argued above that Neatby’s understanding of late 19th-century art movements was undoubtedly different from present day conceptions, it is still worth briefly discussing here the origins and basic ideology of those movements, particularly where they held a special relevance for him. The word ‘briefly’ is used above, as numerous books\(^9\) have been written about art styles in the period of Neatby’s lifetime, 1860-1910, and a study devoted mainly to a single artist is not the place to compete with more wide ranging investigations dedicated to style. However, although the emphasis is different here, it is still necessary to outline basic philosophies where they relate to Neatby’s output. For example, in consideration of Plates 2.1 and 2.2, it is necessary to identify and define the styles that gave rise to such differing design forms, if an understanding of how and why a single person could be responsible for both areas of work is to be achieved.

In essence, the objects represented appear to relate to two different and possibly mutually exclusive traditions. The female head is art nouveau in style while the table has more in keeping with arts and crafts ideals. The former relates more to aesthetic considerations while the latter concerns itself with constructional matters and fitness for its purpose. Although one figure is a stylized graphic concept and the other is a representation of a piece of furniture, this does not negate the comparison as the analysis relates not to individual objects but to overall design styles. The appearance of conflicting values of exuberance and simplicity making an appearance in the repertoire of a single designer such as Neatby may seem strange but they are undoubtedly a reflection of the artistic influences at work on him.

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at various stages in his career. They illustrate the two main stylistic strands that dominated theory and practice in late 19th-century Britain: Aestheticism with its eclecticism and philosophical notions of beauty on the one hand and Morrisian arts and crafts ideas of form and function and the spiritual values of Medievalism on the other. That Neatby was able to work convincingly within both traditions is a gauge of his versatility.

The first of the influences on Neatby’s work, the Aesthetic Movement, is described in a recent publication as: ‘An artistic and literary movement of the 1880s and 1890s which believed in art for art’s sake. It developed in opposition to contemporary ideas on the utility of art, as well as to the perceived philistinism of the day’. This statement is in direct contradiction to Larnboume’s comment cited above which, although published in the same year (1996), strongly suggests that the Aesthetic Movement was in decline by the 1880s. This latter viewpoint is supported by the reminiscences of a contemporary observer of the Aesthetic lifestyle, W. Graham Robertson, himself an artist, in his damning summation on the end of the movement: ‘....the Aesthetes by their antics killed the thing they proposed to love as dead as a door-nail, and the great Art Revival of the ‘seventies from which so much had been hoped passed away in the ‘eighties amidst peals of mocking laughter’.

In their quest for ‘beauty’ the Aesthetes were undoubtedly the inheritors of the romantic tradition in fine art that had its most recent manifestation for them in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, from the late 1840s onwards. The wan long-haired female beauties portrayed

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as Ophelia or Isabella by Millais\textsuperscript{12} in his early works or the numerous similar waifs painted over a period of four decades before the turn-of-the-century by Burne-Jones were exemplary models for the Aesthetic women who strolled the streets of fashionable London suburbs like Bedford Park, in an arty manner, wearing their loose-fitting Aesthetic dresses, purchased perhaps from Liberty’s costume department which opened in 1884.\textsuperscript{13} However, for the start of the Aesthetic Movement in Britain, as opposed to similar developments taking place in France and elsewhere, the event that is taken by several scholars, including Aslin,\textsuperscript{14} as being significant is the International Exhibition held in London in 1862. Here, for the first time in Britain, visitors to the exhibition could see a large and comprehensive (albeit personally chosen) selection of Japanese porcelains, lacquerwork, fans and bronzes, brought to the exhibition by Sir Rutherford Alcock, who had been the first representative of the Crown in Japan in 1859. The display was enthusiastically received by avant-garde artists and designers and shortly thereafter Japanese influences are to be observed in the paintings of Whistler and the furniture designs of the noted Aesthete E.W. Godwin (1833-86).\textsuperscript{15} The burgeoning movement, in its quest for beauty and novelty, was given an unexpected impetus from an alien culture, the movement found a new direction and the principle of eclecticism that was to characterise so much of Aesthetic art was established.

From a chronological point of view, a description that envisages Aestheticism as a

\textsuperscript{12} J.E.M. Millais: Isabella (1848-49), Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Ophelia (1851-52), Tate Gallery, London.


\textsuperscript{15} The effect of Japanese art and design on British artists of the period 1860-1880, articles and books that were written and lectures that were given, is discussed at length by Lambourne: \textit{op. cit.}, in his chapter: ‘The Cult of Japan’.
phenomenon of the last two decades of the 19th century seems to ignore the majority view (as cited here) that the important decade for the movement was the 1870s, maturing out of tentative beginnings in the 1860s. However, if Japonism is taken to be an important aspect of the Aesthetic Movement, and thereby an important and identifying criterion, then it is easy to make a case for the continuation of the movement into the 1890s. In doing so, the nature of the influence of Japonism can also be identified as a major component of Art Nouveau.

In a study of the Japonism related to changes in western art styles in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Berger investigates numerous factors connecting Japanese art to European artists, art collectors and critics.16 One of his main areas of interest is in what he describes as 'The second wave of Japonism'17 and the concomitant discovery of the 'Primitives', his nomenclature covering eighteenth-century Japanese print artists, but also including the earlier artist Moronobu who died in 1694.18 Berger's view is that the Japonism that infected European artistic development from the 1850s onwards had drawn its inspiration from a number of different areas of Japanese artistic production, such as wood-carving, fans, metalwork, woodcut prints and textiles. This Japonism had manifested itself in almost all areas of art and design from painting and architecture to the decorative arts. The decorative potential of Japanese art was developed by a number of architects and


17 Also the title of Chapter 12 in his book.

18 Moronobu is an important starting point in Berger's classification of 'primitive' early ukiyo-e woodcut artists as his creation of dynamic human forms, solidly outlined and presented in architectural settings was seminal in the formation of the ukiyo-e style of the succeeding two centuries. See Lane, R. : Images from the Floating World : The Japanese Print (London : Alpine Fine Arts, 1978), p. 304.
designers who were content to use a variety of Eastern motifs on their buildings, furniture and wallpapers. The nature of pattern was extended both in a formal sense, using Japanese symbols and textile prototypes and in painting as an alternative to perspective with illusionistic depth being replaced by a juxtaposition of vertical planes, causing the main forms within the composition to be seen against a spatially adjacent patterned background. This latter tendency is particularly prevalent in the work of Albert Moore (1841-1893) and James Whistler, who adapted this planar approach to landscape, both of whose work often displays a total lack of narrative content, a feature typical of Aesthetic painting of the 1870s. To these artists colour harmony and tonality are more important than other considerations.

Art Nouveau.

According to Berger, the exposure of the work of eighteenth century Japanese print artists to a wider audience from c.1890, ‘...coincided with a great stylistic shift in European art,’ and ‘A painterly age was succeeded by a graphic age.’ Essentially, this change re-defined the focus of avant-garde two-dimensional art, moving it even further away from ideas of illusionistic representation by further embracing Japanese pictorial minimalism and placing renewed emphasis on the line as the main expressive form in the composition. The resultant trend of fine art to become a purely decorative form of expression is completely at one with the increased involvement of artists in graphic work for mass public consumption rather than just for individual patrons or galleries. To many artists in the 1890s a series of book illustrations or an advertising poster is likely to be the outcome of their efforts. Two of the major artists of this decade owe their reputations to just such works: Aubrey Beardsley

(1872-98) and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901). Both of these men worked in a graphic style that illustrates an intellectual appreciation of eighteenth-century Japanese prints, using heavily delineated forms in compositions constructed of flat contrasting areas of colour to replace the illusion of a three-dimensional reality. This change of emphasis in pictorial representation is particularly relevant in respect of Neatby's work in the field of ceramic tile murals which have much in common with turn-of-the-century poster design.

The artistic 'discovery' of eighteenth-century Japanese prints by a wider circle of artists and the public seems to have coincided, in France, with the Paris-based exhibition, Maîtres de l'estampe japonaise, organised by Samuel Bing and held at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, in the Spring of 1890. Unlike several earlier exhibitions, where a range of Japanese art and crafts objects had been shown together, Bing used this opportunity to concentrate exclusively on the art of the ukiyo-e woodcut with a display of over a thousand illustrated books and individual prints. In addition to works by artists like Hokusai and Hiroshige, whose works were well known to both art producers and consumers, Bing showed 145 prints by 'primitive' artists. From a compositional viewpoint, the importance of these earlier masters is that they '...all transcended the illusion of a receding space and gave the graphic structure its full expressive power'. In addition to the commonality of these formal qualities, the work of certain individuals was to prove especially decisive for later artistic developments. This is the case with the work of Moronobu, the earliest of the Japanese artists whose prints were on show. The significance of Moronobu's art lies in his use of the

20 Bing, S.: Exposition de la gravure japonaise (1890).

broad sinuous line, sometimes referred to as his ‘singing line’,\textsuperscript{22} to delineate the main forms within his compositions. The effect of this line is further pronounced by his choice of subject matter, with many of his best prints (those of the 1680s) being \textit{shunga} (erotica), and the tendency of his work to be in black and white, with those few prints that are hand coloured losing something of the intensity of meaning. It was this pre-occupation with the curvature of the female human form allied to the use of the sinuous line, a style that was adopted by later \textit{ukiyo-e} artists although in a diminished form, that was to inspire art nouveau line and form in much the same manner as Lasinio’s engravings of Bennozo Gozzoli’s frescoes in the Campo Santo, Pisa, were to give the definitive character to the hard-line style of the Pre-Raphaelites.\textsuperscript{23}

The character and location of the venue for the \textit{Maîtres de l’estampe japonaise} exhibition gave it an accessibility that most previous events of this type had lacked. It was visited by numerous members of the public and by artists, the latter in unprecedented numbers, from both France and abroad. Among the latter were Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928), from Scotland, and Jan Toorop (1858-1928), from Holland.\textsuperscript{24} Mackintosh’s attendance at this exhibition is of particular interest in view of Crane’s writings on the origins of art nouveau: ‘Some of the forms of “L’Art Nouveau” may have been the result of the translation into continental modes of some kinds of British, or rather Scottish, design,


\textsuperscript{24} Berger, \textit{op. cit.} : p. 188.
initiated by certain designers of the Glasgow school, and it is in this direction, I think, that we should be more likely to discover its true genesis'.  

Although the works of a number of British designers have been cited by researchers as precursors of Art Nouveau, Crane’s comments seem a curious inversion of history, but may be explained as being part of a more widespread attack on art nouveau and the Glasgow school which a decade before had been encouraged by the Arts and Crafts establishment. Even Lewis F. Day, whose views can be considered as conspicuously liberal when compared with those of Crane, seems curiously Anglo-centric on the matter. Writing in the *Art Journal* in 1900, he rather parochially ascribed the origins of Art Nouveau to Aubrey Beardsley, but blamed its spread to a novelty-hungry Europe on indolent French students. Elizabeth Rycroft has explained Day’s dislike of what he saw as a temporary disruption in the evolution of art quite simply: ‘Day’s dislike of fashions in design and the interruption of orderly growth makes this a predictable response as does his connection of the style with Rococo - that anathema to his generation’.

In Day’s article, cited above, one of the most scathing and comprehensive attacks on art nouveau can be observed. His condemnation of the style is virtually universal, criticising its exponents both at home and abroad. Although Beardsley is marked out as being at fault for

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26 For example, the designs of Arthur H. Mackmurdo and his Century Guild circle, discussed in Madsen, S. T.: *Sources of Art Nouveau* (New York: De Capo Press, 1975), pp. 152-163.


encouraging the style in England, Day comments that ‘His was an imagination touched with
a taint of decadency, caught, no doubt, in Paris’, the French having lost none of their
culpability for perverting English art and morality even in the fin-de-siècle Victorian
psyche. Following this, his comments on the style being a classic example of French licence,
with a tendency to the worst excesses of Rococo design, come as no surprise. English
artists and designers are equally criticised with Day venting his disapproval in areas of both
theory and practice. Towards the beginning of the piece he states his position clearly: ‘The
influence of William Morris appears to have gone by, or to act mainly upon designers who,
being strictly speaking only amateurs’ in practical design, and lacking the invention of the
master, find excuse in his theories for affectations with which he would have no sympathy.
The fashion is no longer for medieval romance but for latter-day anarchy in design’. In
material terms, Day found much to bemoan about the current state of art and design, even
singling out items such as art ceramics for censure. He is quite clear in his opinion that art
has somehow ‘lost its way’ and has become devalued: ‘The highest triumph of art is not a
poster - which appears to be the ideal of many an artist engaged in the design of tiles,
embroidery, and even what should be serious mural decoration. Much of the new art, as we
see it, reaches a standard just about on a level with what a wall advertisement demands’.
Such an analysis would seem very relevant to an artist like Neatby, working in just those
areas mentioned by Day and in the ‘New Art’ style, a term used frequently in the article.
Some fifteen years older than Neatby, Day represents a view of a generation that was firmly
in charge of the Arts and Crafts movement at the end of the 19th century. Although in some
respects still avant-garde in their outlook, by this date, men like Day and Crane, his exact

29 The word ‘amateur’ would seem to be used here with its English rather than its French meaning.
contemporary, formed what was in effect an alternative ‘establishment’ for the decorative arts, as opposed to the fine arts, and the appearance of what they perceived to be a radical yet superficial style challenged their artistic values and revealed their basic parochial conservatism. From the opposite side of the argument, the fact that Day was willing to commit his thoughts to print in such a determined manner suggests a reaction to a style that must have been seen as becoming widespread and increasingly successful. For Day, no aspect of English New Art offered consolation and in his closing paragraphs for the *Art Journal* expresses equal displeasure over the price of new art objects which, it is revealed, he has found to cost more than similar items made in more traditional styles.

Day’s enmity for ‘poster art’ as expressed in his *Art Journal* paper, as quoted above, illustrates an identification yet a total lack of appreciation of the forces at work in art and design in 1900. Japanese influences, while not being the only agent responsible for artistic evolution in the west, provide a direct and continuous link between the Aestheticism of the early 1860s and the appearance of Art Nouveau. Likewise, it was the graphic arts, so dependent on Japanese ideas, that were to supply a direction for artistic developments and, contrary to Day’s beliefs, it was indeed the poster that was to be at the forefront of *fin-de-siècle* triumphs. The success of exhibitions such as the Royal Aquarium Poster Exhibition, London, in 1894-95 and the inauguration of *The Poster*, a magazine focussed towards poster design, in 1898, coupled with present day perceptions of the importance of the graphic work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, only serve to expose Day’s weaknesses as art


31 This London-based magazine ran from 1898 to 1901.
... Lautrec has gone down in history not as a painter but as an incomparable graphic artist," and as such can be perceived as the leader of a new direction in artistic production. His work exhibits a reversal of the traditional form of procedure where a line drawing forms a preliminary and a basis for a full painted image. With Lautrec his paintings become compositional exercises for the final stage in his creative process: the lithograph. Lautrec's vision juxtaposed expressive line and form with the romance and excitement of Parisian café society leading artistic visual articulation further towards the sinuous linear style of Art Nouveau. His effective graphic compositions for posters are echoed in Neatby's similarly linear style for tile murals, particularly in his work at Blackpool where a range of Art Nouveau-inspired female figures painted on tile capture much of the movement seen in Lautrec's commercial works.

Whether or not Neatby drew any of his ideas from Lautrec is debatable although it seems likely that he did. However, Lautrec was only one of a number of artists in the 1890s who were developing a new graphically-based visual reality. Nearer at hand, and readily accessible, was the work of Aubrey Beardsley. Lewis F. Day's ideas on the origins of Art Nouveau in Britain confidently ascribed the responsibility for, what was to him, an unwanted style, to Aubrey Beardsley (see above). Although this is an oversimplification of a complicated evolutionary development, his ideas were not completely misguided.

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32 Bergcr : op. cit., p. 199.

33 See Chapter Seven below.
Beardsley was the British artist who took the combination of the principles of Japanese line and form with Western aesthetics further than any other individual. His graphic style, often executed in black and white for greater contrast and impact, employed the sinuous line in a way that marks him out as the artist whose works are closest to the Continental Art Nouveau style. His published works, including illustrations for the *Morte d'Arthur* (1893) for Dent's, and for Wilde's *Salome* (1894) along with drawings for various editions of *The Yellow Book* (mid 1890s) and his cover for the first edition of *The Studio* (April 1893), were widely circulated and like Mackintosh's designs promoted similar works among a whole generation of younger artists in the period up to c.1910. At this time, Beardsley's influence with its emphasis on heavily delineated forms and spare use of colour can be seen in a range of works from the heavily drawn woodblock prints of Sir William Nicholson (1872-1949), \(^{34}\) W. Graham Robertson, \(^{35}\) and Charles Ricketts (1866-1931), \(^{36}\) and must have provided for a sympathetic reception for the equally 'cartoon-style' tile mural works by Neatby from 1896 onwards.

Mackintosh's debt to Japanese art and design in a number of areas of his work is obvious, with that of his main collaborators, Frances Macdonald, Margaret Macdonald and Herbert McNair, even more so. The influence of the Japanese print is most noticeable in the designs for posters produced by the group, around the mid 1890s. In these graphic works, produced by one or other of The Four (as they came to be known), or in collaboration with

\(^{34}\) Nicholson, Sir W. : *Twelve Portraits* (1899)


\(^{36}\) Illustrations for Apuleius : *De Cupidinis et Psyches Amoribus* (1901).
Plate 2.3. Examples of fin-de-siècle commercial New Art furniture marketed by J.S. Henry and Co.
each other, spatial recession is abandoned in favour of just two visual planes, a foreground and a background, with no indication of depth between the two. On one example, a poster designed c.1895 by the two Macdonalds and McNair, for an exhibition to be held by the Glasgow Institute for the Fine Arts, the three artists' names are written vertically in a block in the lower left hand corner of the picture space in a pseudo-Japanese fashion.\textsuperscript{37} In these posters the Four are rejecting the notion of creating a three-dimensional representation in a two-dimensional plane, choosing instead a planar composition in which planes remain isolated from one another and defy the establishment of any form of visual recession; effectively they are creating a new visual language. In concert with this compositional device, reality is further abandoned as figural details are rendered in a stylised 'calligraphic' manner on human forms that are themselves attenuated to the point of unreality. The source for these bizarre 'Spooks' has been has been ascribed by some writers to Jan Toorop,\textsuperscript{38} whose Symbolist painting \textit{The Three Brides}, featuring similar attenuated figures had received exposure in the \textit{Studio} in 1893,\textsuperscript{39} therefore making his ideas readily accessible to the Glasgow Four. It seems, in hindsight, that Samuel Bing's 1890 exhibition in Paris had far reaching consequences.

Whether the graphic style outlined above was developed directly under the influence of \textit{ukiyo-e} woodblock prints or was inspired by a similar yet further evolution in the graphic


work of Toulouse-Lautrec from 1891 onwards is almost irrelevant. What is more important is that artistic advances were made by The Four, that were important enough to inspire a range of art and design activities throughout the artistic community in Glasgow, creating a recognisable style that became known as the Glasgow Style. Although the Four made great advances in painting and poster design in the mid 1890s, they were able to transfer their basic concepts into a variety of other media, designing for furniture, metalwork, stained glass and textiles. Mackintosh, in particular, designed complete interiors both for his own architecture and for extant buildings. In these interiors the utilisation of open space compared to furnishings, as exemplified in his own flat at 120 Mains Street, Glasgow, designed in 1900, and his use of vertical slatted screens at Hill House, Helensburgh, completed in 1904 and at Hous’hill, Nitshill, 1904-05, displays his debt to Japanese taste and interior design as portrayed in woodblock prints just as much as his symbolic roundels, that surmount the railings at the Glasgow School of Art, recall Japanese mon.

The designs of the Mackintosh clique became well known in Britain and Europe both through public exhibitions and reviews of their works in contemporary publications, thereby allowing for their ideas to be developed or, as was more often the case, diluted by followers. Some of designs produced by lesser known artists proved more commercial and aesthetically acceptable to the market and effectively, in a consideration of the career of

40 A good illustration of the Mackintosh drawing room at Mains Street is illustrated in Kaplan, W. (Ed.), op. cit., Plate 161. When the Mackintosh’s moved to 78 Southpark Avenue, Glasgow, in 1906, they utilised much of their existing furniture in a similar disposition to that at Mains Street. This later scheme of decoration is reconstructed at the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow.

41 For example: Vienna Seccession Exhibition, 1900; Turin International Exhibition, 1902; Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show, London, 1896. The Studio carried numerous articles relating to Glasgow artists and designers from 1896 onwards.
Plate 2.4. Studies by Neatby, based on originals by Byam Shaw, taken from Neatby’s Notebook No. 1.

Plate 2.5. Studies by Byam Shaw published in the Magazine of Art (1898).

Plate 2.6. A Neatby drawing of a Dragon taken from a notebook section on heraldry. Notebook No. 1.
W. J. Neatby, the importance of what the Glasgow Four produced is of lesser concern than the effect that they had on others. The Glasgow Style was adopted by numerous Glasgow artists and designers, both male and female. Some of these created unique designs for specific projects but many worked on a more commercial footing, with designers such as John Ednie, George Logan and E.A. Taylor working for the established furnishing company of Wylie and Lochhead who aimed their goods at a wider market than did The Four. Wylie and Lochhead had an aggressive marketing policy, exhibiting at major interior design shows and advertising their products nationally. They were interested in aspects of style and aesthetics far more than function and construction, embracing the new style for purely commercial reasons, and producing a range of furniture similar in appearance to that marketed by J.S. Henry of London and Liberty’s. It was with these firms and others like them that Art Nouveau design found a place in Britain.

That Neatby was fully aware of the latest fashions in design throughout Britain and Western Europe cannot be doubted. The Victorian age saw a tremendous growth in the number of newspaper and journal publications produced and the area of art and design was no exception when it came to printed matter. Starting as the Art Union in 1839, but changing to its new name in 1849, the Art Journal was one of the most influential art periodicals of the 19th century. However, this publication was joined by others such as the Magazine of Art (1878) and in 1893 by the internationally influential Studio. On the Continent a similar series of developments took place resulting in publications such as France’s L’ Art Décoratif (1898) and Germany’s Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration (1897).

Living in London from 1891, close to public libraries and other designers who kept abreast
of published material on art and design, there is little doubt that Neatby read widely and
gleaned material for his own compositions. In his extant notebooks, dating from c.1901-
10, there are numerous references to published material on art and design, mentioning the
following publications: Magazine of Art; Art Journal; Graphic; Kunst und Handwerk;
Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration; Architectural Record (U.S.A.); Dekorative Kunst;
Jugend; Kunst und Kunsthandwerk; Academy Architecture; and Hobby Horse. Further
notes accompanying these journal references suggest that he was interested in a wide
variety of subjects ranging from Aubrey Beardsley and Baillie Scott (1865-1945) to the
American artist Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966). Other literary sources in the notebooks list
books that were of interest to Neatby that were housed in the British Museum Library and
include library reference numbers.

The use to which Neatby put his researches can be evidenced in the character of his extant
architectural works and the subject matter used for his numerous watercolour paintings, the
latter produced mostly after 1900. However, more immediately, the effects of his reading
can be seen in his notebooks, in the numerous sketches and scribbled notes that fill them,
the origins of which must often have been the work of others garnered from current
publications. Consequently, in his notes can be found entries for art techniques such as
enamelling, this taken from the Magazine of Art, and sketch exercises such as that shown
in Plate 2.4 which is copied from a sheet of studies by the artist Byam Shaw (1872-1919),
a detail of which is shown here as Plate 2.5, published in the Magazine of Art in 1898.

42 Private collection.

Neatby's comment, written on the right-hand side of his sketch, saying that the body of the figure was too big for the head is typical of his method of self-learning and many of his thoughts on the artwork produced by both himself and others are scribbled down in his notebooks in this manner. In a notebook dating c.1901-02, in a section dedicated to sketches of heraldic devices, Neatby made a series of notes concerning the appearance of various mythical beasts, for example: 'Griffin - Head & neck & fore legs those of an Eagle with wings - but having ears. Body, hind legs & tail of a Lion'. Below this, similar observations are used to describe a Dragon and after this the reminder, 'See G.W. Eve Decorative Heraldry'. The sheet is finished with the sketch of a Dragon shown here as Plate 2.6. Eve's book Decorative heraldry; a practical handbook of its artistic treatment, had been published in 1897 and was typical of the kind of publication used by decorative artists such as Neatby for their background information.

Like other successful artists, Neatby saw his work published in a variety of contemporary journals, such as the Artist, Kunst und Kunsthandwerk and the Studio. Whereas Neatby embraced the ideas of others through the medium of contemporary art journals, it must be presumed that his own works reached a wider public by the same means. Quite what effect this had on other designers is difficult to assess. In the late 19th century, architects throughout Europe and the United States of America were making use of terracotta for building facades and interior details but stylistic influences were usually similar, falling into a few main categories such as Gothic or Renaissance revival. Such homogeneity makes it difficult to see the influence of someone like Neatby on his peers, despite his extensive use

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44 See Bibliography for comprehensive list of publications including work by Neatby.
of terracotta. More individualistic are his polychromatic tile and Carrarraware murals and facades from the years around 1900, and in these decorative schemes he comes closest to Continental Art Nouveau.

Comparing Neatby's facade and mural work with that of other architects and designers is, however, inconclusive, even in this narrow area of his work. From a technical standpoint, the polychromatic ceramic facade of Otto Wagner's (1841-1918) Majolikahaus in Vienna is closest to Neatby's exterior mural work such as that found on the Fox and Anchor public house in London or the Everard Building in Bristol. On both of these sites Neatby used painted Carrarraware murals, producing an effect very similar to that found on Wagner's building. However, the Majolikahaus dates as early as 1898; Neatby's Fox and Anchor is exactly contemporary but received no traceable publicity and the much vaunted Everard Building is later, dating to 1901. Consequently it must be assumed that Neatby and Wagner were developing similar ideas and techniques for exterior ceramic decoration contemporaneously yet independently. In France, little of the non-terracotta ceramic work designed by the avant-garde architect Hector Guimard (1867-1942) is directly comparable to Neatby's creations in Carrarraware. Guimard, particularly in his panels for the interior of the entrance porch for his Castel Béranger, Paris (1894-98), achieves total abstraction in his designs; Neatby, despite severe stylization of his forms retains representational elements in most of his individual visual components. Where Neatby's design concepts may have had some influence is in the work of the French architect Jules Lavriotte (1864-1924). His best known work, the impressive ceramic facade that he constructed for an apartment building at 29 Avenue Rapp, Paris, in 1900-01 makes considerable use of both terracotta and glazed ceramics, yet has little in common with any of Neatby's works. However,
Neatby’s technique of using constructional ceramic blocks with moulded low-relief decorated polychromatic elements to form a unified facade mural is replicated with considerable similarity in Lavirotte’s building at 39 Avenue Wagram, Paris (1904). Here, the ceramic facade of the building is covered in moulded wisteria plants, growing from large pots or vases at the base of the frontage. The building is now, somewhat aptly, named the Ceramic Hotel. No proof of Neatby’s possible influence can be determined and Lavirotte’s design may merely imitate, in ceramic, the real wisteria plans that decorate the fronts of so many Parisian houses even today, or the occasional low-relief carved stone wisteria that can be seen on fin-de-siècle building facades in the City.

What Neatby’s late murals do have in common with the schemes for exterior decoration devised by many of his contemporaries both British and European, is a strong symbolic content. In this he shares the same Pan-European Symbolist philosophy shared by Guimard and Lavirotte, in France and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, W.R. Lethaby (1857-1931), and Charles Harrison Townsend (1851-1928) in Britain. The movement, born out of a revulsion against the scientific logic and materialism of the 19th century, imbued works of art and architecture with a feeling of mood and symbolic meaning and grew out of the literary works that provided the theoretical basis for Art Nouveau. A detailed analysis of Symbolist literature and theory is beyond the scope of this study but the originators of the various theoretical strands behind the Movement include individuals as disparate as the French poet and art critic Charles-Pierre Baudelaire (1821-67) fellow French poet Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91) and English architectural theorist W.R. Lethaby. Here, the application of Symbolist concepts to art and design productions, particularly in relation to Neatby, is more relevant and this is discussed further in Chapters Seven and Eight.
The previous few paragraphs have concentrated on ways in which it is possible to ascertain the influence of other British and foreign artists and designers on Neatby’s ideas using the various references to artistic publications in his notebooks. The possible influence of Neatby’s work on others has also been considered briefly. At the core of the discussion is the presumption that during Neatby’s lifetime the art and design press became the prime conduit for the transmission of new ideas in the fine and decorative arts and architecture. Many of these new ideas were coloured by the influence of Japonism as conceptions of art changed, focussing on its decorative potential rather than its didactic role and the discourse relating to Orientalism and art journalism is closely connected. In effect, the journals were often spreading ideas concerning new techniques of creating visual imagery and this permeated Neatby’s design considerations just as it did the thoughts of others. However, in this discussion on dissemination and techniques little has been said concerning Neatby’s subject matter. Aesthetic Japonism physically fashioned art, his compositional techniques and linear style but where did his deeper motivation originate?

Sources of inspiration.

In a brief tribute printed shortly after his death,45 the appearance of the names Dante Gabrielle Rossetti and William Holman Hunt in a list of artists favoured by W.J. Neatby gives more than a suggestion as to the influences behind his artistic philosophy. Although his career in art and design dates from c.1884 to 1910, after Rossetti’s death, and long after the breakup of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Neatby’s art was greatly influenced by Pre-Raphaelite subject matter, and its associations with mediaeval romance and beautiful female

45 Anonymous, A Memory, privately printed, c.1911.
images. The word ‘beautiful’ in the previous sentence is highly relevant in the context of Neatby’s art for he was much concerned with aesthetics particularly in relation to the female form and in the appreciation of surface texture and colour. The preoccupation of the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers with Italian and northern European Quattrocento painting, particularly frescoes, illustrates a devotion to visual effects based on strong colour and the definition of forms by a distinct outline, while a concentration on subject matter taken from Mediaeval sources suggests a parallel interest in the social life of the Middle Ages. Similar interests in subject matter and ‘hard-line’ style are evident in Neatby’s paintings and graphic work and the Pre-Raphaelite fascination with wall frescoes is mirrored in his ceramic murals. Above all, the ‘romantic’ nature of mediaeval culture is captured in Neatby’s art, albeit rendered in a fashion influenced by the West’s adoption of Japanese artistic conventions.

The character of Pre-Raphaelite paintings in this genre, so aptly displayed in early works such as Millais’s *Isabella* (1848-49)\(^{46}\) and follower Charles Alston Collin’s *Berengaria’s Alarm for the Safety of her Husband, Richard Coeur de Lion, Awakened by the Sight of his Girdle Offered for Sale at Rome* (1850)\(^{47}\) was further developed by a number of later painters such as John Byam Liston Shaw, Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale (1872-1945), John Roddam Spencer Stanhope (1829-1908), Evelyn De Morgan (1855-1919), John Melhuish Strudwick (1849-1937) and Marie Spartali Stillman (1843-1927) whose work embraced mediaeval subject matter, particularly Arthurian legends, largely concerned with romance,

\(^{46}\) In the collection of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

\(^{47}\) In the collection of the City of Manchester Art Galleries.
life and fate. Although their works are usually painted in techniques somewhat different to those of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, their jewel-like qualities, dependent on bright colours and minute attention to detail give a similar visual result to the viewer. Between them they popularised a late Aesthetic or Symbolist turn-of-the-century style that continued many of the traditions of early Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood works. The work of most of these artists is closely associated with that of Edward Burne-Jones who likewise continued the earlier traditions, almost in the manner of apostolic succession from the original Brotherhood, particularly from his relationship with Rossetti. Burne-Jones gave the late phases of Pre-Raphaelitism an intellectual quality that suited the educated elite of the late Victorian period in both aristocratic and nouveau riche circles. Luke Ionides, art patron and friend of many avant-garde artists of the period said that Burne-Jones’s ‘love of the classics made him the best scholar that I have ever known’ and his mediaeval paintings indicate his mastery of the literature of the Middle Ages. As a painter, graphic artist and designer of ceramic murals, interested in mediaeval subject matter it is inconceivable that Neatby was ignorant of the work of Burne-Jones and his followers and their influence can be seen in several of his works. The mention of Rossetti in A Memory must reflect an expressed interest in the painter by Neatby and may be associated with his own series of pictures illustrating single portrait busts of women dressed in mediaeval attire. Rossetti developed this idea in a series of imaginary or legendary female portrait figures painted in the 1860s and 70s. These bear titles such as Bocca Baciata (1859), the earliest picture in the series, Helen of Troy (1863) and Lady Lilith (1864-68). They make use of artist’s models to represent both famous and obscure female characters from the real or imagined past,

imbuing women with mystique and sensuality and portraying them in an intense yet decorative manner, pictorially independent from any narrative that might be connected with the individual depicted. Neatby's imaginary female heads, largely of the first decade of the 20th century, are not painted in such a sensual way nor in such claustrophobic surroundings as Rossetti's closeted sirens, adhering more faithfully to 15th-century Italian prototypes, yet they are purely decorative devices and carry similar titles including Romola, La Bella Mia, and The Duchess.

In essence Neatby's art, certainly from the early 1890s onwards, marks him out as belonging to an artistic tradition that drew its pictorial inspiration in subject matter from the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and in technical artifice from the Japanese print. Philosophically, in common with the Pre-Raphaelites, he drew his rationale from the early writings of John Ruskin, though whether this was from his first-hand appreciation of Ruskin's works or through an observation of the results of its influences in the art of others is difficult to establish. Whether Neatby read widely or not is difficult to ascertain, though references to book titles in his notebooks suggest the former rather than the latter. More important was his role in a wider discourse and his participation in what had become an established artistic dynamic by the end of the century. That Neatby was part of this artistic focus is evidenced by his own artworks and by his associations with architects, who commissioned his work, and designers and artists through his affiliations with professional societies.

The 'artistic dynamic' that encompasses the mature works of the last two decades of Neatby's life is the same force that fired an almost evangelical artistic zeal in the labours of
William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones from the mid 1850s onwards. In Morris's case he was to channel his energies into the creation of a utopian society which in artistic terms was represented by the Arts and Crafts Movement, while for Burne-Jones Symbolism, the fine-art relation of Art Nouveau in architecture and the decorative arts, became the final resting place for his ideals. Neatby, like many other decorative artists and designers found himself working in an artistic milieu that employed facets of both trains of thought. Essentially he was working in an environment brought about by a union of the almost contradictory beliefs of the Aesthetic Movement and Ruskinian artistic morality, and the equally diverse values of historicism and modernity. That the ideals of Ruskin and Morris should be brought together with the seemingly antipathetic creed of Pater and Wilde by the 1890s is perfectly explainable in causal terms if the core components of each philosophy are considered.

The two strains of artistic thought initially engendered by the writings of Ruskin and Pater are principally indebted to two major works: Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) and Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). Although numerous other literary works by both Continental and British authors affected the course of artistic developments in Britain from the mid 19th century onwards, and indeed coloured the writings of Ruskin and Pater, it was these two works that captured the imagination of many of the leading exponents of the arts in this period and that were to be seminal in the formulation of the aesthetic theories that lay behind the seemingly incompatible ideals of the Aesthetes and the Morrisian Craftsmen. Both sources propounded artistic philosophies that were essentially liberal in both political and social contexts, that democratised the arts and in doing so empowered the individual. Both were firmly in the anti-academic romantic tradition.
The earlier of the two works, *The Stones of Venice*, was read eagerly by Morris, Burne-Jones and their circle at Exeter College, Oxford, during 1853-55. The young undergraduates were consumed with a passion for medieval history, art, and religion and Ruskin's prose offered them a literary and spiritual diet that they readily adopted. Simply, Ruskin said what they wanted to hear. In his writings of this period he claimed 'that his own establishment Protestantism was an active spiritual force, and could be the inspiration of true modern art'. He provided the Morris set with a total justification for their views and later for their own artistic creativity.

In the early works of Ruskin historicism and medieavalism gain an academic credibility. The Gothic style attains its importance in Ruskinian terms, not just for its relationship to nature but because of its relationship to God and thereby to both spiritual and aesthetic beauty. In a lecture on Gothic architecture Ruskin states:

'...there is a farther reason for our adopting the pointed arch than its being the strongest form; it is also the most beautiful form in which a window or doorway can be built. Not the most beautiful because it is the strongest; but most beautiful, because its form is one of those which, as we know by its frequent occurrence in the work of nature around us, has been appointed by the Deity to be a source of pleasure to the human mind'.

Ruskin justifies this latter assumption by explaining that in nature the leaves of trees are

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'terminated, more or less, in the form of the pointed arch',\(^{51}\) and to this he attributes the grace and beauty of nature. To the Victorian middle-class mind, Ruskin's principal readership, such arguments were ultimately persuasive in a time of religious revivalism. From Ruskin the educated populace of England acquired the knowledge that God's favoured architecture was Gothic and that the mediaeval world was a morally better environment than that of the 19\(^{th}\) century.

Ruskin's ideas could claim an impressive academic pedigree. A.W.N. Pugin's (1812-52) *Contrasts*, of 1836, made the same disparaging comparisons between medieval and contemporary architecture and morality as did Ruskin. Of more importance because of its popularity and the moral stance that it expounded was Thomas Carlyle's (1795-1881) *Past and Present* of 1843. Carlyle, from a strict Presbyterian background, had much in common with Ruskin and provided the latter with both moral arguments and an evocation of mediaeval life that could be developed into a utopian fantasy-world of social interdependence, moral values and quality workmanship overseen by benevolent craft guilds. Carlyle castigated the economic and social climate of 19\(^{th}\)-century England advancing theories against materialism and blaming the downfall of social morality on the constant desire for money; 'cash payment' and the worship of Mammon, being the curse of modern society.\(^{52}\) In contrast, in the second part of *Past and Present*, Carlyle tells the story of Monk Samson and the mediaeval world in which he lived, providing a perspective on morality and craftsmanship that Ruskin was able to combine with his admiration of the

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Carlyle, T.: *Past and Present* (1843), p. 58.
quality of the Gothic architecture of Venice to provide a theoretical platform that was to change the ideas of a generation. Through William Morris and his associates this medievalism continued through to the Arts and Crafts Movement of the last decades of the 19th century.

By contrast, the writings of Walter Pater eschew questions of social morality, quality of workmanship and Christianity - Pater was fonder of Paganism as an inspiration for art. In his Aesthetic creed artistic objects had a quality of their own through their basic antiquity, quality of age has value, academic as well as monetary, gained through concepts as vague as association with the supposed wisdom of the ancients. How an object is produced becomes of secondary importance to the experience that it gives to its viewer. Pater preaches against the social responsibility of art or indeed any wider social context for art by concentrating on the individual. He asks:

‘What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? And if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence?’

Pater’s ideas concern the development of artistic taste in the individual and the ability to appreciate beauty in objects:

‘...to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or

in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure,
to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what
conditions it is experienced.\textsuperscript{54}

To this end art is removed from its social context and becomes an entity in itself and in his
'Conclusion' to The Renaissance, when Pater mentions 'the love of art for its own sake',
he effectively polarises his viewpoint as against that of Ruskin. Pater's ideas encompass
introspection, pleasure and hedonism, traits that were to be developed by Wilde, to create
an environment where for artists like Whistler it is enough that paintings become mere
patterns of colours on canvas or for Albert Moore pictures have subject but no narrative
content. Pater is not usually cited as an important theorist for Symbolism but his words on
how art is to be experienced: 'Every one of those impressions is the impression of the
individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a
world,' again in his 'Conclusion', illustrates the beginning of a train of thought in England
that was to develop into the art style of the 1890s. Here then was a series of concepts that
were the total antithesis of Ruskin's rigid views, and concepts which perceived Ruskin's
ideas as a 'facile orthodoxy'.

Here then were the main ideologies that shaped the art of the last decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th}
century. Both strains of thought conflicted with the notions of art proposed by the Royal
Academy which envisaged art as a slow progression from the work of the 13\textsuperscript{th}-century
'primitives' to that of the High Renaissance, with Ruskin's disciples favouring the art of the
Mediaeval period and Pater's seeing the Renaissance as a much longer development and
effectively removing concepts of chronology from artistic appreciation. Ruskin and Pater,

\textsuperscript{54} Ib\textit{id.}, p. xxx.
from differing standpoints, broke the Academic straitjacket of 19th-century art. Both coincidentally, by either embracing notions of workmanship or by seeing art in a wider variety of objects, encouraged the development of the decorative arts, which gained a new respectability, in part due to the belief held by William Morris 'that every form of decorative art could be subsumed under the single head of architecture'. Against previous conventions fine artists now became involved in the design of furniture, metalwork and other elements of interior design. By their very nature, the decorative arts became a haven for historicism and thereby academically respectable, and, as Aesthetes appreciated art at all levels, therefore historicism acquired 'taste'. This latter point was to have tremendous influence on the design of decorative arts objects in the 1890s.

The Arts and Crafts Movement.

By the 1890s basic Ruskinian principles had been developed by Morris and others to create the Arts and Crafts Movement while Aestheticism became translated into Art Nouveau. However, the differences between the two artistic areas did not prevent them from having things in common, nor practitioners in common. Both established a basic ontological approach to give the fine and decorative arts a new raison d'être. What should have produced the evolution of two mutually exclusive groups in fact saw the growth of two styles embraced by, for the most part, a single group of artists and designers.

At the heart of avant-garde design in England at the end of the century was the Art Workers Guild founded in 1884 by a group of young architects. One of its main aims was to break down the barriers between artists and craftsmen and in doing so to enable one

Plate 2.7. Emblematic Figure of Air by Walter Crane. Cartoon for a mosaic published in the Magazine of Art (1887).
another to assist each other in their individual specialisations. Having trained in a professional climate where Victorian revival Queen Anne Style architecture overshadowed all other styles and with several of its leading exponent Richard Norman Shaw's assistants as members, the Guildsmen shared an interest in vernacular styles and the views of William Morris in the importance of local character in architecture and the use of local materials and building methods. As an organisation embracing several sympathetic disciplines the organisation strove to give itself a professional identity but reacted against moves to professionalize individual areas, such as architecture, within its structure, thereby maintaining a certain parity between members. This contributed to the rather 'cosy', indeed parochial, nature by which the English Arts and Crafts movement is perceived but it also led to insularity and isolation from the public. However, as a pressure group and a forum for discussion the Guild did help to institutionalize the ideas of Morris and spread their usage in much the same way as Morris had converted Ruskin's principles into a working theory.

To reach a wider market a further organisation was founded: the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society which held its first exhibition in London in 1888. This group whose president from 1888 to 1912 was Walter Crane, with the exception of the years 1893 to 1896 when William Morris was president, set the standard for avant-garde design in England in the period 1888-1910. Through a series of regular exhibitions the Society exposed the public to the latest in Arts and Crafts designs but also material which had more in common with mainstream Continental visions. Some of those exhibiting produced the simple hand-crafted furniture and metalwork that conformed strictly to Morris's notions of the nobility of labour.

and the ability of the workman to see through all the stages of production of, for example, a chair or metal candlestick. Others, however, were designers who worked in a wider artistic arena, utilizing elements of Art Nouveau style as well as Arts and Crafts forms. Exhibitors such as Lewis F. Day and Walter Crane, both men with wide intellectual horizons, despite their aversion towards the style were amongst the most flamboyant of designers. Indeed, Madsen recognises 'an uninterrupted sequence running from the pre-Raphaelites enthusiasm for Botticelli’s lines via Walter Crane’s linear aesthetics to Beardsley’s elegant play with surfaces and curves and to the whiplash linear rhythm of the Glasgow artists.' Through Crane, the art of Pater’s beloved Botticelli connects through to the decadent fin-de-siècle style that was to be the last thing that Crane approved of. However, although Crane disapproved of Art Nouveau its influence is clearly identifiable in many of his works, none more so than that shown in Plate 2.7, a cartoon for a mosaic showing the Emblematic Figure of Air, published in the Magazine of Art, as early as 1887. This design pre-dates the ‘invention’ of Art Nouveau as a recognisable style yet illustrates in his use of the sinuous line, the female figure undergoing metamorphosis into the shape of a butterfly, and the sense of dramatic movement, that Crane was already using many of the iconic features of Art Nouveau, and he continued to do so. Not only through his designs but undoubtedly also through his written works, Crane was to become an important influence on Neatby.

In his book *An Artist’s Reminiscences* Crane has a great deal to say about the Arts and

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Crafts Movement and, in particular, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Referring to the latter, he lists W.A.S. Benson, Heywood Sumner, T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, Emery Walker, Henry Longden, J.D. Sedding and Lewis F. Day as being ‘... the most earnest workers in the movement’, a movement which was to ‘assert the claims of decorative design and the artistic handicrafts to their true position in relation to architecture and the arts commonly called “Fine”’. These were the men who were to found, through their various societies and commercial connections, the alternative art and design establishment of late Victorian and Edwardian England. Few of these men held the high positions in society enjoyed by some of the fine artists of the period, such as Frederic Leighton (1830-96) and G.F. Watts (1817-1904) and must have seemed approachable and sympathetic to younger designers and men like Neatby who had entered upon his career through a somewhat unconventional route. Certainly, the stylistic vocabulary that they promoted was eagerly followed by younger more adventurous individuals who embraced their Arts and Crafts design forms which they then frequently decorated with motifs that represented more Continental mainstream avant-garde ideas. The style that developed from this fusion of cultural and artistic visions became English New Art, the formal style of much of Neatby’s work. However, the process was not one-way, and members of the older generation of artists and designers, such as those mentioned above, often produced work that echoed that of their junior colleagues. The resultant style and its advocates may be termed as belonging to an alternative establishment because ‘The style ... met with a degree of official disfavour in the Government Art Schools. Indeed, the authorities at the South Kensington Museum took it upon themselves to effectively banish from the sight of impressionable workmen and students the first representative collection of Continental furniture in the Art Nouveau style

The public acceptance of the English New Art style was brought about by a number of commercial firms such as Wylie and Lochhead and Liberty who promoted their own versions of the style. Liberty was particularly important with products covering virtually all aspects of interior decorative design for the home. Products from the company included metalware, textiles and wallpapers and they were a leading retailer of commercial avant-garde furniture. They had their own manufacturing plant for furniture from 1887 onwards and they developed a style of vernacular forms utilizing mahogany, usually inlaid with decorative designs, or oak, often stained pale green, combined with large metal hinges, stained glass panels, inlaid tiles and frequently bearing written mottoes or lines of poetry.

The 'Liberty Style' and similar styles produced by competitors became the face of modernity in Britain. However, it was an eclectic collection of influences dominated by the vernacular trends of the Arts and Crafts Movement but including elements of Pre-Raphaelitism, Japonism, Moorish culture (particularly in tile design), Art Nouveau and revivalist elements from almost every period of English history. In this way commercialised modernity embraced historicism to produce English New Art, a novel style that might well be credibly described as 'the inglenook, teashop interior style', for that was where many members of

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the public saw the style to its best advantage. Although not taken from original inspiration
the assemblage of the stylistic components that made up English New Art resulted in
a design mode that while contrived was nevertheless acceptable to the public. It was
identified with all that was modern, despite paradoxically often appearing to be mediaeval,
and was possessed of a typical English 'cosiness' while having the excitement of novelty.
Like Baroque, English New Art was theatrical yet where the former was massive it was
light, where serious it was full of gaiety, yet for all that its designs were executed with just
as conscientious an intent as the older style. Despite the incongruities surrounding English
New Art, by the mid 1890s Neatby had become enthralled by the romantic nature of the
style and it was in this context that he worked, both in his later days at Doulton and as an
independent artist and designer in the first decade of the 20th century.

Neatby was only one of numerous designers producing work at this time and consideration
should be given as to why he might be regarded as being more important than most of his
peers. The chapters of this study that deal with his extant work illustrate that he was more
versatile than many of his fellow designers, being, like Walter Crane, able to turn his hand
to almost any sphere of artistic invention from tile decoration and freehand painting to
furniture and wallpaper design. He shows evidence not only of ability in his compositions
but also originality, particularly in regard to the stylization of forms, but most important of
all he was able to conceive decorative schemes on a grand scale, as would an architect. He
had a vision that could be translated into art for the public in the form of painted murals and
some of those works still survive.

Neatby was more fortunate than many of his contemporaries in that some of his artworks
received an exposure to the public far beyond that which could be achieved through exhibitions and book illustrations. In particular, his ceramic murals, both for the interior walls and the exterior facades of buildings placed his art in the public domain. The tradition of paint-decorated interior wall surfaces is not unusual in Britain. The rather poor technical results achieved by Rossetti and his compatriots when they attempted to fresco the interior walls of the Oxford Union in 1857 were not, in general, typical of late Victorian ingenuity, and many buildings both secular and clerical were adorned with interior painted murals in the late 19th century. However, due to climatic conditions, the incidence of polychromatic decoration on the outside of British buildings, other than coloured patterned brickwork, was rare until the latter part of the century, when brightly coloured faience tiles and architectural mouldings for exterior use became available. Neatby's use of Doulton's Carrarraware and Parianware for large painted facade murals at the turn-of-the-century took this polychromatic tendency one stage further. The tradition of facade decoration is part of an established historical dynamic but in Britain has usually been expressed through the medium of sculptural decoration. Neatby was able to break with this tradition and adopt an Islamic tradition of exterior building decoration based on painted ceramics.

Whether Neatby's ceramic murals on the Royal Arcade, Norwich or the facade of the Everard Building in Bristol can be considered as 'public art' just because they exist in what can geographically be identified as a public space is debatable. Neatby's commissions were usually from private companies. In an article relating to a work of public architecture in Bristol, not about Neatby's Everard Building but about a bridge-building project in 1994, Peter Dormer commented that: 'As with most commissions carried out under the "art in public places" banner there was no public consultation at the time...' and the same must be
equally true of public involvement relating to Neatby's very visible facade decorations.\footnote{Dormer, P.: 'Architecture: A bridge too far-sighted to be built', \textit{The Independent} (23rd. March 1994).} However, Neatby's works were often both large in scale and had tremendous visual impact on the observer and it is to his credit that he made them accessible to the passing spectator by retaining both a human scale in the individual motifs used and by using his subject matter in a way that attracted and maintained an interest for the public. Certainly, for his contemporaries a design such as that for the Everard Building in Bristol was an ever constant visual reminder of his talents as one of the foremost decorative designers of his day.
CHAPTER THREE

ARCHITECTURAL CERAMICS

The purpose of this thesis, to study the works of W.J. Neatby, rather precludes a wholesale investigation of the history and development of architectural ceramics in the 19th century. However, Neatby’s involvement in this area, first with Burmantofts and then at Doulton of Lambeth necessitates some attention in an effort to place his work in context with this particular area of Victorian architectural design.

Briefly, architectural ceramics can be seen as an important feature of the ‘new architecture’ of the second half of the 19th century gaining an association with concepts of modernity due to a perception of ceramic components, other than basic brick, as creations new to the Age. The use of architectural ceramics, principally terracotta and glazed faience, was developed in combination with recent technological advances in building methods and constructional materials such as iron and steel framed buildings, large-size plate glass and mirrors. The material tended not to be associated with traditional building forms, such as churches, but rather with the new categories of building in the period, galleries, museums and art schools. In this connection, ‘In the years after 1850 interest in the material was heightened by ideals of art and architecture shaping the morals of the masses and acting as agents of ‘self-improvement’.1 In these terms, it is easy to explain why London’s Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum came to be constructed with terracotta.

In his book, *The Terracotta Revival*, Stratton discusses the whole issue of the widespread adoption of ceramic components for architectural purposes by the Victorians from a variety of motivational viewpoints. His thesis that ‘... Victorians sought an architecture loaded with moral and practical messages’, with ‘architectural ceramics as ideal media for introducing “meaning” into a facade’, is hard to dispute. The practical aspects, showing for example, the name of the firm who occupied a particular building clearly moulded in terracotta or low relief sculptural work in the same material illustrating the occupations carried out in the building was merely a continuing manifestation of the concepts of ‘decoration fit its for purpose’ promulgated by Henry Cole’s Design Reform Movement from the mid-19th century onwards and continued forward by designers like Morris. The moral aspects of architectural decoration are perhaps harder to explain. Certainly, if Ruskin is recognised as one of the prime movers behind the use of art as a moral and social instrument, then his association with architectural ceramics then can be seen as ascribing to it an almost evangelical role. Undoubtedly Ruskin approved of terracotta by virtue of the same principles that governed his negative attitude toward cut glass. Whereas, for Ruskin, decorative cutting destroyed the basic integrity of a glass vessel, for architectural ceramics the opposite was true as he stated: ‘... in the use of brick : since that is known to be originally moulded, there is no reason why it should not be moulded into diverse forms’. He imbues the material with an almost religious nobility when he comments: ‘... a piece of terracotta,..... which has been wrought by the human hand, is worth all the stone in Carrara,

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cut by machinery. Such was the heady praise that Ruskin reserved for architectural ceramics.

Other features that appealed to architects hoping to use architectural ceramics are connected with the problems of the Victorian urban environment. In particular, terracotta and glazed faience were promoted as being hygienic, easy to keep clean and resistant to pollution. Also, they offered the architect a chance to inject colour into his designs to combat what was seen as the rather dull uniformity of stone. The fireproofing potential of ceramic-clad structural members was a consideration for some architects as was cost, yet in Britain these latter reasons seem not to have been paramount in the revival of interest in terracotta. Certainly, the removal of the Brick Tax, first introduced in 1784 and repealed in 1850, does seem to have coincided with a renewal of interest in developing ceramics for the building trade but this easier financial climate does not appear to have brought about a universal approval of the material. Some architects, like Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) were devotees, but others never used exterior terracotta or tiles. Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912), despite using so much red brick in his numerous Victorian Queen Anne Style buildings was not an advocate of terracotta, while William Butterfield (1814-1900) created his polychromatic exteriors using different coloured bricks. Indeed, quite often, it was the lesser-known architects who used the material in England, often on projects where the use of numerous repetitious decorative elements made terracotta a much more attractive option to stone. Undoubtedly, terracotta offered architects an unprecedented opportunity to include large quantities of finely detailed decorative elements into their designs as can be

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Plate 3.1. Main entrance, Victoria Law Courts, Corporation Street, Birmingham, by A. Webb and I. Bell, 1886-91.

Plate 3.2. Victoria Law Courts, Birmingham, architectural terracotta ornament.

Plate 3.3. Photograph of ornaments submitted to the Leicester architects Goddard and Co., by Burmantofts (1898).
seen in the numerous external decorative components used in Aston Webb’s (1849-1930)
Law Courts, Birmingham, a project undertaken with Ingress Bell in 1886-91 and shown
here as Plates 3.1 and 3.2. Essentially, architectural ceramics appealed to both architects
and their clients for a variety of reasons, however using terracotta, glazed tiles or materials
like Doulton’s Carraraware seems to have been more about making an artistic statement
than about considerations of cost.

But what was Neatby’s position in the field of constructional terracotta and what part did
he play in developing architectural ceramics? Neatby’s role in these matters is discussed
below and relates to four main areas: the place of the ceramic designer in the architectural
process; the development and use of new materials; his overall theories relating to
architectural ceramics; and his practices compared with those of others.

Firstly, the process by which an architect designed and oversaw the construction of a
building using architectural ceramics was very different to one where decorative elements
were carved from stone. In the latter, the stone work would be one of the last items of the
building to be completed and the final result was very much in the hands of the sculptor. In
contrast terracotta decorations had to be designed and approved early in the building
process so that they would be completed ready to be integrated with the structure of the
building once construction was underway. This gave the architect much more control of
decorative elements as he could reject components at the model stage and have them
reworked.

Essentially, most Victorian architects produced overall elevations of their buildings with
varying amounts of attention to detail. Often they would make small scale drawings of
decorative features which would then be sent to the terracotta works where a draughtsman
would produce larger detailed drawings. Sometimes the works’ own designer would be
involved from an early stage in the production and have considerable input into the
character of designs for terracotta components. These drawings would eventually be
produced at slightly larger than full-size, to accommodate the shrinkage factor of the clay
during firing. Once the drawings had been approved by the architect they were converted
into three-dimensional plaster models, or for very detailed works, clay models. Once these
had been approved by the architect the models were used to produce moulds from which
the finished terracotta elements could be produced. Approval was initially acquired by
having the architect visit the ceramic factory but well before the end of the century this was
superceded through the exchange of photographs of the finished models, such as those
shown in Plate 3.3, photographs of ornaments submitted to the Leicester firm of Goddard
and Co., by Burmantofts, and destined for their General News Room building (1898).

Both at Burmantofts in the 1880s, where he appears to have become the chief architectural
designer, and when working for Doulton in the 1890s, as the Head of the Architectural
Ceramics Department, Neatby would have had enormous influence on architects who used
components from the respective firms. It would have been his responsibility to advise his
clients on the nature of the material that they wished to use, stressing its possibilities and
limitations. Often the design of the ornament used was left entirely to Neatby’s judgement
and the comments made by Doulton’s representative J. Miller Carr, in a lecture to the
Society of Architects in 1903, confirm this: ‘This building, erected about five years ago for
Mr. Edward Everard, at Bristol, ... was designed by Mr. W.J. Neatby'.\(^5\) It seems very likely that the relationship that Neatby enjoyed with the architect Ernest Runtz (1859-1913) was typical. In his obituary for Neatby, Runtz records:

‘... Neatby’s work with that firm [Doulton] was not only pure, but original, for he had a keen appreciation of the necessities and suitability of ornament in connection with architectural proportion and detail...

As an architect one had only to indicate the general idea of a decorative feature, whether in modelling or in mural decorative work, and Neatby caught the spirit of the undertaking and seemed to think of nothing but perfecting the seeds of an inspiration; he worked with one - he was receptive...'\(^6\)

Although flattering to Neatby, Runtz’s words may also be apportioning more of the credit to himself, for the decorative schemes used on his buildings, than is justified. In all probability, beyond suggesting a general theme, Runtz left Neatby largely to his own devices when the two worked together. Certainly, on several schemes of ceramic decoration, produced for a variety of architects, Neatby’s name or initials feature far too prominently to suggest that he was merely adding minor detail to an architect’s pre-existing drawings. This matter is discussed further in relation to individual projects in Chapters 6 and 7 below.

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When considering Neatby’s interest in the development and use of new materials, a sentence used by Aymer Valance in his survey of Neatby’s life and work seems relevant. Speaking of Neatby’s time at Doulton, Valance relates that ‘The facilities of the firm enabled him to experiment largely, and, by combinations or developments of existing methods, to introduce several fresh processes’. This information is further illuminated in Konody’s article on Neatby published in the same year (1903), but the most important source of evidence for his inventiveness is published in the Artist, in 1899, where ‘W.J. Neatby’s work and a new process’, records a number of his different achievements and techniques. In particular, the article concerns itself with Neatby’s development of Doulton’s Parian ware, an architectural earthenware with a dull eggshell-like surface which was a less durable material, for interior use, than their Carraraware. The latter, introduced in 1888, was a matt-glazed stoneware for external work, promoted as an alternative to the glassy reflective surfaces of faience tiling and Doulton’s own salt-glazed stoneware components. Parian ware became the principal medium used for Neatby’s late decorative schemes, particularly at Harrods and the Royal Arcade, Norwich. It provided an ideal surface for hand-painted mural decoration and the Artist records that Neatby spent sometime in developing, through experimentation, a palette of bright enamel colours for the material. Further experiments with platinum, silver and gold, for use as embellishments on Parian ware, were also successful. The development of Parian ware as the ceramic canvas for Neatby’s painted murals was of particular consequence in that it released him from the

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brightly glazed tile backgrounds used by many artists, allowing his worked to be viewed without glare. The nature of Parian ware encouraged the painting of large murals executed with bold outlines and strong colours, becoming to Neatby what the poster was to Toulouse Lautrec.

His development of Parian ware was paralleled by an increasing use of Carraraware for polychromatic exteriors. In his hands the material was shown to have unthought of possibilities. Developed originally as a rather dull-looking material, Neatby promoted its capabilities for polychromatic relief decorated patterned decoration and flat painted mural work using strong formal qualities in a contemporary style. Unquestionably, ‘The potential of Carraraware was brought to the fore once Doulton had appointed a decorative artist well versed in Pre-Raphaelite art and art nouveau design’ - that designer was W.J. Neatby.¹⁰

On the subject of Neatby’s own views on his activities, any attempt to establish a theoretical base for Neatby’s architectural works predicated on the visual and technical characteristics of his extant designs is made difficult by both the variety of styles and materials used and the diverse freedoms and limitations, financial and artistic, imposed by the requirements of specific clients and projects. As can be observed from the chronological outline of architectural projects outlined in Chapters 6 and 7, an evolutionary model can be perceived whereby the inexperienced designer at Burmantofts in the 1880s is content to reproduce the same Renaissance revival grotesques and strapwork, but by the mid 1890s has been

exposed to a multitude of new influences and is working in varied and new media. The end of the century witnesses Neatby’s mature style in ceramic mural work but he is still, on occasion, forced to design in an earlier format, thereby clouding the issue of a stylistic definition to encompass his creativity at this time.

Fortunately, although Neatby was not a prolific writer, he did publish an important paper on his views in ‘Mural Keramics’, in the *Art Workers Quarterly*, in 1903. This publication had a strong Arts and Crafts flavour and published contributions by Walter Crane as well as Neatby. The article outlines the history, or rather the differing characteristics of the ceramic mural from a number of past cultures and in doing so reveals Neatby’s particular areas of interest in ceramic art and his opinions on the execution of murals in his own day. His fascination with colour and its application is revealed when he says:

‘The choice and luscious quality of Persian and Rhodian tile and pottery glazes and colours, the amazing fertility of fancy in design, the masterly and restrained brushwork, the cunning use of their somewhat limited palette - chiefly of mazarine and turquoise blues, green, yellow, manganese purple, and black for outlines - on a white or ivory ground are things to wonder at’.\textsuperscript{11}

Further on he comments on Moorish murals and applauds their use of repeating patterns and the manner in which the accidental variations in glaze colour are readily used to break up any monotony in larger areas. For the Victorians, the concept of uniformity in an age of

industrial mass-production was important and had both its supporters and opponents. In general the larger tile producers attempted to produce a consistent product but for William Morris and his friend the ceramics designer William De Morgan (1839-1917), the perfection of mass-produced tiles was an anathema and they strove to re-introduce the 'human' element into tile production through their advocacy of hand-painted tiles. In his comments concerning tonal variations in the colours of tiles, a fortuitous accident which Neatby compares to '... the many coloured leaves of a tree in autumn', he champions the Arts and Crafts cause, revealing that such questions are much more concerned with ideology than technical skills. Continuing, he reinforces his argument:

'If you take the material as it comes from the kiln, generally speaking, it will, I venture to think, look pretty right, even if there is a little irregularity of line and surface, so much the better, and will be characteristic, if the design be characteristic...'.

Here, the importance of the design is stressed as the more important contribution to the final visual appearance of the mural. In this latter context he also scrutinizes the appearance of joints and their contribution to the aesthetic overview of mural work:

'... it seems to me that the joints should be fairly thick, anyhow without effort to make them very thin, for in addition they give texture and a sort of enrichment to the masses, and add a feeling of structure. In some situations, with tiles proper, a 1/4 inch, and sometimes even 1/2 inch, joint is simply delightful - it makes the work look so big and strong. Of course I am assuming hand-made tiles are used - a machine-made tile and a very wide joint do not agree over-well; ... Machine tiles are difficult to deal with - you
cannot put much feeling into the work, they have such a straight, hard look ...” \(^{12}\)

Once again reference is made to the artistic qualities inherent in a hand-made tile as opposed to those pressed-out by machines. Neatby’s comments on the ability of ‘good’ jointing to promote a feeling of texture and to assign a structural context to the mural appertain to questions of the suitability of the material for its purpose. In this he takes a very Ruskinian stance. Using the Assyrian Archer Frieze, from the palace of Darius, held in the Louvre, Paris, he compares the simple broadly modelled relief work with its obvious jointing and ‘feeling of a “wall”’, with the late 19th-century practice of breaking up the surface of a wall by introducing raised mouldings to divide the wall into a series of panels. He argues that while such treatment is necessary for the construction of wooden panelled walls and is a true use of the material, it is equally a false use of tile. He blames such ill usage for bad design and increased costs:

‘... the pilaster treatment, with its many accompanying mouldings - caps, bases, and the like - often with considerable projection, involves endless trouble and cost, without commensurate result, especially as “repetition” of the individual piece, or block from a mould, is a prime essential of this particular manufacture; also as the spaces and forms of a building invariably lend themselves to anything but multiples of a particular size or form, it is obvious that a large amount of unnecessary scheming, dodging, and special manufacture must result. This is one of the most fruitful causes of

the abnormal cost of which architects sometimes complain, and which would go a long way towards providing much beautiful hand painting and other interesting decoration on simpler forms and broader surfaces; ... In all ancient work it will be found that mouldings are few and exceedingly simple in form - so simple that they do not in the least destroy the breadth of feeling that appears to be so desirable, and yet serve to give structural direction, mark out masses, and give relief of light and shade where needed; and will yet bear, without losing their self contained form, the delicate pattern-work, either painted or in low relief, with which the old tile makers loved to adorn them'.

Such comments while having practical and financial implications, also reveal much about the theoretical nature of Neatby’s work and his appreciation of simple, broadly executed forms to create a significant unified visual image on a large scale. It is interesting to note that Neatby does not envisage the ceramic mural as merely as a painting on a wall but as an adjunct to the basic structure, not in any way challenging its integrity. Considering the latter part of the quote above, it reads like a manifesto for his Edward Everard building facade, Bristol (1901), where the effect of flat-painted figural work is enhanced by the presence of occasional low relief moulded components (see Chapter 7).

On the subject of colour and surface finish for architectural ceramics the article reveals a fairly predictable progressive attitude towards the materials. Speaking of the use of

\(^{13}\) *Op. Cit.*, p. 50.
polychromatic ceramic murals he says: ‘as for our dingy and depressing streets, they might be made to glow with colour and give us joy in place of wretchedness and squalor,’ - the latter remark referring to the facility of glazed ceramics to be easily cleaned. High Victorian architects such as Butterfield and Samuel Teulon (1812-73) pursued a policy of introducing ‘structural polychromy’ into their building through the use of different coloured bricks arranged in patterns or contrasting string courses. However, Neatby’s concept of colour is more closely allied to that of Halsey Ricardo (1854-1928), who in a number of lectures and published articles in the 1890s (see Bibliography) proposed the wide scale use of polychromatic architectural ceramics in the urban environment. An analysis of Ricardo’s theories on colour undertaken by Graham Scott identifies four main areas of interest within his writings. The first two of these were commonly held proposals suggesting that by introducing colour into the urban environment the lot of the inhabitants would be improved and that this colour could be maintained by using bright, durable and easily washed ceramic components. The next is more interesting, encouraging the:

'abandonment of cornice, pilaster, architrave and string course in favour of delineating architectural facades primarily through subtle changes of colour and hue. He proposed a reduction in the amount of elaborate architectural ornamentation, to be replaced by low relief surfaces of coloured tiles and faience to denote the architectural order of the building'.

Although Neatby’s own views on the use of colour to delineate architectural features were


not as radical as Ricardo’s, the latter’s antagonism towards elaborate architectural
ornamentation is certainly reflected in some of Neatby’s own words quoted above. He must
have been familiar with Ricardo’s opinions but while using colour to demarcate sections of
facades was unwilling to be bound by the dogmatic straitjacket that Ricardo’s ideas would
have imposed.

Ricardo’s last major proposal suggested the use of colour for the geographical demarcation
of civil parishes and for colour-coding different types of building, thereby creating a colour-
based model for urban planning. This latter idea received no practical support in his lifetime.
The archetypal extant example of Ricardo’s work is the house that he designed for Ernest
Debenham in Addison Road, London (1906-07) the exterior of which shows graphically his
passion for polychromatic ceramics.

Returning to Neatby and the subject of surface appearance for architectural ceramics he
again has fixed views: ‘The thing is to have a glaze of fine quality, with some texture of
surface and not too transparent; most modern glazes are too thin and glassy looking - too
perfect by far’.16 Once more Neatby illustrates his allegiance to Arts and Crafts notions of
the value of ‘artistic imperfection’ with its implied connection to hand-made artefacts;
perfection is scorned in favour of more interesting and idiosyncratic values such as
‘texture’. Fortunately, Neatby was able to record that:

‘The enamels now available, with a dull parchment-like surface,
are much more pleasant than the shiny glazes whose glittering

surface tends to destroy form. Messrs. Doulton succeeded in producing these some few years ago, and having used them myself very largely for all kinds of work, I have been much impressed by their superiority over the glassier types, especially for architectural exteriors'. 17

This reference is, of course to Carraraware and possibly to Parian ware, both materials used extensively by Neatby in his decorative schemes.

The appearance given by his 'Mural Keramics' paper is of a confident mature designer who feels that his experience and achievements in the field of architectural ceramics make his opinions worth reading. His knowledge of ceramics, both ancient and modern, was obviously extensive and although by 1903 he was in independent practice he obviously considered that his reputation as a painter of ceramic murals was secure.

The last area for consideration concerns the nature of Neatby's work in architectural ceramics compared to that of his contemporaries. This has in part been discussed in the preceding chapter but is further investigated and illustrated here. The case has already been made above that much of Neatby's work in terracotta followed a fairly ubiquitous Victorian trend in reviving Renaissance decorative motifs and this category of his work is therefore unlikely to have been perceived as innovative by his peers. Where Neatby did use an advanced Art Nouveau style in terracotta, as at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, in 1895 (see Chapter 7), his sources seem to have been derived from Continental artists. By the

time that he began to make use of the ‘tree of life’ motif it had already become an accepted icon of the English New Art style, having appeared for the first time in a major architectural context on Charles Harrison Townsend’s Bishopsgate Institute facade, London, 1892-94, Plate 3.4.

Where he does appear to have introduced a note or originality into ceramic facade decoration is in his Carraraware painted and relief-moulded murals of the period 1898-1901. These have no real contemporary parallels in England and few in France where relief decoration on building facades was often effected in sculpted stone, plaster or using individually placed tiles or ceramic mouldings. Painted decoration was rarely carried out on facades other than in paint. Neatby’s Art Nouveau style was much more popular with artists producing glazed faience tiles for interior use and numerous tile works across Europe manufactured tiles graced by images of Art Nouveau ladies or floral arrangements.

The most comparable major facade mural, executed in a manner similar to Neatby’s, is that of Otto Wagner’s Majolikahaus, Vienna, shown here as Plates 3.5 - 3.7. This floral scheme, completed in 1898, illustrates the effective use of polychrome enamels used in conjunction with matt glazed ceramic tiles. While the technique echoes Neatby’s Carraraware murals the scale of Wagner’s design is vast even compared to the Edward Everard building facade. Additionally, although bounded by a regimented border at the top and bottom of the work the main field is self-consciously asymmetrical, painted in a free-flowing sinuous Art Nouveau style. Considering that Wagner’s architectural training was very much in the Classical mode, this is a masterpiece of Secession style and must surely have been inspired, in part, by the work of his younger associate Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867-1908), architect.
Plate 3.4. Bishopsgate Institute façade showing ‘tree of life’ frieze, by Charles Harrison Townsend (1892-94).
Plate 3.5. Main facade of the Majolikahaus, Vienna, by Otto Wagner (1898), showing the extent of the painted ceramic mural.

Plate 3.6. Detail of Art Nouveau border devices at the upper perimeter of the mural.

Plate 3.7. Detail of the ceramic mural showing the asymmetrical nature of the individual curvi-linear components.


of the Secession House, Vienna, who had adopted the curvi-linear forms of Art Nouveau into his design repertoire by this date. By comparison, none of Neatby’s work is so confidently European in character. Although his works display a measure of asymmetry it is usually tightly controlled by internal borders or by the shape of the structure involved, for example, the balloon-shaped pediment at the top of the Fox and Anchor public house, London (1898), Plate 3.8.

Other than Wagner’s Majolikahaus mural, few other works by well-known Continental architects bear comparison. Hector Guimard used a considerable amount of architectural ceramics but rarely for murals. His most notable achievement in this sphere, the porch mural for the main entrance of the Castel Béranger, Paris, Plate 3.9, has no parallels in Neatby’s work nor in that of any other designer. The nearest that Neatby ever came to abstraction was in the weird circular motifs found on his terracotta facade in Union Street, Plymouth (1898), discussed in Chapter 7, but at the Castel Béranger Guimard goes far beyond such well-delineated forms to create pure abstraction. In Paris, as discussed in the previous chapter, Lavirotte’s work comes closest to Neatby’s, with his facade at 39 Avenue Wagram, Paris (1904), Plates 3.10 and 3.11, having suggestions of his polychromatic moulded relief work.

The main conclusion that results from a comparison of Neatby’s work with that of other designers is that several architects were trying to produce polychromatic building facades and that each one had his own individual style. Neatby is unlikely to have influenced many of his Continental peers, although the Avenue Wagram building might owe something to him, or they him. Even within the close confines of England the ideas of Townsend or
Ricardo seem to have played only a marginal part in his designs and that, in itself, is hard to identify. Basically, by the late 1890s Neatby was at the top of his profession in architectural ceramics and had no need to look to anyone for advice on either style or technique.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST DESIGNER

The second half of the 19th century witnessed a dramatic widening of opportunities for anyone wishing to become involved in the production of art and design. This fertile environment for the artistic designer was brought about by a combination of circumstances including expanding markets, increasing prosperity, population growth, improved transport and communications, art education and scientific and industrial developments. Much of this advance was built on earlier progress, particularly in the field of education.

In 1837 the Government inaugurated a system of state art education when it opened the first Government School of Design in rooms at Somerset House, London. This was the first of many branch schools set up in London and the provinces during the following years to train students to design particularly for industry, for the ever expanding textile, ceramic, furniture and metalwork factories that brought about the prosperity of the Victorian era. Despite this aim, inevitably, educators found it impossible to divorce the teaching of design from that of art, specifically in the area of life drawing, and the two gradually became increasingly integrated. The move towards a firm basis of drawing for design was so inescapable that in the 1850s Henry Cole (1808-82) was given the responsibility of reforming the system under the banner of the National Art Training School, which was to become closely associated with the South...
Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). To ensure a nationwide standard, each year the National Art Training School and its branch schools submitted examples of students’ work to a National Art Competition. In this way students could gauge their work against that of their peers and also achieve a wider audience for their designs.

Gradually, education through the Government’s curriculum came to include a range of subjects including figure drawing from both life and casts, flower drawing from nature, modelling and applied design. The result was several generations of designers who had an understanding of art and design far beyond the limitations of technical drawing and aspirations to accompany that knowledge. Equally important was the process of change in the status of the decorative arts. Preconceptions of art were radically altered by the elevation of the decorative arts which followed on from the closer connection between the fine and decorative arts which took place both in educational terms and practice. This helped to bring about a ‘blurring’ of the division between the various branches of the arts and led to the involvement not only of designers like Walter Crane or architects like Alfred Waterhouse producing paintings, but to fine artists like Rossetti and Millais designing chairs. This integration was assisted by other contemporary factors such as the difficulty of categorizing the wave of Japanese art that was imported into Britain from the 1850s onwards, the Aesthetic Movement which encouraged amateurs to take up every form of art from flower arranging to china painting and, the ideas of Ruskin and Morris who were of the opinion that the designer and producer should be one and the same, with Morris particularly believing that ‘... nothing should be done in his workshops which he
did not know how to do himself.¹

In such a cultural climate, where artists became designers and designers artists it could be construed that they were one and the same thing. However, to the Victorian mind, in both theory and practice the two disciplines were very different as Christopher Dresser was at pains to point out in his book *Principles of Decorative Design*. In his introductory chapter he advocates a concept that is totally at odds with Ruskin's view of naturalism related to ornament. The latter's view was that 'Ornamentation should be natural, - that is to say, should in some degree express or adopt the beauty of natural objects';² which in Ruskin's terms meant the accurate representation of nature. Conversely, Dresser states: 'If plants are employed as ornaments they must not be treated imitatively, but must be conventionally treated, or rendered into ornaments. A monkey can imitate, man can create'.³ With this unequivocal judgement Dresser effectively defined what he perceived to be the difference between art and design. Artists created illusionistic representations of nature, a contemporary trend seen in both the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and the high finish of narrative painters, while designers designed through a process involving the stylization of natural forms into decorative motifs.

This differentiation was exceedingly important in establishing a rationale for design in general,
and establishes the role of the designer in 19th-century society. However, Dresser’s ideas on art and design were not new, Pugin, for example, in the introduction to his *Floriated Ornament* (1849), when comparing mediaeval art with modern, made the same point with equal clarity:

‘The great difference between antient and modern artists in their adaptation of nature for decorative purposes, is as follows. The former disposed the leaves and flowers of which their design was composed into geometrical forms and figures, carefully arranging the stems and component parts so as to fill up the space they were intended to enrich; and they were represented in such a manner as not to destroy the consistency of the peculiar feature or object they were employed to decorate, by merely imitative rotundity or shadow; for instance, a pannel, which by its very construction is flat, would be ornamented by leaves or flowers drawn out or extended, so as to display their geometrical forms on a flat surface. While, on the other hand, a modern painter would endeavour to give a fictitious idea of relief, as if bunches of flowers were laid on, and, by dint of shadow and foreshortening, an appearance of cavity or projection would be produced on a feature which architectural consistency would require to be treated as a plane; and instead of a well-defined, clear, and beautiful enrichment, in harmony with the construction of the part, an irregular and confused effect is produced, at utter variance with the
The work then proceeds through text and illustration to argue for the superiority of stylized over naturalistic form for ornamentation. Plates 4.1 - 4.3 show examples of Pugin’s stylized ornament which can be compared to a drawing by Dresser (Plate 4.4), whose work appears to descend directly from his predecessor.

Ruskin disagreed with both stylization and Pugin. For Ruskin Nature was the work of God and therefore divine and in its use for ornamentation there could be no compromise; Nature should be rendered truthfully not distorted. It became an almost evangelical crusade for him and had obvious repercussions on the work of artists such as the Pre-Raphaelites. In his Lectures on Architecture and Painting Ruskin compared a naturalistic drawing of a cluster of leaves from an ash tree with a cluster of ash leaves drawn on ‘Greek principles’. His illustrations, reproduced here as Plate 4.5, are contrasted: the former as representing God’s work and being reminiscent of Gothic architecture in the way the stalks of the leaves spring from the bough like the ribs of Gothic vaulting; the latter being ridiculed as being as if Nature had taught the ash tree Greek and ‘shown them how to grow according to the received Attic architectural rules of right’. Realistically, this was a discourse on the merits of Gothic architecture against the somewhat pagan irreverence of stylization.


5 Ruskin, J. : Lectures on Architecture and Painting (London : Routledge, reprint c.1907), pp. 16-17 and Plate III.

Plate 4.2. Pugin: *Floriated Ornament*, Pl. 18, 4.


Plate 4.4. Dresser: *Principles of Victorian Decorative Design*, Fig. 14.

Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) became an important stimulus for the Gothic Revival and undoubtedly owed much to Pugin's works. Yet Ruskin attacked Pugin's efforts, deriding his abilities as an architect and warning others not to see in his architecture and writings the message that Protestantism and art were incompatible. This sectarian attack against the Roman Catholic Pugin illustrates but one of the illogicalities behind Ruskin's beliefs and betrays his frustration with the Catholic origins of his beloved Gothic style. He tried to distance himself from Pugin by commenting that he did not have any interest in his works but he is known to have read at least three of his works, with notes that he made from Pugin's *The True Principles of Architecture* (1841), still surviving. These may seem to be mid-century views but sectarian antagonisms lingered on to the end of the century and beyond. In *A Memory*, the eulogy written for Neatby after his death in 1910, there are distinct references to an evangelical view of Nature in his beliefs, with more than an echo of Ruskin's views on the superiority of God's work over Man's, and the idea of worshipping God through art. In one passage the author recalls 'he burst out with great emphasis: "I tell you, I believe God hates it. The trains and motor-buses, the telegraph and the telephone - the whole thing is but a travesty of His mind and will for man"'. Such a statement does much to explain his adherence to the Arts and Crafts Movement with its reactionary views on modern life but also creates a problem in respect of his practices in the field of ornamentation. Neatby was one of the most advanced designers in the area of stylization in the late 1890s and seems to have recognized no conflict of interest

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6 For a discussion on Ruskin's religious beliefs associated with architecture and his relations with Pugin see Brooks, M.W. : *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (London : Thames and Hudson, 1989), Chapter III and especially pp. 45-49.

with naturalism, despite his deeply felt religious convictions. That he did not is due to the changing attitudes towards design as opposed to fine art that sprang out of the work of reformers such as Dresser from the middle of the century onwards, creating an entirely new ethos for the decorative arts in Britain, placing emphasis on fitness for purpose rather than naturalistic imitation.

The Rococo revival which began in the 1820s and lasted beyond the middle of the century brought about a vogue for overly ostentatious naturalistic ornament, particularly in the fields of metalwork, ceramics and heavily carved furniture. The trend was especially noticeable at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and brought criticism from designers concerned to promote concepts of taste and the use of appropriate ornament for industrially produced goods. One of the earliest of these design reformers was Henry Cole. In 1847 Cole founded Felix Summerly’s Art-Manufactures, a design company dedicated to ‘the good old practice of connecting Art with familiar objects in daily use’. The company commissioned a series of designs from artists sympathetic to Cole’s views, such as Richard Redgrave and Daniel Maclise, with the express purpose of providing forms and decoration which were suitable for their function.

Another important influence on design, and one which followed the direction set by Pugin and continued by Dresser in a tendency towards flatness and form and greater stylization of motifs, was the publication of *The Grammar of Ornament* by Owen Jones (1809-74) in 1856. In this

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work, which also included drawings by Dresser, Jones presented thirty-seven propositions which he related to the use of form and colour in architecture and the decorative arts. Important in the context of this discourse is Proposition 8 which states that: ‘All ornament should be based upon a geometrical construction’, which is reinforced by Proposition 13: ‘Flowers or other natural objects should not be used as ornaments, but conventional representations founded upon them sufficiently suggestive to convey the intended image to the mind, without destroying the unity of the object they are employed to decorate’. This was the antithesis of Ruskin’s propositions yet along with works by other design reformers appears to have overwhelmed any support that he may have had in the field of design; considerations of the divine in Nature disappeared, rendered subservient to considerations of expediency.

Jones’s Grammar became the reference work for generations of designers. Not only did it contain numerous European historical styles, mostly in full colour, but it also introduced a variety of Oriental and Far Eastern styles of ornament. These proved equally popular as the basis of design work. For example, on a page devoted to Assyrian and Persian ornament, Plate xii, no. 2, can be seen to be the design from which Neatby developed his inspiration for a border used in his decorative tile scheme for Alfred Waterhouse’s Prudential Assurance Company offices in Glasgow, both illustrations are shown here as Plates 4.6 and 4.7.

In producing his Grammar Jones was also fulfilling another role that became part of the

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Plate 4.7. Border motif from a decorative scheme by Neatby for Alfred Waterhouse’s Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow, 1890.
designer’s lot in the 19th century, that of introducing new, usually foreign, stimuli to British manufacturers. Dresser followed Jones in this tradition, being particularly noted for his Japanese-style designs. Essentially, design became a matter of creating form and ornament. It was markedly eclectic in nature and as such always appeared to be ‘modern’. Against this background, the designer came to represent the cultural interface between art and industry. Dresser, who was the most successful at unifying the aims of art and industry saw himself in these terms. On business cards that he was using in the 1870s he styled himself not as an artist but as ‘Architect and Ornamentalist’.  

Between them, Pugin, Cole, Jones, Dresser and others had succeeded in creating a new professional persona for the designer who could be an architect or fine artist but frequently was not necessarily so. Dresser, for one, styled himself as an architect but had no training in the constructional side of the subject and would have been better termed an interior decorator. Their achievements provided an opportunity for a whole new group of artists, who favoured the decorative arts to find a new career as designers, more interested in pattern than painting. William Morris was one such designer and Neatby another. The improved status of the designer attracted numerous individuals to try their hand at designing wall-papers, furniture or metalwork, until in 1891 Oscar Wilde was able to comment somewhat sarcastically: ‘All over England there is a Renaissance of the decorative Arts. Ugliness has had its day. Even in the houses of the rich there is taste, and the houses of those who are not rich have been made

gracious and comely and sweet to live in'.

The increasing demands of manufacturers in the late 19th century encouraged a move towards greater versatility and wider experience in the fin-de-siècle artistic community. The 'improvement' of a whole range of consumer products became the concern of the artistic designer who was required to apply his or her talents universally. In contrast to those working in narrow areas of science or technology the late Victorian designer found specialization a disadvantage and those individuals who achieved success like Walter Crane, who undertook almost any task from book illustration to interior decorating, had to be able to design for almost any function and in a variety of media. In such a climate Neatby's rather unconventional training proved beneficial.

Essentially, Neatby began his career training with a provincial architect, then gained 'shop floor' experience as a ceramic painter and designer at Burmantofts, Leeds, then found himself elevated to the position of head and chief designer for the Architectural Ceramics Department at Doulton and finally set up in independent practice. His success seems astonishing when compared to that of Charles Rennie Mackintosh who attended the much vaunted Glasgow School of Art, or Christopher Dresser who trained at the Government School of Design in Somerset House, but in fact there were many avenues into the world of design. Noting his contemporaries, Walter Crane began his formal education in 1859 when he was apprenticed

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to the London wood engraver William Linton; the talented furniture and tile designer J. Moyr Smith (1839-1912) received his education working in the design studio of Christopher Dresser; and Lewis F. Day (1845-1910), considered by a recent researcher to have been 'an important influence on the moves to reform British design education in the later 19th century', was largely self-trained acquiring his knowledge through practical experience, first at the stained-glass manufacturers Lavers and Barraud in 1864 and later as keeper of cartoons for glass with Clayton and Bell. In fact, once Neatby had learnt the technical aspects of drawing in an architect's office he was as well qualified to undertake design, in its many forms, as most of his peers. Also, Neatby lived in an age when the theories of self improvement propounded by Samuel Smiles in his book Self-Help were at their height of popularity. Smiles had an important impact on the evolution of Victorian social values and throughout his career, from his youthful studies of church architecture in East Yorkshire to his use of the British Museum Library as revealed in book references in his notebooks from 1901 onwards, there are indications that Neatby was aware of the importance of self-education and research.

12 Crane, W.: An Artist's Reminiscences (London: Methuen and Co., 1907), Chapter III.
Neatby must have felt very much part of the London design milieu in the 1890s and up to the time of his death in 1910. These were busy times for designers; the population of Britain had risen from about 23 million when Victoria came to the throne to over 41 million when she died and the scale of this huge growth in numbers necessitated an equally immense expansion in building for both public and domestic use, and was also reflected in the output of manufactured consumer goods to satisfy the burgeoning market. Whether producing schemes for interior decoration or producing drawings for new vases or dining tables, professional designers were at the heart of this activity. Organizations such as the Art Workers Guild, the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions Society and the Society of Designers (founded in 1896) were all support centres for designers. Each provided a focus for promoting design as a profession, and acted as a point of exchange for ideas. Neatby joined the Society of Designers and exhibited in the shows held by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. In his eyes and those of his peers he was fulfilling his role as a designer, both to his clients and his colleagues.

Despite the confidence engendered by his position and success Neatby appears to have encountered the same type of frustrations as many other Victorian artists and designers. His experience, training and personal beliefs had given him distinctive ideas about design, as can be seen from his extant works. However, he worked in a commercial climate as did all designers and had to admit: 'It is rarely, however, that one is free to carry out one's convictions thoroughly - often not at all, for the man who pays the piper generally thinks he has some right to call the tune'.16 The role of the Victorian designer may have been to provide for

industry, to improve design and introduce society to new ideas, but, all within the constraints of the wishes of the customer.
CHAPTER FIVE

PATRONS AND COMMISSIONS

‘In the private sector, a growing number of developers budget for art in their buildings, knowing that the consequent improvement of the environment is directly linked to letting and sound commercial practices’ (Petherbridge).¹

This comment, although voiced in 1987, could equally apply to the architectural commissioning environment of the late Victorian period in England. In the 19th century, developers and their architects faced with ‘... the vastly increased production of buildings needed for a rapidly expanding population’² found themselves in a construction environment that concerned itself with architectural aesthetics for mass consumption in a manner that was previously unknown. Development schemes were often concerned with multi-occupancy scenarios, with a principal contractor such as the Prudential Assurance Company taking the larger part of a building complex while letting out smaller units within the scheme to other commercial concerns. To attract both tenants and customers, buildings had to be appealing to both groups and the artistic enhancement of facades and interiors was part of this process. For single-owner properties Ruskinian didacticism is commonly observed in the exterior decoration of buildings, with an

iconography appropriate to the use of the building, for example, railway trains on the facade of the Thomas Cook building, Leicester (1894). All of this ornamental work could, of course, be rendered in stone, but for architects sympathetic to the material or where numerous repeated motifs were required, terracotta was often the preferred material, with, at the turn of the century newly introduced matt-glazed materials such as Doulton's Carraraware or its competitor Marmo, made by Burmantofts, making an impact.

Virtually all of the architects who dealt with Neatby had two things in common, a liking for ornament and an enthusiasm for architectural ceramics. Not all architects used terracotta and of those that did, many were unwilling converts to the new material. Views such as those expressed by architect George Gordon Hoskins in 1902 were not uncommon:

'For many years I had a strong prejudice against terra-cotta, due, probably, to a certain to my practising in a stone country, but some twelve years ago, partly to prevent a masons' strike, and partly to reduce the cost of a somewhat large building, I decided to accept the "burnt offering" in lieu of stone for the dressings, and as a result I became a "vert" to terra-cottaism, and have used much of the material with, in my opinion, most satisfactory results'.

Hoskins, President of the Northern Architectural Association, 1886-87, and designer of numerous private and public buildings in Durham and Yorkshire, continues with several notes of caution. He comments on the matter of cost, saying that savings can be made by the use of terracotta when there is much repetition of detail but that for individual elements, where stone

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is locally available, it would prove cheaper. His other main criticism of architectural ceramics concerns late delivery, for which, he records, the manufacturer usually supplies excuses relating to ‘an accident during burning’, that is in the firing of the material, or delays in the receipt of detailed drawings from the architect. As is related in Chapter 7, such delays are recorded in the supply of ceramic materials to the Royal Observatory Building, Greenwich, a Doulton commission, and similar problems plagued the building of Waterhouse’s Natural History Building, London. On this latter project, various manufacturing problems resulted in ‘the timetable for delivery [of the terracotta] descending into chaos’⁴. Eventually the museum was completed but opened five years behind schedule. Such problems in the use of architectural ceramics were not uncommon and it would seem that architects who used the material more than once needed to have considerable patience. Only a true enthusiasm for architectural ceramics can have produced the devotees who designed the numerous terracotta buildings that still populate Britain’s Victorian cities.

Hoskins is not known to have worked with Neatby, but Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) certainly did, both while he was at Burmantofts and later when he moved to Doulton (see Chapters 6 and 7). Waterhouse is perhaps the best known and most successful of all the architects who used architectural ceramics. Starting in practice at Manchester in 1856, he moved to London in 1865, where he became part of the architectural establishment. Among his better known buildings are: Manchester Assize Courts (1859); Manchester Town Hall (1869-77); Lime Street Station Hotel, Liverpool (1868-71); Reading Town Hall (1872-75); National Liberal Club, London (1884); and the Hotel Metropole, Brighton (1888). In addition,

he became the house architect for the Prudential Assurance Company, building numerous provincial branch offices for the Company as well as their London headquarters in Holborn. Not all of his buildings were constructed in architectural ceramics, but many were and contracts for the Prudential invariably specified the use of the bright red terracotta that has become associated with much of Waterhouse’s work. Not only was Waterhouse an effective advocate of terracotta in the number of buildings he designed but stylistically and functionally he changed the professional and public perception of the material with his buff and grey-coloured Romanesque exterior for the Natural History Museum. As Stratton points out in his *Terracotta Revival*:

‘The Natural History Museum marked the major turning-point in the terracotta revival. Terracotta had been released from the restriction of having to be designed in a form with which it was historically associated. Rather than re-create Italian arcades, Waterhouse had demonstrated an approach based on the purpose of the building and on the potential of clay in terms of colour, repetitive decoration and naturalistic sculpture. Terracotta had gained a status on a par with stone, and a practical cause in resistance to soot, damp and fire’.

Although red terracotta Italian Renaissance-derived decorative schemes continued in the work of architects throughout the 1880s, Waterhouse’s seminal building provided a reference point for the free-style works of the 1890s.

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Details of some of the projects on which Neatby worked with Waterhouse at Burmantofts are detailed in Chapter 6. Undoubtedly, the extensive use of Burmantofts architectural ceramics in Waterhouse’s buildings was in part due to his close friendship with James Holroyd, the manager of the Leeds factory. However, as is described in Chapter 7, Waterhouse commissioned the material for a large building in Manchester, the Refuge Assurance Company building (a project that involved him from 1891-1896), from Doulton after Neatby had become Head of the Architectural Ceramics Department there. The choice of Doulton for this project may well have owed something to the former collaboration between the two men as Waterhouse seems not to have been a frequent supporter of Doulton’s output, having declined their wares for the large Natural History Museum contract. A letter from Henry Doulton to his friend John Hardcastle, dated January 1873, reveals the onset of a somewhat cool relationship between the Doulton and Waterhouse, which considering the paucity of business between the two, must have continued for many years: ‘I called to see Waterhouse and gave him the information needed but we shall not do any of the work I saw him about. I think it was intended for someone else from the first’.  

Waterhouse was undoubtedly the most accomplished and respected architect with whom Neatby had dealings. Although he worked with a number of architects during his career, most of them lacked the national stature of Waterhouse and historically many of them are virtually unknown apart from through a few extant buildings. For the most part they were architects working for provincial firms or were from lesser known London practices. Once again, a

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detailed analysis of the projects with which Neatby was involved can be found here in Chapters 6 and 7, but some comments on the nature of these men is pertinent in a general discussion about patrons and commissions.

Alfred Waterhouse was not the only architect to make continued use of Burmantofts as a ceramic component supplier. James McVicar Anderson (1835-1915), with whom Neatby worked, is recorded as having used Burmantofts architectural ceramics for four buildings during the period c. 1889-1902. All were banks or assurance company offices in London and all were interior schemes of decoration. These were prestigious buildings and Anderson was himself very established in his profession, being President of the Royal Institute of British Architects from 1891-1894. He may have only worked on one project with Neatby, the Commercial Bank of Scotland, Lombard Street, London (1889), but possibly also on the Union Discount Bank, Cornhill, London (c.1890). His use of Burmantofts after Neatby’s departure suggests that he had more interest in the firm than in any one of its employees and this must surely be the case for many of the other architects who worked with Neatby. For men like J. Vickers Edwards, who built the Menstone Asylum, West Riding of Yorkshire (c.1890), or John McLachlan who used Burmantofts for his Stock Exchange Building, Edinburgh (1890) the decision on which ceramics firm to commission probably depended on nothing other than cost.

With reference to the years that he spent at Burmantofts it is probably irrelevant to pose the question: what type of client chose Neatby as his designer? Most private and public clients will

7 Burmantofts Pottery : various authors (Bradford : Bradford Art Galleries and Museums and Leeds City useums, 1983), pp. 70-72.
have chosen the architect then left the choice of materials suppliers to him. There is little by way of distinctive profiles to suggest a pattern in the behaviour of individual architects. Burmantofts supplied terracotta and glazed faience to build numerous banks, assurance society offices, restaurants and educational establishments. Other than Waterhouse, who, in terms of the number of commissions, was the factory's biggest and most consistent customer, few if any other architects seem to have had any particular loyalty to the factory or, presumably, its designers. Unfortunately, the records for Burmantofts are far from complete, usually mentioning only prestigious projects that could be featured in promotional catalogues and it may be that numbers of important commissions are absent from the record. Certainly, the importance of small independent builders as clients is virtually unknown, although such 'bread and butter' trade must have been crucial to the Company. Although the projects mentioned made use of constructional and or decorative ceramic components, few of the designs, other than those by Waterhouse, show anything very progressive in their conception; Renaissance Revival styles predominate and there is little to indicate the changes that were to take place in Neatby's design philosophy during the 1890s.

However, after his move to Doulton of Lambeth, Neatby's working experience was to change dramatically and during his time there and afterwards, he developed a very successful relationship with a small number of architects, who used him on some of their most prestigious projects. At least from the mid-1890s, it is possible to discuss Neatby's career in terms of conscious patronage, and to see him working in a progressive mix of styles, including elements of Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts visual vocabularies, sometimes alongside architects whose work displays similar artistic sympathies. Foremost among these was the Norwich architect
George Skipper (1854-1948).

In terms of eccentricity, few English architects have rivalled George Skipper. Born in East Dereham in 1856, he was the second son of Robert Skipper, a local building contractor. Following a youthful ambition to become an artist, nurtured by a year spent at Norwich of Art in 1872-73, Skipper eventually took parental advice and in 1873 entered the office of John T. Lee, of Bedford Row, London, to study architecture. Over the next few years he travelled widely and continued his studies. Eventually he set up practice on his own account in Dereham (1879) and the following year moved to Norwich. Over the next few years, in addition to other successes, he became an important influence on architecture in Cromer, the Norfolk seaside holiday resort north of Norwich, where he constructed several large hotels and the town hall. Although contracts in Norwich itself were less than prestigious until the later 1890s, Skipper based his practice in the city and in 1896 built himself a new office there in London Street. The building illustrated here as Plates 5.1 to 5.3 shows both Skipper’s confidence and his interest in architectural ceramics, particularly in the relief-moulded panels made in local Cosseyware, which depict scenes from the architect’s life.  

The year 1898 saw Skipper designing his most famous building and his first large commission in Norwich, the Royal Arcade (Plate 5.4), which was opened in 1899. This project brought him into contact, probably for the first time, with W.J. Neatby at Doulton. The original plan had been to produce a brick-clad structure but at some point in 1898 Skipper decided to change the

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Plate 5.1. Skipper’s Offices, Norwich (1896).

Plate 5.2. Cosseyware ceramic relief-moulded panels on the facade of Skipper’s Offices.

Plate 5.3. Cosseyware ceramic relief-moulded panels on the facade of Skipper’s Offices.
Plate 5.4. Royal Arcade, Norwich, by Skipper (1899).

Plate 5.5. Commercial Chambers, Norwich, by Skipper (1901-03).
specification to Doulton Carraraware and in doing so produced a unique building complex of outstanding originality. Much of the quality of this complex lies in its polychromatic Carraraware decoration designed by Neatby and executed in an Art Nouveau style. Whether Skipper was choosing architectural ceramics or Neatby is uncertain but the latter's work was becoming well known through publicity in trade journals, particularly the *British Architect*. Neatby's designs for the Blackpool Winter Gardens were published in some detail in this journal and may have been very influential in Skipper's choice. That Skipper began to become interested in the *avant-garde* style of English New Art is obvious from other buildings produced by him soon after the Royal Arcade. Notable among these are his Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club House, Lowestoft, of 1902-03 and his Commercial Chambers, Red Lion Street, Norwich, 1901-03, shown here as Plate 5.5, which is designed to an asymmetrical format with an eccentric attic storey capped to one side by a dome. Further evidence of his passion for Art Nouveau at this period is to be found in one of his sketch books where an entry for October 1901 records a visit to Glasgow to sketch architecture. Special mention is made of 'Miss Cranston's Tea Room, [by] Mr. Macintosh (sic) of Honeyman & Keppie & Glasgow School of Art'. The entry includes a sketch of what appears to doors in the Willow Tea Rooms by Mackintosh and some associated decorative details.

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10 Skipper, G.: *Sketch Book*, no. 23 (Collections of the Royal Institute of British Architects), RAN 35/C/33.
Neatby may have been responsible for Skipper’s enthusiasm for new forms of architectural decoration or the contract for the Royal Arcade may have been the result of a previous interest. Whatever the order of events, both men were clearly in sympathy with one another when it came to architecture and Skipper commissioned Neatby on at least two further occasions, first to do work on his Norwich Union Life Insurance Offices, Norwich (1901-06), illustrated here as Plate 5.6, and subsequently at Sennowe Park, Guist, Norfolk (1904-11). The Norwich Union Offices, a powerful exercise in Classicism with strong Palladian influences, is Skipper’s most successful and opulent building, and for the decoration of the structure he assembled a number of specialist craftsmen and artists, among whom was Neatby, with a responsibility for stained glass design and mural painting. Neatby’s part in the former is somewhat difficult to judge but his wall murals are dealt with in detail in Chapter 8. At Sennowe Park, home of Thomas Cook, a member of the family firm of travel agents, who left the family business and settled in Norfolk, Skipper was given the task of enlarging a pre-existing Georgian mansion into an imposing country house. Once again Neatby was called in to create wall murals and these are also described in Chapter 8.

In considering Skipper’s two large commissions mentioned above there can be no doubt that he was consciously patronising Neatby. Neither client was likely to know Neatby and the tasks
Plate 5.6. Norwich Union Life Insurance Offices, Norwich, by Skipper (1901-06).
given to him were quite different from work executed on the Royal Arcade. By now, Neatby had set up as an independent designer and decorator and so it was his talents rather than the name and expertise of Doulton that Skipper was hiring. As the nature of the work was so different, namely mural painting, utilizing paint and canvas, rather than glazes and ceramics, Skipper must have been aware of Neatby’s wider talents and was, no doubt, familiar with his work since leaving Doulton and was fully cognizant of his versatility. Additionally, it seems likely that the two men got on well together and that Skipper found Neatby easy to work with.

Evidence as to the nature of Neatby, his character and ability to work with others is provided by another of his important patrons, Ernest Runtz (1859-1913), in the obituary that he wrote soon after Neatby’s death. In the opening paragraph Runtz laments:

‘The death of Mr. Neatby will have caused sincere regret to those architects who had the pleasure of being associated with him. Modest to a degree and without an atom of commercialism in his constitution, he was an artist in the best sense and was never more happy than when he was associated with an architect in the clothing and adornment of a building’. ¹¹

Runtz’s sentiments were presumably felt by George Skipper as well as by a number of other architects who had worked with Neatby. The points that Runtz mentions, the lack of commercial drive and devotion to his work, would have been more than enough to endear him to most Victorian architects, but his words seem sincere and one senses a feeling of personal

loss in his text.

Runtz may have recognised a kindred spirit in Neatby. He did not take up the study of architecture until he was thirty, having been an auctioneer, valuer and estate agent, and only started in practice as an architect in the mid 1890s, just at the time when Neatby was beginning to develop his mature style and to battle for recognition. The two men were also of similar ages with Runtz being the senior by about a year. Runtz and Neatby are known to have worked together on at least three projects, although comments made in Neatby's obituary suggest that the actual number of co-operative ventures was much more. They probably first met to collaborate over the building of a series of shops and offices at 54-55 Cornhill, London (c.1893) when Neatby was working at Doulton and Co. Runtz designed the buildings and Neatby the decorative details, including some grotesque statues, the result being somewhat melodramatic. Subsequently, Neatby worked with Runtz on the New Gaiety Theatre, London (1903), producing interior decorations. Norman Shaw was involved with the exterior elevations for this building, apparently adding much that was beyond Runtz's abilities. 12 In 1904 Neatby produced painted mural work for Runtz's Theatre Royal, Birmingham.

Runtz seems to have specialized in building theatres and looking at his work it is tempting to suggest that it was in this area that his talents were best suited as his buildings can scarcely be described as possessing gravitas. He, like Neatby, was caught up in the wave of new styles that produced a good deal of eccentric looking architecture at the end of Victoria's reign. The fact

that his works lack a serious quality does not however negate his remarks about Neatby’s abilities. In the obituary he speaks of Neatby’s versatility and genius and indeed, to him, those qualities must have seemed very real.

Although other names might be mentioned, the architects Newton and Cheatle of Birmingham conclude this survey of Neatby’s patrons. Well known in Birmingham, this partnership experimented with English New Art styles in their buildings at the end of the 19th century and it therefore not surprising that when they came to build their City Arcades scheme in Birmingham in 1898, they chose Doulton architectural ceramics rather than stone as their facing material. Neatby became the decorative designer for the ceramics section of the project and produced a series of terracotta figures and two particularly Art Nouveau style heads for the main entrance facade. This work is discussed and illustrated in Chapter 7. Neatby’s part in the project was important enough but was made more so by Newton and Cheatle’s invitation for him to return to Birmingham in 1901 to design the interior of the King’s Café, within the arcades. Obviously, Neatby had impressed his former clients with his abilities and versatility. This was not just a project involving ceramic murals but an entire interior design scheme involving furniture, stained glass and, presumably, light fittings.13 This is the first recorded instance of Neatby undertaking an entire scheme of decoration and it may have decided him to finally make the break with Doulton and set up in business on his own account. Certainly, it was at around this time that the change in his career came, and it may be that Newton and

Cheatle provided the impetus.

Runtz, Skipper, Newton and Cheatle, these, and a few others, were Neatby’s real patrons, those architects who commissioned him rather than Burmantofts or Doulton. They provided him with a range of differing challenges involving him in artwork in a range of media and styles. For his part, his creativity and skills allowed him to fulfill his clients needs. Sometimes his contribution was small but in a project such as Skipper’s Royal Arcade, Norwich, it is probable that the entire design for the ceramic cladding was Neatby’s. Whatever his contribution, he worked well with the various architects who commissioned him. One, the London based Charles Fitzroy Doll (1850-1929), even commissioned Neatby to paint murals for his lavish personal residence, The Towers, Much Hadham (unrecorded and unfortunately destroyed).

As regards the question of what type of men his clients were and how they can be characterized, it is to be remembered that his patrons were the architects not the subsequent owners of his works. To identify a uniform set of criteria by which to classify these men is not easy as their experiences and projects were so diverse. However, although George Skipper received several important and rather traditional contracts, he and the others mentioned above all had an interest in ceramics as a new building material and all seem to have embraced exuberant styles that would perhaps not have been as successful in any other medium. The types of buildings that they constructed include a number of theatres, hotels and arcades, all part of the consumer leisure industry even in Victorian times, and this rather flamboyant type of building does typify their work. In essence, they were not ‘architectural heavyweights’, such
as John Belcher (1841-1913) or John James Joass (1868-1952), whose use of neo-Baroque styles in the Edwardian period incorporated both the dignity and mass of a calculated, rather than contrived, classical revival architecture. Neatby’s patrons rarely worked on such a scale, and were frequently associated with buildings for public use and entertainment. In such a context it is easy to understand their enthusiasm for Neatby’s work which frequently has an air of ‘seaside jollity’ about it. Having admitted this, however, it is nevertheless true that a great deal of fin-de-siècle decorative artwork falls into the same category.

14 For example, Belcher’s Hall of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, London (1890), undertaken with A. Beresford Pite (1861-1934).
Neatby's first continuous employment as a designer rather than as an architect or surveyor was with the ceramics firm of Wilcock and Co. at their Burmantofts Works, situated on the eastern outskirts of Leeds. The firm had begun life as a coal-mining concern in the 1840s but within twenty years, fireclay had been discovered on the site and the firm expanded into making a range of sanitary wares and fire-brick products. In 1879 James Holroyd, from a local textile manufacturing family, became the manager of the Burmantofts Works and embarked upon a wholesale programme of re-organization at the works with the building of a new factory for the production of glazed bricks at the forefront of his plans for expansion. In 1880 he had a new suite of company offices and a warehouse building constructed in Leeds, designed in the new Queen Anne Style by the London architect Maurice B. Adams and went into the production of a new range of architectural ceramics with some of the designs also being supplied by Adams. Finally he began the manufacture of glazed pottery vessels which were marketed under the name of *Burmantofts Faience*, and examples of these pots were exhibited at the annual exhibition of ceramics and 'china painting' at Howell and James's in London in 1881. By the mid-1880s Burmantofts was one of the most important producers of architectural ceramics, sanitary wares and *avant-garde* pottery in Britain.

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Neatby arrived at Burmantofts in 1884, most probably in the spring of that year, shortly before his twenty-fourth birthday.\textsuperscript{3} He was to stay with the company for the next six years and during this time the basis of his approach to decorative design was firmly established. Valance explains that he was hired 'as a designer of tiles for interior decoration. However, he was no mere draughtsman on paper, but used to paint tiles himself and execute them in several different methods.'\textsuperscript{4} This last comment by Valance suggests that Neatby was multi-talented in the field of decorative design and this is supported by the evidence of his activities while at Burmantofts. Most of the extant information relating to Neatby's work for Wilcock and Co. resides in the designs that he executed for trade catalogues published between 1886 and 1890\textsuperscript{5}. In addition there are known several hand-painted ceramic plates bearing Neatby's signature and at least two moulded tiles carry his name.

**Painted ceramics.**

Effectively, there are six main areas of evidence that illustrate Neatby's accomplishments at Burmantofts: catalogue illustrations; ceramic paintings; tile designs; designs for architectural mouldings; fireplace designs; extant architectural schemes. The evidence for each of these areas of work is variable. Very few examples of his work as a ceramic painter and a tile designer are recorded and the authorship of his designs for fireplaces, architectural terracotta and overall interior and exterior architectural schemes can only be inferred from their appearance in illustrations drawn by him. The largest body of material that can definitely be attributed to

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\textsuperscript{3} See Chapter 1 for a chronology of Neatby's movements at this date.

\textsuperscript{4} Valance, A., 'Mr. W.J. Neatby and his work', *The Studio*, 29, 1903, pp. 113-114.

\textsuperscript{5} See Chapter 1.
Neatby is the series of over sixty sheets of drawings and pages of hand-written text, signed or initialed by him, that exist as printed reproductions in the series of trade catalogues he worked on between 1884 and 1890.

The small quantity of recorded hand painted work by Neatby can be firmly categorized as being Aesthetic in inspiration, with Japanese influence showing prominently in the subject matter chosen. Plate 6.1 shows two very similar circular painted plaques each featuring a single female head, one side view and one full face. The plaques, painted predominantly in green, dark blue and reds portray the heads of two rather European looking ladies wearing Japanese costume. Both women sport intricate coiffures, wearing combs and other ornaments in their light brown coloured hair. Their heads are set against a background of an oriental printed textile, the pattern of which includes curvilinear forms and mon symbols. The main outlines and features are executed with thick black lines which in conjunction with the suggestively Western hair colour produces a rather unsophisticated appearance. However, such an assessment ignores the basic graphic style of Neatby’s art and also the influence of Japonism which dictated a flat, two dimensional interpretation of form delineated in the manner of Japanese woodblock prints. Both plaques are signed in blue: W. Neatby.

Plaques of this type were a fashionable ceramic art form in the 1870s and 1880s. Undoubtedly, Neatby would have been aware of similar studio-style plaques produced by Minton at their art pottery studio in Kensington Gore from 1871 to 1875 and subsequently in the Potteries.  

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shape was also one of the most popular with both the amateur and professional artists who exhibited at Howell and James each year from 1876 to c.1887. In the 1880s Burmantofts employed several other artists to paint similar ceramic plaques, and it is probable that the physical task of painting pots was not one of Neatby’s main activities.

Ceramic tile design and illustration.

Burmantofts produced a range of hand-painted tiles but research has not uncovered any signed examples by Neatby. These individually executed designs are not numerically important in extant *in situ* examples and collections of Burmantofts tiles and were far less important than the mass-produced, moulded relief decorated tiles produced by the factory. These latter were made in a variety of sizes, starting with a basic six-inch square tile and rising in size to suit the requirements of the project in hand. Long narrow panels of up to three feet in height or length are not uncommon. They are usually naturalistically decorated in low relief with female figures or depictions of birds or other animals. Neatby illustrated a number of these tiles in both the trade publications: *Catalogue of Designs* (Leeds: Burmantofts, 1886), and *Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience* (Leeds: Burmantofts, 1890). Both publications are a testimony to Neatby’s skill as an illustrator but, in the area of tile design, provide little information to suggest that Neatby was indeed the designer of any of the tiles included in the catalogues.

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Neatby began work on the former of the two catalogues by 17th July 1884 at the latest, although he had probably started working at the factory a few months earlier. In addition to numerous illustrations by Neatby, this also carried material from an earlier publication: *A Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience and Decorative Terra-Cotta*, published by Wilcock and Co. in November 1882. This rather sets the tone for the catalogue which Neatby began work on, with Burmantofts making use of many previous designs to fill the pages. Any drawings that were considered suitable were left untouched while extant designs that had either not been included or had not been given enough prominence in the earlier catalogue were drawn or reworked by Neatby. Probably very few designs were new.

The proof that Neatby was at first merely entrusted with illustrating existing designs by others, rather than allowed to create new ones, can be seen in the examples Plates 6.2 and 6.3. ‘Winter’, shown in Plate 6.2 is one of a set of drawings of ‘The Four Seasons’ that appeared together as Plate 137 in the 1886 catalogue and as Plate 231 in the 1890 catalogue. The original line drawing, now lost, was executed on the 26th August, 1884 and was one of a number of reworked illustrations that Neatby produced between July and November, 1884, showing Burmantofts faience tile panels, nearly all with similar female figures, being series of figures representing ‘The Four Winds’, ‘The Elements and Hospitality’, and ‘The Gatherers’, as well

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9 The date is the earliest inscribed date for his work and occurs as part of an inscription: ‘W.J.N. delt. 17. VII. 84’ on Plate 156, which is entitled: *A few Pilaster Panels in Burmantofts Faience by Wilcock and Co. Burmantofts* (sic).

10 See Chapter One.

Plate 6.3. Winter, drawn by T. Raffles Davison and originally published in the British Architect, early 1880s.
as a few other miscellaneous figures. A caption to the sheet that includes 'Winter' advises would-be purchasers that the panels, shown as measuring 24 inches by 9 inches, '...can be considerably modified in either length or width & can be executed in any colour or colours and are in low relief'. That this particular design is not Neatby’s can be seen with reference to Plate 6.3 which is one of a number of images on a sheet entitled ‘Rambling Sketches No. 8 by T. Raffles Davison, being a first visit to Burmantofts Faience Works’. The central figural section of the design is basically the same as that drawn by Neatby yet clearly carries the inscription ‘V. Kremer invt’. Victor Kremer, born at Sarreguemines, Moselle, France, is recorded at Burmantofts in the early 1880s yet is known to have married in Sarreguemines on the 9th January 1884. He may well have left Leeds before this as no evidence of his presence at Burmantofts exists as late as 1884. Certainly, as this drawing by Raffles Davison had appeared in the 1882 Burmantofts catalogue, it pre-dates Neatby’s arrival at Burmantofts.

Another similar example of Neatby drawing pre-existing designs can be seen in Plate 6.4. Here, in addition to a pair of smaller tiles showing ‘The Monk’ and ‘The Cavalier’, Neatby has illustrated four larger figures that are emblematic of the ‘Four Winds’. Again these are earlier creations, this time by the designer F. Hamilton Jackson and used in mantle-piece designs by architect Maurice Bingham Adams whom James Holroyd met in January 1880. At Holroyd’s
Plate 6.4. *The Four Winds Etc.*, signed ‘W.J.N. DELT 22 VII 84.’
Plate 6.5. Designs by Maurice B. Adams for Burmantofts c. 1880.
invitation Adams designed a range of ceramic door casings, fireplaces and porches for Burmantofts. A page of these designs, dating to c.1880, is shown in Plate 6.5. On the fireplace shown at the left-hand side of the drawing, the ‘Four Winds’ tiles can be clearly seen, two to either side of the grate.

A further example of Neatby undertaking the illustration of another designer’s work can be seen in a page of illustrations, this time from the 1890 catalogue, signed ‘Wm. J. N. del’. The page shows six eight inch square tiles, of which three are illustrated above in Plate 6.6 Stylistically these tiles would appear to be the work of Pierre Mallet, a French designer who worked at Burmantofts from 1885 to 1886. His speciality, while at Burmantofts, was the production of low relief decorated plaques and tiles such as that illustrated for comparison in Plate 6.7. His naturalistically decorated pieces are frequently signed on the face (on this example in the lower left-hand corner) and are usually finished in a single-coloured glaze. While Neatby’s signed Burmantofts ceramics are rare, Mallet’s works are particularly interesting in establishing the authorship of specific designs. His tiles and circular wall plaques, intended for mass production rather than as unique pieces, display two types of signature: either incised or relief moulded, indicating that they were either signed on the original model or later in reverse in the mould itself. A further series of wall plaques decorated with moulded low-relief landscape scenes,

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Plate 6.6. A set of three tiles drawn by Neatby for the 1890 Burmantofts catalogue.

Plate 6.7. A Burmantofts Faience tile designed by Pierre Mallet, c. 1885.
roughly contemporary with Mallet’s work and Neatby’s time at Burmantofts, was signed with an ‘HL’ monogram, for H. Leech, an artist who also executed hand-painted designs on tiles.

The practice of displaying designers signatures on mass produced moulded tiles was not particularly common in the 1880s yet the two examples given above show that the procedure was firmly established at Burmantofts. In the absence of original artist’s drawings or other contemporary documentation, it remains the only definite method of establishing the authorship of tile designs. With reference to Neatby, whose tile drawings in the Burmantofts trade catalogues have been shown (see above) to have been the design work largely or wholly of others, it suggests that Aymer Valance’s statement that Neatby was taken on at Burmantofts ‘... as a designer of tiles for interior decoration’, is something of an exaggeration, and that like his painting on pottery, his tile designing activities were of minor importance. However, research has uncovered part of what was originally almost certainly a set of four or six tiles that can be proven to be Neatby’s work.

The evidence for this set exists as two related tiles showing different scenes from what was almost certainly a larger series of designs depicting eighteenth century occupations connected with public houses or hostelries. The tiles, each measuring 19.75 by 11.50 inches (50x29.5 cm), and entitled ‘The Maide at the Inne’ and ‘The Ratcatcher’, are designed in a similar vein to


18 Private Collection.


Plate 6.10. A Burmantofts tile: *The Maide at the Inne*, designed by Neatby.

Plate 6.11. A detail of Neatby’s signature from the bottom right-hand corner of the *Maide* tile.
a series of nursery rhyme tiles created by Walter Crane for Maw and Co. Broseley, Shropshire in the mid-1870s. Neatby's 'Maide' is reminiscent of Crane's 'Little Brown Betty' (Plate 6.8), but lacks the fairytale character and delicacy of line of the latter's work. These tiles, in typical Aesthetic style and presumably designed to complement the Queen Anne style architecture of the decade, owe some of the variations in their appearance to the different techniques of production. Crane's 6 inch square tiles are based on the graphic work developed for his several toy books and are decorated with a printed design which allows for consideration of detail and subtlety of effect; Neatby's are larger and are decorated with low-relief moulded figures and details with the formal outlines composed of incised lines. These lines form the boundaries to differing areas for hand colouring and the process allows for a certain amount of modelling of the figures and their dress, but the overall effect is one of coarseness when compared to Crane's designs. Probably the Burmantofts tiles were designed for commercial properties rather than the children's bedrooms of middle-class Aesthetic homes. Like Crane's tiles, Neatby's designs were probably originally produced as part of a larger series. Both extant tiles are illustrated as Plates 6.9 and 6.10, with an example of Neatby's signature from the 'Maide' tile being shown as Plate 6.11.

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19 Illustrated as part of a page of designs by Crane in Spencer, I.: Walter Crane (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 113. Several examples of these tiles exist in the collection of the Jackfield Tile Museum, Broseley, Shropshire.

Plate 6.12. Burmantofts parti-coloured ware vase, late 1890s.
The use of moulded inscribed lines for figural outline on the Neatby tiles illustrates an early use, at Burmantofts, of a technique that was to become commonplace on a range of 'parti-coloured' wares produced by the factory in the late 1890s. These polychrome decorated wares, usually vases, were moulded with slightly raised patterns delineated with inscribed lines, as shown in Plate 6.12. The consequent division of patterned areas into 'cells' enabled them to be hand coloured by semi-skilled labour, quickly and efficiently, making polychromatic decoration economically viable. Such moulded designs were in use at Burmantofts in the 1880s but usually in conjunction with monochrome glazes, even for large figural tiles such as that illustrated in Plate 6.2. Neatby's tile series of the later 1880s may indicate that he introduced the idea of this novel form of polychrome decoration on work of this kind at Burmantofts. Certainly, his subsequent designs for Doulton and Co. in the 1890s suggest a strong interest in the theory and practice of colour division on tile surfaces (see Chapters 3 and 7). It is possible that these tiles were originally produced in a single-coloured glaze and later re-issued in polychrome, contemporary with the other parti-coloured wares. Certainly, artists such as P. Mallet had their designs of c.1885-86 reproduced at Burmantofts well into the 1890s. However, when this was done, it was always in the original monochrome glaze. Also, whereas Mallet's work is relatively common, these particular Neatby designed tiles are extremely rare and may well have been produced for a single decorative scheme. Dating the tiles with precision is impossible as the

21 See Walton, P. : op. cit., pp. 59-62. These wares were originally called 'Hispano-Moresque wares', see: 'Burmantofts', The Pottery Gazette, Jan. 1st (1900), pp. 70-71.
mark on the reverse can only be ascribed a date of late 1880s to early 1890s, but it is very unlikely that they were produced over a long period or in any great numbers. Any further evidence relating to possible original designs for tiles by Neatby resides in extant architectural schemes of decoration and will be dealt with when these are discussed below.

Architectural mouldings.

In the field of designs for architectural mouldings, ascribing Neatby’s authorship is once again difficult. Numerous drawings illustrating architectural mouldings are included in the main Burmantofts catalogues that have already been mentioned. These designs show a range of ceramic mouldings decorated in low relief with a range of floral and figural subjects that could be produced in either glazed faience or terracotta. Virtually all of those drawings signed by Neatby are for glazed bricks or faience rather than for terracotta, but most were probably suitable for either medium. In the earliest of the catalogues worked on by Neatby, the Catalogue of Designs (1886), most of his drawings are of figural tile panels rather than being true architectural mouldings in a structural or semi-structural sense. Exceptions to this are Plates: 156 (illustrated here as Chapter 1, Plate 1.4); 165 (Plate 6.13); 186 (Plate 6.14) and 187 (Plate 6.15). Burmantofts Plate 156 illustrates a series of pilaster panels in faience, executed in a typical late Victorian Renaissance revival style, plus a single plant-in-pot panel in perhaps

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22 Walton, P.: ibid, Mark 1, p. 67.

23 In this thesis, floor tiles are taken to be a distinct category of ceramics differing from architectural mouldings. While ceramic mouldings in either terracotta or glazed faience were often used in the Victorian and Edwardian periods in Britain to clad an underlying metal or brick support structure, their physical integration with the main fabric of a building marks out their structural function. For the purpose of this thesis, flat tiles are taken to represent ephemeral surface decoration and finish, although the distinction is not always easy to recognize.
a more Oriental vein. Typical of the historicist and eclectic nature of architectural decoration of the 1880s, the panels are competently drawn in an illusionistic technique that makes full use of dense black line hatching to suggest shadows and heighten the three-dimensional appearance of the objects. Although Neatby’s technique for these drawings can be considered somewhat unsophisticated, these representations were probably more than adequate for use in a trade catalogue and compare well with illustrations in similar publications by other architectural ceramics companies. Plate 165 shows further examples of decorative friezes for use as single panels or repeating runs. Drawn in similar manner to Plate 156 this page, although undated, was probably executed at a similar time (1884) and carries the same ‘W.J.N. delt’ inscription. One feature that marks out this drawing from Neatby’s other graphic works for the firm is the small figure who draws upwards the bottom right-hand corner of the page as if it were a theatre curtain. This rather imaginative depiction seems rather unsuitable for an architectural ceramics trade catalogue yet managed to find its way into print. Like his early tile drawings, it seems unlikely that these two sets of drawings were fresh designs by Neatby. Even if they were, they show little originality. They were however an important introduction to a loosely interpreted Renaissance style that was prevalent in architectural decoration well into the next decade and Neatby’s lasting adherence to this particular form of decoration is illustrated in projects, such as the facade of the Salford Board School (1894) and the Royal Observatory, Greenwich (1895), that he executed for Doulton and Co..

While Plates 156 and 165 show something of Neatby’s artistic flair, the final two illustrations in the series, Plates 186 and 187, are little more that exercises in draughtsmanship. Showing

Plate 6.15. Burmantofts wall surfaces and dados drawn by Neatby.
glazed brick mouldings and faience dado panels, these technical drawings illustrate what was standard Burmantofts stock. Presumably, it was for drawings of this kind that Burmantofts employed Neatby with his architectural experience.

The contents of the 1890 Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience shows a much larger number of illustrations by Neatby, many of them of architectural mouldings often shown in the interiors of buildings. The line-drawing techniques developed for Neatby’s earlier catalogue work remain similar and the decorative styles continue on from the 1886 catalogue with Burmantofts Plate 229 actually being titled ‘Renaissance Panels by the Burmantofts Works’. However, the 1890 catalogue is very different from its predecessors both in its style of presentation and in the contribution which Neatby appears to have made both to the publication and the operation of company contracts. In terms of marketing objectives, the change of emphasis in this catalogue can be explained in terms of company experience and confidence. Although the catalogue format had been a ‘shop window’ for their ceramic products and had therefore illustrated a range of individual ceramic mouldings, glazed bricks, fireplaces and faience tiles, complete with technical specifications and sometimes prices, Burmantofts had always been aware of the commercial value for the acquisition of future contracts in past achievements. In this, from the early 1880s onwards, they were assisted by numerous drawings of completed Burmantofts contracts, building interiors and exteriors, by T. Raffles Davison, whose drawings, often termed ‘Rambling Sketches’ appeared regularly in the British Architect. Some of these drawings were subsequently used in Burmantofts trade publications. In the 1890 catalogue the importance of this type of marketing was given even greater emphasis with numerous new drawings by Neatby showing a series of architectural ceramic features taken from named building contracts.
that had recently been completed by Burmantofts. Many of these were for large public or commercial buildings such as hospitals and banks and suggest that large scale individual contract work was the aim of the Burmantofts management rather than mass-produced small-scale item sales, although economically, these remained of paramount importance to the Company’s revenues. An exception to this new emphasis was sales of fireplaces, an area which still received prominence in this catalogue and which was the subject of the separately produced booklet Burmantofts Firesides, which was almost certainly published in the same year, using illustrative material from the main catalogue.

A further point to notice in the catalogue is the importance to Burmantofts of faience and glazed bricks largely destined for interior use and this and the increasing interest in large-scale projects reflects the Company’s continuing and expanding relationship with the architect Alfred Waterhouse. Although glazed brick and tile had been available much earlier, the production and usage of these materials saw a major expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century. The development and successful marketing of moulded faience components came even later, in the 1880s, and it was in this area that Burmantofts was to become pre-eminent until the early years of the 20th century, when the material became unfashionable. It was this material, used on the inside of his buildings, that Waterhouse was to perceive as an excellent foil to many of his brick and terracotta exteriors.24

Ceramic interiors.

Waterhouse was one of the leading pioneers in building with architectural ceramics and his

24 See below for mention of this material in Waterhouse’s buildings.
extensive use of terracotta in the construction of the Natural History Museum, London (1870) is both a tour de force in architecture of this type but also proved to be a testing ground for the new material. Having encountered and for the most part solved many of the problems associated with the design, manufacture, supply and erection of terracotta blockwork at the Natural History Museum and subsequently at other buildings, Waterhouse enjoyed a confidence with architectural ceramics that few of his contemporaries could equal. With such a background the logic of using ceramics for interior decoration is not difficult to argue. Unfortunately, terracotta could appear rather dull and dark on the inside of buildings and faience, with its bright, permanent colours and easily maintained glazed surface, afforded a more appropriate material for interiors. Despite the publicity given to Burmantofts faience in the trade press, such as The Building News, from as early as 1880, it was probably not until 1883, when he was in Leeds to design the new Yorkshire College that Waterhouse gained first-hand experience of the new material. Certainly, by the following year he was preparing to use Burmantofts faience for the interior of his major commission, the National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London (1884-87). Waterhouse's position as the main architect for the Prudential Assurance Company made him a customer to be courted and the Burmantofts management were obviously successful in their relationships with him, as between 1885 and 1901 more than a dozen branch offices for the Prudential were constructed with Burmantofts faience interiors. These were large and prestigious commissions for Burmantofts as the 'usual arrangement was a large public


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office for the Prudential, backed by some clerical space, and sets of managers’ offices, which might altogether occupy two floors’. In addition, accommodation space was created to lease to other companies. Although part of the Prudential building these offices had separate access and comprised a range of companies, including, in the Leeds Prudential, office premises for the Leeds Fireclay Company, who, from 1889, took over the ownership of the Burmantofts Works.

In the period 1885 to 1890 Burmantofts furnished faience interiors for Prudential offices at Liverpool (1885-88), Manchester (1886-89), and Glasgow (1888-93), as well as to a variety of other Waterhouse buildings including the Royal Infirmary Chapel, Liverpool (1890), the National Provincial Bank, Manchester (1888-93) and the Hotel Metropole, Brighton (1888-89). The last four buildings listed above are illustrated by Neatby in the 1890 catalogue and it seems most likely that he was in charge of the projects for each of these buildings at the Burmantofts end.

There is unfortunately nowhere any record of Neatby’s official position at Burmantofts to substantiate the above. Alan Garlick, in recording his departure from Leeds in 1890, offers the opinion that his six years with the Company had been spent in ‘becoming expert in the use of ceramics for architectural decoration’, and he would seem to be the obvious choice to head


the design team liaising with architects. No other likely individuals have been identified as having the ability to undertake this role. That Neatby was the Company’s leading artist and draughtsman seems certain in the light of his work for the various catalogues mentioned above and with his former architectural experience his abilities as an designer of architectural faience are unlikely to have been equalled by any other member of the staff.

What evidence there is for designating Neatby’s status within the company suggests that his official position at Burmantofts would have been ‘Head Draughtsman’. Certainly, the title existed in 1890, when the records of the Leeds Fireclay Company, Burmantofts parent company, show that the title was held by a Mr. A. Whitehead.³⁰ The information is given in a list of contracts or agreements in force at Burmantofts on May 15th, 1890. Whitehead is designated as ‘Head Draughtsman’ with a contract term due to expire in June 1993. The list contains ten agreements, mentioning artists, modellers, a glazer and a glaze maker, but makes no mention of Neatby. This document must have been produced after Neatby’s departure from Burmantofts as it is inconceivable that his name would have been omitted or that he would have been employed without some form of contract. The initials ‘A.W.’, undoubtedly for A. Whitehead, appear for the first time on a few drawings, dating to late 1888, that feature in the catalogue *Burmantofts Firesides*, of 1890,³¹ and it is most plausible that, starting as a junior, he took over the position of Head Draughtsman from Neatby when the latter left the Company.


³¹ For example, Burmantofts Plate 243 entitled *Grates and Chimney-pieces by the Burmantofts Works*, which is signed ‘AW 8/11/88’.
It would seem, therefore, that for most of the period that he worked at Burmantofts, Neatby would have been in charge of re-drawing architects designs, scaling them up to take into account the shrinkage of the terracotta during firing and deciding how each block or moulding was to be manufactured, jointed with its neighbours and anchored to the building. Consequently, most if not all of the important architectural projects that Burmantofts undertook in the period 1885 to 1890 will have benefited from Neatby's input.

The extent to which an architectural ceramics component designer, working for a company such as Burmantofts, influenced architects or their clients is discussed in Chapter 3. However, comments relating to Neatby's interaction with specific architects and their projects while he was working for Burmantofts are given here.

To suggest that Neatby was anything but a very minor contributor to Waterhouse's architectural schemes is not realistic - Neatby had much more to learn from the *doyen* of ceramic Gothic architecture than Waterhouse had from him. However, Waterhouse seems to have been happy to accept advice on ceramic materials and readily used stock components from firms such as Burmantofts, Craven Dunnill and Co., and even William De Morgan. Also, it seems very unlikely that Waterhouse would have undertaken such complicated architectural features such as faience clad circular columns, complete with entasis, without detailed consultation with a member of the Burmantofts design staff who could advise on the suitability of the material and the accuracy and consistency of the individual tile components.
Conversely, Waterhouse employed a staff of approximately fifteen in the last two decades of the century and his office produced numerous drawings from overall site and building plans right through to details of interior decoration such as patterns for tiled surfaces. In this, he was different from some other architects who worked more with concepts than details and were content to let ceramic designers such as Neatby work out the details of terracotta or faience schemes. Certainly Waterhouse gave serious consideration to the details of his faience interiors, even down to the colours used, and for important commissions such as those for the Prudential designs for faience decorations survive.

Waterhouse was an important customer who would have had no trouble in having his designs made to order, but just how much of each interior was an original conception and how much utilised pre-existing Burmantofts stock is difficult to ascertain. Equally, how did consultation with Burmantofts staff, presumably headed by Neatby, produce changes in the completed designs? Finally, were designs used by Waterhouse kept strictly for his buildings or utilised in the works of others? Relevant to these points is the faience fireplace used in the interior of the Prudential offices in Glasgow. Plate 6.16 shows the faience fireplace, as it exists today, in the main business hall of what was the Prudential Assurance Offices in Glasgow. Plate 6.17 shows a pages of drawings of fireplaces, signed by Neatby and dated 1890, that appeared as Plate 269 in the 1890 Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience and Burmantofts Firesides. In the centre of this

33 See Chapter 3.
Plate 6.16. Fireplace in Burmantofts glazed interior, Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow.

Plate 6.17. Burmantofts fireplaces, Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience and Burmantofts Firesides, Plate 269, drawn by Neatby (1890).
group of five fireplaces, No. 16, 'A Hall Fireside', is the same design as that seen in Plate 6.16 from Glasgow. Both illustrations show the same high fire surround with a heavy mantle shelf supported on four deep brackets that are decorated with characteristic 'Y' shaped mouldings. Beneath these, a single line of astragal moulding borders the recess for the fire grate. There are minor differences between the two illustrations, for example, in the Plate 6.17 the dentil mouldings on the perimeter of the mantel shelf are omitted as is the astragal moulding that runs between the heads of the mantle-support brackets, and the fire grate is set further back than in the Glasgow example, also, the wall behind fireplace is different. Neatby has obviously simplified the design for the catalogue, but structurally and in most details, the two are essentially the same. As Waterhouse's work on the building spanned the years 1888-93 and Neatby's drawing dates to 1890, it is impossible to know whether this was a Burmantofts design by Neatby, that Waterhouse used, or whether the latter designed it and Burmantofts appropriated the design for their own purposes. Although in essential features this fireplace has an architectonic quality not shared by most other Burmantofts fire surrounds, it seems inconceivable that the Company would risk alienating a major client by reproducing one of his designs without any form of credit. There seems to be a reasonable case for suggesting that this is a Neatby design. This theory is further supported by evidence from Burmantofts Plates 246 and 247 that also appear in Burmantofts Firesides. Both of these drawings of fireplaces are inscribed with an 'AW' monogram and the abbreviation 'INVT.' in the lower left-hand corner, but also carry Neatby's signature, accompanied by 'del.' in the corresponding right-hand corner. The use of the suffixes 'invenit' and 'delineavit' are clearly important here and mark out Alfred Waterhouse as the designer of the fireplaces while Neatby was merely the artist who
Plate 6.18. Interior of the Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow, showing frieze detail.

copied the drawing for the catalogue. If such legalistic formality is adhered to in these two plates, it seems unlikely that it would be omitted for other designs.

Further evidence of close co-operation between Burmantofts and Waterhouse in this particular building can be seen in the wall decoration shown in Plates 6.18 to 6.21. Of these four illustrations, the two photographs show faience friezes still extant in the Prudential offices in Glasgow. Both friezes are reproduced by Neatby in the 1890 Burmantofts catalogue, the first, resembling a stepped pyramid, as part of the central of three friezes in Plate 6.19 (Burmantofts Plate 311) and the second, a foliate scoll design, as the middle one of three friezes in Plate 6.21 (Burmantofts Plate 312). Again, no acknowledgement is given to Waterhouse and this could suggest that Neatby was the designer. Both drawings are dated for 1890. Incidentally, the lower frieze shown in Plate 6.19 was used in the Burmantofts faience interior for the Turkish baths at Waterhouse’s Hotel Metropole, Brighton (1888-89) as can be seen in Plate 6.22 (Burmantofts Plate 316, Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience, 1890).

Elsewhere in the 1890 Catalogue Plate 317 (here Plate 6.23) is titled ‘Faience Ceiling &c. by the Burmantofts Works’ and carries the additional information ‘Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow’. The page portrays a perspective sketch and a plan of the ceiling in part of the building. No mention of Waterhouse is made and again a case could be made for a strong design input from the Burmantofts design department. However, at least the location is given.
Plate 6.20. Interior of the Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow, showing frieze detail.


Plate 6.23. Burmantofts Faience ceiling drawn by Neatby (1890).

Plate 6.24. Interior of the Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow, showing the extant ceiling.

Plate 6.25. Interior of the Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow, showing the extant ceiling.
so that Waterhouse's involvement can be traced. The accuracy of Neatby's drawing in Plate 6.23 can be compared to the extant ceiling as shown in Plates 6.24 and 6.25.

A further drawing by Neatby, connected with Waterhouse interiors, is Plate 6.26 (Burmantofts Plate 308) which shows faience columns from the Royal Infirmary Chapel, Liverpool (1886-92), the Hotel Metropole, Brighton, and the National Provincial Bank, Manchester (1888-93). The drawing of the latter is of interest as it is of a particularly complex repeating shell design. Faience columns of this type can be seen in Plate 6.27, a contemporary photograph of the interior of the bank, but can also be seen in Plate 6.28, the interior of the Prudential Assurance offices in Glasgow.

Although Alfred Waterhouse was the most accomplished architect with whom Neatby worked, during his time at Burmantofts he was involved with several other notable architects and their projects. It is probable that the majority of the projects on which he worked have left no record of his involvement, but fortunately, through his drawings in the Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience (1890), it is possible to trace connections with architects such as John McLachlan, Sydney Mitchell, James McVicar Anderson, Thomas W. Cutler, Robert Watt, Charles Trubshaw, J. Vickers Edwards and Sir T. N. Deane. As discussed above, it is impossible to know how much first-hand involvement Neatby had with any of the projects undertaken by the architects mentioned above. In some instances it may have been no more than advising on

35 It must be stated that other architects names are not given in the 1890 Catalogue, but usually whole or large sections of interiors are shown and the location of the work portrayed is always given.

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Plate 6.28. Interior of the Prudential Assurance Offices, Glasgow, showing column decoration.
technical matters to do with the ceramic materials or supervising the modelling of new designs for decorative terracotta or faience components while for other projects he may have been given a major voice in the overall design, being allowed to suggest the use of pre-existing ceramic forms from stock or being asked to provide original designs that would be suitable for the material. As few, if any of Neatby’s drawings show any particularly characteristics that might be attributed solely to him, it is difficult to judge his input. Undoubtedly, the designs provided Neatby with useful experience for his future career.

Plate 6.29 (Burmantofts Plate 297) shows the interiors of the Restaurant of the Midland Railway Hotel, Bradford, designed by Charles Trubshaw c.1885, and the Luncheon Bar at the Grand Café, Belfast, by Robert Watt c.1885. The drawings, executed in 1889, show something of a departure for Neatby. Both perspective drawings are more imaginative than is usual in his interiors. Neatby’s drawings of fireplaces often contain household items such as vases, small tables or potted plants, and these accessories are repeated in both of these interiors but now with the addition of human figures. This latter suggests an increasing self-confidence in Neatby’s art work and follows a model for injecting variety into such drawing frequently used by T. Raffles Davison in his sketches for the British Architect. As most of Neatby’s drawings concentrate on the architectural aspects of a variety of interiors, it may be that these two drawings were produced for publication or display elsewhere, rather than being solely for use in the trade catalogue. Charles Trubshaw (d. 1917) held the position of Chief Architect to the Midland Railway Company and was to use Burmantofts faience again for his spectacular Midland Hotel, Manchester (1896-98). Robert Watt also used Burmantofts faience for the
Plate 6.29. Interiors of the Midland Railway Hotel, Bradford and the Grand Café, Belfast, drawn by Neatby (1889).
interiors of his Belfast Gas Offices, also c.1885. Although the Bradford hotel restaurant and the Belfast café are contemporary, considering that they are by two different architects, in character they seem remarkably similar. This, to some extent, reflects the prevailing system of wall decoration in the 1880s, with a division of the interior wall into three elements: frieze; filling and dado, running as a series of horizontal bands from ceiling to floor. However, in its use of neo-Renaissance frieze panels employing grotesques, groupings of columns and pilasters, with the latter being used to accentuate individual features such as alcoves or fireplaces, deep cut architectural mouldings and large individual formal components such as pediments, combined with rich permanent colours, interior design of this type acquires an almost Baroque heaviness which betrays both the limitations of the ceramic materials but also a lack of individual flair in the architects and designers responsible. Conversely, it could be argued that the fault was with Neatby and other company artists like him who advised architects on what was both technically possible and fashionable, in consideration of the artistic limitations of their modelling staff, current stock and the possible commercial repercussions of attempting something new that might require considerable development time and effort.

In terms of stylistic sources similar Classical roots can be observed in Neatby's drawings of the ceilings for the Commercial Bank of Scotland, Lombard Street, London, shown in Plates 6.30 and 6.31 (Bumantoffs Plates 272 and 273) by James McVicar Anderson (1835-1915) and the entrance vestibule of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, Manchester designed by C. Heathcote

36 See Crane, W.: Line and Form (1902), p. 235 for a diagram of this system; although, by this date, the tripartite division of walls in this way was somewhat out of date. Also, Lambourne, L.: The Aesthetic Movement (1996), pp. 20-23, and 'Artistic Homes - 1', The Queen, May 21 (1881), p. 501.

and Rawle. Although both sheets show perspective drawings Plate 6.30 also includes a plan
drawing of the Commercial Bank ceiling and both contain section drawings of the ceilings.

One of the most prestigious projects that Neatby was associated with was the building of the
Dublin Science and Art Museum. For this nationally important public contract the architects
were Sir T. N. Deane and Son, who ordered fifty-seven ceramic door casings from
Burmantofts.\textsuperscript{37} The door casings, an example of which can be seen in Plate 6.32, were painted
in white, yellow and blue with occasional touches of green and brown. The 1890 Catalogue
contains five different designs for these doorways, signed ‘Wm. J. Neatby del. 1889.’ Four of
these designs are illustrated as Plates 6.33 to 6.36 (Burmantofts Plates 250 to 253). The
drawings display a typical array of Classical motifs and structural forms. Although
uncompromising in their eclecticism they reflect the Victorian interest in the architectural forms
of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century English Renaissance. The illustrations here
show four different types of pediment, including on Plate 6.33 a swan-necked version,
surmounted by an urn, an arrangement often found on 18\textsuperscript{th}-century furniture. Three of the
examples have a central entablature panel showing a raised jewel decoration surrounded by a
strapwork border while one has a central ansate panel in the same position; two have prominent
shell ornaments. The most lavish is Plate 6.34, with a large panel frieze illustrating two putti
sitting to either side of a central urn and joined to it by festoons. Three of the designs have
pilaster panels based on Renaissance grotesques.

Plate 6.32. Burmantofts Faience door casing, Dublin Science and Art Museum (1889).


Plate 6.34. Burmantofts Faience door casing, Dublin Science and Art Museum, drawn by Neatby (1889).
Plate 6.35. Burmantofts Faience door casing, Dublin Science and Art Museum, drawn by Neatby (1889).


Plate 6.37. Burmantofts Renaissance panels drawn by Neatby (1889).
In formulating designs of such complexity the architects must have effected close liaison with Neatby at Burmantofts, if only to eradicate any technical problems. In fact, the designs probably owed more than mere advice to Neatby, as several of the elements passed into Burmantofts stock, again without reference to Deane and Son, as can be seen in Plate 6.37, and the various pilaster panels used on the door casings are simple variations of the type produced since the early 1880s, as can be seen in Chapter 1, Plate 1.4.

Another important and still extant building that appears in Neatby's drawings for the 1890 catalogue is the West Riding Asylum, Menstone, Yorkshire, designed by J. Vickers Edwards c.1890. A single sheet of drawings, Plate 6.38 (Burmantofts Plate 314), showing two separate designs for door surrounds, appears in the catalogue. Unlike Waterhouse, Edwards is not known to have had any particular affinity for faience and the two doorways shown in Plate 6.38 are structurally very simple with the addition of a sinuous segmental pediment giving the left-hand specimen added stature. The doorways have the appearance of standard Burmantofts stock items and the more complex design utilises the raised jewel decoration set in a strapwork cartouche that had been designed the previous year for the range of door surrounds that Burmantofts created for the Dublin Science and Art Museum. The character of these surrounds, with their reliance on previous Burmantofts work, strongly suggests considerable involvement by Neatby in their design. However, the catalogue drawings represent but a small part of the total scheme of decoration undertaken in Burmantofts faience.

Although the Menstone asylum was an enormous building project and represented the
Plate 6.38. Drawings of Burmantofts ceramic door casings at Menstone Asylum by Neatby (1890).

Plate 6.39. Burmantofts ceramic decoration in the main entrance corridor at Menstone Asylum.
expenditure considerable public funds, there was probably little money available for non-

essential decorations. Consequently, J. Vickers Edwards concentrated his efforts for decoration

on the area that was most likely to be seen by members of the public: the main entrance hall.

Plate 6.39 indicates the breadth of the scheme. J. Vickers Edwards’s design is based on a long
corridor, illuminated in places by windows set into the ceiling and divided, at intervals, by

lower, faience-clad archways. The arches spring from comparatively massive piers that are built

out into the corridor space. The piers are just under twice the height of the dado, which is
decorated with the same tiles as the piers. As can be seen on Plate 6.40, these are simple press-
moulded tiles that could easily have been part of the standard range of tiles produced by

Burmantofts at this time. The whole faience scheme is finished in greenish-yellow, cream and

brown coloured tiles and mouldings. Plate 6.41 shows the simplest part of the design, the type

of door casing shown in Plate 6.38. The focus of attention of the whole corridor is however

more complex. Plate 6.42 shows one of a confronting pair of round-headed windows, bounded

by large faience arches, that open out onto the corridor about halfway along its length. These
dominate the entire scheme and are a tour de force of revived English Renaissance architectural

ornament. The structure of each window fills the space between the top of the tiled dado and

the bottom of a plaster frieze. Each is recessed, set under a deep tiled arch that springs from

a pair of dwarf piers, which also provide the support for a pilaster and entablature arrangement

that frames the arch. The decorative panels, into which the structure of each window casing is

divided by its main framework, contain designs based on grotesques and elements of strapwork,
or more precisely scrollwork. Plate 6.43 illustrates such a panel, on one of the dwarf piers, with

a central patera-shaped motif provided with scrolled edges, while Plate 6.44 shows a similar
Plate 6.40. Supporting pier for archway, Burmantofts tiles, Menstone Asylum.

Plate 6.41. Ceramic door casing, Burmantofts Faience, Menstone Asylum.

Plate 6.42. Renaissance-style arched window in Burmantofts Faience, Menstone Asylum.

Plate 6.43. Decorative panel, Burmantofts Faience, Menstone Asylum.
Plate 6.44. Renaissance-style relief-moulded decoration in Burmantofts Faience on arch spandrel, Menstone Asylum.

Plate 6.45. Renaissance-style grotesque decoration in Burmantofts Faience on entablature frieze, Menstone Asylum.
device, this time with a central shield, in one of the spandrels of the arch. Plate 6.45 portrays a pair of dragon-like creatures on a projecting section of the entablature frieze. Although, the main thrust of the decoration corresponds to the pervading contemporary interest in seventeenth-century forms, occasional references to specific motifs suggest that even the Rococo has made its contribution to the design. Once again, although the work is characteristically late Victorian, it is also typical of the work that Neatby was producing as terracotta shrinkage-scale drawings for architects throughout his time at Burmantofts and many of the decorative details used on the faience mouldings for the Menstone project may have been his own.

Fireplace design and catalogue illustration.

Returning to Neatby’s contributions to the trade catalogues issued by Burmantofts, his drawings of fireplaces for both Burmantofts Firesides and the Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience (both 1890), consist of a combination of illustrations showing fireplaces in decorative interior settings and those of a more architectural and formal nature, usually incorporating plans and sometimes sections. The former champion Neatby’s advocacy of the Aesthetic style and incorporate all manner of accessories including art pottery vases, plants, fans, and in one case a top hat and gloves. The latter are standard Victorian fireplace manufacturers drawings and give details of measurements as well as the plans, sections and elevations. Examples of both categories are shown in Plates 6.46 to 6.49.

While the scope for demonstrating artistic flair and design abilities was somewhat restricted when drawing fireplaces, the converse was true when it came to overall catalogue design. Here,
Plate 6.46. Burmantofts catalogue illustrations of fireplaces drawn by Neatby (1889).

Plate 6.47. Burmantofts catalogue illustrations of fireplaces drawn by Neatby (1889).

Plate 6.49. Burmantofts catalogue illustrations of fireplaces drawn by Neatby (1890).
particularly with reference to the artwork for the covers and the various text-based information sheets, Neatby was able to give free rein to his drawing and calligraphic talents. Two items, in particular, have survived that show his mastery of graphic techniques: the catalogue, *Burmantofts Firesides*, and the cover, for a case to house loose leaf drawings, inscribed *The Burmantofts Portfolio of Faience*.

The first of these, *Burmantofts Firesides*, consists of a front cover, then five pages of text including a price list, followed by thirteen sheets of drawings of fireplaces, some of which have been discussed above. The cover, two pages of text and a detail from one of those pages are illustrated as Plates 6.50 to 6.53. The cover, Plate 6.50, is an apposite design for the promotion of Burmantofts products, using as a background a complex construction of scrolling foliage reminiscent of the grotesquerie to be seen on panels decorating their faience and terra cotta pilasters. The density of this decoration, combined with its rigid symmetry in the narrow horizontal panels at the top and bottom of the page and the further allusion to Classicism contained in the bead and reel decorations at its upper and lower margins suggest a design wholly determined by the rather 'fussy' Victorian eclecticism of the period. However, within the writhing tendrils of the foliage is a hint of the linear movement that presages the art nouveau styles of the 1890s; although this is perhaps best observed in the text sheets that follow. Certainly deference is given to asymmetry in the somewhat contrived title banner. This, with its ambiguous characteristics, suggesting both a ribbon and a severely deteriorating parchment scroll illustrates a calculated pretension in the execution of the calligraphy, with its flourishes, particularly on the letter 'R', and and double bars, particularly on the letters 'A' and 'E'. The
Plate 6.50. Cover illustration for Burmantofts Firesides, by Neatby (1890).

Plate 6.51. Page from Burmantofts Firesides.
panel below the title is a clever yet visually confusing mechanism for introducing the advantages of Burnamtofts fireplaces. The top edge of the panel curves like the open pages of a book while a vertical axis for the foliate decoration suggests the interior spine of the book. The straight horizontal line at the bottom of the page introduces a visual incongruity to the design producing a heightened interest for the viewer of a page that might superficially seem rather pedestrian in its conception. Neatby’s name appears at the bottom right-hand corner of the page.

Plates 6.51 and 6.52 are typical examples of the format of the text pages of the catalogue. Except for the page carrying the itemised price list, all the others are divided vertically down the left-hand side of the page. The calligraphy on these pages shows similarities with the title page but the main areas of interest are in the decorative details at the peripheries. Both the scrolling leaf design on Plate 6.51 and the stylized plant motif on Plate 6.52 echo the theories of Walter Crane38 and some of the designs of Mackmurdo for the Century Guild,39 and plant motifs used to decorate ceramics by French designers such as Felix Bracquemond (1833-1914)40 and Emile Gallé (1846-1904).41 The importance of Neatby’s designs here lies in his use of the sinuous rhythmic line to denote movement, a concept that had already been explored by Walter Crane in 1888 but which found its mature expression in his book Line and Form,  

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40 See Madsen, S. T., Sources of Art Nouveau (1975), Fig. 93, for a plate executed by Bracquemond in 1867.
41 Garner, P.: Emile Gallé (1990), Plate page 71.
Plate 6.52. Page from Burmantofts Firesides.

Plate 6.53. Detail from page 5, Burmantofts Firesides.
published in 1900. On the Continent, moving towards art nouveau styles, the expressive nature of the sinuous line was developed, as it had been by William Blake (1757-1827), for its decorative qualities, particularly in graphic design and as an adjunct to text. Neatby's use of the sinuous line in this context illustrates his awareness of current artistic thinking and may indicate that like Rossetti, whom he admired, he may also have shared an interest in Blake.

Two other points may be mentioned in dealing with the design of these pages. On Plate 6.52 the horizontal decorative strip at the top of the page shows two confronting peacocks amid scrolling leaves. The use of ornithological motifs is characteristic of the work of several English Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts designers of the late nineteenth century and Neatby was no exception. This rather formal arrangement is an early use of elements that were to remain popular with Neatby throughout his career, being most conspicuously implemented as part of his decorative scheme for the terra cotta bas-relief panel above the doorway of Orchard House, Abbey Orchard Street, London (c.1900) and in glazed Parian ware for the narrow horizontal panels above shop windows in the Royal Arcade, Gentleman's Walk, Norwich (1899). Both these schemes were executed on behalf of Doulton and Co. The other feature that is noticeable on these two pages of drawings is the use of small vignettes below the text, one of which is shown in detail in Plate 6.53. It seems that although he was appraised of the latest trends in the decorative arts, in this last matter Neatby was unable to divorce his design work from the traditional Victorian love of novelty for its own sake.

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Finally, in dealing with Neatby’s artwork, one of his most ambitious pieces of work was his design for the case cover: *The Burmantofts Portfolio of Faience*. This cover, inscribed ‘Wm.J. NEATBY INVT. DEL. ‘89,’ occurs in at least two slightly different forms. Both versions have the same overall artwork by Neatby but below the main title one has an additional line of text: ‘Published by B.T. Batsford, 52 High Holborn. Price 3 Guineas’. The example illustrated as Plate 6.54 lacks this extra line of text but does display a label saying: ‘MAROTEX FIREPLACES’, which marks a later re-use of the folder. The case is basically a folder for issuing loose leaf advertising material that could be varied or updated as required.

Neatby’s design is a densely packed composition, once more making use of large scrolling leaf forms, but this time including a series of human figures engaged in occupations connected with pottery making and the words: ‘Terra-cotta’; ‘Faience’; ‘Tiles’; ‘Pottery’, either ‘floating’ in the design or written into ribbons among the foliage. The design is typical of Neatby’s hard-edged graphic style, using contrasts of light and shade to give the composition depth and to highlight certain prominent elements within the overall work. In its general appearance the design has much in common with Walter Crane’s ‘Wood Notes’ wallpaper design although it is much more fluid in conception and not bound by the rigid symmetry of Crane’s work, a convention necessitated by the requirements of repeat patterns for its function as a wallpaper. Neatby could easily have seen Crane’s design, if not as a wallpaper, then published in a journal such as the *Magazine of Art*, where it appeared in 1887.42 Returning to Neatby’s cover, the medieval appearance of the subject matter has a definite Pre-Raphaelite character though is

Plate 6.54. Cover design for *The Burmantofts Portfolio of Faience*, designed by Neathy (1889).

Plate 6.55. Detail of cover.
more in keeping with a world seen through the eyes of Boccaccio or Keats rather than by Malory. Plate 6.55, a detail of the design, shows the quality of Neatby’s figural work and reveals that the background shading is composed of whorls of black lines rather like fingerprints. However, towards the top of the figure, to the left of the word ‘Portfolio’, the word ‘Tiles’ can be seen, and here the background has been altered to incorporate square shaped tiles. The design can be viewed as possessing artistic merit, in conception and execution being perhaps more demanding than the usual work of a draughtsman.

Neatby’s departure from Burmantofts.

The above outlines Neatby’s career and achievements while at Burmantofts. To conclude, it remains to consider when and why he left the Company. The list of agreements in force at Burmantofts on Thursday, May 15th, 1890, which make no mention of Neatby, must, as is suggested above, post-date his departure from the firm. Drawings that appear in Burmantofts Firesides and the Catalogue of Burmantofts Faience include examples dated to 1890, so it merely remains to see if the date when he left can be specified with any more certainty.

Several entries in the records relating to Leeds Fireclay Company board meetings throw light onto the situation at Burmantofts in the Spring of 1890 and may suggest a narrower date range for Neatby’s departure, when coupled with the information held in the list of employment agreements mentioned above. At a board meeting held on April 9th, 1890 the Directors of the Leeds Fireclay Company were informed of the death of Mr James Holroyd, Manager of the Burmantofts Works on the 8th. At a board meeting on 24th April, Mr Holroyd [Junior] reported in regard to the engagement of additional artist and glazer at Burmantofts that his agreement
was for 5 years - commencing salary £5 per week, but terminable in 2 years'. Following this, on the May 1st meeting the board was informed that ‘The agreement made by the late Mr Holroyd with Louis Auclère Artist & glazer for 3 years - first 3 months £5 per week, afterwards £7 per week. Terminable on payment of six months wages, was submitted and after some discussion it was Resolved That Messrs North & Sons be consulted as to Mons Auclère’s agreement “whether it would now be necessary for the Company to enter into a new one”’. Fortunately for Auclère, at the board meeting on May 9th, it was ‘Reported “That Messrs. North & Sons advised that Auclère’s agreement was binding on him as well as the Company”’. 

The finale to this serial of employment considerations was a call for clarification by the board, of the contract situation at Burmantofts, which resulted in the report, delivered on May 15th, containing the names of ten skilled workers at the works for whom employment agreements were in existence. This list gives the names of the workers, their term of employment, wages and a description of their occupations. Presumably all other workers were considered unskilled or semi-skilled and did not merit formal contracts.

Neatby’s name does not feature in any of the information given in the minutes of the various board meetings referred to above, but that does not mean that his presence or absence at Burmantofts can be considered as irrelevant in this context. The minutes cited for both April 24th and May 1st both relate to the necessity of employing an artist and glazer at the works, presumably because a vacancy already existed or was imminent. If only one position was envisaged, then the two entries are at variance with one another, the first suggesting a job with

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43 Minute Book of the Leeds Fireclay Company Board Meetings, 1889-1892, entries for various dates, as specified in the main text, during April and May, 1890. Leeds District Archives, Accession number 3356, No. 28.
an employment term of five years, terminable in two years, and paying £5 per week, while the second, directly relating to Louis Auclère, was for three years, with the wages being £5 per week for the first three months and subsequently rising to £7 a week. The entries may indeed refer to two separate posts but in view of the fact that only one artist/glazer appears on the formal agreements list, and that is Auclère, it seems probable that they refer to a single position but that in the wake of James Holroyd’s death, the management was in some confusion as to what terms and pay had been offered to this man. Monsieur Auclère was one of a number of French artists working in the pottery industry in Britain in the Victorian period and was continuing a tradition for employing foreign artists, established at Burmantofts since its earliest days. He may well have been possessed of a legalistic turn of mind. His original agreement had been with James Holroyd and when he started work, possibly shortly after the latter’s death, as is suggested by the entry of April 24th, he may not have been given the correct contract. Consequently, the May 1st entry, may be a response to Auclère’s complaints. This reading must be considered plausible, but how is it relevant to Neatby?

It has been suggested above that A. Whitehead, the Head Draughtsman at Burmantofts, mentioned in the May 15th list, inherited his position from Neatby upon his departure. However, Valance, in his biographical essay for The Studio, makes it quite clear that Neatby ‘was no mere draughtsman on paper, but used to paint tiles himself”,44 while at Burmantofts and Konody,

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writing in the same year, echoes this by calling him a 'Zeichner und keramischer Maler'. If these comments are to be taken at face value, then when Neatby left the factory, Burmantofts lost more than just a draughtsman. Probably, Auclére was engaged, at least in part, to replace Neatby.

Perhaps surprisingly, although a model maker and two modellers feature, only one other decorative artist is mentioned in the May 15th agreements list but that a concern such as Burmantofts managed with the talents of only two professional artists can be explained by the nature of the work and the profile of the workforce. Burmantofts had started the decade with a heavy reliance on individually crafted pots and had been quick to follow the current fashion for hand-painted wall plaques, like those painted by Neatby. Artists such as Pierre Mallet and H. Leech, who produced relief-moulded plaques and hand-painted tiles just after the middle of the decade, are absent from the list and it may be that there was not enough work for more than two skilled painters. The only important range of hand-painted vessels, Burmantofts 'Anglo-Persian' wares, similar to William De Morgan's Isnik inspired pottery, was launched in 1887, but each piece is signed by the same artist and seems to have been a short-lived venture. At the end of the decade, most products were probably finished with a single coloured glaze or had one glaze flown irregularly over another for decorative effect. What hand-painting there was

probably passed through the hands of the semi-skilled painters at the factory. These were likely to be female painters such as Rachel Smith, who moved to Burmantofts from the Linthorpe Pottery in Middlesborough, following its closure in 1889. However, the skills gap created by Neatby's departure had to be filled and Auclère seems to have been his replacement. He was probably contracted to start work at about the time Neatby left. If the minute book reference for April 24th 1890, cited above, does refer to the Auclère, then he was presumably in post by that date, having negotiated his contract with James Holroyd before the latter's death. Therefore, allowing for at least a month to produce the drawings which he signed and dated in 1890, Neatby presumably left Burmantofts sometime between early February and mid April of that year.

Having suggested a date for his departure, it remains to suggest a reason for his move. Quite simply, it may have been that his contract of employment was coming to an end. If, as is argued in Chapter One, he commenced work at Burmantofts at a date between the 16th April and the 24th May 1884, then in the Spring of 1890, he will have been there for six years. Whether Neatby's initial contract was for six years, or perhaps he was serving two terms of three years, is not recorded, but Auclère's agreement is certainly stated as having been for three years. The usual term of contract at Burmantofts appears to have been five years but that of William Walker, the 'majolica, color [sic] & glaze maker' is listed as ten years duration. Obviously, 48 Garlick, A. : 'A Brief History of Burmantofts Works', in Burmantofts Pottery (Bradford : 1983),p. 14. 49 Minute Book of the Leeds Fireclay Company Board Meetings, 1889-1892, entry for May 15th, 1890. Leeds District Archives, Accession number 3356, No. 28.
there was some flexibility in the system. After six years in the same position Neatby was probably ready for a change. In June 1889 Burmantofts was amalgamated with several other Yorkshire ceramics concerns and became part of the Leeds Fireclay Company Limited. Neatby may not have liked the new style of the firm. Certainly entries in the minute book of weekly Board meetings for the new conglomerate suggest that expenditure for new projects was more closely scrutinised and this increasing culture of formality and accountability may not have been to Neatby’s taste. However, it seems more likely that his experiences of the previous six years had given him a confidence in his own abilities and aspirations that could only be fulfilled in London. To Doulton and Co. his work with Waterhouse and participation in schemes like that for the Dublin Museum of Science and Art, must have made him an attractive proposition to take up the post of head designer for their architectural ceramics department. His combined skills of the architect, artist and graphic designer gave him a distinct advantage over their current artists and modellers who will have lacked Neatby’s versatility, and presumably he had already accepted the new post before leaving Leeds.