

WILLIAM JAMES NEATBY (1860-1910)

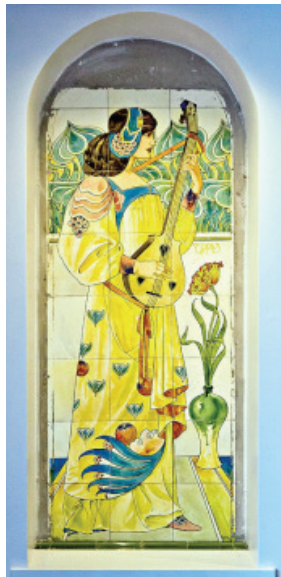
By Tracey Hebron

William James Neatby was an influential arts and crafts ceramic sculptor and artist. His career highlights included designing tiles for the Harrods food hall and the panels in the Winter Gardens Theatre Bar in Blackpool. Neatby's work spans ceramic sculpture, tiles, metalwork, stained glass, furniture and painted murals plus a number of wallpaper designs.

He was born in Wellington Street, May 1860, the eldest son of Samuel Mossforth and Mary Jackson Neatby. His father Samuel was a clerk in the family timber merchant's business in Barnsley. In 1881 William married Emily Arnold of Prospect Street, Barnsley. Emily sadly died in 1885 and he remarried Jane Isabella Dempster.

Neatby originally trained as an architect after becoming fascinated by medieval architecture. He was also greatly inspired by the principles of William Morris and the ideals of the Arts & Crafts Movement. Around the age of 23 he became a craft worker for Burmantofts in Leeds, designing ceramics and catalogues for the company. It was here that he learnt about the 'practicalities of painting and the industrial manufacture of the ceramics as well as the creation of the designs'.

In 1890 William went to work for Doulton and Co in London just before the age of 30. Here he became the Head of Department in Ceramic Architectural Decoration for nearly 20 years. He worked on public and private commissions for the company including relief panels for the New Physical Observatory at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. In March 1899 Neatby was elected to the membership of the Society of Designers and at the turn of the century he became an independent artist. Enabling him to pursue other arts and crafts interests. He joined forces with E. Hollyer Evans to form the firm Neatby, Evans and Co. Together they would create a booklet called *The 1901 book* which would showcase their products. They were involved in the design of stained glass, textiles,



Winter Gardens Theatre Bar in Blackpool.



Harrods food hall.

furniture, metalwork and anything related to interior decoration, including wallpaper for Jeffrey and Co. By 1906 he was working from a studio in Chelsea and his work expanded even more as he went on to illustrate a number of books including *Days with the great Poets, Keats* by May Byron. To further his career in painting, in 1906 he joined the Royal Society of Miniature Painters and later exhibited 60 pieces in the Modern art Gallery on Bond Street in 1905. He exhibited two works at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1906.

He passed away after suffering a heart attack in April 1910. He is buried in High Wycombe. He will continue to be remembered for his designs featured in many restaurants, theatres, shopping arcades, and galleries up and down the country. ■