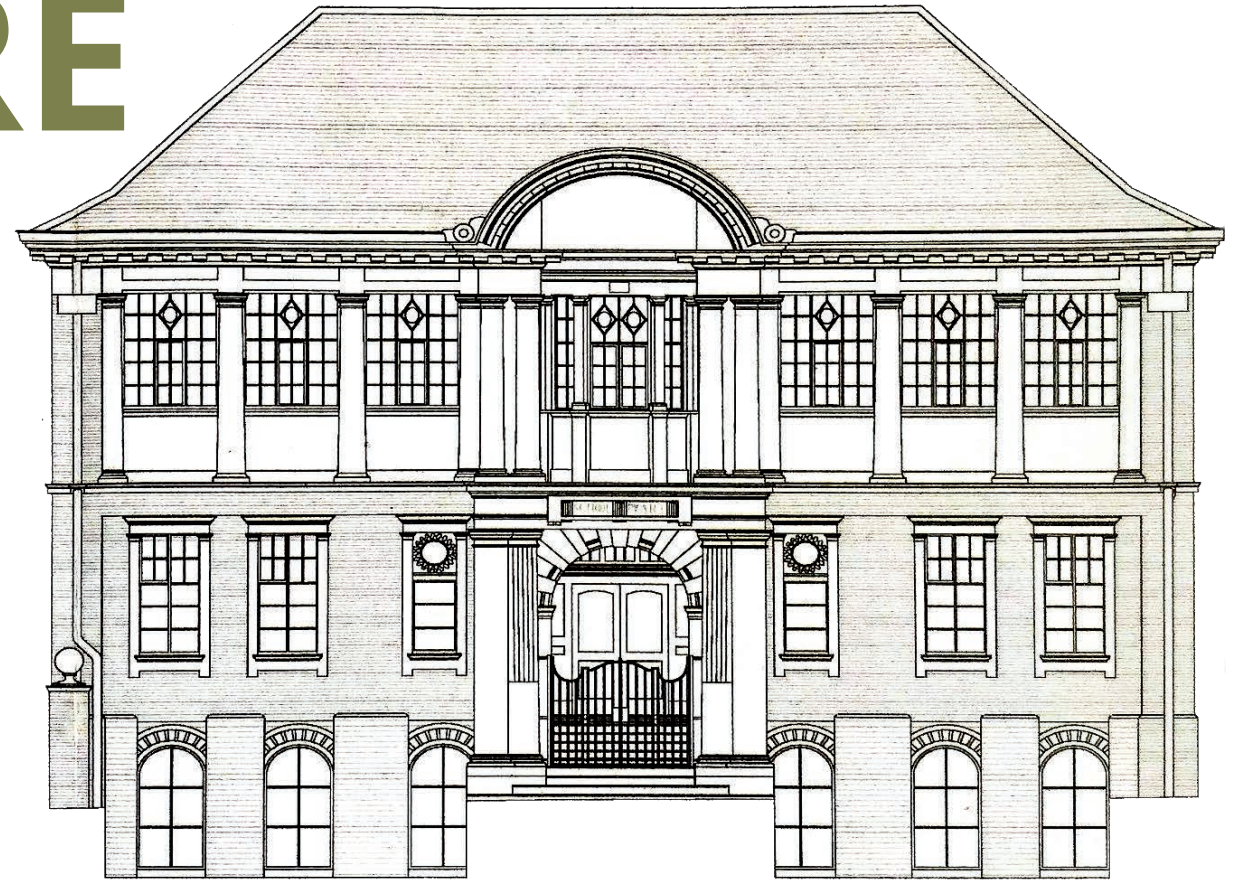


ARCHITECTURE

William Henry Bidlake 1861-1938



William Bidlake was one of the most productive architects of the Arts and Crafts period in Birmingham

In the 1900's he was often referred to as the man who rebuilt Birmingham, unfortunately many of his city centre commissions have been demolished. He designed Moseley Road Art School in 1899.



Moseley Road Art School stands out as one of the first purpose built municipal art schools of the late 19th. Century

Starting from independent practice in 1893, Bidlake later pioneered the teaching of architecture in Birmingham, eventually becoming Director of the School of Architecture at Birmingham School of Art.

The School

Bidlake designed a restrained exterior using Bath stone contrasting with Woodville red-brick. The symmetrical baroque frontage has Doric columns framing the upper floor windows, contrasting with the heavier brick

faced basement and ground floor. The roof is covered with recycled slates taken from demolished buildings in Leicester. Rainwater goods feature Arts and Crafts detailing.

His design for the interior focuses on function and economical layout maximising the use of light with the classrooms orientated to have north windows for shadowless illumination.

Large, airy and easily accessible classrooms demonstrate the simplicity and practicality of the building. The two large ground-floor classrooms accommodating 70-100 pupils could be overlooked from the masters' rooms. Only in the impressive reception area did Bidlake include more decorative features such as a groined ceiling and Doric columns.

Bidlake's other work included large private houses which are significant for their simplicity of design within Arts and Crafts ideas. Like the design for the school, there is an emphasis on function, understatement, individuality and honesty in the use of materials.

These design concepts were singled out for praise and promoted in a German publication in 1904: 'The English House' by Herman Muthesius. This book directly influenced the philosophy and practices of the Modernist Movement in Europe and later the Bauhaus.

