

THE BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND

by Nikolaus Pevsner

The development of Birchington began in the late 1860's with an estate of big isolated bungalows by John Taylor in an attempt to devise an appropriate seaside architecture not in terraces. The Bungalow Hotel next to the station has now been demolished. He built four 'Tower Bungalows' in Spenser Road, facing the sea. The Indian idiom is preserved with broad sheltering roofs and side verandas. Each house has a stocky tower at the seaward end. Sgraffito decoration was applied between the half-timbering on the coach houses, mostly of putti [Italian infant angels], but including Seddon's signature on "The Old Coach House" and on "Tresco Lodge", the date 1882. [Why 'Seddon', when the panels were made by George Frampton?]



JOHN POLLARD SEDDON was born in 1827 at London House, Aldersgate, where his father Thomas had a large furniture manufactory. The business had been founded in the mid-eighteenth century by John Pollard's great-great grandfather and had flourished to such an extent that by the end of the century it was one of the largest in the country. In the early nineteenth century the firm was commissioned to carry out work at both Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. After leaving Bedford Grammar School, Seddon became a pupil of T. L. Donaldson and later set up his own practice in London. He later became involved in designing the Castle Hotel, now the University College of Wales, at Aberystwyth, his best known work. He later became involved with the Pre-Raphaelites, in particular with Ford Madox Brown and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who died in a bungalow which Seddon had provided for him at Birchington-on-Sea. After Rossetti's death, Seddon and Madox Brown designed the monument to Rossetti on the Embankment at Chelsea. Seddon's decorative work, his belief in the unity of painting, sculpture and architecture ensure his continuing interest. His many books and articles, together with the Victoria & Albert Museum's large collection of his drawings, constitute an important source for the study of 19th century art and design.

- Extracted from John Pollard Seddon by Michael Darby

SIR GEORGE FRAMPTON R.A., the sculptor, was internationally known from the early 1890's. His many famous works include the statue of Peter Pan in Kensington and the memorial to Edith Cavell outside the National Portrait Gallery in London. Born in 1860 he studied architecture and stone-and wood-carving and, later, sculpture at the Royal Academy Schools 1881-7. After returning from Paris in 1888, he became interested in the applied arts and took up metalwork shortly afterwards, designing a number of important presentation pieces.

His designs for the sgraffito panels in the Coach-houses belonging to the four Tower Bungalows in Birchington, Kent (created in c. 1880) are still enjoyed by owners and visitors alike today (2016).



Sir George Frampton's statues of Peter Pan and Edith Cavell statues

[SGRAFFITO, meaning 'scratched' in Italian, is thought to have its origins in the decorated pottery of ancient Greece. The craft was revived in Italy during the Renaissance, a German technique becoming popular in Britain during the nineteenth century. It involves painting a thick layer of coloured plaster, often black, on to a smooth and pre-soaked fresco-like background of crushed lime and aggregate; as soon as the colour is absorbed it is washed with several layers of lime, which – as it dries – is worked on with a transfer pattern so that the relevant parts can be scratched out to reveal the black surface underneath. In Jane Lamb's dissertation on '*SGRAFFITO IN ENGLAND 1600-1950*', she points out that because there are so few remaining examples of sgraffito in England, a listing of Grade II should be considered to secure the future of these rare examples.]