**James Stevenson Craig (*c*.1827–1879)**

A subject painter who often drew on Scottish literary sources including ballads, poems and the work of Walter Scott. This reflected his own birth in Scotland – though where is unknown – but he is only otherwise recorded as living and working in London.

On 25 February 1858 he married Leicestershire-born Hanna Smith, who was about ten years younger, at St Pancras. Both were noted as living in Pratt Street, Camden, and certainly together, since they already had a daughter, Kate, who was born at Ramsgate in 1836 or early 1837. A son, Robert Henry, followed by the third quarter of 1858, while they were still in Pratt Street, but before the 1861 census (April) the family was at 10 Fitzroy Road, Camden and still there in 1871.

Craig exhibited in various years at the Society of British Artists (1854 – 1870/1), the British Institution (1856–65) and the Royal Academy in 1854 and 1861. His prices given at the first two ranged from five guineas to £100 but were mostly within £18 to £75. His exhibiting address at the SBA in 1854 was 10 Stanhope Street, Park Place, Regent’s Park, though the RA and BI list it as ‘10 ½’. From 1868, at the SBA, it was Stanhope Yard, Delancey Street, so both street addresses appear to have been just studio premises. He may also have done decorative work since an old artist friend, David Gray, later said he helped in ornamentation of the royal mausoleum at Frogmore (completed in 1871).

By early 1879 Craig had been living apart from his wife for several years. She was at 154 Arlington Street, Camden Town but he had become of ‘no fixed abode’, latterly relying on the kindness of friends including Gray (then of 7 Newman Street, Oxford Street), who let him sleep in his studio for about three weeks in April. He had also spent a period in the Royal Free Hospital from 11 February until late March, after which he was reported malnourished, depressed, unable to work, short of money, showing signs of ‘softening of the brain’, and was difficult to help effectively. On Wednesday 30 April he was seen at a previous favourite walking spot near the Great Northern Railway at Hadley Crossing, Barnet, before deliberately walking in front of a fast-moving train as it came out of the adjacent tunnel. Although he had made no prior mention of suicide, that was the verdict (‘whilst in a state of temporary insanity’) of a coroner’s jury at New Barnet on 9 May (*Barnet Press*, 10 May). When buried at Camden on 3 May his age was given as 53 and his last address as 15 Park Street (now Parkway), Camden Town.

Craig’s son Robert Henry (1858–1922) was also an artist who largely worked under the pseudonym of ‘Albert Rosell’, though more widely now called ‘Alexander’ for reasons unclear. He also died by suicide resulting from depression after the death of his wife.

*Summarised from Art UK discussion on ‘Who painted ‘Auld Robin Gray’’ in the New Art Galley, Walsall, August 2023*

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