**Robert Sanderson, 1835/6–1918 [working draft 28.2.23]**

A Scottish artist who lived and worked in Edinburgh and does not appear to have travelled noticeably outside Scotland. He primarily painted genre figure and landscape subjects but in the 1870s also did portraits.

His birth and death dates are often wrongly given as 1848–1908 but he was born in late 1835 or early 1836 in Raeburn Place, Edinburgh, to Robert Sanderson (1809–66), a wood carver and gilder, and his wife Caroline (née Ross, m. 1831). He had at least one older and two other sisters and at the 1851 census, when they were living in Dicks Close, 267 Cowgate, he was listed as a ‘Woodcarver’s Apprentice’, probably to his father. How he also learned to paint is unknown and he was still recorded as a ‘Journeyman Wood Carver’ at 23 High Riggs, Cowfeeder Row, when he married in 1859.

This occurred on 20 September at 57 George Square, Edinburgh, home of the United Presbyterian minister who conducted the ceremony, probably private because his bride was Jewish. She was Sarah (1838–1911), daughter of Moses and Sarah Jacob of 28 George IV Bridge, where her father was an auctioneer, broker, and dealer in old furniture and books. In the early 1860s he also held nos. 32 and 33. Following his death in 1865 family occupancy, including the Sandersons, seems to have continued into the 1870s. In 1866-67 one Edinburgh directory lists Sanderson as ‘artist and woodcarver’ at both nos. 28 and 32 and he long retained some reputation as a carver: in 1899 he was asked to judge woodcarving exhibits at the Musselburgh Industrial Society Show (*Musselburgh News*, 12 May)

The Sandersons had eight children between 1860 and 1874. The first and third were Sarah (1860–62) and Robert Alfred Jacob (1864–69). The fifth, Edwin Jacob (b. 1867), married in 1904 but then rapidly lost his wife, probably in childbirth though their son survived (d.1961). He remarried in 1905 but himself died in July 1910, aged 43: five sisters survived their parents.

Census returns and Edinburgh directories show the Sandersons living at 28 George IV Bridge from 1861 to 1874 and, with slight variations, note Robert as artist/painter to 1911, eight years after he last exhibited. In 1861 the census calls him ‘Artist Landscape Painter’ and in 1871 ‘Artist Historical Painter’. From then until 1882 most local directories list him under ‘Painters/ portrait’ and just two under ‘Painters/landscape’. There is only one portrait [apparently] by him on Art UK of an unnamed light cavalry officer, dated 1877, though he painted them of at least two of his children and probably more. By the 1880s, however, good-quality photography had undermined the middle-class market for painted portraiture and he may have refocused on other subjects as more profitable.

In 1874, the Sandersons moved to 6 Forrest Road, Edinburgh, but he also had studio addresses listed as 10 George Street in 1880–81, 10A George Street in 1882–83 and 56 George Street by 1884 to some point before 1888. He exhibited in both oil and watercolour from 18XX up to 1903, including 106 works at the RSA (18XX …)….[all TBC]

Work is found signed both ‘R Sanderson’, with the RS in interlocked monogram form, and just with the RS monogram. In both cases the ‘R’ is reversed to form the top half of the ‘S’, and the eights in his dates have flattened tops and bottoms (though not unique in that).

Mrs Sarah Sanderson died at Forrest Road on 31 March 1911 and he followed, noted as 83, on 8 July 1918 at Woodburn Terrace, Pitlochry, home of their daughter Mrs Robina Jacob Russell (b.1869). Another daughter, ‘Ada Henrietta Jacob Sanderson or Kewley [1872–1945], wife of Thomas Kewley, Sack Merchant, [of] Hull’ was the family’s representative executor for estate of £545 2s 6d, equally shared with her four sisters apart from £20 that Sanderson left to his granddaughter Florence Ray Russell ‘in consideration of her services as my housekeeper’. He also bequeathed his two eldest daughters – Mrs Rachel Sarah Joan Johnson (b.1863) and Mrs Caroline Isa Jacob Osborne (b.1865) – the framed portraits he had painted of them but until then kept hanging at Forrest Road, probably because both had emigrated to South Africa.

Rachel, known from early life as Joan, was also a painter probably taught by her father. She was educated at Watson’s Ladies College, Edinburgh, and may have trained to teach art since (according to *Women of South Africa* [1913]) she held a ‘South Kensington Teacher’s Certificate’. As Miss Joan Sanderson. she exhibited two works at the RSA (1880 and 1882) and later in 1882 married Dr William Johnson. They sailed for South Africa in 1889 where she also exhibited pre-1913, and apparently at one of the summer shows at Simla in India, where they may have travelled. On 1 July 1899 the *Illustrated London News* published her drawing of ‘Meeting at the Presidency of Sir Alfred Milner and President Kruger’, which was also reproduced at Kruger’s death in 1904. She had four sons and died as a widow at Bloemfontein in 1951. Caroline married Dr Herbert Osborne in 1888 and died in Pretoria in 1944. The youngest daughter, born in 1874 and named in her father’s will as Mrs Amy Louisa Jacob Maclulich, also married a doctor (John Peers Maclulich).

Sanderson’s body appears to have been returned to Edinburgh by train for burial with his wife.

PvdM