

# Daniel Cottier



Summer Swallow at Prudhoe Hall, circa 1870.  
Photograph taken by Father Zielinski in 2010.

These windows are situated above entry doors to the Main Hall of Prudhoe Hall, and are some of the earliest creations of Daniel Cottier, commissioned by the Liddell family soon after he had won a prize for the superb harmony of colours in his armorial window at the 1867 Paris International Exhibition.



Rising Sun over River Scene, circa 1870. Photograph taken by Father Zielinski in 2010.

## DANIEL COTTIER, PIONEER OF AESTHETICISM (1838-91)

Cottier was interested in glass, furniture, ceramic manufacture, and interior design. His art furnishing business opened branches in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London between 1864-1869, and then in 1873 he opened more branches in New York, Sydney and Melbourne. In the United States he is seen as a 'harbinger of aestheticism....and a profound influence on American decoration'. And the same can be said of Scotland where he also exported the Aesthetic Movement to Scotland via his many professional and business contacts which he had made during his training and early career in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. So, by the time he moved to London in 1869, Cottier was already part of an influential and avant-garde group of designers – many of them also expatriate Scots – who were to establish the Aesthetic Movement in England.

It is difficult to bring together much by way of biographical details simply because few business records or letters survive. What we can say is that he was born in Glasgow on 19 January 1838, to Daniel, a master mariner from Jersey (of French, perhaps Huguenot, extraction), and a Highland mother, whose father was also a master mariner. Indeed, it was said of the young Daniel Cottier, "With his big head, his curly red hair, his shrewd and humorous eyes,, his strong Scots accent, his unaffected naturalness and bonhomie ... he was far more like an ideal coasting skipper than an artist." His sense of humour and magnetism and bonhomie attracted a considerable following of other talented designers. His training began as an apprentice to glazing and decorating firm in Glasgow in the 1850's, first with the firm of David Keir (1802-65), then with John Cairney & Co (1828-65). Cairney's circle included the architect and designer Alexander 'Greek' Thomson (1817-75), who was of international stature and one of the most original interpreters of the Greek Revival style. When Thomson was designing a building, he included coloured decoration, furniture and carpets in his drawings. His ornamentation and colour schemes also drew from Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian cultures. Cottier in all probability came into contact, whilst an apprentice at Cairney's, with this unified eclecticism of Aesthetic Movement interiors of the 1870's.

Cottier subsequently worked for the stainer James Ballantine in Edinburgh, and attended evening classes at the Trustees' Academy, at which 'Ornamental Design' was taught. Around 1859 he went to London, where he may have worked for the stained glass makers, Ward & Hughes, while attending evening classes at the Working Men's College at 31 Red Lion Square in the East End. Here he heard lectures given by the critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) and received drawing lessons from the artist Ford Madox Brown (1821-93). Cottier

could not have been closer to the Pre-Raphaelites or to the stirrings of the Aesthetic Movement: in 1861 William Morris (1834-96) opened his decorating and furnishing partnership across from the College, at 8 Red Lion Square. This may have exposed Cottier to the colour theories being developed by Morris, whose subtle and resonant tertiary hues were beginning to replace the archeologically-inspired mid-century primaries favoured by designers such as Thomson.

In 1862 Cottier returned to Scotland to accept an appointment as manager of Field & Allan, a firm of slaters, glaziers and decorators based in Edinburgh and Leith (1797-1910). Here he oversaw the glazing and decoration of Peddie and Kinnear's Pilrig Parish Church, Leith (c.1862-3). The surviving geometric glass cycle, bold and vigorous, was based on medieval *grisaille* work. It shows that by now Cottier had developed a keen sense of colour harmony, heavily reliant on the juxtaposition of contrasting primary or tertiary colours.

After managing Field & Allan for two years, Cottier felt sufficiently confident to open his own business in Edinburgh at only the age of twenty-six. Cottier persuaded Andrew Wells (1845-1915), his talented young assistant at Field & Allan, to join the new venture, together with Stephen Adam (1848-1910) from Ballantine & Co, and Charles Gow (1830-1891). However, Cottier's connection with Field & Allan did not end completely: he married Marion, the late William Field's daughter, in Edinburgh on 15 June 1866.

At the 1867 Paris International Exhibition, Cottier's armorial window received a prize, and was praised as 'magnificent ...superb harmony of colours ...the finest ornamental window in the Exhibition'. Encouraged by his growing success, in 1869 Cottier moved the centre of his activities to London where, at 2 Langham Place, in partnership with Brydon, Wallace and John Bennett, he established 'Cottier and Company', which advertised as 'art furniture makers, mural decorators, and glass and tile painters'. Cottier may have been drawn to London by the artistic community of expatriate Scots who had settled there, referred to as 'the London brethern'. However, Cottier & Co's order books continued to be dominated by commissions in Scotland, and the studio expanded. Around 1871 Norman McLeod Macdougall (1852-1939) followed Cottier to London, where he became the chief glass painter and latterly designer. Cottier also began to visit the continent as he developed an interest in art dealing, which brought him into contact with Vincent Van Gough and to another Dutch artist Matthew Maris (1839-1917), who arrived in London to work for Cottier around 1872. Maris, who accompanied Cottier on visits to Norway and elsewhere, has been credited as the designer of 'some of Cottier's most successful windows of the 1870's'. Certainly, the figures on a window such as the *Musician Angels* at St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen (1873), assume the strong *contraposto* poses which often appear in Maris's drawings. Maris also painted panels for Cottier, but as he found the watery consistency of glass paints made them difficult to use, he later explained that 'the only things that exist by my hand (from Cottier's studio) I painted with oil colours against the light'.

Van Gough visited Cottier's London showroom in 1876 and there he recalled seeing, 'Sketches for two church windows. In the middle of one was a portrait of a middle-aged lady – oh, such a noble face – with the words "Thy will be done". Elsewhere Van Gough noted, 'When there is style in a drawing he (Cottier) likes it well enough'. Such drawing of elegant robust Neo-Classical figures, may well have been from the hand of the freelance artist Frederick Vincent Hart (1865-1915), whom Cottier associated with. Hart's designs appear in several Scottish commissions, as at Leiper's Coll-Earn House, Auchterarder, Perthshire (1869-71). A fully Aesthetic flavour pervades the entrance hall, where two stained glass windows feature family monograms, classical women, personifications of the seasons, and portraits of the daughters of the Mackintosh family who owned the house. As well as sunflowers and pomegranates, many of the border panes, or 'quarries', feature ships. A nautical theme is common in Cottier's work, and supported the image he liked to project of 'an ideal coasting skipper'. Another example dating from around this time is the pair of panels depicting fishermen at sea, incorporated in a stairwell window of a house at Horselethill Road, Downanhill, Glasgow.

Cottier probably oversaw many of the commissions until at least 1875. Whilst not losing his native shrewdness, he often demonstrated great kindness and generosity, when called upon to decorate a church. An example of this is the West Kirk, Aberdeen in 1875, when Cottier opted to use more expensive 'wholesome good Antique glass' rather than a cheaper sort, whilst keeping within the price set by the building committee.

As well as capitalising on a taste for all things Aesthetic in Britain, Cottier helped to establish the Aesthetic Movement abroad. In 1873 he opened a New York branch at 144 Fifth Avenue. In New York, Boston and elsewhere, Cottier & Co supplied ecclesiastical and domestic stained glass imported from the London workshop, which came to employ over a hundred men. He also supplied a variety of other goods, from gasoliers to Oriental Carpetings, as well as decorating interiors and dealing in pictures and antiques, and Cottier's taste in Aesthetic furnishings and modern paintings spread across the States as far as Portland, Oregon. He encouraged native artists such as Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917). Cottier remained an active designer on several American projects between 1873-9.

In the 1880's Cottier collaborated with the stained glass artists Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933) and John La Farge (1835-1910). An important window made in about 1877 for the main hall of the Newport, Rhode Island, house of William Sherman (1843-1912), formerly attributed to La Farge, is now considered to be the work of Cottier.

Cottier's transatlantic experiences may have crossed over into his Scottish commissions, such as the Baptism of Christ in Paisley Abbey, Renfrewshire (c.1880) which features an unusually bold exercise in depicting water-reeds blowing in the wind which seems to anticipate the landscape glass that Tiffany later developed in America. Cottier played a

part in the strong late-nineteenth century ties between progressive Scottish and American glass, a trend which later resulted in American-developed techniques, particularly the exploration of streaky and opalescent glass, influencing the glass produced by the Glasgow School in the 1890's.

In 1873 Cottier began to export the Aesthetic Movement to Australia with the opening of a branch in Sydney in partnership with John Lamb Lyon (1835-1916), a fellow Scot with whom he had trained in Glasgow and London. Cottier made at least three trips to Australia between 1873-1890, but Lyon largely ran the business there. Cottier's contribution to the Australian branch was to supply Lyon with his talented assistants, Gow and Wells, who acted as its chief designers from the mid-1870's to the mid-1890's. Under the direction of Lyon and Wells, the firm of Cottier, Lyon & Co decorated a number of important private residences, churches, and public buildings, all in the latest London style, with windows initially imported from the London workshop.

As a result of his business interests abroad, Daniel Cottier became increasingly known as an art dealer. He began to amass a large private collection of paintings, apparently to supply a legacy for his family, as his recurrent rheumatic fever made him ineligible for life insurance. In the event, Cottier died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-three, while in Jacksonville, Florida for health reasons, on 5 April 1891. His firm survived in New York as picture dealers until 1915.

By the time of his death, Cottier had undoubtedly contributed as much to the propagation of the Aesthetic Movement in Britain as he had abroad. Stephen Adam left Cottier & Co in 1870 to establish his own firm in Glasgow together with David Small (1846-1927). For the next two decades Adam & Small capitalised on the demand which Cottier had created for Aesthetic glass by producing a stream of confident windows dominated by Adam's figure drawings, which were based on Hart and Moore's Neo-Classical style. In 1873 Adam collaborated with Wells, shortly before he left for Australia, on the decoration and glazing of Belhaven Parish Church, Glasgow. Adam's glass at Belhaven borrowed heavily from the repertoire which he had learned from Cottier, including Japanese-style foliage, quarries and sunflowers, with figurative panels based on Millais' Parables, which may have been adapted from cartoons of identical windows produced in Cottier's studio.

Daniel Cottier emerges as an important figure in pioneering the Aesthetic Movement in Britain, in areas beyond the glass-painting with which he is most often associated. He was a talented colourist and ornamentalist. He oversaw the production of a range of glass, furniture, ceramics and interior schemes which, incorporating the designs of Goodwin, Talbert, Moyr, Smith, Moore and others, testify to his position in avant-garde London design circles on the 1870's.



The Large Window in the Main Hall of Prudhoe Hall. Photo by Fr Paul Zielinski.

## **COTTIER IN PRUDHOE**

Prudhoe Hall (built 1868-70) and the Catholic Church of our Lady and St Cuthbert in Prudhoe (built 1890-91, but incorporating the Cottier windows from an earlier smaller chapel built 1868-70) have some of Cottier's earliest stained glass. Why did Matthew Liddell commission Daniel Cottier to design the stained glass windows in both the main hall and the original chapel? His architect, Archibald Dunn, presumably would have been impressed by the fact that Cottier had recently won a prize for the superb harmony of colours in his armorial window at the 1867 Paris International Exhibition. Indeed, Daniel Cottier has referred to his Paris prize in the graphite border of the large window in the main hall of Prudhoe Hall.



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Prudhoe Hall in 2010, seen at the rear from the East. Photo by Fr Zielinski.

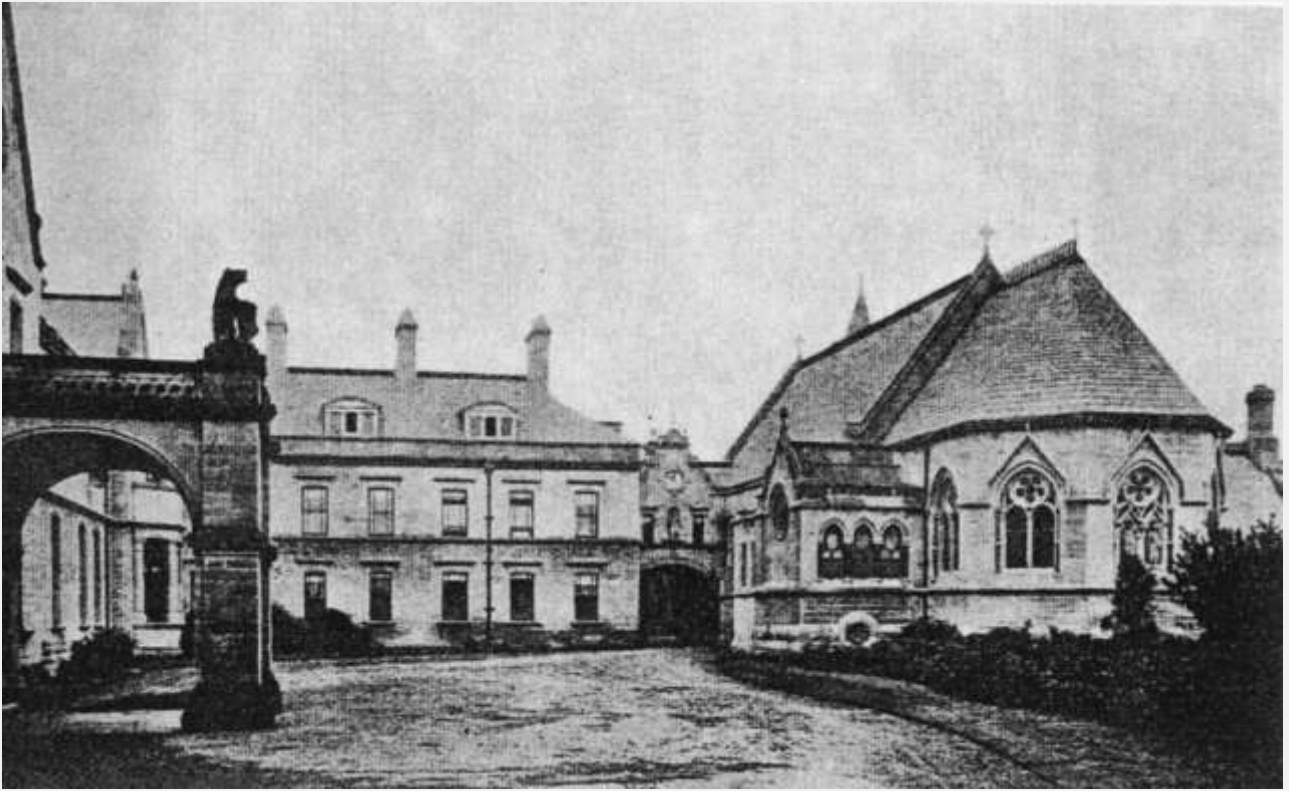


The original chapel of 1870 showing the Cottier windows.



One of five Rose Windows in the Sanctuary of Our Lady and St Cuthbert's Church in Prudhoe, created by Daniel Cottier in 1870, when the Liddell family provided the first Catholic Church in Prudhoe, as part of their Mansion. Photo by Fr Zielinski.

At the centre of each of the five Rose Windows, Cottier has provided a series of Christological symbols to draw the eye upwards from the Reredos and Tabernacle to the Pascal Lamb, the Pelican which speaks of the Eucharistic Food, IHS monogram for Jesus, the Star of David, and the Greek monogram for Christ. All these windows in the sanctuary were created for the chapel of 1870, and subsequently transferred into the enlarged church of 1891, and then moved again when the church building was removed from the grounds of Prudhoe Hall in 1904/05 to be rebuilt on its present site in the town in Highfield Lane. Through various changes and modifications, the Cottier windows link the parish community to the very start of the Catholic Mission in Prudhoe in 1870.



The church of 1891 repositioned to the front of Prudhoe Hall, showing the Cottier windows transferred



One of the Windows in Our Lady and St Cuthbert's Church in Prudhoe, dating from 1870 and one of the earliest examples of Cottier's work within the Aesthetic Movement at that time. Photograph taken by Father Zielinski.