

ERNEST GIMSON

IMAGES - INTERIORS



The **Memorial Library at Bedales School, Steep, Hampshire**, was designed by Ernest Gimson.

It is widely regarded as one of the masterpieces of the English Arts and Crafts movement and is **Grade I listed**. Although completed in **1921**, Gimson died in 1919 before construction began.

The building was erected as a memorial to former Bedales pupils and staff who died in the First World War.

The project involved several of Gimson's closest collaborators:

- **Architect:** Ernest Gimson
- **Builder:** Geoffrey Lupton, a former Bedales pupil who had trained with Gimson and largely realised the building on site.
- **Construction supervision:** Sidney Barnsley, who supervised the work following Gimson's death.
- **Furniture:** Designed by Gimson and the Barnsley workshop, with much of it produced in the Froxfield workshops established by Geoffrey Lupton and later continued by Edward Barnsley.

Architecturally, the library is notable for:

- Its restrained Arts and Crafts design using handmade brick and oak.
- A sequence of timber-framed reading bays rather than a single open hall.
- Carefully integrated furniture, shelving, lighting and architectural detailing, all conceived as a unified interior.
- The exceptional quality of craftsmanship, making it one of the finest surviving Arts and Crafts interiors in Britain.

An interesting historical detail is that the library had originally been planned as part of a larger quadrangle—including Lupton Hall, laboratories and a gymnasium—but the First World War halted the wider scheme. Only Lupton Hall (1911) and the Memorial Library (1921) were completed.

The Bedales Memorial Library is significant because it represents one of the last and most complete collaborations of the Gimson–Barnsley circle, where architecture, interior design, furniture and craftsmanship were conceived as a single work of art.