

## The Mosaicist who created the mosaic above the Lord's Table



*Count Boris von Anrep*

The mosaic above the Lord's Table is wrongly attributed in the guide to the Chapel to "Mr Anrup". The mosaicist was actually Count Boris von Anrep (1883 - 1969), a distinguished Russian of many interests, whose father's links to Czar Nicholas II led him to settle in England at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. Some of his most well known works are the entrance floors of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, in Westminster Cathedral, in the private halls of The Bank of England, as well as many private commissions for notables of the time. Further information about the Count may be found at <http://www.rkb-law.com/RR/insights/anrep/1boris.htm> and <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about/history/building/1928.htm> A brief history of religious mosaic construction can be found at [http://www.westminstercathedral.org.uk/art/art\\_mosaics.html](http://www.westminstercathedral.org.uk/art/art_mosaics.html) which describes the mosaics of Westminster Cathedral.

Boris Anrep, besides being the only artist who consistently worked with mosaics in Britain during the 20th century, was an adventurous Russian of great size and charm. Born in 1883, his career began in the St. Petersburg Imperial School of Law, which fitted the nobility to work as civil servants, just as the School of Pages fitted them to serve the tsar as courtiers, from which he emerged with assured civil service rank and a Reserve cavalry officer.

But at a given moment he put this aside, as a young man who was making a name in St. Petersburg literary circles as a poet. Then, with a rather older man, the artist Steletski (Dimitri Semionovich Stelletski (1875-1947), he left this Venice of the North to tour through France and across the mountains to discover the marvels of Ravenna.

He left St. Petersburg for Paris and enrolled at the Academie Julian. This was followed by a year at the Edinburgh School of Art.

While in France Anrep had become friends with the painter Henry Lamb and well before 1914 was acquainted with English artists and intellectuals, among whom were Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry and the Woolfs. The Bloomsbury group were amused and entranced by this migrant, whose imagination was full of a kind of flourish and who expressed wild, anarchic opinions which veered about with deliberate provocation.

In England when war broke out Boris got back to Russia via Archangel and to the front, where campaigning with his troop of Cossacks in Eastern Carpathia he collected icons rescued from churches in no-mans land at night during breaks in shelling. He amassed a large collection, of which most were given to the Heritage museum. When the Austrians learned of the plunder they protested. Anrep was recalled and sent on a mission to the Russian Government Committee in London, where he now had so many personal contacts. One of his immediate jobs was that of persuading the British to resume shipping of saltpetre to Archangel in order to help the Russians make gunpowder. It was a convenience that Anrep's previous friendship with Maynard Keynes, now highly placed in the Treasury, enabled him to succeed.

After 1917 Boris never returned to his homeland. As the son of a well known figure in medicine and education, who had served under Tsar Nicholas II, his future with the Bolsheviks did not look propitious. But in the 1920's commissions for mosaics in Britain mounted. He went on to become one of the most famous mosaicists ever.

As part of the famous 'Bloomsbury set' which included Virginia Woolf, Henry Lamb, Roger Fry, and other intellectuals of the day, many of Boris's works are now national treasures.



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*Count Boris von Anrep working on the floor of the entrance to the National Gallery*



*Royal Memorial Chapel Sandhurst*

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