Dear Member,

1. KELMSCOTT HOUSE

Members who have been following the long-running saga of Kelscott House will wish to know that after an interval of two years the Society's Trustees met on 9 May and agreed that building work to refit the basement as the Society's headquarters should begin as soon as possible. The Trustees' architect is finalising details of the contract with one of the builders who submitted tenders in November last year. Although pessimists may call this a hostage to fortune, it is our firm aim that the Yuletide Party this year will indeed be at Kelscott House, as shown in the Society's printed programme.

2. BOOKCASE APPEAL

Further generous donations have been made towards the cost of a new bookcase to house the Society's collection, with contributions from G. P. and J. Baker Ltd., Hans Brill, Carol Johnson, Raymond Kenyon (Australia), Trevor Lloyd (Canada) and Charles Nonell (USA). We particularly appreciate the contributions from overseas members, as they may not find it easy to come and see the bookcase. We shall have some photographs specially taken. The appeal is still open. Donors' names will be recorded in a specially-printed folio to be kept in the bookcase.

The new Committee at their first meeting in June agreed to invite Lucinda Leech to undertake our commission. Trained at the Rycotewold College in Thame and a member of the Society of Designer-Craftsmen, Ms Leech set up her workshop in Oxford ten years ago and has undertaken a wide range of work, chiefly in English hardwoods. She will be invited to submit a design for our bookcase to the next meeting of the Committee.

JOHN KAY

3. THE SOCIETY'S PROGRAMME

Expedition to Iceland, Friday 1 to Friday 15 August, and Report-back Monday 15 September. After the disappointment of last year it is good to report that the expedition is definitely taking off. This is mainly due to the quiet persistence of Julia Stapleton, and the co-operation of our Icelanic travel agent, Kjarlant, and we are most grateful to them both. Our party of fourteen leaves Heathrow on 1 August and meets the American group at Keflavik; then we set out together. Ruth Ellison has agreed to act as our guide; she is a member of the Society, deeply interested in the Sagas and in Morris's translations, and fluent in Icelanic, as she has for many years spent the summers there. We are indeed fortunate to have her as our guide.

We hope to see many of our members at the Report-back Meeting at 6.30 p.m. on Monday 15 September at the Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington
Following the formal business there was a very useful discussion on the work of the Society, and especially on the possible formation of local groups, which is reported elsewhere in the Newsletter. An excellent tea had been provided, and a profitable afternoon was rounded off with a most interesting and enjoyable talk by our member, Dr. Nicholas Falk, on the Wandle Industrial Museum project.

7. OBITUARIES

Robin Page Arnott. Robin Page Arnott, who for many reasons we may think of above all others as our founding father, died on Sunday, the eighteenth of May, half way to his ninety-sixth birthday.

He was born on the fifteenth of December 1890, and so was nearly six years old when Morris died. He was educated at seven, and educated himself into journalism, and when Robin was born, was editor of the Greenock Telegraph. Robin went eventually to Glasgow University, and in the founding of the University Socialists. An excellent writer with G. D. H. Cole, and with Cole he began work, in 1912, in London, under the sharp eye of Beatrice Webb, in the new Fabian Research Department.

With Cole too he shared a lifelong enthusiasm for William Morris, which had been when, in a cupboard full of his father's books, he found one which settled for life his central passions— for history and for socialism.

That book was 'News from Nowhere'. First read when he was twelve, it inspired him with the ideas of Morris, and when in 1934 Morris's centenary was being celebrated up and down the country, it was Robin's sixpenny pamphlet, William Morris: A Vindication, that in thirty-two pages set out so no other did, what kind of man Morris had really been. From that pamphlet has flowed virtually all the serious study of Morris of the subsequent fifty years.

In 1914-1918, he was imprisoned for opposition to the war, along with Stanley Morison, who taught him, as he taught others, that Morrisian art of calligraphy. The two worked together again in the setting up of the William Morris Society, forty years later. The first meetings took place - and where more fitting? - in Red House, and the first Minutes of our Committee are those of the tenth of October 1953, when Robin took the chair, and Graeme Shankland became our first Secretary. The letter to The Times of the 13th of September 1955 marked the public launch of the Society: its first AGM took place a little over six months later, and on the 11th of May 1956, at a meeting held jointly with the Shaw Society (of which he was also a member) Robin gave the lecture, on Bernard Shaw and William Morris, that was the first of our printed transactions.

With an amazing memory for detail - even of meetings held sixty years before - he had no less a large and clear sense of history, while his capacity for getting business done cleanly (learning he would say from Shaw) was no less than his penetrating gift of criticism. With this, he was warm, witty, entertaining, with a sense of mischief and an endless fund of sparkling memories, shared until four years ago with his well-matched wife Olive. He lived his ninety-five years to the full, and we are all the richer for it.

Robin's funeral took place at Beckenham Crematorium at three in the afternoon of Thursday, May 29th. For an hour the stormy weather was suspended and the sun shone on the sixty or so who gathered to say farewell along with his family: the oration was given by miners' leader Mick McGahey.

Ray Watkinson

9. THE RIDEWAY THREATENED

Our member Denis Grant King has written from Little Cheverell in Wiltshire: "As you will know, when William Morris was a boy, part of his life was spent at Marlborough, and here he often wandered over the Marlborough Downs and perhaps first learnt the value of our English countryside. The ancient 'green road' called The Ridgeway in this area must have been well-known to him. I am sure that he would have been outraged had he known that this famous route could be made into a 'Byway open to all traffic', and thus could be used for motor rallies and all kinds of motor sports, some of them on a colossal scale."
Berkshire County Council wishes to ban motor traffic on the small part of the Ridgeway under its control, but the Wiltshire and Oxfordshire County Councils, which control larger sections, have been hesitant. Mr. Grant King suggested that the Society should support Berkshire County Council's stand, and express its concern to the Countryside Commission, and to the Wiltshire and Oxfordshire County Councils. This, the Society has willingly done, and members might wish to make their own feelings known. Addresses are: 

The County Secretary,  
The Royal County of Berkshire,  
Shire Hall,  
Shinfield Park,  
Oxford,  
RG2 9XD

The Chairman,  
Wiltshire County Council,  
County Hall,  
Trowbridge,  
Wiltshire,  
BA14 6EX

10. THE JOURNAL

The next issue of The Journal, a double number, will be distributed in October. This will be the last issue under the editorship of Ray Watkinson, who is handing over to Peter Faulkner. The Journal urgently needs an Advertisement Manager, and we would be most grateful for a volunteer. Some knowledge of printing is desirable, but not essential.

11. EMBROIDERY WORKING PARTY

It is hoped to revive the Embroidery Working Party, which has been out of action for some time. No experience is necessary - merely an enthusiasm to take up the art. Those interested should get in touch with Daphne Jennings at the Society's headquarters.

12. BARBARA MORRIS, HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

At its meeting in June, the Committee decided to bestow Honorary Life Membership upon Barbara Morris, as a mark of its appreciation of the work she has done for the Society, and in particular for her very long service as a member of the Committee. Barbara joined the Society shortly after its inception, and served almost continuously on the Committee until her resignation at the last AGM. As a Keeper at the V & A until her retirement in 1978, she has made many valuable contributions to Morris Studies.

13. PUBLICATIONS

Teresa Newman and Ray Watkinson have been commissioned by Massara Chatto to write a biography of Ford Madox Brown. This will be the first book on this artist and friend of Morris since that written by his grandson, Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford) in 1896; still the only book on this artist. Any members having information of any sort relating to PMB would do them a service if they would get in touch.

Ray Watkinson is writing a new, bigger book on Morris, which will take a look at more than just the designs and attempt a more general critical consideration of his ideas, poetry, politics. (Both books should appear in 1988.)

Barbara Morris has just written a short history and critique of the Victoria and Albert Museum and its influence on the design world over the past century and a quarter. Inspiration for Design: the influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum is published by the V & A where Barbara was a Keeper from 1947 until she retired in 1978. In just 200 pages, with ample illustration, this brings the work of the V & A right up to date and will be a most useful handbook for historians and artists. Distributed by Trefoil Books.

Godfrey Ruben's lavishly illustrated William Richard Lethaby: His Life and Work 1857-1931, Architectural Press, £25.95, is the first full-length study of the architect, teacher and historian of the Gothic, who was arguably Morris's most consistent exponent after his death, with the deepest understanding of his theories of the relationship of art to labour. The book will be reviewed in the next issue of The Journal.

Our member Professor Edvige Sculte's, Dante Gabriele Rossetti: Vita, Arte, Poesia, Napoli, Lugour Editore, 15,500 L., is an up-to-date, well produced and illustrated treatment of its subject; a worthy witness to the growing interest in Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites in Italy.

Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 33 (2), 1985 contains two articles originally contributed to a colloquium on Morris at the Karl Marx University, Leipzig, 25-26 October 1984. In the first, 'Morris, Marx and Engels' (pp.145-152), one member A. L. Morton is chiefly concerned with Morris's contacts with Engels. He concludes that although they were brief, they played an important part in his political education. Engels may also have introduced him to dialectics, and imparted knowledge of some works by Marx as yet unpublished. In the second, 'William Morris's aesthetic relationship to the contemporary working class' (pp.153-160), Jack Mitchell contrasts passages in 'The Pilgrims of Hope' and a poem by Francis Adams 'England in Egypt' (1877), both depicting a man experiencing a march-past of British troops; 'whereas the latter moves swiftly from his dreams of love and hate to reality, Morris, on the other hand, moves even more speedily from reality and its immediate impact into the dream.'

In the notice of Hans van Lemmen's article 'Dutch Art Nouveau Tiles' in the January Anglisten-Nachrichten, mention was made of the fact that the English summary of the Dutch text had left out the article's references to Arts and Crafts influences on the development of Art Nouveau in Holland. Hans van Lemmen writes that he was not responsible for the English summary, and continues: 'The links between England and Holland at that time can be put into a nutshell. Dutch artists visited England personally or someone like Jan Toorop had an English mother. Magazines like The Studio spread knowledge and above all visual examples about what English painters, designers and architects produced, but perhaps more important were books by Crane and Day that were translated into Dutch. My illustrations juxtapose English and Dutch examples to make visual links clear.'

Yours sincerely,

Richard S. Smith  
Hon. Secretary.
WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY
in the UNITED STATES

NEWSLETTER,
July, 1986

A. ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the last two Newsletters there were announcements regarding the
Directory of Members of the William Morris Society in North America,
a booklet painstakingly compiled by Marilyn Bach. We are now under-
taking a revised Directory that will include the names of all Canadian
members of the Society; I mentioned this project in the April Newsletter
and requested information from Canadian members, but I received only two
or three replies. Using a list sent me by John Wicelov I have now
solicited—in a letter enclosed in a copy of the Directory—more particular
information from every Canadian member, and I hope to receive replies in
time to start work on the revised Directory early next year.

Kjartan Helgason of Istravel Ltd. has cabled that all is in order for
the up-coming Icelandic “jaunt.” The dates are firm (August 1-13), but
no exact fee is yet available. Helgason has secured a real expert not only
on the Icelandic sagas and modern Iceland, but also on William Morris, to
be our guide and translator. This expert is Ruth Ellison of York University.
She speaks modern Icelandic without a trace of accent, and she has written
a definitive study of the ways Morris used and was influenced by old Icelandic
literature. This study, “The Undying Glory of Dreams: William Morris
and the Northland of Old,” appeared in Victorian Poetry, edited by Bradbury
Unpublished Poem by William Morris,” (English 15, no. 87, 1964), Ellison
pointed out how Morris had used the form and rhetoric of Norse Eddic poetry
to express his sadness regarding Jane’s attachment to Rossetti. It was
that same attachment that provided reasons for Morris to rent Kelmscott
with Rossetti and then to travel to Iceland during the summers of 1871 and
1873.

*This noun appears in the title of a prize-winning essay that the
William Morris Society published in 1962: The Icelandic Jaunt: A Study of
the Expeditions Made by William Morris to Iceland in 1871 and 1873 by John
Purkis.

“Religion and Literature in Victorian England” will be the theme of
the annual meeting of the Victorians Institute, to be held October 16, 1986,
at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA. The main speaker
will be Professor Jerome J. McGann, of the California Institute of Technology,
who will talk on Christina Rossetti.

The British publisher Thames and Hudson has announced the January 1986
publication of Infl uences in Victorian Art and Architecture, edited by Sarah
Macready and F.H. Thompson. The fourteen papers which make up this volume
were originally presented at a conference organized by the Society of
Antiquaries and the Victorian Society.

The volume includes 41 illustrations (two in color). Published in paperback, it costs $8.00 (in the U.K. only). Write to Thames and Hudson, 30-34 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QF.

Bernie Lucht, Executive Producer of the "Ideas" program for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has announced that the series on William Morris's life and achievements has been cancelled "because of, among other things, technical difficulties with the productions." Since a score of more or less Morris experts were interviewed for this ambitious project, we hope that the programs can be rescheduled soon.

The William Morris Society of Canada has scheduled for July 5 a luncheon at Owen Sound at which Ross Gibbons will speak on "William Morris and the Conflict Between Town and Country." The talk is described as follows: "Since Hobbes, western philosophy has characterized human existence at odds with nature. Against this view—which dominates popular culture, business, and government even today—William Morris posited a peaceful, organic coexistence of humankind with nature. The dominant view that nature is an adversary has had far reaching consequences for community and human settlement. Not the least of these has been the enrichment of the very largest cities in terms of economic, artistic, and intellectual activity at the expense of the small communities and the countryside. Will this inequity be redressed? Perhaps not, but, lest we forget: it's not nice to fool Mother Nature."

The English Department at the University of Massachusetts has acquired a hand-powered cylinder press, a Vandercook 219. Using this press, Gary Aho plans to produce a small edition of William Morris's original poetry on Icelandic painting as "Iceland First Seen" and "To the Muse of the North." This volume, which would include short introductions and notes, will be offered to members of the Society at a modest price.

Kathleen Verduin and Leslie Workman, editors of Studies in Medievalism, have announced the first general conference on Medievalism, sponsored by Studies in Medievalism. This conference will take place at the University of Notre Dame, October 23-25, 1986; and our member, Florence Boos, is scheduled to read a paper on The Defence of Guenever.

Harley Spatt has announced that the Society has available copies of Joseph R. Dunlop's The Book That Never Was; the two-volume edition of May Morris's Introductions to the Collected Works; The After-Summer Seed:


A new quarterly, Avalon to Camelot, promises to be of interest to Society members. The first number of Volume two is on "The Many Faces of Arthur," and it includes "The Victorian Arthur: The Painter's View," by Debra N. Bancroft and "The Victorian Arthur: The Literary View" by John R. Reed. Burne-Jones is mentioned in the first piece, William Morris in the second. This magazine, "issued quarterly on matters Arthurian," is published by the Avalon to Camelot Society, P.O. Box 6236, Evanston, Illinois, 60204.

B. NEWS OF MEMBERS

Karl O.E. Anderson's 1940 Harvard dissertation, "Scandinavian Elements in the Works of William Morris," is an extensive survey and analysis of all of Morris's works which deal with Scandinavian literature. Some of the early research for this massive work (it runs to 1035 typewritten pages) was conducted in Cambridge and London during 1934. Anderson interviewed both Mary Morris and Mackail and had several conversations with Cockerell while he was examining manuscripts at the Fitzwilliam. An account of these interviews and copies of several letters Anderson exchanged with May Morris and Cockerell will be published soon, either in this Newsletter or in the Society's journal.

Joseph R. Dunlop reports that Anthony Crane's slide-lecture on his grandfather's illustrations for children's books, "Academician in the Nursery," given on April 10 at the English Speaking Union in New York City, was well-received. On his way down to New York Professor Crane had stopped in Newport, Rhode Island, to look at the frieze Walter Crane had done for a mansion ("Winland") that is now part of Salve Regina College. He had prepared the frieze—its subject is Long fellow's "Skeleton in Armor"—in Europe and when he viewed it in place several years later, he found it "looking rather lower in tone" than it had originally. (See Walter Crane, An Artist's Reminiscences.) Now Anthony Crane found the frieze difficult to see at all.

Marilyn Ibach gave a slide-lecture on Morris and Company stained glass (an abbreviated version of her fine presentation at the 1985 MLA meetings) to an American Studies Group at the Library of Congress on May 20.

Norman Kelving reports that the galleys for volume two of The Collected Letters of William Morris will be ready by the first of August; he is hard at work on the annotations to volume three of this immensely important contribution to Morris studies.

Richard Mathewson has resigned an executive director of the Kromloher Foundation to join the faculty of the English Department at the University of New Mexico. Much of his work at the Kromloher Press was inspired in many respects by William Morris's achievements at the Kelmscott Press.

Charles H. Monell sent us a copy of his lecture, "Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, Gabriel Dante Rossetti, and Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur." The lecture was delivered on July 25, 1985 at the opening of an
would have had some pointed remarks and questions regarding the lines from T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets that serve as an epigram for the editorial:

A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. So, while the light falls
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.

To Morris, the patterns of Nature were more important, and obvious than those of history, certainly more indelible, permanent, "timeless." Such patterns he imitated in some of his greatest designs, like the Honeysuckle, whose appearance here as Frontispiece is less apt for the editorial than for a fascinating article, "Morris, Ruskin, and the English Flower Garden," by Deborah Nevins. This lavishly illustrated piece discusses the relationships between Ruskin's and Morris's ideas about nature and the "evolution of the English flower garden in the 1870's and 1880's." Nevins mentions the garden that Morris and Webb created at Red House as well as the appreciative descriptions of gardens he included in "The Story of the Unknown Church" and in News from Nowhere. She might also have mentioned the gardens in The Defence of Guenevere (often important to plot and characterization), in Jason (notably "A Garden By the Sea." marked off by T.S. Eliot himself as a prime example of nature affecting mood), and throughout The Earthly Paradise, the prose romances, indeed in nearly every one of Morris's imaginative writings.

Less known are several passages in the Icelands Journals where Morris evoked garden-like oases of secret security within the lava wastes. A few examples: "Just at the foot of the hills there was a space of bog which caught the little brooks that ran from the hills till they could gather into two streams, bounding our camp; but above them the slopes were everywhere covered with sweet grass, and sank into little hollows every here and there, where the flowers grew very thick, notably the purple cranesbill." Later a native insists that Morris and his party come to see the spot within a birch glade "where I take my trout in autumn." This turns out to be yet another locus amoenus: "a grass-grown space quite smooth and flat, with a clear streamlet running level with the grass at the end of it we came in by, and all round it otherwhere a steep green bank covered with thick-growing birches smelling most sweet in the sun."

Morris's critiques of industrialists who exploited and polluted Nature are well-known; so are his ideas about bringing the countryside into human communities. Such ideas have influenced architects and city planners for generations. Nevins isolates a few passages--in "Hopes and Fears for Art"--where Morris descends to more particular criticisms and arguments, where he castigates contemporary London gardening, taking both a sheepish and windy view of their little bit of gravel walk and grass plot in ridiculous imitation of an ugly big garden of the landscape-gardening style, and then with a strange perversity filling up the spaces with the most formal plants they can get; whereas the merest common sense should have taught them to lay out their morsel of ground in the simplest way, to fence it as orderly as might be,...and then fill up the flower growing space with things that are free and interesting in their growth, leaving nature to do the determined complexity, which she will certainly not fail to do if we do not desert her for the florist, who, I must say, has made it harder work than it should be to get
the best of flowers.

Be very shy of double flowers; choose the old columbine where the clustering doves are unmistakable and distinct, not the double one, where they run into mere tatters. Choose (if you can get it) the old China aster with the yellow center that goes so well with the purple brown stems and curiously coloured florets, instead of the lumps that look like cut paper, of which we are now so proud. Don't be swindled out of that wonder of beauty, a single snowdrop; there is no gain and plenty of loss in the double one. More loss still in the double sunflower, which is a coarse-coloured and dull plant, where as the single one, though a late comer to our gardens, is by no means to be despised, since it will grow anywhere, and is both interesting and beautiful, with its sharply chiseled yellow florets relieved by the quaintly patterned sad-coloured centre clogged with honey and beset with bees and butterflies.

Germain concludes that, as specific as such descriptions and advice are, Morris's wallpapers and fabrics might have been more influential on actual gardens than anything he wrote: "The composition of his very popular designs, in which the flat plane of the fabric or wallpaper becomes a sea of flowers, may have stimulated an appreciation of lush and profuse garden compositions," may have created a "greater perception of the intellectual connection between the world of art and landscape."

Yours in fellowship,

Gary L. Aho, for the Governing Committee

Department of English
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

1. KELMSCOTT HOUSE

The news is that the builder started work in August on refitting the basement at Kelmscott House as the Society's headquarters. Our fervent hope now is that he will be finished in time for your Yuletide party on 13 December. Meanwhile we are seeking to supplement our present few sticks of furniture. To reduce our outlay, may we appeal to members for gifts or loans of any of the following items:

- 1 dozen upright chairs (suitable for use round the Committee table in the library)
- a trestle or similar demountable table about 8' by 3'
- 2 armchairs
- 3 standard lamps
- 1 hearth rug about 4' by 6'6"
- 2 office chairs
- 1 low round table about 2'6" diameter
- 1 high round table about 3'6" diameter

Offers, please, to the undersigned at 36 Crescent Grove, London SW4 7AH ('phone 01-622 8660 evenings and weekends). We should also be very pleased to hear from a member who would be able to help by taking up curtains.

An apology is extended to any member who has tried to telephone the Society at Kelmscott House since the beginning of August. The telephone and its attached answering machine are the property of British Telecom and have been removed while the current building operations continue to avoid damage to them.

John Kay

2. BOOKCASE APPEAL

Lucinda Leech presented her design for our new bookcase to the Committee in September. It is simple, well-proportioned, in brown and light oak with glazed upper doors and wood-panelled lower doors; the lower central portion projecting to accommodate large folders of wallpaper and fabric samples. The Committee asked her to start work straightforwardly but the appeal fund is still a few hundred pounds short of our target. May we, therefore, please appeal for further contributions? Please send your cheques made out to the William Morris Society to our Treasurer, Lionel Young, 7 The Boreen, Wilson's Road, Headley Down, Bordon, Hants GU35 6YU. Recent donors include Sarah Carcian, Irene Moran in Valenti (Italy), Penelope Fitzgerald and Linda Parry.