

George Landow of Brown University spoke on "Morris and Ruskin," pointing out that while the influence on Morris of The Nature of Gothic is well-known, few critics have noted that Morris learned how to talk about painting from Ruskin's examples in Modern Painters, and that from Ruskin he also learned the "devices of the sage," prophetic structures that appear in the socialist lectures. These devices include:

- (1) a characteristic alternation of satire and positive, even visionary statement, that is frequently accompanied by (2) a parallel alternation of attacks upon the audience and attempts to reassure or inspire it; (3) a frequent concentration upon apparently trivial phenomena as the subject of interpretation;
- (4) an episodic or discontinuous literary structure that depends upon analogical relations for unity and coherence;
- (5) a reliance upon grotesque contemporary phenomena, such as the murder of children, or grotesque metaphor, parable, and analogy; (6) satiric and idiosyncratic definitions of key terms; (7) and an essential reliance upon ethos, or the appeal to credibility.

Although Morris does not use all seven of these devices, several of them show up again and again in the lectures and thus signal another and hitherto un-regarded debt to Ruskin.

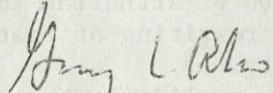
Jeffrey L. Spear of New York University spoke on "The Incarnate Muse: An Essay on the Psychology of Interpretation," setting forth first certain assumptions about male/subject and female/object roles played out by Rossetti, Blunt, Morris and the women in their lives. Against this theoretical and biographical background, Spear then discussed several of the late prose narratives, suggesting that the portrayals of love and sex therein, the visions of happy, guilt-free friends and lovers, are neatly explicable, if linked to Morris's personal experience and problems.

Helene E. Roberts of the Fogg Museum at Harvard gave a slide lecture entitled "Morris's Stained Glass as Seen against its Religion Background." She pointed out ways that Morris and Company artisans were influenced by Protestant restrictions and prejudices against the "Papal aggression" detected in church decoration. Morris and Company windows depicted prophets and angels rather than saints; sin and damnation and other problematic themes were avoided in nearly all their designs for stained glass.

Frederick T. Kirchhoff of Indiana/Purdue University at Fort Wayne spoke on "Terrors of the Third Dimension: Morris's Incomplete Artists," inviting his audience to recall Morris's supreme skills as a designer of flat patterns. His designs avoided depths and the third dimension, and certain of his narratives represent the distrust of romantic individualism and emotional involvement of three-dimensional art, preferring narratives that were only social and entertaining.

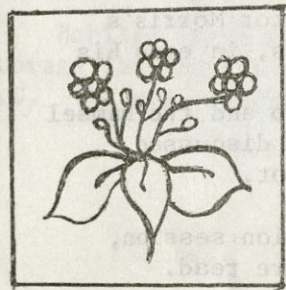
Norman Kelvin announced that the topic for next year's MLA session will be "William Morris and His Contemporaries." Anyone wishing to deliver a paper should send an abstract by March 1, 1987, to Hartley Spatt, Maritime College, Fort Schuyler, Bronx, New York, 10465.

Yours in fellowship,



Gary L. Aho, for the
Governing Committee

Department of English
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003



WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY
President Lord Briggs of Lewes
Honorary Secretary R. S. Smith
Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall,
Hammersmith, London W6 9TA

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RECEIVED

NEWSLETTER

MAY 11 1987

APRIL 1987

Dear Member,

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

1. KELMSCOTT HOUSE

Although these lines have to be written before the re-opening of our headquarters at Kelmscott House on 11 April, by the time this newsletter reaches members a bottle (or two) of bubbly will - metaphorically - have been broken on the bows of our long-awaited rooms in the basement of the house in Hammersmith in which William Morris once lived and worked. This has now been converted to provide us with an office, a craft workshop and a library - all of which will offer us new opportunities to develop the work of the Society in fresh and interesting directions.

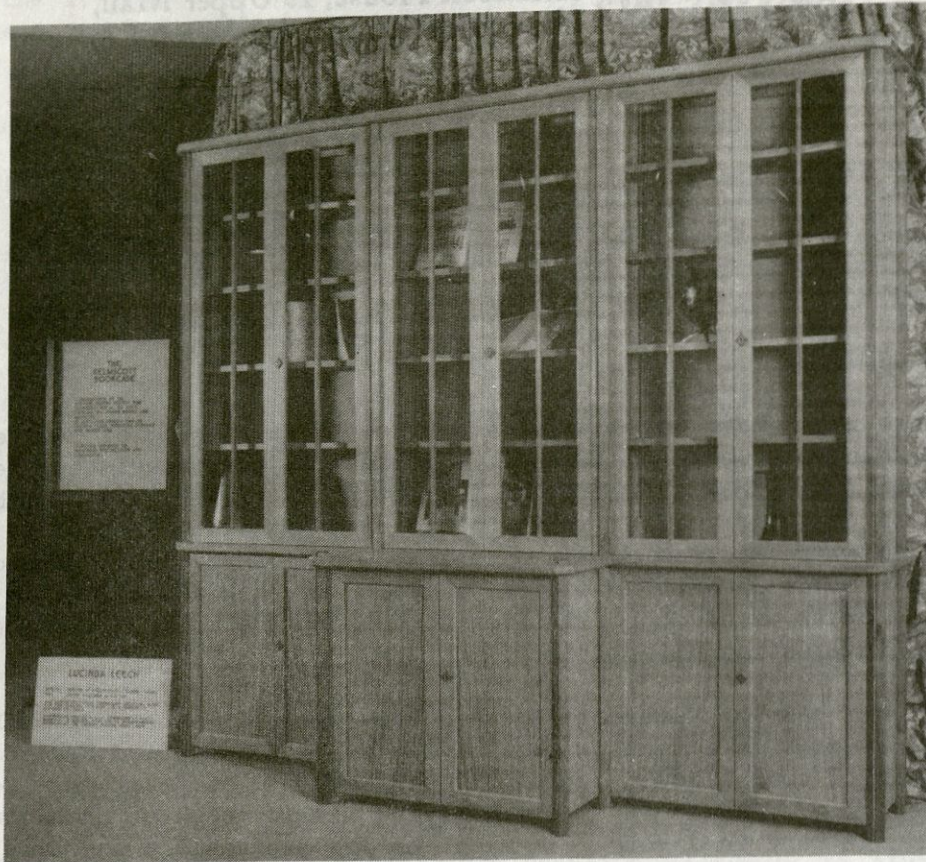
We hope that our part of Kelmscott House can be open to members and others interested in Morris on a regular basis - say on Wednesdays and Saturdays for a start. This of course would depend on being able to staff it on a regular basis on these days. Would any members living within reach of Hammersmith and able to take part in a rota - it might be for just half a day once a month - please write to the Hon. Secretary? Special skills or knowledge are not required - although always welcome. There is plenty to do straightaway in sorting the Society's papers and reorganising our library. The workshop with printing and other craft facilities will be available for use. There are several new projects we can now put in hand, amongst them the planning of a travelling exhibition on Morris and his circle. Kelmscott House can become a social centre for members and a place where visitors from abroad can count on being able to meet Morrisians in this country in a way that has not been possible for all too long.

2. BOOKCASE APPEAL

Our new bookcase which was the object of our recent most successful appeal forms the centre-piece of our Library at Kelmscott House. Members will be interested to see this photograph of it, taken when it was on display before Christmas at Liberty's store in London. Designed and made by Lucinda Leech at her workshop in Oxford, it is constructed in light English oak, with brown oak inserts. The projecting lower central cupboard is to take wallpaper and fabric sample books and large portfolios.

A list of members and others whose generous donations have made this project possible is given below. We propose to print this on our Albion press as a commemorative folio. Please would any member who would prefer their name to be set out differently let the Hon. Secretary know?

John Kay



WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY BOOKCASE FUND
LIST OF DONORS

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
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| John and Ann Kay | |

3. THE SOCIETY: APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE

The Society is in need of assistance in two important areas - membership and publicity. Daphne Jennings, after some years of sterling work as our Membership Secretary, has decided that she must retire from the post at this year's A.G.M. In a voluntary society such as ours, entirely dependent on its members for support and finance, the keeping of proper membership records is crucial, and of great value to the other officers, especially the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary. The other main duty of the Membership Secretary is to respond to enquiries for prospective members and welcome new members when they join. The job is not particularly onerous, and many of the tasks it involves are routine, but they are important ones, and require steady application and attention to detail. Residence in London isn't essential but may be desirable. Closely associated with the question of membership is publicity, and the Society wishes to create a new post of Publicity Officer who will begin work, it is hoped, from this year's AGM. As this is a new post the job specification is less precise and to some extent will be created by the person who holds the office. At the most basic and routine level it will be necessary to ensure that the Society's supplies of publicity material are maintained and that copies are regularly sent to our current outlets. At the same time we need to find new outlets and new ways of publicising the Society's work, so the job requires someone with flair, imagination and energy. It should be said that, in both cases, the Society will meet out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the people who undertake the jobs. Anyone interested in either post should get in touch with the Hon. Secretary.

4. THE SOCIETY JOURNAL

The Winter/Spring issue of the Journal is enclosed with this Newsletter. The Editor will be pleased to consider contributions for the next and subsequent issues. Illustrated articles are particularly welcomed. Please send material for consideration to Peter Faulkner, 1 Chichester House, Coates Road, Heavitree, Exeter, EX2 5RP

5. THE SOCIETY'S 1987 PROGRAMME

Saturday 9 May 2.00 p.m. - THE SOCIETY'S 32ND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Our AGM this year will be held at Fulham Palace (off Bishops Avenue, SW6). This is a remarkable building which was once the principal seat of the Bishops of London and is now being repaired and brought back into public use by the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham. The main business of the meeting is to discuss the Committee's report on the work of the past year, and to consider plans for the coming year. The discussion is always lively and wide-ranging. We are continuing the practice of holding our AGMs on Saturday afternoons so that members from outside London stand a better chance of being able to attend. After tea, Keith Whitehouse of the Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group will talk to us about the history of the Palace.

Saturday 16 May 2.00 p.m. - VICTORIAN RAS, THEIR ARCHITECTS AND HOUSES. A walk in Kensington (in all of about 1½ miles) led by Hilary Morgan, an authority on Victorian painting. We shall view houses in Melbury Road and nearby in W8 designed chiefly for Victorian RAs by noted architects such as Philip Webb, Richard Norman Shaw, Halsey Ricardo and William Burges. The walk ends with tea at the Richmond Fellowship in Addison Road, W14. Tickets £2 including tea from the Society. Meet at High Street Kensington Underground Station at 2.00 p.m. prompt.

Saturday 23 May to Monday 25 May - MORRIS AND THE CATHEDRALS OF NORTHERN FRANCE (see separate display advertisement).

Saturday 6 June - DAY TRIP TO BRIGHTON

A series of visits arranged and led by Ray Watkinson to places and people in Brighton of particular interest to members of the Society. We shall see the church of St. Michael & All Angels, where there is splendid stained glass by Morris & Co. and visit private collections not normally open to the public. The tour will start at about 11 a.m. and will end with tea. Tickets £2.50 including tea from the Society. Numbers have to be limited and early booking is advised to avoid disappointment.

Wednesday 10 June 6.30 p.m. - WILLIAM MORRIS AND 19TH CENTURY ATTITUDES TO THE RESTORATION OF CHURCHES. To be held in our new headquarters at Kelmscott House, this lecture is to be given by Professor Hans de Groot, a member of the Society from Toronto University, who has made a special study of pre-Ruskinian attitudes to the restoration of church buildings. After the lecture there will be a glass of wine and a chance to meet the speaker.

Saturday 27 June 2.30 p.m. - GARDEN PARTY AT RED HOUSE. The garden party held at Red House was one of the highlights of our programme two years ago. Members who missed it (and those who didn't) have another opportunity to see, in high summer, the house Philip Webb designed for William and Janey Morris on their marriage in 1859, now lovingly cared for by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hollamby, our hosts on this occasion. The garden party will be opened by a leading figure in the art world. The tea will be up to the usual high standard of our garden parties. Tickets for tea £2.50; guided tour of Red House £1, from the Society.

Friday 10 July to Sunday 12 July - MORRIS & CO. IN THE MIDLANDS

A notice giving details of this study week-end in Birmingham, organised jointly with the Victorians Society, is enclosed with this newsletter. Further copies are available on request (SAE please) from the Society.

6. OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS

28 March - 10 May - FURLONGS: PEGGY ANGUS AND FRIENDS. This exhibition concerns Furlongs, a remote Downland Cottage, and the circle of artists that have drawn their inspiration from it and from its long-time tenant, artist and designer, Peggy Angus. Among the artists who have benefitted from the cottage's beautiful and remote location are Eric Ravilious and his wife Tirzah Garwood and John and Myfanwy Piper. As a life-long teacher, having taught from the early thirties in schools in Nuneaton, Eastbourne and London, Peggy Angus has encouraged talent wherever she found it and enthusiastically recommended the involvement of everyone in art, whether as artists or patrons. She feels strongly that art should be within the reach and understanding of everyone, not just located in the hands of just a few. To this end, her own paintings are designed to be seen in the context of domestic settings and her wallpapers designed to provide an attractive setting to hand pictures upon. Some of the wallpapers will be on display in the exhibition. A major influence on Peggy Angus' art and ideas was, and still remains, William Morris, and she is a long-standing member of the Society. Other influences include medieval and celtic art and the folk art of many nations, including Bali where she spent a year on sabbatical leave, some twenty years ago. This exhibition, which shows for the first time the great artistic achievement that has centred around Peggy Angus and Furlongs for over fifty years, is being held at the Towner Art Gallery, High Street/Manor Gardens, Old Town, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 8BB, Tel. 0323-21635/25112. A separate but complementary exhibition on the work of Tirzah Garwood is being held at the Gallery during the same period.

* WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE CATHEDRALS OF NORTHERN FRANCE *
* *
* A Whitsun Weekend Tour : Friday 22nd May to Monday 25th May *
* *
* A four day tour of Northern France following the footsteps of Morris and *
* Burne-Jones in their discovery of French Gothic. The tour will include *
* four famous cathedrals, each a masterpiece of art and design, and several *
* little known churches which together inspired Morris's views of art and *
* society. We will also visit Monet's waterlily garden at Giverny. *
* *
* Guided by John Purkis of the Open University, combining amusement and *
* instruction in the congenial company of members of the Society, and *
* including visits to Amiens, Beauvais, Chartres and Rouen, the tour offers *
* some of the finest architecture, stained glass and sculpture in the world, *
* as well as examples of preservation and restoration, old towns, unspoilt *
* countryside and good food. It gives the opportunity to appreciate some of *
* the most crucial influences which formed Morris and which he re-interpreted *
* in his legacy. *
* *
* It is remarkably good value at £150 for the four days including personally *
* selected hotels, meals and a comfortable coach from London. *
* *
* In order for the tour to succeed we urgently need more participants whether *
* members of the Society or not, so please tell your friends and evening *
* classes and get in touch with me as soon as possible. *
* *
* *
* Hans Brill *
* Royal College of Art, London, SW7 *
* 01-584 5020 and 01-373 0667 *
* *

Friday 1 May - Sunday 3 May - RUSKIN/MARX WEEKEND

The aim of this course is to look at the criticisms of industrial society made by John Ruskin and Karl Marx. After some background discussion of industrialisation and its social effects the course will look at the responses of Ruskin and Marx in some detail, consider William Morris's attempts to run a commercial firm on Ruskinian lines, and conclude with a discussion of Morris's attempt to combine the ideas of Ruskin and Marx in his own critique of contemporary England. The tutors are Jon Press, a business historian, Peter Faulkner and Ray Watkinson. The course takes place at Dartington Hall, and costs £45.00 (£30.00 for non-residents); further details from David Cox, Devon Centre for Continuing Education, Dartington College of Arts, Dartington, Totnes, Devon, Telephone 0803-862267.

Thursday 28 May, 11.00 a.m. - WILLIAM MORRIS: NEWS FROM NOWHERE

The British Museum is showing this 53 minute video in its series of events open to the public, admission free. It stars Timothy West as William Morris and Kika Markham as Janey.

14 - 21 June - FLOWER FESTIVAL, ALL SAINTS CHURCH, LEEK

All Saints, which celebrates its centenary this year, is a fine example of an Arts and Crafts Movement church. Designed by Norman Shaw and decorated by his

pupils Lethaby and Horsley, much of its glass is by Morris & Co., to designs by Burne-Jones. As well as the Flower Festival there will be an exhibition of works by the Leek School of Embroidery. Refreshments will be available throughout the day, but parties need to book - Leek 382588 - for lunch and afternoon tea. All Saints is situated on the A520 on the left hand side of the road travelling towards Stone.

7. SOCIETY PROGRAMME REPORT

Visit to Sanderson's Design Archive, Uxbridge, 21 January

A fascinating and illuminating time was enjoyed at the Sanderson Design Archive in Uxbridge by approximately a dozen people on 21st January. After having a little of the history of the Sanderson family explained to us, Christine Woods kindly showed us round the recently completed refurbished Design Archive, housing amongst many other collections, an extensive selection of William Morris fabrics and wallcoverings.

Although Morris did not have any dealings with Sanderson during his own lifetime, his designs are an important part of the firm's output today. For the last few years of their existence, Morris & Co. had commissioned a Carlisle firm, Stead McAlpin & Co. to produce printed cottons from their wood-blocks and on the liquidation of the firm, Steads acquired the sets of blocks that they held at that time. The wallpaper blocks became the property of the Wallpaper Manufacturers Ltd., and were allocated to the Perivale factory of Arthur Sanderson & Sons; rightly regarded as the successor to Jeffrey & Co. (Jeffrey & Co. was an Islington based wallpaper manufacturer to whom William Morris turned for advice and to whom he eventually entrusted the production of all Morris & Co. wallpapers.) Pattern books, now owned by Sanderson, show samples of all the early designs of wallpapers such as Daisy, Trellis and Fruit (we were able to see some of these ourselves when we visited the archive) and the painstaking trials that were involved in the masterly mixing of colours and the careful use of wood-blocks.

From the 1950s, Sanderson's range of hand-block printed Morris wallpapers have been in constant production. Other Morris designs have been transferred to machine, providing a cheaper range of screen-printed papers, many of which are now available as printed cottons and linens.

It was thrilling to be able to handle some of Morris's original designs, both in fabrics and wallpaper, and to compare how the hues of the colourways have changed with the modern production of wallpapers and fabrics in some instances. We were also able to glean from one of the young designers who was introduced to us, which of Morris's designs are, as far as Sanderson's are concerned, among the 'best-sellers' today and to try to understand why, sadly, because of the wide range of Morris's designs, some are out of production for the time being. However, we gathered that fresh designs from the Morris Collection are being introduced each year.

It was a memorable visit and we are very grateful to Christine Woods, the Archivist, and Messrs. Sanderson for not only providing us with a delightful venue for our Christmas party in 1986, but also this opportunity to visit their excellent Design Archive.

Jackie Kennedy-Davies

Morris Weaving Techniques, Science Museum, 17 February

Miss Linda Wigley is in charge of the textile machinery at the Science Museum and we are grateful to her for showing us some of the machines in her charge and explaining so clearly their operation. It was interesting to find that the

Jacquard looms for which Morris designed such beautiful, intricate patterns were part of a long line of semi-automatic looms, going back to Bouchon's of 1725 and Falcon's of 1728, which controlled the pick-up of threads for the pattern by means of perforated paper-roll and punched cards respectively, and that these techniques were probably derived from early attempts to make automatic musical instruments. Jacquard's of 1801 combined punched cards with an automatic flying-shuttle, and many now in use still work on the same principles. Some of us were allowed to operate some of the machines and all of us left feeling that we understood more clearly than we ever had before how these clever inventions worked and how great was Morris's skill in designing for them.

Dorothy Coles

8. ROBIN AND HEATHER TANNER: 'A VISION OF WILTSHIRE'

Those fortunate enough to catch BBC2's programme 'A Vision of Wiltshire' in the 'Look Stranger' series, which went out on the afternoon of 17 February, were richly rewarded. The Radio Times accurately introduced it: "For over half a century Robin and Heather Tanner have been striving to record a vanishing vision of countryside - the greystone villages, green meadows and flower-filled woodlands of north Wiltshire. They have lovingly portrayed this landscape in a lifetime of etching, drawing and writing. It is a landscape which, the Tanners believe, need not be lost if people really care as much to preserve it as the Tanners have to record it - this vision of Wiltshire." Robin will be well-known to many as a long-standing member of the Society, and we saw Morris's teaching in action in his and Heather's love and concern for the countryside, and in the art with which they captured aspects of it in Robin's etchings and Heather's accompanying text for their book on Woodland Plants, which is now out of print. Their first book Wiltshire Village, published in 1939, has just been re-issued in paperback by Impact Books at £5.95. It contains sixty pen drawing and six etchings, which have been very well reproduced. In June the same publishers will issue Robin's autobiography, Double Harness, hardback, £14.95. It will contain about 30 black and white illustrations, and much, of course, on the importance of William Morris. Both books are strongly recommended.

Richard Smith

9. MORRIS IN CANADA

The energetic Canadian Society has a characteristically lively and varied Spring programme, including a lecture, by Hans de Groot, on 'The Architecture of Philip Webb' and a tour of Arts and Crafts houses in Wychwood Park, conceived as an estate of artists' homes near Toronto at the turn of the century. The major event is the Society's two-day Annual Symposium, the theme this year being 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil'. The Winter 1987 issue of the Society's Newsletter, running to fourteen closely-packed pages, reports on the equally interesting programme for the second half of 1986. The Canadian Society has offered to provide regular reports on its work for this Newsletter, and the first of these should appear in the July issue.

10. THE RON SOUTH FUND

Dr. Ronald South, Principal of the City Library Institute from 1968 to 1984, died in January 1985. He was a member of the Society and his wife, Joan, was at one time on the Committee. Ron South was a distinguished and committed

adult educator who, as well as enhancing the already high reputation of the City Lit, was a keen advocate of international co-operation in adult education. His illness prevented him from working as he had hoped for an organisation whose establishment he had supported - the Commonwealth Association for the Education and Training of Adults. It is the CAETA, in co-operation with the Governors of the City Lit, which has established the Ron South Fund. Its main aims are to provide for an annual 'Ron South Lecture' to be delivered at a major international conference concerned with adult education, and "to provide for some studying material resources to aid individuals and groups in their work of studying and promoting the practice, theory and ideals of international adult education." Contributions to the Fund are invited and should be sent to Alan Rogers, CAETA, School of Education, University of Reading, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ or Chris Springham, The City Lit, Stukeley Street, London WC2 B5W.

11. MISCELLANY

The Society has entered into reciprocal membership with the Institute of Contemporary Arts, at whose premises in The Mall the memorable 150th anniversary exhibition was mounted in 1984. The two organisations will be exchanging information about events and exhibitions which may be of interest to their members. The reciprocal membership works at an institutional level only, and Morris Society members will still have to pay for ICA events.

Sotheby's annual Market Report mentions the sale of a copy of Bruni's Historia Fiorentina, printed in Venice in 1476. This was William Morris's copy and was used by him as model for the Golden Type of the Kelmscott Press. The book fetched £9,680 at auction.

A recent member of the Society is Mrs. Helen Firth, who lives at Westness House, Rousay, Orkney. The house formerly belonged to the Traill family, was let to various tenants during the nineteenth century and sold in 1922; Mr. and Mrs. Firth bought the house, in bad repair, in 1952, and restored it with the help of the Historic Buildings Council of Scotland and the Orkney Islands Council. Its interest for Society members is that during the tenancy of Mr. Middlemore in the late nineteenth century, the house was visited by Pre-Raphaelites. There is an original Morris wallpaper (Daisy pattern) in the dining-room and there are William de Morgan tiles in all but one of the fireplaces. Society members visiting Orkney will be made most welcome - though sadly this will be the Firths' last year in the house.

12. PUBLICATIONS

Linda Parry, who is Keeper of Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and a member of the Society's Committee, has an article on 'William Morris's Early Church Embroideries' in the Autumn 1986 issue of Embroidery. Linda says that it is unfortunate that so little is known of these early commercial embroideries since they show "not only Morris's and his colleagues' most idealised thoughts on how public and religious buildings should look but also their ability to carry out such aspirations using one of the most complicated yet expressive of techniques."

Jon Press, who will be one of the tutors at the Dartington Hall course over the Mayday weekend, has published 'William Morris and the Marketing of Art' in Business History, xviii, 4 October 1986.

The magazine Traditional Interior Decoration has published an illustrated article on Standen in its March issue, and this will be followed by another on Wightwick Manor in May. This is not a magazine known to the Editor, so any further information will be welcomed.

Still on Wightwick Manor, Stephen Ponder has compiled a guide Wightwick Manor: the Morris and de Morgan Collections, which is available from the Administrator at the Manor, Wightwick, Wolverhampton, West Midlands at 50p. plus 20p. postage.

By Chance I Did Rove, the memoirs of Norman Jewson, introduced by David Gould, have recently been reissued by Cryffon Publications. Norman Jewson was an architect who was inspired by Ernest Gimson to work in the new Cotswold tradition, an offshoot of the Arts and Crafts style. No price was given in the publicity material received by the Society, but further information may be obtained from Davinia Wynne-Jones, Gryffon Publications, Turk's Yark, Barnsley, Cirencester, Glos.

* THE KELMSCOTT LECTURE 1985 *
* *
* WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM *
* *
* given on Wednesday 23 October 1985 in the Hall of *
* the Art Workers' Guild by BARBARA MORRIS is now *
* available from the Society at £3.00 (including *
* postage). Please send orders to Norah Gillow, *
* William Morris Gallery, Forest Road, Walthamstow, *
* London E17 4PP, but send no money until you receive *
* your invoiced copy. *
* *

13. EDITOR'S NOTES

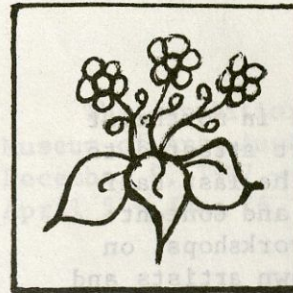
I must apologise to the Society's Auditor, Mr. Chartrey, for having speld his surname wrongly in the last issue. The next issue will appear during July and the closing date is Monday 22 June. Members should note this earlier date. It has become clear over the past year or eighteen months that to make the closing date at the end of the month preceding that in which the Newsletter is due to appear is too late to allow for editing, typing, proof-reading, printing and distribution by the end of the month in which members, quite reasonably, expect to receive their copies. The typist, Barbara Andrews, and the University of Nottingham Print Unit do an excellent job and it is only fair to them that we should give them plenty of time in which to complete their work. Contributions should be sent to me at 7 Bromley Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7AP.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Peter Preston

Peter Preston,
Editor.



WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

in the UNITED STATES

NEWSLETTER,

April, 1987

A. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Second Annual Conference on Medievalism sponsored by Studies in Medievalism will take place at the University of Notre Dame, October 8-10, 1987. Papers are invited on all aspects of Medievalism from the end of the Middle Ages to the present and beyond. Papers on art, music, religion, history, and literature are sought, and papers on the scholarship, history, and philosophy of Medievalism will be particularly welcomed. Abstracts of papers should be sent by June 1, 1987 to Leslie J. Workman, Editor, STUDIES IN MEDIEVALISM, 520 College Avenue, Holland, Michigan 49423.

Ms. Judith Kennedy is seeking articles on revision among Victorian writers for a collection which she is editing. For examples of the kinds of articles wanted, see PMLA, November 1985 (the Convention Program), section 422, "Processes of Revision among Victorian Writers," and PMLA, November 1986, section 428, "Revision among Victorian Writers: Motivations and Modes." Send inquiries or articles to Judith Kennedy, Department of English, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530

"Gilbert and Sullivan and Their Circles" will be the theme of the University of Leicester's 1988 Victorian Studies Conference, tentatively scheduled for early July. Inquiries and proposals for papers should be sent to Richard Foulkes, the University Centre, Barrack Road, Northampton NN2 6AF, England.

Samuel J. Hough, owner of the bookstore, "The Owl at the Bridge," thought that members of the Society would be interested to learn that he has on hand copies of the Omega Press facsimile of the Kelmscott Chaucer. He is selling them for \$50., plus \$2. for postage and handling. His address: 25 Berwick Lane, Cranston, R.I. 02905.

It was reported in the October, 1986 Newsletter that the journal, NINETEENTH CENTURY THEATRE (formerly NINETEENTH CENTURY THEATRE RESEARCH) was being moved from Arizona to the University of Massachusetts. Its editor, Professor Joseph Donohue, announces that the move is now complete, and that this semiannual journal of theatre studies welcomes inquiries, essays, and subscriptions (\$10. for individuals, \$15. for institutions). The address: NINETEENTH CENTURY THEATRE, Department of English, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.

Dorothy Coles has asked me to give credit, since I failed to do so in the October, 1986 Newsletter, to Julia Stapleton for her work in planning the Icelandic journey which Society members enjoyed last August. Ms. Stapleton was the one who handled all the difficult preliminary work on the bookings. Dorothy writes, "I only took over in the final stages, when it was all easy."

The February-March 1987 issue of AMERICAN CRAFT (Vol. 47, no. 1) contains the first of a three-part series of articles "profiling master bookmakers who are operating small private presses." The first article, "Claire van Vliet's

Janus Press," is by W. Thomas Taylor. The Janus Press is located in northeast Vermont; New England is home to many small private presses, a fact attested to by a recent symposium held in Northampton, Massachusetts during the last half of March and the first week of April, 1987. It was titled "Form and Content: the Art of the Book in the Pioneer Valley." There were several workshops, on topics like bookbinding and papermaking, and lectures by well-known artists and illustrators like Leonard Baskin and Barry Moser.

From March 24 through June 28, 1987 the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City will hold an exhibition, "Lewis Sullivan, the Function of Ornament." Over 180 drawings, models, examples of ornament, handwork, and photographs will represent the work and influence of the Chicago architect.

B. RECENT EXHIBITIONS

From January 16 through March 15, 1987, an exhibition, "Victorian Bibliomania: The Illuminated Book in 19th Century Britain," was on view at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in Providence, R.I. Over 70 British books were exhibited, among them volumes from the Kelmscott Press and examples of William Morris's calligraphy.

The exhibition was accompanied by a full-day symposium on February 11, 1987. Jennifer B. Lee, Curator of Printed Books at Brown University spoke on "The History of Books and Printing: An Introduction." Joan M. Friedman, Curator of Rare Books at the Yale Center for British Art, gave a slide lecture on Owen Jones. Martin W. Hunter, an interior designer from New York City, spoke on "Daniel Berkeley Updike of Providence and the British Connection." John R. Burrows, an architectural historian and interior designer from Boston, lectured on "The Victorian Revival in 1987." William Morris's name came up in each of the lectures, and he and his work at the Kelmscott Press are often referred to in the catalogue of the exhibition, VICTORIAN BIBLOMANIA. It is available at RISD's Museum Shop for \$18.

An extremely ambitious and important exhibition, one which often cites the influence of William Morris's ideas and achievements, opened on March 4, 1987 at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. It is "'The Art that is Life': The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920." The curator's Preface to the 410 page catalogue of the exhibition has at its center a passage from Morris's 1881 lecture, "Art and Beauty of the Earth," and there are over eighty references to Morris or Morris and Company throughout the catalogue. The exhibition's 225 artifacts are displayed in four sections: "Reform in Aesthetics," "Reform in Craftsmanship," "Spreading the Reform Ideal," and "Reform of the Home" and the catalogue has detailed and informative descriptions of each of these artifacts as well as the following seven essays: 1) "The Lamp of British Precedent: An Introduction to the Arts and Crafts Movement" by Wendy Kaplan (the Exhibition Director), 2) "Arts and Crafts: Matters of Style" by Robert Judson Clark and Wendy Kaplan, 3) "American Arts and Crafts Architecture: Radical though Dedicated to the Cause Conservative" by Richard Guy Wilson, 4) "'Dreams of Brotherhood and Beauty': The Social Ideas of the Arts and Crafts Movement" by Eileen Boris, 5) "Spreading the Crafts: the Role of the Schools" by Wendy Kaplan, 6) "House and Home in the Arts and Crafts Era: Reforms for Simpler Living" by Cheryl Robertson, and 7) "A More Reasonable Way to Dress" by Sally Buchanan Kinsey. The exhibition catalogue has dozens of black and white photographs and illustrations and 47 wonderful full-page color plates.

The exhibition will travel to three other sites: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, August 16 - November 1, 1987; the Detroit Institute of Arts, December 9, 1987 - February 28, 1988; and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York, April 5 - June 26, 1988.

C. THE NEMLA WILLIAM MORRIS SESSION

At the 1987 Northeast Modern Language Association meetings in Boston, Yvette Grimes presided over a session, given on April 4, 1987, entitled "The Influence of the Norse Sagas on Morris's Work." There were three presentations: Karl O.E. Anderson, of Clark University, spoke on "Morris's Position in the History of Norse Studies in English," surveying an impressive list of British and American authors, from Thomas Grey in 1768 to Gordon Bottomly and W.H. Auden in our century who have written on Iceland and Icelandic literature. He then asserted that William Morris towered over them all, both in terms of quantity (he translated over two dozen sagas and thættir as well as several Eddic poems, and he used Norse themes in a few of his best narrative poems and in several shorter lyrics) and quality (*Sigurd* has been called the greatest epic written in the nineteenth century). Anderson ended his informative talk by reading from Morris's lyric, "Iceland First Seen," offering proof for his sense that Morris's tone in such lyrics is perfect for capturing Iceland's chill and strange beauty.

Lin Haire-Sargent, of Tufts University, spoke on "Mythic Patterns in Morris's Prose Romances," finding ways to apply Lacanian terminology to the roles of heroines in a few of the late prose romances.

Gary L. Aho, of the University of Massachusetts, and Florence Boos, of the University of Iowa, gave a slide-lecture that incorporated passages from Morris's *Icelandic Journals* and 45 slides taken on last August's jaunt to Iceland. They attempted to demonstrate why certain scenes and saga sites moved Morris deeply; in prose that evokes emotion as it provides clean and clear descriptions, Morris left to posterity one of the three or four best travel books ever written on Iceland.

It is pleasant to report that there will again be another Morris session at NEMLA, on the general theme of Morris and the medieval past. Anyone interested in giving a paper at next Spring's meetings, to be sponsored by Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island and to be held in Providence, Rhode Island, should write to Professor Carolyn Collette, English Department, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts.

D. NEWS OF MEMBERS

Joe Dunlap reports that he enjoyed immensely a pair of lectures on "C.R. Ashbee, His Life and Works," given in New York City on April 1, 1987. The lectures, sponsored by the Victorian Society of America, were by Felicity Ashbee, the architect's daughter, and Alan Crawford, his biographer. These same two speakers are scheduled to appear on April 12, as part of the "Sunday Lectures" at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, these given in conjunction with the exhibition mentioned earlier in this Newsletter. Felicity Ashbee will speak on "C.R. Ashbee, Architect, Designer, and Romantic Socialist: A Daughter's View," and Alan Crawford will speak on "The Arts and Crafts Movement" in Britain and America."

Joe Dunlap also wants to remind Society members that an important anniversary is coming up next year, and that it might not be too soon to be planning an

exhibition or symposium to commemorate the slide lecture by Emory Walker on November 15, 1888, for it was William Morris's reactions to this lecture that led to his "adventure" at the Kelmscott Press.

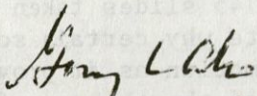
Norman Kelvin reports that volume two of the Collected Letters will be published in October.

Jan Marsh, author of Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood and Jane and May Morris, will be travelling and speaking in the United States next Fall. We hope that she will lecture at the University of Massachusetts in October or November, and she is tentatively scheduled to take part in one of the sessions on William Morris which will be on the program at the Modern Language Association Meetings next December, in San Francisco.

Jack Walsdorf was invited to lecture at the Third Annual Arts and Crafts Convention at East Aurora, N.Y., home of the Roycrofters and Elbert Hubbard, the amiable huckster of the home-spun who claimed to have visited Morris in 1894. Walsdorf spoke on William Morris and his achievements at Morris and Company to an appreciative audience of some sixty crafts enthusiasts. Efforts to restore the Roycrofters shops and enterprises are evidently meeting with some success.

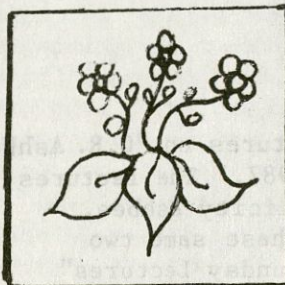
Florence Boos's very detailed and interesting journal of The Society's Icelandic jaunt will appear in this Newsletter in two installments; the first (of eight pages) is attached herewith.

Yours in fellowship,



Gary L. Aho, for the
Governing Committee

Department of English
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003



With William Morris in Iceland: The First Week

August 1st, 1986 8:15 a. m. Keflavík time

We arrived in Keflavík airport, and drank a peaceful if expensive tea, coffee, and milk as we waited for the British members of the Icelandic tour to arrive seven hours hence. We slept about 2 1/2 hours on the plane; the previous night I only slept about 3. Still, I wanted to begin immediately, in honor of Morris's Icelandic diary, and will try to write daily, as did he. I reread the opening of his diary on the plane, and was impressed at how excited and eager he was, sleepless too (for other reasons) the night before the trip; even Scotland was new to him and he made careful, enthusiastic observations of scenery and intelligent comments on bridges, ships, etc.. He was clearly eager to absorb all he could, and try to live for a while apart from all he knew—including his friends; thus the repeated dream of letters from home. Yet his diary was also designed for his friends, whom he seems to address as "you." The purpose for writing during voyages seems clear, to keep faith that one's dislocations from pattern matter, that one is still connected though detached and underway. Morris enjoyed lying on the boat seeing the waves rise towards him—an impulse to seek the edge of danger?

After I began this, Bill found a kindly Loftleidir employee who let us sleep in a deserted staff lounge, a great relief. At 2:45 p. m. Icelandic time, we rose to meet the British party, gathered by Ruth Ellison, who had come out from Reykjavík. Friendly and well-organized, she distributed maps and lists of places we will visit. She is very vigorous, practical, and precise of manner, and speaks excellent Icelandic. Before the bus drove us off towards Reykjavík, we talked a while with several others. The trip to Reykjavík took us through the familiar featureless lavafields, but the suburbs (Hafnarfjörður, Gardabaer, and Kopavogur) and Reykjavík itself looked beautiful in bright sunlight, with its familiar museums, churches, university, and lake. Bill and I were moved, each in our own way. Despite my regret that I hadn't learned more of the language in our four months here last fall, recognition stirred as I looked at place names, streets, and buildings; so many names now familiar at least, though still strange. Eugene is quite excited by the trip; on the plane he could hardly stop talking about what we would see, and the fact that clouds concealed most of the topography did not quench his zeal.

At Reykjavík, Gary, his twenty-year old daughter Karen, and fellow University of Massachusetts professor Bob Creed boarded. The scenery to the southeast became more interesting, as wide fields of moist mossy grass mounds ("Þúfur") contrasted with deep grey basalt. We noted small, neat farms with bright red, blue, and green roofs; the many fine small churches; handsome sheep and ponies; flying gulls and grey-black-and-white marsh birds ("Fulmar"); and the occasional small waterfalls and many slender rivers which defiled from the mountains.

After a friendly tea we drove south through Selfoss, and on to the farm/guesthouse in Smáratun ("clover field") for the night. It was pleasant to arrive at our first farm; Ruth went to another farm with another group, and Bill struggled to help translate. I felt regret that I couldn't follow the hostess's conversation, and renewed respect for the ordered intricacy of the language. We were served a (too) hearty dinner (bread and cheese for us), including dessert and coffee, and walked out into the fields to view turf-covered sheds, neat verdant fields, and sturdy oxen-like Icelandic cows with their powerful legs and lean bodies.

Bill and Eugene are in one room and I share another with an American doctoral student Holly Dworkin; four men (Nigel Kelsey, Neville Cornwell, Edmund Grant, and Al Vogeler) are in a large room across the way. We made tentative first acquaintances, but the fatigue of travel and minimal privacy left us all with some strains, and bright sun and jet lag woke me at 4:20 a. m., after only four hours sleep.

August 2nd

We stopped briefly at the high falls at Seljalandsfoss (either "seals'-land-falls" or "mountain-dairy-land falls"), slender and attractive. Icelandic vacationers were camped at the base, and one of their small dogs (named "Vaskur," or "Brave") nimbly leaped past Bill and Eugene as they climbed. We then rode on

towards the glacier at Thórsmörk, a gravelly riverbed region rimmed by deep charcoal mountains (A "mörk" is a "boundary-region," often uninhabited, which may be forest, desert, or, as in this case, glacial moraine). To reach a small skoður ("forest"), we had to cross several rivers in our little all-terrain bus, a much easier operation than the horseback fordings Morris casually describes in the Diary. At one point, the driver paused for calculation, then cautiously forded; we clapped appreciatively on the other side. The riverbeds change often with the direction of the melting glacier runoff, so bridges are presumably rather hopeless.

This region depressed Morris, as well it might. I tried to take pictures of some things he mentioned--the glaciers, the flowers (some purple, some white-belled, some white and yellow clover), and especially the birch trees, sturdy scruffy stubbornly pervasive bushes. Meagre looking þúfur on the mountainsides supported goats and sheep; I noticed one striking white goat with black head and markings. One becomes used to the fact that the animals are such an individualized array of composite whites, blacks, greys, tans, and browns--one can never quite predict the markings of a goat or sheep, and a cluster of animals rarely possesses identically-colored coats. One understands why the language has an enormous variety of words which designate different color-patterns of sheep, cattle, and horses. Remnants of counterparts probably survive in many English and Scottish dialects. Our destination, a region of "wooded" hills which border Thórsmörk, is a vacation area; we passed cars parked at the fords along the way, and a great crowd of Icelanders and others had encamped at the foot of the hills.

The cliff formations at Thórsmörk were starkly jagged and irregular. Its mountains are "palagonite-tuff," formed under glaciers and flat at the top. We passed Stakkholtsgjá ("cape-hill gorge"), an impressive stratum of cave-like apertures under a grey ledge high upon a mountain, like a great opened grimace. These and the other grim rock formations, like so much in Iceland, bear witness to the heedless power of geological events which are no less fearful for being "understood" (what a relief that Thomas Hardy never made it to Thórsmörk). Edmund Grant aptly remarked that "This was nature's own industrial revolution scarring the countryside, completely without human assistance."

The region is full of crumbled rock and black glacial dust which brush off easily, and the ground is covered with thin spongy vegetation and brush. One becomes accustomed to sitting down with relief on one of the natural pillows of stone covered with green brush. Grey-black boulders and rocks of various sizes are strewn about in the wide glacial beds, and some of the crevices and gullies which debouch into them are striking in themselves. In brightest daylight, the sun brightened the moss-green grass somewhat, and we stopped by a solitary mound called Tröllakirkja ("trolls' church") to devour our neatly packed nesti, bundles of yogurts, juices, sandwiches, and pastries. I saw several solitary sheep alone in small pastures, high in the cliffs, sturdily grazing on their long knobby legs--a lonely life. One needs something to personalize such unrelieved expanses of dark stone; the name-giving of "trolls' church" seems similar to the naturally anthropomorphic spirit of Edmund's remark.

Afterwards we drove to the edge of a large glacier whose lake run-off waters in heavy rain seemed rose-colored; large bluish chunks of ice floated in swanlike formations. Refracted by the driving rain and heavy mist, the scene seemed antediluvian; Gary called it "Burne-Jonesish." Bill, Eugene, and I realized we had made a bad mistake not to bring raincoats, hats, and even perhaps boots. Gary, Bob, Dorothy, and I clambered through the blackish glacial residue to the glacier's edge, and gazed up at the grimy knobs of ice which protruded above and ahead of us. I imagined being at the bottom of such a slide as it fell on me. The heavy drenching rain, mossy background, dirty white snow, charcoal soot, murky water, and eerie rose light created one of the weirdest and most memorable scenes of the trip so far.

Near a hayfield and waterfall on the road home, Dorothy Cole identified several flowers for me--among them mustard flower, blue crane's bill, angelica, and cow's vetch. All, presumably, have equally quaint Icelandic names. Eugene picked an angelica to reveal its large tubular root (Icelanders have traditionally eaten its green cousin; it looks no worse than rutabaga). Our dinner included dishes of skýr, the national desert, a sweetened whey which tastes like a slightly tart whipped cream; everyone enjoyed it. Afterwards Edmund kindly translated for me the final chapter of Edvige Schulte's book on Rossetti.

August 3rd

We visited Bergthórshvöll ("Bergthor's knoll"), near Njal's house, whose burning is the "brennu" of Brennunjalssaga. We all walked together up the knoll to a spot, near a twentieth-century house, where Njal's farmhouse may have stood. The little hill quietly overlooked plains which extended south to the Westmanneyjar ("Westmann Islands"). En route to another waterfall, Gluggafoss ("Window Falls"), which Morris may have visited, we stopped at Stora Dimon, a large, greenish soft-sloped mountain-formation.

We ate at Hlidarendi ("Slope-end;" Morris's "Lithend"), a peaceful sheltered site just up the hill from what Morris translated as "Gunnar's Howe" ("howe" = "haugur" = "burial mound") and made the subject of one of his few Icelandic poems devoted to a specific saga hero. Thus he celebrates the lonely steadfastness of the warrior in Njala, whose wraith was observed after his death as it sang in his grave at night:

O young is the world yet meseemeth
and the hope of it flourishing green
When the words of a man unremembered
so bridge all the days that have been,
As we look round about on the land
that these nine hundred years he hath seen. (ll. 25-30)

"Gunnar's Howe," actually a mound in the gully near where Gunnar may have lived, overlooks a wide, pleasant yellow-brown plain, traversed by rivers shining in the sun and once again reaching to the Westmann Islands. The weather was idyllically warm, and it was a peaceful, quiet day. As we sat on the grassy slope above the sunlit church and cemetery and looked out over the bright plain beneath, Morris's epiphany seemed believable; for a moment at least, intense desire and identification can make not only nine hundred years but a millenium seem to fall away.

I began to realize that this little "byggð" below the road--farmhouse, ironsided church with reddish-brown gate and adjacent "churchyard"/cemetery--formed one of the country's most characteristic scenes. We walked through the cemetery, looked at the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century stones, and stood round its high-mounded graves. Bill, Gary, and Dorothy all agreed that it would be a pleasant place to be buried, but I shuddered to think how the winds must howl over this promontory in winter, in the long twilight above the near-empty plains--bleaker than the landscape of Wuthering Heights--the other side of Morris's hymn to steadfastness and the vanished centuries. Had I been one of the women who lived and worked here, I would have found it hard to suppress a grimace that I would be buried within a few miles of where I'd been born and lived out my entire life. It takes no leap of empathy to understand why even a prosperous woman such as Morris's Gudrun might prefer "a stirring life," to such insulation.

The next stop was one of our more interesting, a preserved farmstead at Keldur (which means either "springs" or "swamps," depending on the context), where Morris actually stayed in 1871, a series of 6 or 8 turf-covered attached compartments, of course a very large bústaður by 19th century standards. At the back of one compartment we saw a kitchen in which Morris had cooked a meal, with its dark hearth, small skyhole opening to the top, and small side window, extremely cramped even in bright summer with no fire.

We also entered a parlour, relatively light (I now realize) as such rooms go; a room which may have been used for eating; another for storage; a kind of cellar with side huts, probably used to store dried food; and a room which seemed a workplace. A small turf-roofed buttery was set directly on a small stream, and beyond were two large, handsome, smooth turfed mounds in the fields, adjacent to each other and almost lushly symmetrical in their contours, perhaps animal-shelters.

Karen teased Gary, "Do you feel excited to see a place visited by your hero?" For me, the answer was yes: after thousands of miles, I am grateful finally to see something which is much as Morris saw it. Perhaps it made the scene seem more authentic that the sky was grayish and overcast, more typical than postcard beautiful.

Late in the day we stopped at Oddi, whose quiet, dignified church, built

after Morris's trip, is the handsomest we have seen so far. Affixed to several stones were stone plaques engraved with two hands clasping each other--love in farewell. One grave inscription was Matthew V:7, which Bill and I looked up in the church's sumptuous Bible, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy"; we wondered who might have expressed this tribute to whom, and in gratitude for what. The stones were unusually old and some were partly effaced. Bill struggled for a while to decipher one long inscription, then asked Ruth for help, but in vain. Lost. We all climbed to a nearby hill and looked down on the church, graveyard, and sloping fields beyond. As we left, we admired a stone mounting block from which people once climbed to their horses. We had a relaxed dinner, Eugene and I talked, and I studied Morris's diary. It was an affectionate conversation and I made progress with the diary, but was tired the next day.

August 4th

A very full day; I hope I can remember it in some detail. We left our farm at Smáratun and drove by Laugarvatn en route to Skálholt. Laugarvatn ("hot spring lake") is set in a valley from which plains and attendant hills slowly rise into the mountains above, a configuration which I remembered distinctly from last fall. Low green mountains surround Skálholt, whose black and white church and carefully-designed interior was one of the finest things we've seen. Over the altar hangs an impressive blue-tinted mosaic of Christ of the ships, by Nína Tryggvadóttir. It seemed appropriate to fuse the tale of Christ and the fishermen with the latter's Icelandic counterparts. There are stained-glass windows on the side by Gerður Helgadóttir, with attractive brightly colored bits of glass and heavily leaded panes, arranged so that one can trace in abstract gradations from yellow-and-blue to red-and-blue a progression from annunciation to ascension.

The church's crypt contained a museum of Icelandic gravestones of several centuries, many in Latin. Bill lingered over them to decipher what he could, and Eugene offered suggestions as he looked on. One could see an evolution in the stones' style from century to century. As always when I look at such monuments, what most depresses me is how meager and conventional they are--not to mention how few were the dignitaries who could afford such relatively elaborate and expensive tributes.

I duly took a photograph of one ancient stone tomb of a medieval bishop, Páll Jónsson. Next to the church stands a handsome adult-education school, with a small display of modern paintings. As we drove away from the cathedral we stopped at the large stone commemorating the site of the 1550 execution of the Catholic bishop of Hólar, Jón Arason, with two of his sons; later, in the north, we will see his church and a bell-tower which commemorates his execution. Before his death, he is supposed to have proclaimed, "The world is a bitter cheat if I must meet my death while Danes sit in judgment" (John Hood, *Icelandic Church Saga*, London, 1946, 155); I thought of Thomas More. We then left the region, to me one of the more pleasant of the country; its gentle valleys and distant lakes under low mountains give a comfortable beauty to the simple "cathedral," as simple and plain as a new England wooden church or Quaker meeting-house.

We stopped at Gullfoss, ("gold falls") where we all clambered for quite a while along assorted ledges next to the rushing waters, divided roughly into two falls, and I took pictures of basalt rifts and gorge. We are now again northeast of Skálholt, in a region of grass-covered black basalt, much rockier and more lava-covered but cut by beautiful, clear blue rivers. The falls are massive and Niagara-like, but mercifully without the latter's rotating restaurants nearby. Close by, we were so overpowered by sound and spray that we became a bit numb.

We drove on from Gullfoss to Geysir. Morris considered this a conventional tourist site, but I enjoyed it very much. There is something lively and interesting about the bright-reddish oxidized gravel and sand which cover the ground and hills beyond. The small geysir Strokkur ("churn") erupted several times, fairly unusual in such a brief period. Bill shared Morris's reaction, and walked down the hill for coffee, but returned later to look for Eugene. We passed many vigorously bubbling pots, some with pipes inserted, a comically direct conjunction of natural forces and human calculation. One hole was quite orange, and another reflected two shades of a deep translucent turquoise. The grass-covered nearby hills and their motley gathering of grazing sheep provide a more mundane background for these cheerfully bubbling fissures.

We came back once again past Laugarvatn, which shone beautifully under blue mountains in the sun, up the roads through glacial moraines, and west to Thingvellir ("Thing Fields"). Thingvellir is situated on an elevated fissured lava plain cut by Almannagjá ("Everyone-gorge"). Impressive mountains to the east look down on the river Öxará ("Axe River"), whose many little green islands gradually open out into Thingvallavatn (a "graben lake," formed in a depression between parallel faults). Stopping at this site was the event of the day, and, given its obvious significance for the Icelanders and for Morris, perhaps even of the trip. After seeing it twice, I appreciate its distinctiveness the more. Its massive basaltic colonnades gradually force each small human visitor down toward the lake. One understands clearly why the medieval Icelanders chose to set up their "booths" here each year.

We ate first in a scrub tree "forest" nearby, in light drizzle and chill, then drove to an outlook above the Öxará. The weather improved as we walked down through the solemn towering colonnades, and I realized that if I had been an Icelanders in 1000 A. D., I too would have been impressed and frightened at the stern solemnity of the colonnade march, and by association by the "lögberg" and the laws proclaimed from it. We gathered around the "rock," beneath the flag of Iceland which overlooks flags of other Scandinavian nations, then passed over the Öxará to Flosi's Leap, incorrectly described by Morris's guides as the site of the law-rock. I lept over a narrow part of the divide; he did have quite a jump, but desperation gives strength. Eugene tossed some aurar into the waters of Peningagjá ("Money Gorge"); some tourist conventions do seem universal.

We left Thingvellir the way Morris approached it, through a barren region to the north, past Meyjarsaeti ("maiden's seat"), and up into a high plateau called "Kaldidalur" ("cold valley;" aptly named). The Thing-fields must have seemed even more impressive to him as he came down from this desert plateau. As we drove, the landscape became steadily more mountainous and deserted, and the road more rudimentary (several times Ruth remarked that the narrow gravel tracks had obviously been moved since she last came through). For a while we rode over lava-covered fields and gray sand slopes beneath folding hills, among them Skjaldbreiður ("Shield-broad"), in the distance on our right. We stopped once on the windswept heath (no cliché, here) to examine the ground by some frozen rivers (in August) and look up at the edges of Thórisjökull and Geitlandsjökull, the latter a small appendage to the vast Langjökull. Comparison with "moonscapes" here are quite appropriate. A traveller stranded here overnight without shelter might well freeze, even in midsummer. Morris surely felt a stronger version of our reaction, as he trotted slowly along in the wind and looked up at black cliffs and distant ice.

In its gloomy way, the region directly north of Thingvellir made me obscurely grateful for my human limitations, my little envelope of thought and warmth. Surely Morris was in fact as distracted here as he could possibly have been from his marital difficulties and other worries. In its deathly quiet way, the wilderness was, of course, also a test of self-reliance for these travellers in their late thirties. Less stubbornly resourceful people, deprived of our bus and emergency radio, would never take this leg of the trip for "pleasure." After this, Morris was better able to bring to his marital and business complications the mixture of sympathy, detachment, and determination they required.

After the long drive north through mountains, we descended into more green pastures above the Hvítá ("White River"), and berthed in various farmsteads near Húsafell, the three of us and Neville, Ed, Holly, and Karen at the venerable farm Fljótstunga ("river tongue"), where May Morris stayed in 1926. The farm was turf-roofed until 1933; the old homestead is now the barn. The next day the present proprietor Ingibjörg Bergthórsdóttir showed us a 1913 Longmans pocket edition of *A Dream of John Ball*, which May inscribed to her father, Bergthór Jónsson, along with a very attractive picture of herself weaving, which none of us had seen before. Good for May to have reached this outpost on horseback in her mid-60's. Ingibjörg explained that her grandfather Jón Pálsson actually met Morris, but he died when she was nine, and she had heard no stories from him of Morris's visit to Kalmanstunga, the adjacent farm. Her farm, nestled halfway up the hillside, appears in the *Grettissaga*, and has been worked continuously since the beginning of the millennium.

The evening conversation was interesting. Ingibjörg and her husband, an amiably silent man, were helped by their son, who studies agronomy in Norway, and

is uncertain whether or not he wants to take over the farm. Ingibjörg has a substantial library of books in English, Danish, and German, and as we watched the evening news, her brother, a meteorologist, appeared on television as the reader of the weather report. She also lent us a German thesis, written by a student who had stayed with them, which studied Fljótstunga as a representative middle-size farm.

A secondary school teacher visited us after dinner, with recordings of passages from *Njála* and other sagas by Einar Olafur Sveinsson, one of which I was happy to buy. The teacher then held forth rather sententiously on the virtues and faults of English and American literature, while the son grew visibly annoyed. We all departed the table except the son and Bill, who struggled to finish the conversation with a quiet handshake.

August 5th

. . . At one point Ruth led us to "Snorri's Stone," an impressively heavy rock which was presented to us as a traditional test of strength. A few members of the party tried vainly to budge it, and finally a group raised it together with great difficulty ("Drops of water turn a mill. . ."). Near Reykholt Gary was able to visit with a ninety-year old farmer with whom he had stayed in 1974, a vigorous author of several books in which he expresses his firm belief in life on other planets. Gary smilingly returned with the latest. One can argue, after all, that the old farmer's projections are a reasonable variant of the common belief in Icelandic "huldufolk"--"hidden people." It would be mildly surprising if such a remote, sparsely populated, desolately beautiful landscape did not inspire fond fantasies of unseeable kinspeople (as in Ireland). By now all three of us were quite cold, and we were relieved to be able to buy scarves and hats in Reykholt.

After a pleasant indoor picnic lunch and conversation, we walked down to view Snorri Sturlusson's tenth-century bath, Snorralaug, a small circular pool formed by the hot spring Skrifla, and connected by a dark tunnel to a nearby farmhouse. Here, according to the *Sturlunga Saga*, Snorri was murdered in 1241, and the Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland's dignified statue of him stands solemnly in front of the local school and the now-familiar simple church. Perhaps it is the influence of Snorri's stone, but I have come to find it depressing and ominous that all the stories we have heard so far are the exploits of knife-, club-, and spear-wielding men.

We finally stopped at Gilsbakki ("ravine bank"), where Ruth has worked most summers since she first came here as a student. We walked about in the large sheep shed and tried out clipping shears, as Ruth described the fatigue in the hands that comes from thousands of compressions in a few hours. We peered over the edge of the huge ravine that gives the area its name, and collected samples of wool from the fences. As we gathered together for group photographs by the ironclad shed, I looked up into the horse pastures nearby, and contemplated their many colored horses--white, speckled gray, black, and even one steel-gray (there are also steel-gray cows, new to me).

Afterwards we walked out to a secluded glen where the priest at Gilsbakki arranged to say his farewell to Morris and the others. We walked first along a river, past a bank with long smooth grasses, then down to a grass-edged pond used for swimming, and back over a short stretch of land to the river, where we rested in the leafy enclosure where Morris said goodbye.

Later in the afternoon, we visited Barnafoss ("children's falls;" legendary site of the drowning of two young children), cut through a lava plateau covered with floral vegetation to the deep turquoise river below. Above the falls is a kind of natural stone arch, only fully apparent to the eyes from above, a good configuration. The scene was less grand in scale than Gullfoss, but even more beautiful--in part, because more accessible. We all climbed a good deal, and took many pictures.

After dinner I wrote seven cards before I succumbed to sleep while working on an eighth, to Dick Smith. I felt sorry I hadn't been more informed about Morris's journey before the trip, but found the farm's stillness and remoteness very peaceful. As I sat at my makeshift desk, I could look out the window down the valley in the lingering summer light. Here too, I felt genuinely remote from

home--like Morris, I hope I may be able to confront it with greater wisdom and purpose on my return. In the stillness, one can to some extent waive needs for day-to-day reinforcement and recover a sense of the ultimate purposes of one's work.

August 6th

On the bus in the morning light, I was again struck by the beauty of the steep green pastures under the glacial mountains. We passed several lava fields, creviced in places but sometimes smooth, and covered everywhere with the characteristic lichen and spongy moss that is so pleasantly soft to walk on (if sometimes deceiving), and dotted with tiny flowers: white, yellow, and purple thyme, campion, gentian, cow's ear. In marshy areas a cottony-like tufted plant grows called bog-grass. The ground became bleaker and rockier, the bus bumped on, and we approached Surtshellir ("black cave"), Iceland's largest lava cave; according to the travel brochure, it is only two kilometers from our farm, hard to believe.

With Ingibjörg's son as a guide, we made our way to the rim, torch-sticks in hand. Parts of Surtshellir, it seems, provided refuges for outlaws; as we descended, thoughts of the lonely and gloomy life in its interior evoke Aristotelian pity and terror. We only ventured a few hundred feet into the cave--a cautious two-hour journey to the first outland "apartments" and back. At its large gaping mouth, boulders of lava clearly break off from time to time and join the debris, a sobering thought. Nigel bravely hoped to make the trip, with his painstakingly wrapped knees, but had to give up, and Edmund stayed behind to keep him company.

We crawled over large spiked stones for the length of a couple city blocks, across a glacier-carved aperture, through a darker, mossy passage, and up into a side-channel, where we found the "apartment." Finally, we stood cheerfully in the strange, room-like passages, and took pictures by the eerie, smoking light of our flares. Ruth narrated a tale in which some saga "heroes" blinded and castrated a luckless opponent in the cave, and it was all too easy to believe. The *Útlagar* ("outlaws") lived by stealing sheep until they were finally hunted down and killed.

Surtshellir is in the region of the *Grettissaga*, and its bleakness makes understandable the tale of that grim hunted man. Grettir had few redeeming traits to my mind--his first significant act, at fourteen, was to kill someone who wouldn't let him mount a horse, and he seems to have killed almost everyone else he encountered thereafter--but he would have relished Ruth's tale. In their introduction to the saga, Magnússon and Morris describe him, too favorably, I believe, as "a man far above his fellows in all matters valued among his times and people, but also far above them all in ill-luck, for that is the conception that the story-teller has formed, of the great outlaw. . . he is the same man from beginning to end; thrust this way and that by circumstances, but little altered by them; unlucky in all things, yet made strong to bear all ill-luck; scornful of the world, yet capable of enjoyment, and determined to make the most of it. . . ." Morris had afterthoughts later, when he viewed one of Grettir's actual hideouts.

As we started back, Neville and Holly turned up missing, and we were worried till we reached the clearing midway, and learned they had emerged from another shaft further down the cave, after venturing through what for a while was complete darkness. As we approached the light at the end of the tunnel, I contemplated what human beings will do in the name of pleasure, edification, and "adventure." All but three of the group are older than we are, and I am impressed by their vigor. When we emerged, Edvige stretched out on the ground in exhaustion, and quoted in her own language the lines in which Dante celebrates his escape from hell: "And after this I saw the stars."

Later, back on the "road" we stopped to view a lava formation said to resemble a troll's face--a proboscis profile, framed by the usual scrub-birch, sturdy gnarled trees which struggled against the wind. We stopped for lunch at a sheltered lava formation nearby, and paused briefly at our farms to deposit those who did not want to rent riding horses, en route to Bjarnastaðir, a nearby farmstead with horses. We waited a while for the horses by the Hvítá, and contemplated again its many little falls and turquoise water. The sturdy Icelandic *hestar*--ponies, really--did well by us. Their large bodies and short legs maneuver

well over the stony ground. Eugene and I enjoyed our two hour circuit along a river and through some wooded flat terrain. Trained in four ordinary gaits, the horses can also do a fifth, more elegant "running walk," which one of the guides demonstrated for us. Bill awaited us back at Fljótstunga, and we ate our usual vegetarian meal of salad, bread, and skyr.

August 7th [To Geitaskard near Blönduós]

August 8th

From Geitaskard, we began the long drive to the other farmhouse on the other side of Blönduós, handsome again by its elegant bright blue firth, under layers of striated gray clouds. At one point Húnafljórdur seemed to divide neatly into a shining glassy blue layer and another deep, rougher blue one close in. We then travelled down to Vatnsdalur, one of the most beautiful valleys we've seen (Morris's "Water-dale"). Green tun-steeds surrounded neat red-roofed two- or three-building farmhouses, and Vatnsdalur's striking parallel rivers seemed to coil and undulate like ribbons, until the dale finally became a watery pasture of grassy islets and soft green mounds. Largish hills, formed by a landslide, appeared on our right all clustered together. We rode round a beautiful small, still blue lake into a region in which Grettir killed one of his opponents, Glámur the Undead, at Þórshall-steed. Afterwards, we entered a beautiful broad valley, green and yellow-green, with carefully ploughed fields and dirt heaped boundaries (from digging for drainage) and passed several diminutive waterfalls, clear and dignified against the dark brown and gray rock. For waterscapes, this has been our best day yet.

At the top of Vatnsdalur we continued south past Hóp and Hausar, and passed the site of the temple of Ingimund, a Celtic priest who made an early attempt to Christianize Iceland. At our stopping point at Forsaeludalur ("shadow dale"), we stood together on a knoll looking south toward a cluster of conflating ridges and hills. "Shadow-dale" is the name of a valley in Roots of the Mountains, and this one looked appropriately lush and protecting; Morris obviously shared Icelanders' interest in the differences between the "characters" of one valley and another.

. . . . We then drove further north to Thingeyra, site of the first Icelandic monastery in 1133, now marked only by a farmhouse and nineteenth-century church. When I walked along the tufted fields to find a good angle for a picture, I marvelled that the crevices in the ground were so large that rivulets could run through them, and walked with care. Against the headlands, with the river behind and Húnavatn to the left, the site looked indeed like a dignified outpost of early Christian history. I could imagine readily enough that one might embrace Christianity here, at the edge of the known world, as an explanation for the meaning of one's quiet and isolated life. When we left, we again drove past the firth and small mounds, and around the Hóp's handsome large oval of deep blue. We passed endless sheep, of course, often mere white and black specks in the distance, usually one or two black in a cluster of white. I saw one sheep frolic and jump, and laughed aloud.

At Borgarvirki ("castle fortress") we unwrapped our lunch, then climbed the huge castle-like formation atop a hill at the head of the peninsula. It was windy and cold on a mild August day, and I felt astounded and depressed to think that humans had built this laborious structure, workers and slaves dragging huge black stones painfully upwards to set them on the others. Borgarvirki is constructed in a rough crater-like circle, with a smaller stone roomlike structure within. From the crest of the fortress we had another beautiful outlook, 360 degrees, headlands to the left and right, the firths in front of us, and Hóp behind. According to Morris's map, his group didn't reach the virki, but he described the legend of its founding, and stayed at two farmhouses in the area, one nearby and another at a site we passed on our route south.

At five or so in the afternoon we arrived at Hvammstangi, a town of seven hundred people. All seemed cheerful until our driver Stefan severed a tendon in one of the baths. Although ordered by the doctor to return home, he managed with some pain and discomfort to drive us home. As we returned through the Waterdale region towards Blönduós, the rivers shone silver in the end-of-day light. At Geitaskard, we had a late dinner about 8:15, and talked a bit afterwards to unwind. I then wrote in this journal until about 11:30 p. m. One week of this strenuous and interesting trip is over.



WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY
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UNIVERSITY LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

July 1987

Dear Member,

1. KELMSCOTT HOUSE

The open day in our refurbished headquarters at Kelmscott House on 11 April was a heartening occasion, full of fellowship. The builder - represented by his painter, who we were very glad to have with us - had done enough to allow us to appreciate what opportunities the new accommodation offers the Society: the study facilities in the library, a compact but convenient office - on this occasion used for viewing the short video film of our Icelandic expedition - and a workshop which can be a base for a range of practical activities.

Councillor Joseph Mirwitch welcomed us back to Hammersmith and hoped co-operation between the Society and the local authority would grow. Athene Seyler, who lives in the coach-house and has now passed her 98th birthday, put in a warmly-applauded appearance and chatted cheerfully for an hour. A fair number of passers-by, seeing the open door and the Society's sign, just dropped in - a good omen for the future. Anthony Eyre brought our Albion hand-press back to life so that those present were able to print their own keepsakes. All in all, a day to be remembered.

Fitting out is now well under way and any member who could spare a few hours to help is invited to get in touch with the undersigned on 01-622 8860.

John Kay

2. SOCIETY NEWS

We are pleased to report that, following the appeal in the last issue of the Newsletter, we have received offers from members to undertake the important jobs of Membership Secretary and Publicity Officer. The new Membership Secretary, whose appointment was confirmed at the AGM in May, will be Dawn Morris, a member living in Sheffield. She will take up her duties over the summer, as soon as the necessary materials can be transferred to their new Yorkshire base. It is a pleasure to welcome Dawn to the Committee, to wish her well, and to thank her for volunteering her services.

For the post of Publicity Officer we have received more than one enquiry, and the officers are at present considering how best to make use of the talents of those members who have come forward. There will be more news in the next issue.